

## Learn the Early Intervention Lingo

By Judith S. Bloch, ACSW

**A**s parents, we all hope that our children's lives will only be filled with happiness and success. Some, however, have unexpected delays or developmental disabilities in their earliest years. Parents are then faced with difficult decisions. What should you do? Just watch and wait? Get professional help?



Early evaluation, identification and intervention can give your infant/toddler the extra boost she may need. Research shows that the sooner infants and toddlers get help, the greater the likelihood of good development. Under the Individuals with Education Act, parents concerned about their young child's development are entitled to have their infant/toddler evaluated at no cost to the family. On Long Island, early intervention services for children birth to three years old are arranged through the Department of Health (DOH).

Here are a few terms, abbreviations and suggestions that will help you deal with the system:

- Call the Department of Health EI office in Nassau at 516-571-3749 or in Suffolk at 631-853-3100.
- A DOH Service Coordinator will be assigned, come to your home and give you a list of evaluators.
- An evaluator of your choice can perform the evaluation in your home.
- Based on the results, your child may be eligible for services.
- If services are needed, your service coordinator will develop an Individualized Family Service Plan.
- The service plan authorizes appropriate services at home, day care site and/or center-based program.

For free information about the early intervention process, call the Nassau Early Childhood Direction Center at 516-364-8580, the Suffolk Early Childhood Direction Center at 631-863-2600 or Variety Child Learning Center, an approved DOH and State Education Department (SED) evaluation site also providing a full range of services at home and at VCLC. For information about VCLC early intervention, call Judi Zipkin, EI supervisor at 516-921-7171, Ext. 2105.



*Judith S. Bloch, ACSW, is founder and CEO of Variety Child Learning Center in Syosset.*