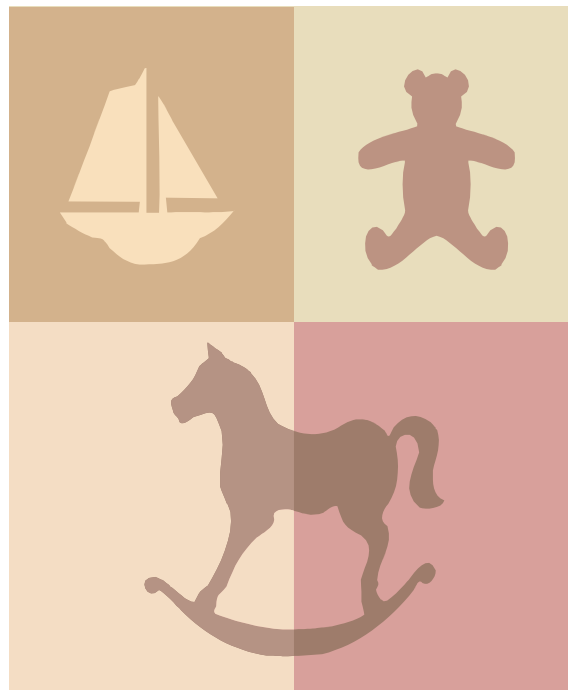


# PARENT GUIDE

## ACCA Infant Learning Programs



2014

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## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

ACCA Infant Learning Programs are available for families in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, North Slope Borough, Delta, and Copper River regions with children from birth to age three who have special developmental needs. Services are provided in the home, in our center-based program, and in various community locations such as child care centers. Visits are designed to provide direct intervention to the child, and home activities for the family to support the child's development. Group activities and field trips are available to support social interactions for both the child and family.

Research shows that children with special needs who have had early intervention reach higher levels of development than children without this service. One reason is because the family provides an effective and efficient way to help their child reach his or her greatest developmental potential. Our program philosophy is family-centered with parents as the primary teachers and decision-makers.

ACCA ILP is part of the State of Alaska Infant Learning Program and is funded by a grant from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. We follow federal guidelines under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our program is also partially funded by the United Way and contributions from corporations and individuals. Some of our therapy services are funded through the billing of private health insurance, Medicaid or Denali Kid Care, or Tri-Care. Core services are free to families.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is assured within the Infant Learning Program. All children's permanent records are kept in locked file cabinets, available only to ACCA staff. Information is released to other agencies only when written permission has been given by the parents.

## **SURROGATE PARENTS**

If a child is a ward of the state, a knowledgeable surrogate parent who has no conflicting interest will be appointed to represent the interests of the child. This may be a family member, foster parent or other appropriate appointee.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

All staff employed by the Infant Learning Program are mandatory reporters of suspected or documented child abuse and/or neglect. If conditions or situations in the home may be putting a child at risk a report of harm must be filed with the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS). If you have questions or concerns regarding this policy please discuss them with your provider or one of the program coordinators.

## INTAKE PROCESS

### Referral

Children are referred to ACCA ILP by physicians, public health nurses, friends, social service agencies, day care staff, educators and parents. The Intake Specialist will be your initial contact person and guide you through the intake process.

### Screening

The Intake Specialist or Early Interventionist will take a quick look at your child's development through a developmental screening. If the screening results indicate a need for further evaluation of developmental skills, an eligibility assessment will be scheduled with your consent. If it is clear upon referral that your child requires a full eligibility assessment, this may be scheduled without completion of a developmental screening.

### Eligibility Assessment

During an eligibility assessment, ILP staff will gather information about your child's strengths and needs. Parents may be asked to provide information about their child's developmental and medical history. Standardized and non-standardized testing tools will be used to look at skills in all areas of development. The assessment team will explain to parents how they can assist in the assessment process.

Following the eligibility assessment, findings and observations are discussed with the parent. The assessment team will later score the tests and complete an assessment report. This report will be mailed to your home in one to two weeks. It will indicate whether or not your child is eligible for the program. Recommendations will be made for the next steps to pursue in supporting your child's development. After your child has participated in an assessment please feel free to call us with any questions you may have regarding the assessment, report, or services.

### Program Eligibility

Children may be eligible for ACCA ILP due to one of the following:

- Test scores indicate a 15% or greater delay in one or more area
- Diagnosed disability or condition
- Presence of two or more biological or environmental risk factors

Children are eligible for the highest level of service, **Part C**, due to one of the following:

- Test scores indicate a 50% or greater delay in one or more area
- Diagnosed disability or condition

### Waitlist

ACCA ILP receives a set amount of funding to provide services to eligible children. If there are not enough funds to serve all children, some go on a waitlist for services. Each child on the waitlist is priority ranked to determine the level of need for services. Children with the highest need for services will be enrolled first. If your child is on the waitlist please feel free to call to check on the waitlist status or ask about additional services which may be available from other community resources.

## **ENROLLMENT**

If your child is eligible for services your child may be enrolled in the Infant Learning Program with your permission. A teacher and/or therapist will be provided to work with your family. The next step is to develop a plan of intervention for your child and family, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

## **FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

State statute, regulations and federal law (Part C of IDEA) require Early Intervention/Infant Learning Programs (EI/ILP) to offer the families of Part C eligible children the chance to participate in a family needs assessment. Participation in this assessment is entirely voluntary. Declining to participate will not affect your ability to receive other services from the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program. The information from this assessment will be used to plan services for your child and family as we develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The assessment process consists of completion of a 3 page family needs survey which contains a series of multiple choice questions and the opportunity to provide written information regarding your family. All information you provide to the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program is protected by law and is maintained in a confidential manner. We recognize that some of the information requested in the family needs assessment is especially sensitive in nature and assure that it will be treated in the most sensitive manner.

## **INDIVIDUAL FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (IFSP)**

The IFSP is developed by those who will be involved in the child's program including the parents, early interventionist, therapists, day care provider, respite worker, other professionals, and other family members or friends. The IFSP provides a "map" for the family and the teacher to used to plan home activities that assist the child's development.

An IFSP consists of:

- the child and family's strengths and needs;
- present level of functioning (a description of your child's abilities);
- outcomes (long and short term goals and objectives);
- intervention strategies, materials and timelines to meet the outcomes;
- service options (who, where, when);
- evaluation of outcomes every 6 months.

The entire team develops the goals, which focus on meeting the needs of the family and child. The IFSP is reviewed and rewritten at least every six months by the team. Goals which have been mastered will be deleted and new goals will be developed.

## **ACCA ILP STAFF**

The ILP staff is made up of professionals and paraprofessionals who are experienced in early childhood development. Their experience and training include at least one of the following areas: early childhood education, special education, social work, nursing, psychology, education of hearing and/or vision impaired, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech/language therapy.

## **SERVICE OPTIONS**

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are opportunities to receive educational information, technical assistance and support to your family. The teacher will model and teach techniques to work toward the goals listed on the IFSP. You will learn ways to enhance your child's development. It is a time to share information about your child. Home visits are intended to be a partnership between your family and the teacher.

### **Center Visits**

Visits at our facility are also available for families who would prefer this option. You may enjoy getting out of the house to another setting, or the teacher may suggest trying some of the equipment which is available at our office. Some children are better able to focus on the activities presented in a more controlled setting.

### **Joint Visits**

If your family is receiving services from another community program such as Healthy Families, Early Headstart, Parents as Teachers or any other program, you may want to schedule visits at the same time. This can allow our programs to coordinate services, share information, and work to better meet your family's needs.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips may be part of Project TEACH activities. Parents attend field trips with their child and are responsible for their own transportation. They are a great way to get out and see what our community has to offer to families.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

### Parents' Rights

- to be an equal partner and team member with your ILP Provider;
- to make decisions regarding your child's program;
  - time, type and frequency of program services
  - choice of Family Service Coordinator
  - requests for consultations, referrals and services
- to participate in all meetings regarding your child's program;
  - assessments
  - program planning meetings
  - program evaluations

### Parent's Responsibilities

- to notify your Infant Learning Teacher in advance when you must cancel a visit, whatever the reason. If your child or another child in the household is ill, please inform your Infant Learning Teacher as soon as possible. Notice is requested at least one day prior to the appointment;
- to be available for scheduled appointments. If any of the following occur:
  - three appointments in a row are cancelled, or
  - fewer than 50% of scheduled visits are completed in three months, or
  - three appointments are missed in three months without noticethere must be a meeting with your Infant Learning Teacher in order to resume services;
- to actively participate in home visit activities;
- to be involved in the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) process and your child's program;
- to engage in ongoing learning with the staff member regarding your child's development;
- to make certain the environment is suitable for learning (ie: turn off theTV and radio; make sure there is adequate space and that the floor is clean; limit use of perfumes/chemicals and put away pets for those home visitors who may have allergies, etc.);
- to provide medical records as requested and appropriate.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS**

### *Teacher's Rights*

- to be notified of scheduling conflicts as soon as possible;
- to be notified if a child or other family member is ill so the home visit can be rescheduled;
- to request that distractions be removed if they interfere with learning activities;
- to request that family members refrain from smoking during the home visit;
- to request that a parent, or primary caregiver, be involved in home visit activities;

### *Teacher's Responsibilities*

- to establish a working partnership with the family;
- to discuss any issues or concerns with the parent when they arise;
- to engage in ongoing learning with the parent regarding the child's development;
- to consult other specialists about the development of the child as parents request;
- to inform parents of other available resources in the community and state;
- to provide parents with information about transitioning to other programs (school, Headstart, etc.);
- to maintain strict confidentiality;
- to inform the family at least one day prior to the scheduled visit whenever there are changes in the teacher's schedule.
- to act as a mandated reporter of suspected or actual child abuse and/or neglect



## TRANSITION PROCEDURE

It is helpful to plan well ahead of time for a transition to a new program. A primary goal of ILP is to find services satisfactory to the family and to make the transition a smooth process.

- **Six months** before the child turns three, the teacher will review with the parents the service options available when the child turns three. An IFSP update will be completed to outline the transition plan. With the parent's permission, the teacher will refer the child to the appropriate programs.
- **Ninety days** before the child turns three a meeting will be held with the family, the Infant Learning Program, and any providers who may be involved in the child's program at age three. This is a time to discuss services available at age three, the parents' desires for their child, the needs of their child and the steps that need to occur in order to determine eligibility for services. At age three services may be available through Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, Headstart, private therapists, or child care providers.
- **Close to the third birthday** another meeting will be held to determine the child's eligibility for the new program. The family and all involved providers may also attend this meeting. A plan will be developed for the child to begin receiving services in the new setting.

## OTHER REASONS FOR DISCHARGE

### Child performing at age level

Parents may choose to discharge the child from ILP if there are no longer developmental concerns. They are encouraged to call if they have any additional concerns about their child's development prior to the child's third birthday.

### Family relocating outside the service area

When notified of an impending move, the teacher will assist the family in identifying necessary services available in the new community. Upon receiving parental consent any pertinent information is sent to the new agency.

### Parent choosing to terminate enrollment

If for any reason a parent wishes to cancel enrollment in ILP, they may do so by discussing this with the teacher.

### Lack of participation from program

When a family is unable to meet the attendance requirements of the program as outlined under Rights and Responsibilities of Parents, they may be discharged from the program.

## **COORDINATION WITH STATE PROGRAMS**

### *Alaska Hearing Impaired Program*

The Alaska Hearing Impaired Infant Program is a statewide outreach program designed to provide assessment and program suggestions to hard of hearing and deaf children from birth to age three. This program serves as a support service to ILP by providing consultation, program suggestions, and periodic home visits.

### *Alaska Blind/Visually Impaired Infant Program*

The Blind/Visually Impaired Program is another statewide outreach program which works in conjunction with ILP to provide assessment and program suggestions, consultation and periodic home visits.

### *Dual Sensory Impairment Program*

SESA's (Special Education Service Agency) Dual Sensory Impairment Program provides services to children who experience both a hearing and a vision loss.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Public Law 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, describes services and rights for the families of children who meet Part C eligibility guidelines. The Infant Learning Program operates under these guidelines. If you are not satisfied with services from the Infant Learning Program, please take the following actions in the order they are outlined below.

**I. Talk to your ILP teacher, therapist or service coordinator.**

It is our experience that many problems arise out of a failure to clearly communicate. Please discuss any concerns you have about your services with the provider(s) assigned to your family. We hope that by communicating your concerns, we can resolve the situation at this informal level.

**II. Call ILP Coordinator**

We understand that not all families are comfortable addressing concerns with their assigned providers and that not all issues can be resolved in this way. The Infant Learning Program Coordinators are always available to discuss any concerns you have about the level or quality of services you are receiving. Please feel free to contact us with any concerns or questions you have about our program services.

**Susan Kessler  
ILP Coordinator  
456-4003x105**

**III. Initiate Formal Grievance Procedure.**

If you have been unable to resolve your concerns through these informal discussions, you may initiate a formal grievance procedure within ACCA. Please follow the three steps outlined below.

1. Within six (6) weeks of the offending action, the parent(s), or legal caregiver(s), must present a written grievance to the Infant Learning Program Coordinator. The written document should describe events leading up to the present situation, identify each person involved, and describe a desired resolution to the problem.
2. Upon receipt of a grievance, the ILP Coordinator shall review the events as described by the parent(s) or legal caregiver(s) and obtain verbal and/or written statements from other involved parties. The ILP Coordinator shall make a written decision within seven (7) days of receipt of the grievance.
3. If the parent(s) or legal caregiver(s) are dissatisfied with the ILP Coordinator's decision, they may submit a written request for a review by the Executive Director of ACCA and a representative of the ACCA Board of Directors' Personnel Committee. This written review **must** be submitted within seven (7) days of the

parent's receipt of the ILP Coordinator's written decision regarding the grievance. The request for review should contain the parent's letter of grievance and a copy of the Coordinator's written decision. The Director and Board representative will review all material submitted and conduct face to face interviews with everyone involved. The Executive Director shall make a written decision, signed by the Board representative, within ten (10) days of receipt of the request for review.

#### **IV. Initiate Mediation Process**

If the issue is not resolved internally, external assistance may be necessary. One option is mediation. Mediation is a process which is intended to assist parents, schools and infant learning programs in resolving disagreements. At a meeting the trained mediator works with the parties to guide them toward a mutually satisfactory solution in the best interests of the child. Mediation is voluntary and is available at no cost to the program or family.

Once mediation is agreed to by both parties, a call is made to the Alaska Special Education Mediation Center and a mediator is assigned. The mediator will schedule a mediation session to occur as soon as possible and will establish the time and place for the mediation which is convenient to both parties. Both parties will receive written information identifying the mediator and providing the basic guidelines governing the mediation session. They will each be contacted by the mediator to plan the session.

For further information about mediation contact:  
**Alaska Special Education Mediation Services**  
**1-800-580-2209**

#### **V. File for Due Process Hearing**

If mediation is not agreed to by both parties or is not successful, you have the right to ask for an impartial hearing. A hearing officer unrelated to the Infant Learning Program will preside over the hearing. To obtain a hearing, you should make a written request to the ACCA Executive Director. The following groups are able to assist in filing for a due process hearing:

**PARENTS, Inc.**  
**535 Second Ave. #103C**  
**Fairbanks, AK 99701**  
**(907)456-6770**

**Disability Law Center of Alaska**  
**250 Cushman St. Suite 3H**  
**Fairbanks, AK 99701**  
**(907)456-1070**

## **AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **I. Social-Emotional Development**

Social-emotional development involves the growth of the child's unique personality or temperament. In this area the child learns ways of dealing with the world and daily life situations. Major skill areas involved are:

- developing a sense of well-being, a feeling of love and belonging, and trust between the child and his/her parents;
- developing a sense of independence and willingness to try out new skills
- developing a sense of cooperation, both with adults and with other children.

### **II. Motor Development**

Motor development refers to the child's ability to move and explore the world around him/her. Movement allows a child to learn about him/herself, to reach for and play with toys, to climb into a comfortable lap and to become independent.

**Gross motor** skills refer to large muscle and movement activities. Some of the major milestones in this are:

- Rolling;
- Sitting;
- creeping and crawling
- pulling to stand;
- walking

**Fine motor** skill refers to control of his/her trunk, shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers to manipulate objects. Some of the major milestones are:

- reaching out and grasping for toys and objects
- pulling the lid off of a container
- using thumb and forefinger to pick up and eat cheerios or cracker

### **III. Self Help**

This area includes feeding skills, pre-dressing and dressing skills as well as independent behavior. Some of the major milestones are:

- accepting food using bottle and /or spoon;
- feeding self by using finger foods, cup, spoon or fork
- assisting with dressing and becoming independent in dressing;
- becoming toilet trained

#### IV. Communication Development

**Expressive communication** is the use of sounds, gestures, body language and words to communicate. Babies cry and laugh to let us know how they feel and these sounds are the beginning of language. When children are older these sounds develop into first words. Some major skills in this area include:

- crying to communicate needs;
- babbling or playing with sounds;
- imitating gestures, actions and sounds;
- imitating sounds or words for different wants and needs;
- initiating conversation, first in single words, then in two-word phrases, etc.

**Receptive communication** is the understanding of sounds, gestures and words to understand another person's communication. Usually children understand more words than they can say. Some of the major skills include:

- watching faces of family members when talking and singing to them;
- following simple directions;
- understanding the meaning of words and phrases
- understanding prepositions, adjectives and verbs

#### V. Cognitive Development

Also known as problem solving, this area refers to a child's ability to understand new concepts, solve new problems and master new skills. Increasingly more complicated cognitive skills enable the child to apply abstract mental concepts to objects and the events that are occurring in the environment. Some of the major skills are:

- exploring the feeling of objects through mouthing and holding;
- functional play-using a toy for its intended purpose, such as shaking a rattle, rolling a ball or pushing a car;
- object permanence- that people/objects exist even when they can't be seen;
- cause and effect-understanding how a particular effect is produced and learning to produce it;
- means-end behavior-discovering strategies or actions that will lead to a desired goal through problem-solving

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

<b>ACCA</b>	Alaska Center for Children and Adults
<b>ED</b>	Eligibility Determination-an in-depth evaluation of a child's overall development.
<b>EIS</b>	Early Intervention Specialist-a home visitor or teacher.
<b>ELF</b>	Early Learning is Fun-a play group for children, parents and siblings.
<b>FNSB</b>	Fairbanks North Star Borough
<b>IDEA</b>	Individual's with Disabilities Education Act-the federal law that assures a free and appropriate education for all.
<b>IFSP</b>	Individual Family Service Plan - a plan of service developed with families which is reviewed every 6 months
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Plan – a plan of service developed with the school district when a child transitions at age 3 years.
<b>ILP</b>	Infant Learning Program
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapy/Therapist
<b>Part C</b>	Refers to Part C under the federal legislation known as IDEA. Children under Part C are classified as having severe developmental delays and/or a medical diagnosis which is likely to result in long-term developmental delays
<b>PT</b>	Physical Therapy/Therapist
<b>Project TEACH</b>	Name of the Infant Learning Program serving the FNSB.
<b>Developmental Screening</b>	A quick look at a child's development to determine whether full developmental testing should be completed.
<b>SLP</b>	Speech and Language Pathologist
<b>90 Day Meeting</b>	A team meeting to plan a child's transition process 90 days before the third birthday.