What is SoonerStart

SoonerStart is Oklahoma’s Early Intervention Program. The program is for children from birth to 36 months of age with developmental delays or who have physical or mental conditions which will most likely cause a delay.

SoonerStart is a voluntary program provided at no cost to the family.
SoonerStart History

- Birth Mandate State
- 1986: Oklahoma developed a needs survey to document service needs for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
SoonerStart History (continued)

• 1987: Gubernatorial Executive Order

Declaring:

• The Department of Education as the lead agency.

• Establishment of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Childhood.
Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

The ICC is composed of:

- Parents of children with disabilities,
- Representatives from the Departments of:
ICC (continued)

• Membership was developed in accordance with P.L. 99-457.

• The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) was designated to staff/maintain the ICC.

• The purpose of the ICC is to advise and assist the lead agency (SDE).
SoonerStart History (continued)

1989: Governor Belman signed into law, House Bill 1618, which created the Oklahoma Early Intervention Act
Oklahoma Early Intervention Act

- This legislation commits the state to planning and implementing a:

  1. Statewide
  2. Coordinated
  3. Multidisciplinary
  4. Interagency program of early intervention services.
The intent of this act was to enhance:

- the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities,
- their potential for independent living,
- And the capacity of families to meet their child’s special needs.
SoonerStart History (continued)

1990: Pilot services - A shift from school services. During this time Oklahoma’s schools were given a choice of continuing to provide services or transferring services to the State operated system.
SoonerStart History (continued)

- P.L. 99-457 was subsequently reauthorized by P.L. 102-199, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1991
SoonerStart History (continued)

1991: Statewide implementation
SoonerStart’s Mission Statement

The Mission of the SoonerStart Early Intervention Program is to enhance the abilities of Oklahoma infant and toddlers with delays and disabilities by strengthening the capacity of their families to support their development through an individualized, comprehensive, coordinated system of services and supports that are family-centered and transdisciplinary, occur in natural life context, and are based on evidence and current best practices in early intervention.
SoonerStart’s Core Values and Beliefs

Evidence Based Practices:
Supports and intervention activities are based on the best research evidence integrated with clinical experience and family values.
Core Values (continued)

Culturally Competent and Family Centered

• Every family is unique.
• People first philosophy.
• The family is the expert and constant in their child’s life.
• Primary service provider approach.
• Parent / Professional Collaboration - the parent is a critical team member.
• Family to Family support and networking.
Core Values (continued)

Meaningful Participation in Natural Life Context

• Everyday experiences, events and places are sources of children’s learning opportunities, promoting and enhancing behavioral and developmental competencies.

• Opportunities for learning occur as part of both routine and spontaneous life activities.

• SoonerStart’s role is to assist families and care providers to support or increase the participation in existing or desired activity settings by using family and community life as sources of learning opportunities.
Core Values (continued)

Learner-Focused Intervention

- The parents or care providers are the primary learners in Early Intervention. As a result, children benefit from enhanced interactions with those care providers.

- Using learner-focused intervention to coach the care providers, SoonerStart staff listen to the parent’s desires for their child and family, assist the family and care providers in identifying strategies to meet their desired outcomes and provide technical assistance.
SoonerStart Eligibility Requirements

According to the Oklahoma Early Intervention Act a child is eligible if:

1. Between the ages of birth to 36 months
2. Exhibit a delay in their developmental age compared to their chronological age of fifty percent (50%) in one or twenty-five percent (25%) in two or more of the following developmental areas: adaptive, cognitive, communication, physical or social emotional development, or
SoonerStart Eligibility Requirements (continued)

3. Have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a delay.
What are their qualifications

• Service providers meet the highest requirements in the state applicable to their specific profession or discipline.
Who provides SoonerStart services?

- Service providers will include a resource coordinator and may include audiologist, child development specialist, nurses, nutritionist, occupational or physical therapists, speech language pathologist, etc…
Where are services provided?

- Services are available in all 77 counties.
- Service providers are typically based out of Community Health Departments (26 sites).