

Issue Brief – Early Intervention/Baby Watch

HEALTH – COMMUNITY AND FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES

DOH IB 08-09

SUMMARY

Baby Watch is Utah's network of services for children ages birth to three with developmental delays or disabilities. The program provides early identification and developmental services for families of eligible infants and toddlers.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this program is to assure adequate funding for federally mandated services to qualified children. The objective of this building block request is to address both the caseload growth and the rate per child of the Babywatch / Early Intervention Program.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

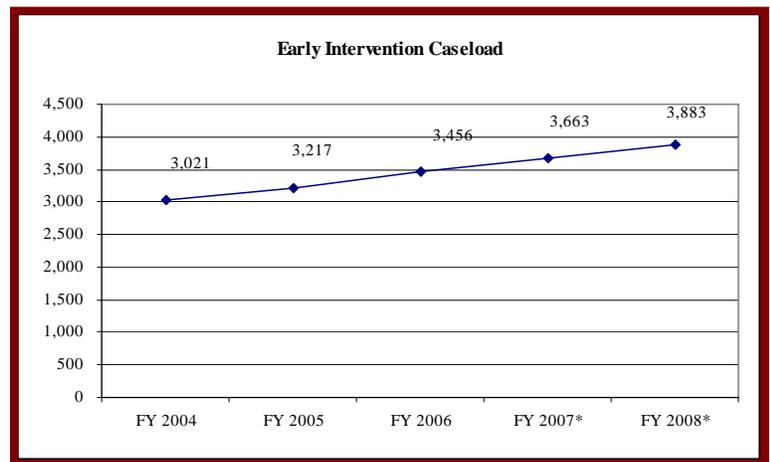
The Baby Watch/Early Intervention Program provides a variety of services, including:

- A full assessment of a child's current health and development status.
- Service coordination among providers, programs and agencies.
- Strategies to address family concerns, priorities, & resources.
- Developmental services: occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech language therapy, etc.

These services are provided through the coordinated effort of professionals and parents. Places where services are provided include Baby Watch centers, home, and community settings such as child care. There are 15 contracted agencies providing services statewide.

Caseload Growth

An average monthly program caseload of 3,456 children were seen during FY 2006. This is 239 more children or a 7.43 percent increase over the previous year. It is estimated that during FY 2007 that the program will experience a six percent increase in total number of infants and toddlers served. This increase is the result of the typical population growth and the new federal requirement that all substantiated cases of abuse and neglect of children birth to three be referred to the Baby Watch program. Services are provided in the homes of the children. Transportation costs have an impact on this program. No adjustments have been made in the past for rising fuel or other program costs.



Program Funding

Funding for the program is approximately half State General Fund. Those children that qualify for Medicaid can use these funds for the program. There is a sliding fee scale for parent payments. Currently, the Medicaid rate per child is \$5,238 while the State funded children are \$3,946.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Recommendation

The Analyst recommends that the Subcommittee approve an ongoing funding increase of \$1,659,200 General Fund to support the estimated caseload growth in the Baby Watch / Early Intervention Program.

A rate per child increase of \$621,400 is also recommended. This group has not received child rate increases in the past. Additionally, fuel and other program costs have not been funded. Consideration may be given to add this item to the priority list.

The total for both items is \$2,280,600 General Fund.