

What Are Family Education and Support Services?

Family Education and Support services are available to families who have a child with a developmental disability. Services are usually provided in the home and include education, support, resources, and service coordination. This program is provided at no cost to families and:

- Teaches family members skills needed to teach their child
- Provides educational information and materials
- Helps get adaptive equipment
- Helps get evaluation and therapy
- Provides other social and emotional support
- Provides help in accessing appropriate respite care
- Helps families communicate and collaborate with other agencies working with their child.

EXHIBIT 1
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What Are Intensive Family Education and Support (IFES) Services?

IFES is a Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waiver service that provides all of the above components and an enriched menu of support services for families of children (up to age 22) with very severe disabilities in order to enable them to keep their child or young adult in the family home. Additional services available under this program include things such as home modifications, habilitation, and expanded respite care. This program also has a Waiver of Deeming, which provides access to Medicaid to pay for support services and medical care.

Why Are Intensive Family Education and Support (IFES) Services Cost-Effective ?

- IFES prevents more costly alternative placements such as group homes or institutions. It reduces the cost of Special Education and supports parents in being able to keep their jobs when they can't find appropriate care for their child. Respite assists families in subsidizing the extra cost for care of a child who has a developmental disability. These strategies work to prevent crises and promote family stability! Currently in Montana, there are only five children in out-of-home placements and no children reside in institutions. This is out of almost 1,800 individuals that are served annually, which is less than one-third of one percent.
- The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) process takes into consideration the resources the family has and utilizes them as much as possible. Families contribute many natural resources to services including use of their insurance for therapies, adaptive equipment, specialized services, travel costs for medical expenses, daycare costs, respite costs, and medical interventions that far exceed that of a normal child.
- Intensive Family Education and Support provides specialized knowledge and skills related to the child's ability, teaches parents to develop their case management skills, supports parents in providing developmental skill acquisition to their child to help them reach their full potential and gain independence within the home and community, and accesses additional resources to meet the developmental, medical, and specialized service needs of the child and family.
- IFES encourages and supports young adults to live at home with their families where they will be ensured a place to live, food, and basic care. Since Montana has growing waiting lists for community services, if these young adults were not cared for at home by their families they would have nowhere else to go. The most costly service in the Developmental Disabilities system is 24-hour living care.

How Some Families May Be Effected If Income Criteria Is Placed On Intensive Family Education and Support (IFES)

Scenario #1: This family from Miles City has deep concerns about having a co-pay in order to receive IFES. Their son has received services since birth which have included physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, respite, developmental equipment, emotional support, and support coordination. This child is making slow but steady gains in his communication skills with intensive speech therapy and medical intervention. If these services were lost to the family, it would be devastating to them and to their child's future independence.

Scenario #2: This child is an almost 15 year old boy from Missoula with a diagnosis of autism. IFES case management services have been in place from referral and initial diagnosis to transition into school services. The family is now looking at high school and application to adult services for individuals with disabilities. Accessing appropriate school services information as it relates to this child's disability, financial support for counseling, speech therapy, and habilitation support for self-care skill acquisition and community access have been made possible through IFES. Respite has also been a lifeline. This child continues to have challenges with communication skills, necessitating ongoing speech therapy since the age of four. Although the family has insurance, co-pays and deductibles quickly become insurmountable costs. Counseling is not an allowable cost under their insurance. Counseling services have assisted this family to stay intact and together, even when the pressures of raising a child with so many needs became overwhelming. This family views IFES as a lifeline.

Scenario #3: This Glendive family is currently receiving IFES services. This single mother currently makes more than 200% of the poverty level. The family contributes a private insurance premium and unpaid family support when the child is not in school and the mother is at work. Currently, services make it possible to provide medical services, independent living training, and keeping the child in the least restrictive environment. Losing these services would be devastating. In order for this single mother to keep this family together and to care for her child without services, she would have to quit her job, stay home, and go on welfare.

Scenario #4: This Helena family has four children, the youngest of whom has Down Syndrome with many of the medical complications typical of this condition. The family does not qualify for any other government services. IFES has provided them with \$880 to help with leg braces, as well as assisting with co-pays for medical interventions including heart specialists, audiologists, and speech and physical therapists. They are self-employed with a private pay insurance policy with a premium equal to their house payment. Without IFES services, this child would be in danger of more costly and restrictive alternatives.