

Physician Orders for Early Intervention Services Overview

The Infant Toddler Program is responsible for obtaining a physician's order for occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech-language pathology (SLP), and audiology evaluations and services in order to bill private insurance and Medicaid.

Obtaining a physician's order for these services benefits ITP for several reasons:

- Ensures compliance with Medicaid regulations and insurance policies.
- Allows ITP to bill Medicaid and insurance for reimbursement of early intervention services.
- Creates a sustainable program by gaining funding from public and private insurances.
- Aligns with Idaho's health home model, which encourages the child's physician be involved in every aspect of the child's system of care.

A new physician's order must be obtained for the initial IFSP, and at least every six (6) months thereafter. Obtaining the physician's order should not hold up completion of the initial IFSP within 45 days. The order does not have to be from the child's primary care physician.

The ITP obtains a physician's order every six (6) months or more frequently as needed for all children receiving OT, PT, SLP, and audiology services regardless of the child's health coverage. It is ITP's policy to obtain a physician's order for all children regardless of their health coverage due to the fact that children's health coverage frequently changes throughout the year making it extremely burdensome on staff to track this information.

A physician's order may be obtained in three ways:

- 1) ITP Physician's Order Evaluation Form (Evaluations only)
- 2) IFSP Summary of Services Page
- 3) Written physician's order initiated from the physician's office (cannot be a verbal order)

A physician's order needs to be obtained for initial evaluations, ongoing evaluations, adding new services, modifying existing services, and every 6 months. There are slight variations to the process depending on the reason for the order. Refer to the **Process for Obtaining Physician Order** section of this manual for process descriptions.

Timelines for Physician's Orders:

Part C of IDEA requires that an IFSP review be conducted every six (6) months or more frequently if conditions warrant, or if the family requests such a review. To bill third party insurance, a physician's order must also be in place and renewed at least every six (6) months.

To ensure compliance with the 6 month physician's order requirement the service coordinator is responsible to:

- Complete the IFSP 6 month and annual reviews prior to the IFSP 6 month and annual review due dates.
- Ensure that all activities, including MDT staffing and parent approval of staffing recommendations, are completed with **enough time** to submit the IFSP Summary of Services

page and obtain the physician's authorizing signature prior to the IFSP review due date (6 month or annual).

NOTE: Third party payers do not require a parent's signature on the physician's order to authorize services and/or evaluations. Therefore the IFSP Summary of Services page may be submitted for the physician's signature prior to receiving the parent's signature if this aligns better with the MDT planning process.

This does not preclude the requirement to obtain the parent's signature on the IFSP Summary of Services page prior to providing any service which is both a Part C and Medicaid requirement.

- Ensure the initial IFSP is completed within 45 days from referral regardless of receiving a physician's order for services and/or evaluations. Services should not be delayed to wait for a physician's order.
- Inform ITP providers when the physician's order is received and the date it is signed so they know when to begin billing for services.

Physician Coordination for Developmental Disability Services:

Medicaid policy also requires collaboration with the physician for developmental disability (DD) services; however it does not have to be through an order signed by the physician as required for OT, PT, SLP, and audiology services.

For DD services, Medicaid requires that ITP sends the child's IFSP to the physician shortly after it is implemented. This demonstrates that ITP collaborated with the physician regarding the child's DD plan of service, and also provides an opportunity for the physician to review and provide feedback regarding the child's services if desired. A physician's signature is not required for DD services. Refer to the **Process for Obtaining Physician Orders** section of this manual for process descriptions.