



OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER
2021

Help Me Grow Early Intervention Newsletter

Serving Geauga County Children Birth To Age 3 With Developmental Disabilities



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EI PROGRAM UPDATE

The Geauga County Early Intervention program will be continuing a hybrid model of service delivery. This hybrid model is a mix of some services being delivered virtually (Zoom) and some being delivered in-person. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your Service Coordinator or Meredith Myers, Early Intervention Manager: mmyers@geaugadd.org; (440) 729 - 5250 x1530.

We are happy to be getting back out in the community and providing inclusive activities for everyone in Geauga County, birth through age 3. Be on the look out for our **Fun Friday's with Friends**, which will be replacing our sensory days! The GCBDD, is pushing for inclusion & integration so our clients are able to **LIVE, LEARN, & EARN** within our community!

IMPORTANT SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

Gauga Early Intervention will be merging with Geauga County Board of Developmental Disabilities/Metzenbaum Center on social media. Below are the updated links & QR Codes. Make sure you are following us for the most up-to-date information on community activities being offered by us!



[@Gaugadd](https://www.facebook.com/Gaugadd)



[@Gaugadd](https://www.instagram.com/Gaugadd)



WHAT ARE PRE-WRITING SKILLS & WHY DO CHILDREN NEED THEM?

Karla Faso MS, OTR/L, GCBDD
From: Pocket OT

Babies are born with hands that are curled up and only reflexively grasp their caregiver's finger. Through practice and play they quickly learn that their actions cause their toy to light up or their body to move around in space. Their hands become stronger and fine motor (small muscle) skills become more refined. Of course, we would not give a baby a pencil and ask him/her to write in cursive! The use of crayons comes through practice holding more interesting items to baby, like food or their bottle. Then comes big and chunky items like pegs, and eventually we give crayons for scribbling on paper. It's important to give babies lots of sensory and movement experiences to help build their muscles and make connections within their brains. Let them pick up all kinds of items so they can explore their surroundings. This helps children to build fine motor skills in preparation for handwriting, buttoning, zipping, holding onto finger foods, and holding on to small items. However, a young toddler isn't ready to tie shoes just yet! So, how can you work on these skills? Here are some ideas:

ENCOURAGE TOYS THAT HAVE LIGHTS & SOUNDS

For young toddlers, it's important that their actions cause something fun to occur. When they press a button, there's music or a sound. Toddlers quickly realize that THEY made that happen! This is a huge confidence booster.

ENCOURAGE STRING BEADS

Encourage stringing beads. This is a fun activity that works on using BOTH hands together. One hand is the 'helper' hand that holds the string and the other picks up the beads.

PLAY WITH SMALLER TOYS (BE CAREFUL ABOUT CHOKING RISKS)

BINGO is a fun game. Most discount stores sell small fun-themed erasers, use them as BINGO makers, or drop them into an empty water bottle. Try using puzzles with small handles on them. Give them containers to open and close for practice using small hand muscles.

AS YOUR CHILD GROWS AND DEVELOPS:

Try finger painting with pudding or substitute painting with a Q-tip instead of a larger paintbrush. This gives the child something to hold that will begin to build up the tripod grasp commonly used for writing. Try breaking crayons in half to give kids a smaller area to hold. This will naturally cause their little hands to use a more mature grasp (grip) pattern.

FINALLY NEVER FORCE HANDWRITING

Kids learn best through fun games and activities they enjoy and prefer. Handwriting is often a weak area for kids with special needs due to muscle weakness, sensory processing trouble, visual skill issues, and with their thinking (cognitive) skills. When we are weak in an area, it tends to become an activity that's NOT preferred. This is the reason why we want to work on hand strengthening activities before writing.

Babies and toddlers are watching as you are scribbling your "to do" list....WATCH OUT.....they may grab that pencil from you and start scribbling themselves! Have Fun!



LANGUAGE THROUGH ARTS & CRAFTS

Ashley Bruno, MA, CCC-SLP, GCBDD

Use these fun activities for speech therapy lessons that work on building vocabulary and using descriptive words. Arts & craft activities are also a good opportunity to work on following and giving directions.

IF YOUR CHILD LOVES BAKING:

Look for leaf-shaped cookie cutters. Describe the colors of the sprinkles on the cookies. Remember to repeat, repeat, repeat! Encourage your child to think of his/her own descriptive words. Ask him/her which color icing you should use on your cookie.

IF YOUR CHILD LOVES OUTDOORS:

Take him/her on a nature walk and collect items like leaves, pine cones, etc. Describe the brittleness of the fall leaves. Talk about the different sizes and colors. Choose 2 different leaves and explain what is the same about them and how they are different. Build piles with the leaves, small piles, big piles, high piles, etc. Talk about the piles using different concepts and descriptive words. Afterward, have your child glue his/her favorite leaves and other items to construction paper to make a colorful fall collage.

IF YOUR CHILD LOVES HAND ON ACTIVITIES:


Go to a pumpkin patch (or grocery store) and buy a pumpkin to carve. Talk about the qualities of the pumpkin you want to purchase - big, small, round, orange, etc. Talk about the features of the pumpkins you see. Carving the pumpkin: Give directions on how to carve a pumpkin. For example, first we will mark the lid then we will cut it, etc. Direct your child to color a picture of a pumpkin orange, green, and one other color of their choice. Then ask him/her to tell you which colors you should use on your picture. Brush glue on the surface and sprinkle the pumpkin seeds onto the pumpkin shapes.





FIRST SHOES: THE WHEN & WHY


Danielle Skrabec, MS, PT, GCBDD



One question I often get as a pediatric physical therapist is when shoes should be introduced to their child?

The general rule of thumb I follow is there is no need to place shoes on your typically developing child unless they are leaving the home or walking outdoors. Barefoot is almost always best because it helps to develop the small muscles of the feet. Try this at home...stand on one foot...do you feel your foot start to wobble and wiggle? Those are the muscles we want your child to strengthen, which helps with their overall balance and arch development!

HOWEVER, THERE ARE CERTAIN CASES WHEN I RECOMMEND SHOES TO BE INTRODUCED EARLY:

1. If a child is walking on their toes.
 2. If they are not progressing to walking after several months of cruising.
 3. If they are hesitant to bear weight and pull to stand by around 12 months.
- 



In these cases, shoes could add ankle stability and protect the feet.

So what shoes should you buy if the time is right?

Look for a sturdy heel cup, good traction, a Velcro strap to tighten, and a soft flexible sole. Try to avoid anything slip on such as crocs, natives, or flip flops. Also, children's feet sweat TWICE as much as ours, so breathable is best!





Promoting Language Development Through Songs/Rhymes

Polly Meil, Developmental Specialist, GCBDD

Gabby Ball, M.Ed., Developmental Specialist, GCBDD

Interactive rhymes and songs promote language development! Repeating the short rhymes or songs will help your child remember the corresponding actions and words. You can pause throughout the rhyme or song to prompt your child to say the next word and/or do the corresponding action.

Five Little Pumpkins

Five little pumpkins sitting on the gate.

(Hold up 5 fingers)

The first one said, "Oh, my it's getting late."

(Hold up your thumb)

The second one said, "There are witched in the air."

(Hold up your index finger)

The third one said, "But I don't care."

(Hold up your middle finger)

The fourth on said, "Let's run and run and run."

(Hold up your ring finger)

The fifth on said, "I'm ready for some fun."

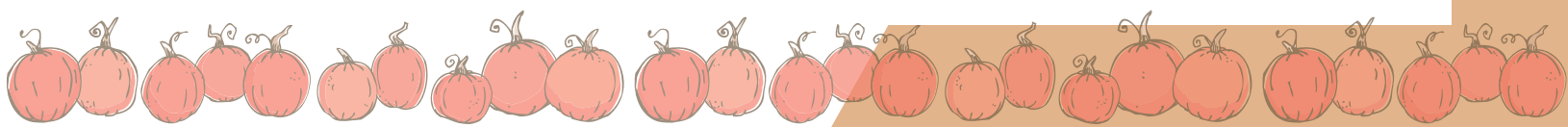
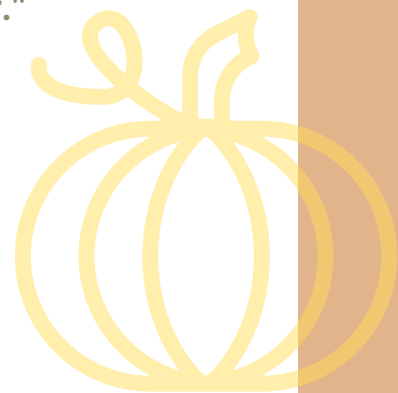
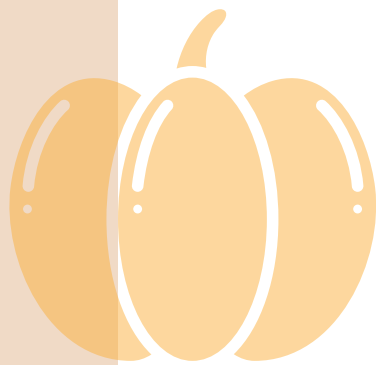
(Hold up your pinky)

Ooooooo! Went the wind, and out went the light.

(Blow through your hands, then clap)

And the five like pumpkins rolled out of sight!

(Roll your hand behind your back)





MUSIC CORNER

Carol Colombo, Music Therapist, GCBDD

Thanksgiving is right around the corner. Here's a song to teach your kiddos using their fingers. It can be chanted as you hide fingers behind your back and then show them each finger by wiggling it in front of them. Try to add some suspense by truly not knowing where they are and have kids point or touch your hand. Start with your thumb for Daddy and make your way down to your pinky for baby finger and end with all your fingers for the family. Have fun!

Daddy turkey, Daddy turkey, where are you?
Here I am, here I am, how do you do?

Mommy turkey, Mommy turkey, where are you?
Here I am, here I am, how do you do?

Sister turkey, Sister turkey, where are you?
Here I am, here I am, how do you do?

Brother turkey, Brother turkey, where are you?
Here I am, here I am, how do you do?

Baby turkey, Baby turkey, where are you?
Here I am, here I am, how do you do?

Turkey family, Turkey family, where are you?
Here we are, here we are, **Happy Turkey Day to YOU!**

Movin' with Music and Mini Music are being offered in-person at The Metzenbaum Center in Chesterland. For more information please contact Carol Colombo at ccolombo@geaugadd.org

Zoom music is available for any family in Help Me Grow. Everyone is welcome to join in LIVE every Wednesday at 9:30 am on our Facebook page: [Geauga County Board of Developmental Disabilities/Metzenbaum Center](https://www.facebook.com/GeaugaCountyBoardofDevelopmentalDisabilities/MetzenbaumCenter)



CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD OR PATIENT?

CONCERNED

About NAS/NOWS?

ACT EARLY AND REFER TO OHIO EARLY INTERVENTION



WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR BABY HAS NAS/NOWS?

In Ohio, a baby who has a confirmed diagnosis of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) or Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS) is automatically eligible for Early Intervention.

Early Intervention works with families with children birth to age 3 who have NAS/NOWS so they have the best possible start in life. Early Intervention professionals support your family to identify strengths and needs and address concerns as early as possible, with services right where you live, play, and spend your day.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT?

If your baby has been diagnosed with NAS/NOWS, you or your healthcare provider can refer to Early Intervention right away. The process is simple.

TO MAKE A REFERRAL

Contact **1-800-755-GROW** or visit www.OhioEarlyIntervention.org.



REMEMBER, ACT EARLY
to make sure your child has the best possible start in life.



Department of
Developmental Disabilities



CONCERNED

About Lead Exposure?

ACT EARLY AND REFER TO OHIO EARLY INTERVENTION



EVEN A SMALL AMOUNT OF LEAD IS DANGEROUS TO A CHILD. Children under the age of 3 are at the greatest risk of lead poisoning because:

- Their brains and bodies are developing quickly,
- They absorb lead more easily than adults, and
- They are more likely to be crawling on floors and putting their hands and other objects in their mouths that have come into contact with lead dust.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR CHILD HAS AN ELEVATED BLOOD LEAD LEVEL (EBLL)?

If your child's blood lead level is 5 mcg/dL or higher, your child is automatically eligible for Early Intervention. Ohio Early Intervention (EI) works with families with children birth to age 3 who have elevated blood lead levels so they can have the best possible start in life. Early Intervention professionals work with you and your child to identify strengths and needs and address concerns as early as possible, with services right where you live, play, and spend your day.

TO MAKE A REFERRAL

Contact **1-800-755-GROW** or visit www.OhioEarlyIntervention.org.



REMEMBER, ACT EARLY
to make sure your child has the best possible start in life.



Department of
Developmental Disabilities



EARLY CHILDHOOD SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

The Early Childhood Subcommittee meeting will be held Thursday, October 7, 2021 via Zoom at 10:00 am (Meeting ID: 899 0619 3419 - Password: 230885 - [Meeting Link](#)). The ECS is an advisory group of Geauga Family First Council. Membership is comprised of various community agencies, representatives, and parents who partner together to share ideas, experiences, and expertise in the area of early childhood development. The focus of the group is to gather input regarding direction, planning & success for the Geauga County Help Me Grow program. We encourage Help Me Grow parents to join us to share feedback about services they are receiving and/or gaps in services they might be experiencing. We value your opinions and your time is valuable to us and will send you a \$25 gift card for attending the meeting. Please contact your Service Coordinator if you have any questions.

Join Us!



Your Early Intervention Support Team



Brad Welch

Help Me Grow Contract
Manager
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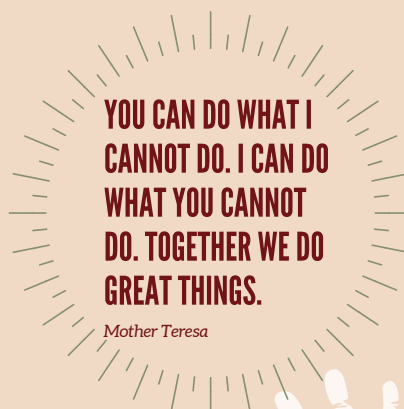
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INFANTSEE



**NO-COST EYE
ASSESSMENTS
FOR INFANTS
6-12 MONTHS**

The American Optometric Association recommends scheduling your baby's first eye exam around six months of age.

Dr. Graley, 14894 N State Road in Middlefield is a provider for the InfantSEE program and works with children of all ages. She prefers to start seeing children between 6 months-1 year old. Remember you can get that first visit for free if your child is 1 year or younger. Make your appointment now, Call 440.632.9277 More information and full list of providers; Visit: InfantSEE.org

LAKE-GEAUGA UNITED HEAD START INC.



FREE Preschool for children ages 3-5. Eligibility is based on family income. Please CALL 440.636.5387



Michelle Frygier
Geauga County Parent Mentor
mfrygier@escwr.org
Free assistance for parents needing guidance when transitioning from an IFSP to an IEP.

STARTING POINT



Need Help Finding Child Care? Try Starting Point's FREE child care referral line for information on child/early education options! Serving Lake, Cuyahoga, Geauga & Ashtabula counties. Call us at: 800.880.0971 Or visit us online at: www.starting-point.org.

PARENT'S RIGHTS IN EARLY INTERVENTION



To file a complaint about your child's early intervention services please contact: The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Early Intervention via: Phone: 614.466.6879 Email: ei@dodd.ohio.gov Mail: Ohio Dept. of DD Early Intervention 30 East Broad Street, 12th Fl. Columbus, OH 43215

STABLE ACCOUNT Please visit stableaccount.com or call 1.800.439.1653 for more information

Savings and investment solutions for people with disabilities. Stable account allows you to save or invest up to \$14,000 per year without losing government benefits like Medicaid or SSI.

GEAUGA WIC PROGRAM



Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a nutrition education program that provides nutritious foods to pregnant women, women who just had a baby, breastfeeding moms & infants & children up to age 5. Visit lcghd.org/WIC/ for more information on income eligibility. Please call to schedule an appointment at 440.636.5331.

BIRTHRIGHT GEAUGA COUNTY



440.286.9711
24 Hour Line:
1.800.550.49
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Birthright serves those in Geauga & surrounding counties by providing tangible, compassionate support for pregnant women and families with small children. In addition to being a source for non-judgmental support, we can provide free pregnancy testing, maternity and children's clothing and other material needs for children. Open Monday- Friday - 11:00 - 4:00

SYSTEM OF PAYMENTS



Payment choices for additional Early Intervention (EI) services determined by child's IFSP. Additional EI services may include Audiology, assistive technology devices or other needed services to meet IFSP outcomes as determined by your child's EI team. For more information contact your child's Service Coordinator.