

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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TDD 654-2054 (For the Hearing Impaired)
(916) 654-1954



DATE: December 22, 2014
TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
SUBJECT: CHANGE IN EARLY START ELIGIBILITY

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance regarding the changes in eligibility for the Early Start program due to the enactment of Senate Bill 856 (Chapter 30, Statutes of 2014). As the changes result in an expansion of the Early Start eligibility criteria, more children, including those currently receiving Prevention, Resource and Referral Services (PRRS) through the Family Resource Centers (FRC), may be eligible for Early Start services beginning January 1, 2015.

To summarize, the following changes were made to the Early Start eligibility criteria, contained in California Government Code, Section 95014:

- Developmental delay – The new definition of “significant difference,” for purposes of identifying developmental delay, is a 33-percent delay in one or more developmental areas. This new definition no longer requires a more significant level of delay for children 24 months of age or older.
- At High Risk – The new criteria restores Early Start eligibility for those infants and toddlers who are at high risk of experiencing developmental delays or disabilities due to a combination of biomedical risk factors.

Regional centers should collaborate with their local FRCs to confirm the referral process for children currently receiving PRRS for evaluation of Early Start eligibility. In order to ensure a smooth transition, funding remains available through the PRRS contract with the Department of Developmental Services and will continue this fiscal year.

In addition to the FRCs, it is important for regional centers to inform other referral sources in their area about the expansion of the Early Start eligibility criteria.

"Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices"

Regional Center Executive Directors
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If you have any questions, please contact JoEllen Fletcher, Chief, Early Start and Health Services Section, at (916) 654-2133.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Jim Knight for

NANCY BARGMANN
Deputy Director
Community Services Division

cc: Association of Regional Center Agencies
Regional Center Chief Counselors
Family Resource Centers Network of California
Family Resource Centers
Meredith Cathcart, California Department of Education