

Guidance to Address Feeding Issues

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an educational program that assists states with implementing a comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities, ages birth to three years of age and their families.

Children enrolled in the Infant Toddler Program may encounter eating and feeding challenges. Learning to eat and feed oneself are developmentally appropriate skills for infants and toddlers to gain. However, feeding issues that are **medical** in nature are outside the purview of IDEA, Part C early intervention services.

Developmental Feeding Issues

The Infant Toddler Program's primary focus is to address any developmental feeding issues that may impact the child's development. Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- Behavioral feeding issues
- Sensory feeding issues
- Oral motor feeding issues
- Picky eaters

It is important to remember that any developmental feeding issues addressed by Infant Toddler Program staff/contractors should have a positive impact on the child's development. If feeding issues persist, the professional and their MDT should consider making a referral to a medical specialist.

Staff/contractors who can address developmental feeding issues within their scope of practice can work on feeding goals identified in the IFSP. Examples include:

- Nutritionist
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Developmental Specialist

When a staff/contractor works to address developmental feeding issues, the intervention provided on the IFSP Summary of Services page should be listed using their discipline specific service.

Medical Feeding Issues

Services provided to address medical feeding issues are outside the scope of IDEA, Part C. As a result, it is important to ensure medical feeding issues are NOT being addressed by Infant Toddler Program staff/contractors, but are referred to an outside medical specialist. Examples of medical feeding issues include but are not limited to:

- Medically induced swallowing disorder
- Oral structural impediments
- Aspiration
- Atypical or immature suck/swallow pattern
- Feeding issues due to prematurity
- Poor weight gain

If a child is referred to the Infant Toddler Program and has or develops a medical feeding issue, an outside referral should be made to a medical specialist.