

Understanding Early Intervention Data Systems

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), through the Bureau of Early Intervention Services, serves approximately 79,000 infants, toddlers and preschool children with developmental delays and/or disabilities from birth until they reach school age. Electronic information management systems are used to maintain individual child records in the Early Intervention (EI) program.

What is Early Intervention's Data System?

PELICAN (Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks) is the name of OCDEL's information management system. It is used to manage all the records of children receiving EI services across the Commonwealth. The information that is entered into PELICAN is based on the information families provide to service coordinators or Early Intervention service providers about their child through conversation, correspondence and meetings. The PELICAN system contains:

- Demographic information about children i.e. name, address, contact information, date of birth etc.
- Evaluation information
- Information about family routines and activities so that OCDEL can match the services to the child's natural settings
- Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP)
- Transition plans

To make sure there is only one identifying number assigned to each child, the EI program will ask families to provide the child's Social Security Number (SSN). The child's SSN ensures the proper identification of a child's information, especially if it already exists in other statewide data systems. This prevents families from providing the same information repeatedly. However, providing the child's SSN is not required to receive EI services.

Why is information collected in a data system?

Child information is collected to allow for effective program management and accountability including:

- Assessing the effectiveness of EI programs and services in supporting children and families both at the state and local level
- Identifying best practices and areas for improvement at the state level
- Completing mandatory state and federal reports
- Making provider payments.

What are the benefits of an electronic data system to families?

Families will not have to give the same information repeatedly as they move through the EI program. Each child record in the information management system will be assigned one identifying number. This means that each child receiving services will have only one record in the statewide data system, regardless of how they entered the system or what services they receive.

Maintaining child records through an information management system allows the record to be accessible to his/her IFSP/IEP team. It also allows for a smooth exchange of information when a child transitions from one program to another, as the child's record may be shared quickly with a new program (with parental consent).

Data systems promote and assure:

- Quality services for children
- Program accountability to ensure all resources are used wisely and effectively
- Anticipation of changing needs
- Continuity of data across programs.

Who has access to a child's information?

Child information contained in the information management system is kept confidential and only authorized persons will have access to the records, per federal and state confidentiality, privacy, and security laws. Data in PELICAN is protected by security protocols, which require secure and encrypted servers, unique user names with strong passwords and user roles that are assigned specific security roles and access. This means that:

- Only the staff directly involved with a specific child has access to that child's information.
- State personnel have limited access to child information for the purposes of monitoring the delivery of EI services.
- Information about a child will not be shared outside a program, except as permitted by law and/or with parental consent.
- Families have the right to inspect and review EI records relating to their child and request an amendment to inaccurate information in a record. A copy of a child's record is also available to families upon request and is kept for a period of four years.
- As permitted by law, for transition purposes, a child's name, date of birth and parent contact information will be shared with the Preschool Early Intervention Program during a transition year to assist with planning purposes.

Who should families contact with questions about their child's record in these data systems?

Families should call their child's Service Coordinator, Teacher/Therapist or Preschool EI Supervisor should they have any concerns regarding the collection of child information in PELICAN. If at any time, you feel that confidentiality has been compromised; families may file a complaint with the OCDEL by call 717-346-9320.