

## Helping Families, Saving State Resources



The Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program provides services for very young children with significant developmental delays. ECI offers services in the home and community, providing therapeutic interventions and helping parents and caregivers better understand how to address their child's specialized needs. Services include therapies and training on social-emotional, self-help, communication, motor functions and cognitive skills. Parents are taught exercises to help a child learn to swallow, or crawl, or adjust to special needs. Intervening early in a child's life improves school readiness and decreases costs to taxpayers through reducing the need for special education and other publicly funded programs.

### ECI services

- speech therapy
- feeding/swallowing
- specialized skills training
- occupational therapy
- nutrition instruction
- case management
- physical therapy
- counseling
- parent education

## ECI is in Jeopardy

Program changes and reductions in funding continue to threaten this vital program. Eligibility was narrowed in 2011, resulting in missed opportunities for intervention among children with moderate delays, increased special education costs, and higher needs among those who remain eligible. These increased needs result in higher costs per child, further contributing to the financial challenges brought about by recent funding changes. **As funding declines and family needs increase, ECI programs across Texas are unable to meet these needs in a sustainable way.** Budgets are stretched as providers must do more with less, while working to maintain the services on which thousands of families depend. Our state's continued population increase brings new challenges, as providers must serve all eligible children, even if they are not adequately funded to serve them. This perpetuates the program's lack of sustainability, as the same resources must be spread across a larger population, leaving less available for each child served.



## We Must Act Now to Address the Funding Shortfall



Since 2011, 16 ECI programs have closed, placing services at risk in more than 50 Texas counties. In order to ensure programs can continue to provide the important and economically efficient services families need, ECI must be adequately funded. This means a per-child funding increase that will allow providers to cover costs and maintain fiscal sustainability. Providers cannot continue to shoulder the financial burden created when state funding is not adjusted for population increases and the increased needs and severity of children who qualify for ECI services. Children's experiences from infancy to age three profoundly affect the rest of their lives, and early intervention to address developmental challenges is the best way to ensure their lives are independent and healthy. ECI is more than a program for babies and toddlers, it's a program that helps all Texans. Now it needs your help.