

Fund Early Intervention 2026
H-7127 FY27 EOHHS Budget
[H-7586](#) (Cotter) & [S-2785](#) (Valverde)



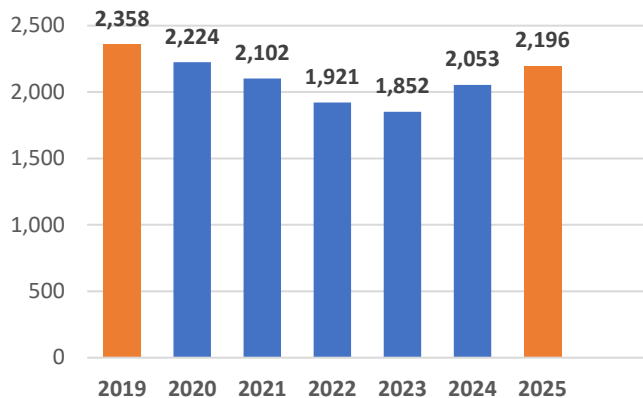
Right from the Start

Rhode Island’s Early Intervention program provides special education services to infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities. Early Intervention is required under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.

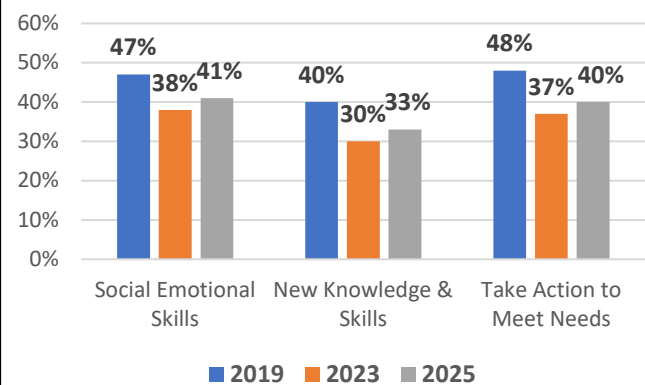
Researchers have found that **about one-third of infants and toddlers who received high-quality Early Intervention services no longer had a developmental delay, disability, or special education need** in kindergarten.

Rhode Island’s Early Intervention program experienced major financial and staffing problems from 2020-2024 following 20 years of frozen Medicaid rates. In 2021, the state established a waiting list, limiting access for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Since then, the General Assembly enacted two rate increases and allocated temporary *ARPA* funding to Early Intervention. As of 2025, the Rhode Island Early Intervention program **enrollment and child outcomes have rebounded but remain below 2019 levels.** The state’s Early Intervention program still has a federal designation of “needs assistance.” As of January 2026, there were 134 infants and toddlers who had been waiting more than 45 days for services. The average wait time was 102.3 days for this group of children.

RI Early Intervention Enrollment, June 30th Census, 2019-2025



Child Outcomes, RI Early Intervention, 2019, 2023, 2025



Invest in Early Intervention 2026:

- 1) Governor McKee’s FY27 budget proposal** includes a Medicaid rate increase for Early Intervention at 50% of the OHIC recommended rate increase.
- 2) Rep. Cotter’s and Sen. Valverde’s bill** proposes a Medicaid rate increase at 100% of the OHIC recommended rate increase, the first scheduled rate increase based on a new statutory rate review. The bill also requires the state to continue updating the [Early Intervention data dashboard](#) with information about the waiting list and staff vacancies and updates the Early Intervention statute with current information.