

# To Be What We Wish to Create: A Summer at Pernet Family Health Service

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Pernet Family Health Service is a non-profit home-health agency working with individuals and families to provide family-centered health and social services that lead to long-term strengthening and enhancement of family and community life. Its programs include:



- Early Intervention

- Fathers and Family Program

- Parent Aides and Young Parent Support

- Parenting Classes

- Youth Services and Play Groups

- Food and Infant Supplies Pantry

- ESL classes

- Maternal and Child Nursing

## Spotlight on Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) is a system of services that helps babies and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. In Massachusetts, a child up to three years of age and his/her family may be eligible for EI services if the child:

- Is not reaching age-appropriate milestones in one or more areas of development.
- Is diagnosed with a physical, emotional, or cognitive condition that may result in a developmental delay.
- Is at risk for developmental delay due to various biological and/or environmental factors.

### Who provides EI services?

Services are provided by a professional and dedicated EI team, which should include all members of the child's family. Depending on the child's needs, an EI team may also include a developmental specialist, physical therapist, speech-language pathologist, psychologist, occupational therapist, social worker, nurse, or other specialty service providers.

### Where and how are services provided?

An EI team serves the child and family in what are called "natural settings" – for example, at home, at a daycare, in community play groups, or even libraries. Providing services in natural settings supports children in their everyday activities with family and friends.

## Engaging the Sibling: Outlining Future Efforts at Pernet

**Needs Assessment:** Many families in Pernet's Early Intervention program have difficulty completing early intervention (EI) visits with enough frequency to truly benefit their children. In addition, there are few efforts to engage the community of typically developing siblings whose families are served by Pernet's EI program.

**Future Efforts:** The sibling of a child enrolled in early intervention can play a consistent and pivotal role in ensuring that milestones are met for their sibling during the hours outside of EI visits. We will harness the sibling as a tool by creating materials that will help them understand both the mission of EI and the ways in which they can help to make EI effective for their brothers and sisters. Next summer, with the help of the UMASS student placed at Pernet, we will pilot several new initiatives to engage siblings, which might include:

- ◆ A **storybook** that explains, in age-appropriate language, developmental and social delays and how all children contribute to diversity in our communities. These would be piloted for families and in daycare settings.
- ◆ A **sticker board** that helps brothers and sisters track their sibling's progress towards achieving their intervention goals in order to engage siblings in the early intervention experience.
- ◆ Hosting regular **sibling events** throughout the summer during which siblings will have the opportunity to make connections with other siblings while completing fun activities!

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