



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Physicians

Babies Can't Wait Program



## **Babies Can't Wait Program**

### **What is Babies Can't Wait (BCW)?**

Launched in 1989, the Babies Can't Wait program is a statewide system that offers access to early intervention services to children age birth to three who may be at risk for developmental delay or disabilities and their families. BCW is the beginning of special education in Georgia under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funded by state and federal funds. It is run by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, and delivers services through 18 district offices across the state of Georgia.

### **Why does Georgia need BCW?**

Each year in Georgia, more than 10,000 babies are born with or develop conditions that affect typical growth and learning. A child's early years, from birth to age three, are a critical time to prepare for later learning—half of a child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth takes place in these first few years. This is why it's important to create a solid foundation. Since 1989, Babies Can't Wait has served thousands of Georgia children and families. In fact, in 2006, more than 11,000 children and families were served.

### **What does BCW do in Georgia?**

BCW assists and supports Georgia families in need of developmental services by: 1) promoting and coordinating early detection of developmental delays, 2) educating families and providers about the benefits of early intervention and developmental signs or milestones, 3) providing access to important family support services, 4) enabling health and child care providers to provide referrals to the program, 5) and offering early intervention resources such as speech-language pathology, audiologic services and occupational therapy, to name a few.

### **What types of early intervention services does BCW offer?**

BCW provides the following full-range of services:

- assistive technology devices and services
- audiologic services
- family training and counseling
- health services
- medical diagnostic services
- nursing services
- nutrition services
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- psychological services
- social work
- special instruction
- speech-language pathology
- vision services
- transportation



## **Program Changes to Georgia's Babies Can't Wait Program**

### **Why has BCW recently made changes to its program?**

Challenges such as higher caseloads (including a 60 percent enrollment increase), rising program costs with flat or decreased funding and increased development delay diagnoses led to the need for program changes. Recently, BCW made changes to its system to better meet these challenges and the growing needs of children at risk for developmental delay and disabilities in Georgia. Now, each child and family has a service coordinator and a dedicated team of providers that work closely together. This allows the team of providers, including physicians, and family to be better connected and part of the child's services. The improvements to the system will allow BCW to better serve children across Georgia and support successful outcomes for as many children as possible.

### **What are the changes to BCW?**

The main change is the way in which services will be coordinated. The new approach is family-centered and offers individualized care and support to each child through the Primary Service Provider model (PSP). Research has shown that this new model leads to gains in child development and improves outcomes for children and is the preferred model of the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) programs. Seven other states have already tested it and found it successful and professionals working in the new model have reported improved outcomes for children and families, greater support among colleagues, and improved efficiency as practitioners.

The Primary Service Provider model continues to be based on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and is implemented by a collaborative team of practitioners. Each child has a team of providers, including their primary care physician or pediatrician, led by a dedicated service coordinator. This service coordinator oversees all of the child and family's individualized services. That same service coordinator then ensures communication among the child's entire team of providers/physicians.

### **What do these changes mean to me as a physician?**

Through the PSP model, you will work with one service coordinator for each child in your care that is in the BCW program. Evaluation and assessment activities may be conducted jointly with other providers, saving you time. Communication among each child's provider team will be enhanced through regular team meetings and opportunities for co-visits. Varied settings or natural environments will continue to be offered for flexibility. The team approach offers collaboration of professionals for consultation, professional support and co-visitation. Reimbursement is also provided for team meetings.

### **Will the qualifications for the service providers or physicians change?**

No changes have been made in who can provide services to participants in BCW. This means that, as before, only licensed, certified or approved providers can provide services to the program. To find out more about specific qualifications, call 1-800-651-8224.

### **Will BCW be providing training on the new model?**

Training and technical assistance is available to help introduce and explain the new, evidence-based practices and functions of the Primary Service Provider model. Visit the new BCW website for more information, [www.georgiasfamiliesmatter.org](http://www.georgiasfamiliesmatter.org) or call 1-800-651-8224. Local district representatives are also always available for support, as well.



### **Will BCW be providing any resources that I can use in my office with parents?**

To support the changes and provide helpful information and resources, BCW launched a new website [www.georgiafamiliesmatter.org](http://www.georgiafamiliesmatter.org). A section of the web site is dedicated to information for you specifically under the "Physician Providers Resources" button on the main home page and can be accessed 24/7. In this section, you will find new materials that can be downloaded and printed or ordered at no charge. These include:

- brochure entitled "A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years," which features a milestone chart for parents
- posters that outline developmental milestones that can be used in your office
- flyers that can be used in waiting rooms or offices
- wallet cards with BCW contact information that can be handed to parents, left in waiting rooms or left at checkout windows

You may also call 1-800-229-2038 to access all of these resources. There are also individualized sections for families and child care providers on the web site, so you may also want to refer them to [www.georgiafamiliesmatter.com](http://www.georgiafamiliesmatter.com), too.

### **Will reimbursement for my services change?**

Currently reimbursement practices will remain the same, except that the new provider team meetings will be reimbursable. BCW understands that third-party reimbursement issues continue to exist and DHR is working to make the process and third-party payors understand the need for timely and fair payment.

## **Referring to Babies Can't Wait in Georgia**

### **Are referral services changing?**

Referral procedures and services are not changing. To refer a child to BCW, call 1-800-229-2038 or provide this number to the parent to call. A Children's 1<sup>st</sup> operator will assist the caller.

### **Who is eligible for services?**

A child under the age of 36 months who is a Georgia resident that:

1. Has a diagnosed medical condition such as down syndrome, spina bifida, autism, blindness, deafness, or other medical conditions that will result in a developmental delay or
2. Shows significant delays in development such as talking or walking

### **How do I refer a child?**

If you have concerns about a child's developmental milestones, contact BCW at 1-800-229-2038. You will be asked for basic information, such as the name, address and telephone number of the family, along with the reason for referral. The operators will then forward this information to the BCW coordinator nearest to the child's home.

### **How is a child's eligibility determined?**

Using standardized evaluation tools, BCW staff will evaluate your child's growth and development. BCW staff will include parents or guardians and care providers to be involved in the evaluation, if requested.