

ANNUAL FEE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Annual Fee for Early Intervention Services?

The Department of Public Health (DPH) collects an Annual Fee 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 Annual Fee be used?

The money generated by the collection of the Annual Fee 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.*

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 Annual 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. 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 annually 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' annually if subsequent (annual) 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 Annual Fee for 5 months of IFSP services.)

What if the child is scheduled to be discharged in less than one year? Will they be required to pay the full fee?

In the cases where children will be enrolled 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?

There are no refunds for the Annual Fee.

What about children determined eligible based on clinical judgment?

Since the period of enrollment for children eligible under the category of clinical judgment is six (6) months, the family would be required to pay 50% of their assigned fee.

- ◆ *If at the end of the 6 month eligibility period the child is found eligible a second time based on clinical judgment (and with an approved waiver), the family would be responsible for the other 50% of the assigned fee.*
- ◆ *If at the end of the 6 month eligibility period the child is eligible for services and an IFSP was written for 12 months, the family is responsible for a full fee based the category assigned during the original eligibility period.*

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 Annual 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 Annual 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.