

Babies Can't Wait (BCW) is Georgia's early intervention program available to children ages zero to three years old with disabilities and developmental delays. Through BCW, a team of multidisciplinary healthcare professionals assesses, educate, and implement a family service plan to help ensure children receive every opportunity to fulfill their potential.¹



A child's brain develops extremely rapidly from birth to age three. **This is a critical window of opportunity to detect and address developmental delays before they become significant barriers to healthy development.** BCW staff work closely with physicians and healthcare providers to identify children showing signs of developmental disabilities or delays, so that needed supports can be provided early on – and long-term development challenges can be prevented or mitigated.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR SERVICES?

Babies Can't Wait serves children from birth until age 3 who have a diagnosed developmental delay or chronic health condition that results in a developmental delay.³ BCW services provide support and resources to assist family members/caregivers to enhance children's learning and development in the child's natural environment (e.g., home or community setting).^{4, 5}

Anyone can refer a child to Babies Can't Wait including, but not limited to:⁶



Parents



Childcare Providers



Doctors



A free developmental evaluation is available to families to determine eligibility for services and supports under the program.⁷

HOW THE PROGRAM IS FUNDED

**babies
can't
wait**

receives federal funds from the Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and state funds, and is housed within the Georgia Department of Public Health.

HOW SERVICES ARE PAID FOR²



First, services are billed to the child's health insurance (where applicable and with parent permission)



A sliding fee is determined based on income and family size



BCW program serves as a payor of last resort, if needed

CHILDREN SERVED BY BABIES CAN'T WAIT

26,000
children were served
in FY 2021-2022⁸



The number of children that are referred and eligible is increasing each year²



It's likely that more children are in need of services than BCW can currently serve, given existing constraints.

STEPS TO RECEIVE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES¹⁰

- 1** Referrals can be made by anyone including but not limited to a pediatrician, family member, care provider, or a parent/guardian for assessment. Assessment of children must start within 45 days of referral.
- 2** Intake is conducted by BCW Service Coordinators (SC) and/or BCW Intake Service Coordinators (ISC) to assess potential delays or diagnoses. Early Intervention Coordinators (EIC) and Service Coordinators ensure that children receive assessments and services in a timely fashion and align with the care plan; they also ensure that timely and complete data is collected.
- 3** The Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) team, which includes parent/guardian, service provider(s), Service Coordinator(s), and anyone the family deems necessary, create an IFSP based on the child's needs.
- 4** Children and families receive services for conditions based on their IFSP up until their 3rd birthday. Services are provided by BCW local agency staff and contracted providers (Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Language Pathologists, Special Instructors, and other BCW contracted providers).
- 5** The child's progress is evaluated every six (6) months or as needed based on the needs of the child and the concerns of the IFSP team. BCW Service Coordinators work with providers and families to determine if additional services are recommended¹¹
- 6** Transition plans begin at 27 months. BCW Service Coordinators help families develop a plan to determine which next step will support the child's developmental needs after they have exited the BCW program. Options for next steps include private therapy services, private childcare, preschool special education classroom, Head Start/Early Head Start, or staying at home. This includes creating an educational plan to compare all transition options.

CHALLENGES TO THE SUCCESS OF THE BABIES CAN'T WAIT PROGRAM

While Babies Can't Wait is implemented in all 18 public health districts, the program has encountered challenges with having enough contractors, particularly in rural areas of Georgia, to meet all the service needs of the children enrolled. **Understaffing ultimately results in children/families receiving delayed services or not receiving the recommended services.**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE BABIES CAN'T WAIT PROGRAM

- Work closely with local agency staff, stakeholders, and community partners to assess and address staff/program recruitment and retention issues.
- Streamline coordination and follow-up coordination/communication between referral source (e.g., physician) and program staff across the state
- Continue to recruit providers to serve in all districts at numbers that meet the demand for services.
- Continue to offer telehealth as a platform for providing services to parents/caregivers where possible.
- Continue to explore whether there are early intervention services provided by the state which could be billed to Medicaid and/or private insurance (e.g., provider-to-provider consultations to coordinate services). If feasible, this would allow greater flexibility for IDEA Part C grant funds to support case management.

Babies Can't Wait is a federally regulated program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, specifically, Part C of the law. The program is to be a statewide, coordinated, multidisciplinary inter-agency system that provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers, and coordinates developmental, educational, and community supports for those children. However, eligibility criteria may vary state to state.

Sources for Babies Can't Wait

- 1 Georgia Department of Public Health. Babies Can't Wait. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/babies-cant-wait>.
- 2 Georgia Department of Public Health. Professional Communications. Accessed November 2022.
- 3 Georgia Department of Public Health. Eligibility for BCW. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/babies-cant-wait/eligibility-bcw>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Georgia Department of Public Health. BCW Services. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/babies-cant-wait/bcw-services>.
- 6 Georgia Department of Public Health. "2019 BCW Program Brochure: Early Intervention, Ages 0-36 months". Retrieved on October 27, 2022. from <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/publication/bcw-program-brochure-eng-and-spa/download>.
- 7 Georgia Department of Public Health. Eligibility for BCW. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/babies-cant-wait/eligibility-bcw>.
- 8 Georgia Department of Public Health. Babies Can't Wait Program Fact Sheet 2022 for Providers. Accessed November 4, 2022.
- 9 Georgia Department of Public Health. "2019 BCW Program Brochure: Early Intervention, Ages 0-36 months". Retrieved on October 27, 2022. from <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/publication/bcw-program-brochure-eng-and-spa/download>.
- 10 Georgia Department of Public Health. Babies Can't Wait: Steps for Success, Transition 3. Accessed November 4, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/publication/bcw-transition-3-brochure-english/download>.
- 11 Georgia Department of Public Health. Babies Can't Wait: FAQ Retrieved on November 4, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/publication/babies-cant-wait-faq/download>.