

# EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

## Information about Fees

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **“Is there a fee for Early Intervention (EI) services?”**

*Yes. Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (the IDEA) is the federal law that provides Early Intervention Services. Part C of the IDEA allows fees to be collected from families. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health began to collect fees from families in July, 2003. The fee is based on family size and income in relation to the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG) for families enrolled in Early Intervention with a signed IFSP.*

#### **What is the “Annual Program Fee Assessment”?**

*This is the amount that each agency that has a contract with DPH to provide Early Intervention services is expected to collect from families based on data submitted by programs (family size and income) and projections by the DPH. The amount is collected by the DPH by reducing payments owed to each agency on a periodic basis. The amount is adjusted each year to reflect changes in anticipated enrollment, and socio-economic characteristics of eligible families.*

#### **How will the funds collected from the fees be used?**

*The money generated by the collection of fees will be used to support the provision of direct services in the EI system.*

#### **Who pays this fee?**

*Families with an income above 300% who have a child (or children) eligible for Early Intervention and have signed an Individualized Family Service Plan.*

#### **Who does not pay have to pay a fee?**

*Families with an income less than 300% of the FPIG, families where the EI eligible child is in foster care and families enrolled in MassHealth (e.g. MassHealth Basic, Standard, Kaleigh Mulligan, CommonHealth, or SSI) are exempt from paying a fee. This includes individuals who have MassHealth as a primary or secondary insurer. All other families will pay a fee based on the schedule outlined in response to the next question.*

#### **How much is the annual fee?**

- Families whose size and income is between 301% and 400% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines will pay an annual fee of \$60. There will be a fee of \$60 for the second child receiving EI. A family will not be charged more than \$120 annually.*
- Families whose size and income is between 401% and 550% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines will pay a fee of \$180. There will be a fee of \$180 for the second child receiving EI. A family will not be charged more than \$360 annually.*
- Families whose size and income is between 551% and 750% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines will pay a fee of \$350. There will be a fee of \$350 for the second child receiving EI. A family will not be charged more than \$700 annually.*
- Families whose size and income is above 750% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines will pay a fee of \$500. There will be a fee of \$500 for the second child receiving EI. A family will not be charged more than \$1,000 annually.*

**Note:** These are annual fees. If a child is eligible for 6 months, a family will be billed half the fee for the first 6 months. If the child continues to be eligible, the family will be billed for the remaining half and every 6 months as long as the child is eligible and receiving IFSP services.

### **How is income information collected?**

Early Intervention Programs should be collecting income information from all families of children enrolled in their program.

### **What if an individual declines to share income information?**

A family may decline to provide their income information. A family who declines to provide their income information will be assessed the highest income fee (i.e. \$500.)

### **What will be the process for families who are unable or refuse to pay the fee?**

Programs should explain to families the reason why a fee is being assessed and how the money is used. Any family who indicates an inability or refusal to pay the fee will need to complete the Statement of Annual Income. Providers will fax this form to Rob Seymour's attention @ 617-624-5927 once it has been completed and signed. IFSP services, including home visits, child groups, center visits, etc. are subject to the fee. **Families may not be denied services based on an inability to pay the fee.**

### **When is the fee collected?**

EI Programs will bill families after written consent for a completed IFSP has been obtained and again from the date of subsequent IFSP signatures. The following are some examples of how the fee will be applied:

**Julia Jones:** Family size = 5, Income = \$ 110,000 (family is between 400% and 550% of 2007 FPIG.) The IFSP was completed and signed on 9/15/07. The Jones' are responsible to pay a fee of \$180 as of September 15, 2007, or shortly thereafter. The program would bill the Jones' if subsequent IFSPs were signed.

**Kayla Smith:** Family size = 3, Income = \$55,500 (family is between 300% and 400% of 2007 FPIG.) An IFSP was completed and signed on 8/1/07 and Kayla will turn three on 1/15/08. On August 1, 2007, or shortly after, the Smiths would be responsible to pay a fee of \$30 (based on ½ of the assessed \$60 fee for 5 months of IFSP services.)

### **What if the child is determined eligible for 6 months or scheduled to be discharged in less than one year? Will families be required to pay the full fee?**

Since the period of eligibility for a child eligible based on a delay, clinical judgment, or risk factors is six (6) months, the family would be required to pay 50% of their assigned fee. If the child continues to be eligible for another 6 months, the EI program would bill families for the balance of the annual fee.

Children who are eligible based on Established Conditions will have their fee assessed and billed annually (subsequent to IFSP signature).

In cases where child will be enrolled for less than one year, there will be a pro-rated schedule for the fee:

- 0-3 full months enrollment – family pays 25% of the assigned fee.
- 4-6 full months enrollment – family pays 50% of the assigned fee.
- 7-9 full months enrollment – family pays 75% of the assigned fee.
- 10-12 full months enrollment – family pays full fee.

### **Can a family receive a refund if they pay for one year but leave EI in six months?**

The fee is not refundable.

**How is family size calculated for a single teen parent, with two children, who live at her parents' home?**

*Based on the definition of family size, you should count the child enrolled in EI, the teen parent, and the other child. The teen's parents should not be included.*

**Is SSI considered income?**

*Yes. SSI and SSDI cash benefits to another family member other than the EI eligible child will count as family income. An infant or toddler (0-3) eligible for SSI is automatically eligible for MassHealth, and therefore exempt from paying a fee. The Statement of Income form provides types of income and benefits that count toward calculating annual family income. While this form only needs to be completed if a family identifies their inability or unwillingness to pay the fee, programs may want to familiarize themselves with the categories of what would be considered family income.*

**Is the fee tax deductible?**

*Families should refer this question to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and/or Internal Revenue Service.*

**Can families use funding from a flexible spending plan to pay the fee?**

*Yes.*

**Will families who transfer from one program to another be required to pay the fee twice?**

*If a family notifies a program that they've already paid a fee within the last 12 months, the program should attempt to confirm that this has taken place by contacting the program that initially collected the fee.*

Additional questions about the fee should be directed to the Regional Specialist in your area or Rob Seymour at (617) 624-5436. The DPH will provide periodic updates to this list of questions as necessary.