



All in for Kids

A Birth to 3 Program Family Newsletter

All in for Kids: Birth to 3 Program is a newsletter that helps to keep you and your family informed about the services available through the Birth to 3 Program. The newsletter is published by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).



Helping your child benefit from early intervention

Early intervention helps infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. It provides services and support to help your child grow, learn new skills, and get off to a strong start in life. In Wisconsin, early intervention is available through the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program. Every county in the state offers this program, meaning families across all 72 counties can access these services close to home.

Why early intervention matters

The goal of early intervention is to support your child's development during their most important early years. These services are delivered by trained professionals who understand

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how to help children reach developmental milestones. Early intervention services are designed to give your child the best chance to thrive.

Who monitors the success of early intervention?

Each year, the federal government checks how well states like Wisconsin are doing in providing early intervention services. They do this through a process called “Determinations.” This process looks at:

- How many children are enrolled in the Birth to 3 Program and for how long.
- How much children in the Birth to 3 Program make progress in reaching their developmental milestones.
- Whether services are provided in **natural environments**, like the child’s home or daycare.
- If individualized family service plans, called IFSPs, and other activities for the family and child are done on time.

How does Wisconsin help families get the right services?

Just like the federal government reviews the states, Wisconsin’s Department of Health Services (DHS) looks at how well each county’s Birth to 3 Program is doing. DHS checks to make sure that each program:

- Serves the children and families who need help.
- Helps children make progress in their development.
- Provides services on time and in the places where families feel comfortable.

Based on this information, each county gets evaluated. DHS then works with the counties to help them improve if needed.

Where can I learn about how Wisconsin’s Birth to 3 Program is performing?

Information about the quality of Wisconsin’s Birth to 3 Program, including details about how well each county is doing, are available online. You can see the state’s rating by visiting this webpage:

sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/2023-determination-letters-on-state-implementation-of-idea/.

WHAT ARE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS?

Natural environments are the places where your child spends most of their time, such as your home, a relative’s house, daycare, or even the park. These are familiar settings where your child can play, learn, and develop skills in their everyday routine. Learn more in the next article!

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (IFSP)?

The IFSP is your child and family’s roadmap to success. It’s customized, focuses on what you think is important, and adapts as your child grows. It’s a way to make sure your child gets to enjoy being a kid while learning and developing at their own pace, with you cheering them on every step of the way.

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To find information about your county's program, visit the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program County Performance Data webpage: dhs.wi.gov/birthto3/reports/county.htm. You can also reach out to your county's Birth to 3 Program coordinator to learn more.

Help improve early intervention in Wisconsin

Learn more about the program and share your experiences to make Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program even better:

- Attend a meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), which helps guide the Birth to 3 Program. You can visit the ICC webpage here: dhs.wi.gov/b3icc/index.htm
- Apply to become a member of the ICC. Members share their input on how to improve early intervention services in the state. You can apply to join here: evers.wi.gov/Pages/Application_Process.aspx
- Advocate for more support for early intervention by speaking to local leaders, businesses, and government officials.

By getting involved, you can help make sure the Birth to 3 Program continues to support Wisconsin families and children! ❖

Natural environments help children learn and develop

The Birth to 3 Program uses the term “natural environments” to describe places that your family and child normally spend time. This includes your family's home, community, and other places you go in your day-to-day life (for example, your child's day care center or the park). Natural environments are not only places but also include the people, activities, toys, and other objects that are part of your child's everyday life. Your family's beliefs, values, and culture are also part of the natural environment.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Key information for families

Upcoming meetings:

- For the meeting schedule, please visit dhs.wis.gov/b3icc/meetings.htm.

Public comments:

- You're invited to attend each meeting even if you're not a member of the ICC. There is time for public comments at the start of each meeting.
- The ICC helps make sure the Birth to 3 Program supports children and families. Your input helps improve the program.

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The benefits of learning in a natural environment

Children benefit from working with Birth to 3 Program providers in a natural environment because children learn best while:

- They are in familiar places.
- They are using their own toys and familiar objects.

It takes time for children to get used to new places and figure out new objects. Sticking with what is familiar means they are ready to learn right away—they do not need to get comfortable or used to the situation first. When activities take place in natural environments, your family can add them to your regular routines. Then your child can practice those skills throughout their day, not just when the provider is there.

How services are provided in natural environments

Your family and child have your own everyday routines, activities, and places. You will identify your child's natural environments when you talk with the provider about what happens during your typical day, such as visiting family or friends, going grocery shopping, walking the dog, or washing dishes.

When learning is tied to familiar activities, it helps your child develop and practice new skills in a meaningful and consistent way. This approach makes sure learning becomes part of your child's everyday life, not just during scheduled sessions.

Think about your child's likes and interests to decide what activities will engage them best. For example, you might:

- Leave two rattles within reaching distance and let them grab their favorite.
- Use a toy phone to help them “talk” to you or other family members.
- Help them climb up and go down a slide.

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While your child is doing these activities, you and the provider support them as they build new skills, learn new things, and explore how their own actions make things happen.

Talk with the Birth to 3 Program if you would like more information about receiving services in natural environments. ❖

Birth to 3 Program Family Experience survey: Share your story to help us improve

As families transition out of the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program, we want to hear about your experiences. That's why we send out the Birth to 3 Program Family Experience Survey. It's a chance for you to share how the program has helped your child and family grow, and for us to make improvements that benefit future families.

What is the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program Family Experience survey?

The Family Experience survey is sent to families within one month after they leave the Birth to 3 Program. It's sent by mail and email, making it easy to share your thoughts and feedback. Through the survey, families can tell us how the program helped them:

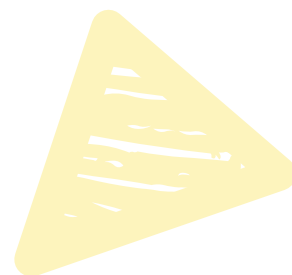
- Understand their rights
- Communicate their child's needs
- Support their child's development and learning

What do families say?

Families have shared that the Birth to 3 Program does an excellent job of:

- Listening and respecting family choices
- Building strong, supportive relationships with families

However, we've also learned that we can do more to help families understand their child's rights and how to help their child get along with others. Your feedback will help us improve in these areas.



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Why is this survey important?

We conduct this survey because we are required to gather feedback for federal reporting, which helps fund the Birth to 3 Program. But more importantly, your answers help us find ways to improve the program. We use your input to:

- Create family-friendly materials
- Work with counties to increase families' knowledge of their rights and resources

How can you help?

To make sure your voice is heard, here's what you can do:

- Ensure your address and email are up to date when transitioning out of the program.
- Complete the Birth to 3 Program Family Experience survey when it is sent to you.

By filling out the survey, you're helping us make sure the Birth to 3 Program continues to provide the best support for children and families across Wisconsin. Thank you for helping us improve and grow! ❖

The Wisconsin Sound Beginnings program can help children with hearing loss

Even before babies are born, they are learning about the world through their senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. If a child has hearing loss, it can affect their ability to communicate and form relationships with others. Getting support early can help.

What is the Wisconsin Sound Beginnings program?

Wisconsin Sound Beginnings (WSB) is a Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) program that helps babies and toddlers who have hearing loss. WSB makes sure newborns' hearing is tested, usually before they leave the hospital. If the baby or toddler has permanent hearing loss, they are eligible for the Birth to 3 Program.

WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?

Hearing loss is when a person is unable to hear sound partly or completely in one or both ears. It is also called a "hearing difference."

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The WSB team will work with the Birth to 3 Program team to support you and your child. The WSB team helps you:

- Understand your child's hearing.
- Learn ways to boost their development.
- Encourage communication and healthy relationships.

If you are interested, the program may also be able to connect you with others who have personal experience with hearing loss. This includes young adults with hearing loss and other families who have children with hearing loss.

Have questions about Wisconsin Sound Beginnings?

For more information about the WSB program, visit dhs.wi.gov/newbornscreening/hearing.htm.

If you want to talk to someone about the WSB program, please get in touch with the following contacts:

- For questions about services provided with your Birth to 3 Program team, contact Chris Kometer at kometercl24@uww.edu or 262-472-1008.
- For questions about parent-to-parent support, contact Connie Stevens at cstevens4@wisc.edu or 608-577-3895. ❖

Family spotlight: Hendrix's journey with the Birth to 3 Program

We are excited to share the incredible progress of Hendrix, a bright and determined 2 ½-year-old who has thrived with the help of the Birth to 3 Program.

Hendrix's story

Hendrix began his journey in the Birth to 3 Program in Shawano County at 3 months old, and since then, he has been working with both a physical therapist and a speech therapist. Through his speech therapy, Hendrix has learned to sign up to 10 words in American Sign Language (ASL). More recently, Hendrix reached a special milestone when he said "MOM!"

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent COVID and the flu. You can also help stop its spread by:

- Wearing a mask inside public buildings, on public transportation, or at crowded outdoor gatherings.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing your hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Staying home when feeling sick.
- Getting tested if you have symptoms or after close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or the flu.

For more information, please visit dhs.wi.gov/disease/respiratory.htm.

His physical therapy journey has been just as remarkable. Thanks to the dedicated support of his therapist, Hendrix has progressed from sitting and crawling to standing, walking, and now running! A highlight of his physical therapy experience was when his therapist coordinated a session with the Believe to Ski Program, giving Hendrix the opportunity to participate in an adaptive water-skiing event with the Shawano Ski Sharks.

A message from Hendrix's family

"I can't believe that my son has been able to accomplish all of this by the age of 2 ½. Our family is so grateful." ❖



Pictured: Hendrix participating in the adaptive water ski program.

The Birth to 3 Program wants your family stories and photos!

The All in for Kids newsletter is for families. We want to feature your photos and experiences for other readers to enjoy! You can share things like:

- A positive interaction with the Birth to 3 Program.
- An example of how the Birth to 3 Program has helped your family or child.
- A photo or story of an activity you did with your child.
- A photo of artwork or something else your child has made.

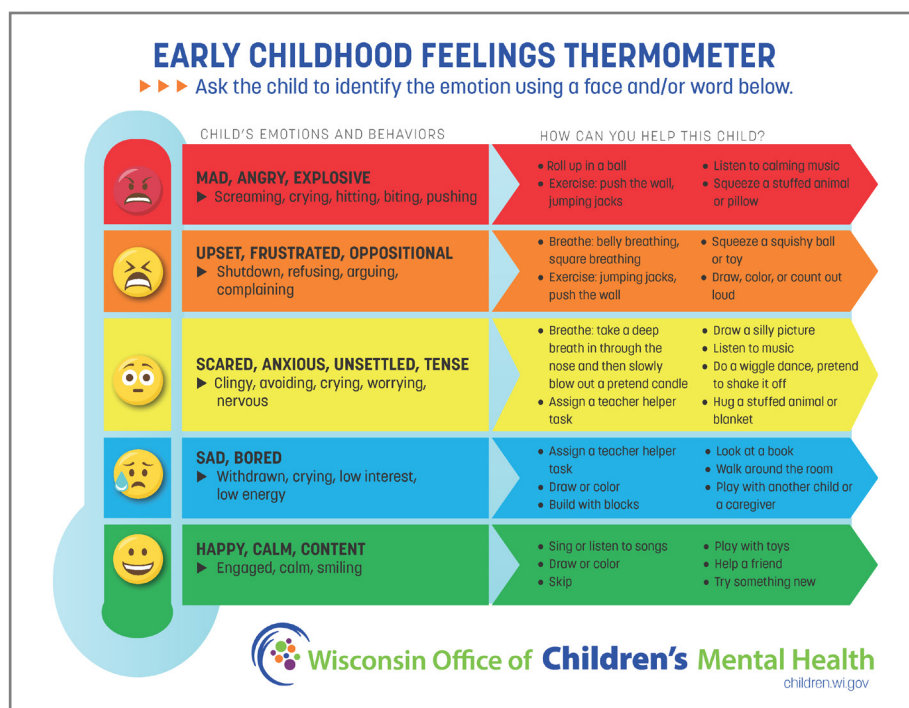
Email your family story or photo to dhsbirthto3@dhs.wisconsin.gov with "All in for Kids" in the subject line. You can also send ideas for stories you would like to see in the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you! ❖

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Early childhood feelings thermometer

The Early Childhood Feelings Thermometer is a helpful way for families to help young children begin to understand and name their feelings. You can ask your child to tell you which emotion they are feeling on the thermometer.

The thermometer features five zones. It starts at green – the calm zone – listing feelings and behaviors associated with that zone. The gauge goes up to red – the furious zone – with suggestions to help your child in the moment. Studies show that identifying an activity is another important step to self-regulation. Offering your child choices like jumping jacks, belly breathing, wiggle dancing, or drawing can make a difference in the body as well as helping to shift moods.



Visit children.wi.gov/Pages/EarlyChildhoodFeelingsThermometer.aspx to download and print the graphic and get more tips and tools for using it. ❖

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

For faster delivery, sign up to get the electronic version of this newsletter and other emails about the Birth to 3 Program. Go to dhs.wi.gov/aboutdhs/alerts.htm and scroll down and click the Birth to 3 Program Information for Families link.

Don't forget to tell your family and friends in the Birth to 3 Program to sign up as well!

Learn more about the Birth to 3 Program

The First 1,000 Days brochure gives an overview of the program:

dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/p-02928.

The Birth to 3 Program Services at a Glance guide explains

the supports and services available: dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/p-03011.

The Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers with Delays and Disabilities in Wisconsin booklet helps you understand how early intervention helps your family and child learn and grow together:

dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/p-03022.

Previous issues of the All in for Kids newsletter: Birth to 3 Program

are available online: dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/akidsb-3-2023. ❖

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All in for Kids: Birth to 3 Program is a newsletter published by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services for children and families in the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program.

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program is an early intervention program committed to serving children under the age of 3 with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. The program partners with families to assist the child's development and support the family's knowledge, skills, and abilities as they interact with and raise their child. For more information, visit dhs.wi.gov/children/index.htm.

Para leer este boletín en español, visite dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/akidsb-3-2024.

Xav nyeem tsab ntawv xov xwm no ua Lus Hmoob, mus xyuas dhs.wi.gov/library/collection/akidsb-3-2024.

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