(12.1) What is Part C ("Early Intervention") of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

Part C governs the federal "early intervention" program for infants and toddlers, aged birth through two years. The purpose of Part C is:

1. to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, to minimize their potential for developmental delay and to recognize the significant brain development that occurs during a child’s 3 years of life;
2. to reduce educational costs by minimizing the need for special education and related services after infants and toddlers with disabilities reach school age;
3. to maximize their potential for independent living;
4. to enhance the ability of families to meet their infants and toddlers’ special needs; and
5. to enhance the capacity of public agencies and service providers to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of “historically underrepresented populations” (especially minority, low-income, inner-city and rural and infants and toddlers in foster care).

[20 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 1431(a).]

In order to accomplish this purpose, the federal government provides financial assistance to the states: “to develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system that provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.” [20 U.S.C. Sec. 1431(b)(1).]