

**\$1.6 Million Grant Will Increase Access to  
Early Intervention for Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities**  
*New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, in partnership with  
the Fund for Public Health in NYC, receives support from Robin Hood for  
enhancement to Early Intervention Program for babies and toddlers*

**October 21, 2021** —The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is undertaking a project to help increase the number of families that benefit from NYC’s Early Intervention Program (EI) for young children with signs of developmental delays, made possible with funding of more than \$1.6 million from Robin Hood. EI connects families whose children have, or are at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities to comprehensive services that can significantly impact their developmental trajectory and outcomes as they grow older. The new initiative looks to improve the number of referrals to EI, follow-up and retention of families in EI, and communication between referring healthcare providers and families.

By expanding the use of an electronic health record referral process in four partner healthcare institutions across NYC, the Health Department expects to make it easier and quicker to refer children to EI. The project also supports a novel mechanism for partner institutions to monitor a child’s progress through the referral process and address any barriers that emerge. The Fund for Public Health in New York City (FPHNYC) applied for and received the funding for this initiative from Robin Hood’s Fund for Early Learning (FUEL) on behalf of the Health Department’s Division of Family and Child Health, Bureau of Early Intervention.

NYC’s EI program assists and empowers families by providing services to young children as soon as their developmental delay or disability is recognized. Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act calls for early intervention services to be provided to children under 3 years old with developmental delays or a medical condition likely to lead to a developmental delay. The earlier an infant or toddler is referred to EI, the greater the likelihood that a service plan designed specifically for the child and family will have a positive impact on the child’s developmental trajectory.

“The first three years of a child’s life are critical for healthy brain development, and early intervention can help infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays make important progress in cognitive, physical, language, and social development,” **said Emily Ashton, the Health Department’s Acting Deputy Commissioner for Family and Child Health.** “Making the referral process for early intervention more seamless will allow us to connect more families with vital services that support their child’s development.”

“Cognitive development begins in the womb and the first three years of a child’s life is a clear determinant of a child’s capacity to engage, learn and thrive throughout early childhood and adolescence. Providing easier, more direct access to early intervention services for families whose children have, or are at risk, for developmental delays or disabilities pay long-term dividends for parents, children, and school systems alike,” **said Kelvin Chan, managing director of Early Childhood Programs at Robin Hood.** “Wrap-around services like EI, result in kids who are happier, healthier, engaged, and more likely to finish high school prepared for a postsecondary education or a career.”

“From a public health perspective, it’s both essential to provide services that vulnerable families need – like early intervention – and to continually look to improve access to those services,” said **Sara Gardner, Executive Director, FPHNYC**. “That’s why Robin Hood’s ongoing partnership with the City of New York is so transformative: they understand the importance of investing in innovative projects that can improve the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.”

**For more information on the Health Department’s Early Intervention Program, visit:**  
[www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/early-intervention.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/early-intervention.page) or call 311.

**The Fund for Public Health in New York City** facilitates partnerships between the public and private sector to develop, test, and launch new public health initiatives that advance the health of all New Yorkers. For more information visit: [fphnyc.org](http://fphnyc.org)

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