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Early Support for Infants and Toddlers

The Department of Early Learning has included \$4 million state funding for the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers program to narrow the gap in funding activities that must be provided at public expense in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

History: For over 20 years, the State Lead Agency for Part C, currently the Department of Early Learning (DEL), Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program has received funding through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C to facilitate the development and coordination of a statewide system of early intervention services. These federal funds do not increase as the number of eligible infants and toddler increases. These funds are allocated to states based on a birth-rate methodology. The majority of activities occur prior to service provision for which there are a number of required activities. The **activities that occur prior to service authorization and funding include:**

- Early identification and child find
- Evaluation and assessment to determine eligibility
- Development, review and evaluation of the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) that authorizes services
- Sharing of parent's rights and procedural safeguards

There is limited funding through OSPI, public and private insurance, and in Snohomish County, Developmental Disabilities and none of these funding streams is available until the IFSP is completed. Since 2006 the number of **infants and toddlers eligible for ESIT services has increased by 35%** while the only funding stream available for these services (**federal funding**) **has only increased by 12%**. For ChildStrive, we incur more than \$700,000 in expenses per year for these services. In an entire year we receive approximately \$285,000 in federal funding for these activities. Other than our fundraising efforts, these are the only dollars received earmarked for these activities that are required to be provided at public expense.

The investment in finding children with disabilities and delays early pays dividends – up to 30% of those served in Early Intervention no longer need special education by the age of three. The additional funds requested will not completely fill the gap, but will make a huge step towards narrowing the gap. We therefore urge you to support this budget item and work with the legislature to ensure that this investment in infants and toddlers is passed.