

# Mental Health FAQ

## The Nova Scotia Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) Program for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

July, 2015

### **Will all pre-school children with ASD receive this program?**

Services are offered to all young children (not attending school) with a diagnosis or provisional diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. To benefit from the program, families need to be able to participate for a minimum of 6 months, with the maximum benefit being obtained through participation for the duration of an intensive year. There will be some children who will be unable to access the EIBI Program. If a child receives a diagnosis within the year they must start school at age 6, they may not be able to access the program. In addition, when offered a position in the program, some parents/guardians may decide that their child and family will not participate. New funding was announced in April 2015 to ensure that the growing number of young children with a diagnosis of ASD will be offered EIBI service.

### **When my child is offered EIBI, what is expected of the family?**

Parents play an integral role in their child's treatment. Parents are expected to participate in the training provided by the program, and parents' views are central in determining what skills will be targeted for treatment. When services are offered, parents make the decision as to whether to accept or decline. To help them with the decision, they are provided with an orientation to the program. During the orientation, they learn more about the program and have the opportunity to ask questions. If families choose to participate in the EIBI program, staff will be in their home and/or their child's childcare centre for many hours each week. Parents are expected to participate in parent training and team meetings, as this is critical for their child's success in the program.

### **How long will my child have to wait to get into the program?**

The oldest children will be offered an opportunity to participate first to ensure that as many children as possible receive the program prior to starting school. Currently, children are legally required to start school during their sixth year. If a child is younger than 5 years old, they will be offered the program as opportunities become available and the oldest children have been served.

An independent evaluation of the EIBI program did not show any difference in outcomes based on the age that pre-school children started treatment. Therefore it continues to be our understanding that children will benefit from this program at younger and older pre-school ages.

### **What do I do While I'm Waiting for EIBI?**

EIBI is one service available to families with children who have a diagnosis of ASD. Some communities may have other options available to you in the interim, such as Early Intervention Program (EIP), clinical services such as occupational therapy and psychology, and Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres. We suggest that you speak with your local Early Interventionist, Speech Language Pathologist, or Mental Health team to see what services might be available in your community.

### **How much treatment time will we get in EIBI?**

The NS EIBI program has adopted a graduated service delivery model, in which a one-year period of direct service by the EIBI clinical team is followed by consultation and support. Direct services are provided over the course of the year as follows:

- Months 1 to 6: up to 15 hours per week
- Months 6 to 9: up to 10 hours per week
- Months 9 to 12: up to 6 hours per week

Following the one year of direct services, if the

child does not begin school immediately, consultation from EIBI team members is provided until the child enters school (i.e., support, problem-solving and “booster sessions” are available to parents and others working with the child). As a follow up to EIBI service, consultation is provided to the child’s elementary school for the first six months after school entry.

This service delivery model also focuses on transferring skills to those persons’ with whom the individual child interacts on a daily basis; at this time parent training is the main focus, with opportunities to train childcare centre staff, as appropriate. Support and training for parent and childcare centre staff extends the intensity of the treatment beyond the hours of direct service given by EIBI staff.

### **What if my family moves within Nova Scotia during the intensive year of EIBI?**

If your family moves to a different part of the province during your child’s intensive year in the EIBI program, a referral will be made to the EIBI team in your new area, the local Mental Health and Addictions Program, or the IWK Autism Team. Your child’s date of birth will be used to determine when they will receive treatment in the new community.

### **Can my child receive EIBI once he/she starts school?**

No, the NS EIBI program provides treatment for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who are not yet in school. If a child received services from the EIBI program as a preschooler, the EIBI team will support their transition from home to school. (For more information refer to Fact Sheets: Home to School Transition Process: Provincial Guidelines for EIBI Clinical Team Involvement and Transitioning to School : Sample Timeline and Activities for the EIBI Team).

### **Will my child be at a disadvantage if he/she does not receive EIBI at age 2 or 3?**

Our current process is to offer EIBI to the oldest preschool children first so that all the children are offered an opportunity to participate before starting school. We encourage families to access other available resources if they have not as of yet been offered EIBI. An independent evaluation of the EIBI program has not indicated differences in outcomes based on the age that children entered the program. That is, significant gains were made regardless of age. Therefore it continues to be our understanding that children will benefit from this program regardless of their pre-school age.

### **Who will be working with my child?**

Treatment is provided by a coordinated team consisting of:

- Parents
- One-to-one interventionists who provide the bulk of direct hours to the child (e.g., Autism Skills Worker, Autism Support Worker, Program Implementer)
- A Clinical Interventionist who is the clinical supervisor and lead to the team
- A Speech-Language Pathologist who consults to the team
- In some districts of the province, a PhD Psychologist who is the Clinical Leader.

Your child will be offered service through the area in which you live (IWK or on the services within the Nova Scotia Health Authority), which partners with Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres (NSH-SC). The teams are supported and offered training provincially so that all children will receive a similar service no matter where they live in the province. Parents play an integral role in their child’s treatment; they are provided with training specific to the needs of their child, and parents’ views are central in determining what skills will be targeted for treatment.