When services are available early and on time, young children with developmental delays or disabilities are more likely to develop to their full potential, and the cost is significantly less than waiting until children reach school age.

When young children (ages birth – 5 years old) are not developing typically, federal law mandates that appropriate, timely services be available to help them reach their full potential.

Infants and toddlers (ages birth through 2) are served by the Early Intervention program and preschoolers (ages 3 – 5) are served by the Preschool Special Education program. By intervening early in a child’s life, when brain development is most rapid, the need for later special education services is reduced.

**Average Annual Spending Per Child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Intervention</th>
<th>School Age Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$9,029</td>
<td>$31,423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IN MONROE COUNTY:** Approximately 5,000 children benefit from Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education (PSE) every year.

**WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?**

**Provider shortage:**
The number of agency and individual providers of EI and PSE services such as speech, physical and occupational therapy, teachers of the deaf and blind, feeding specialists and other professionals is on the decline, largely because reimbursement rates are too low to cover expenses. As a result, wait lists for children in need are the longest they have ever been.

**System complexity:** Lack of coordination makes the programs expensive and confusing for families and providers.
- At age 3, a child transitions from EI to PSE, and parents must learn to navigate a new system.
- Therapists and teachers seeking payment face a complex billing system that requires too much time for successful reimbursement.
- Some reimbursement rates are set by the state and others are set by counties, making it difficult to set consistent policies and rates.

**WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

1. Increase funding for the evaluators, therapists and teachers who provide these critical services by raising reimbursement rates set by New York State.
2. Improve the system serving these vulnerable young children by aligning and better coordinating the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs.

**WHAT CAN I DO?**

- **Speak up!** Tell your friends, neighbors and—most importantly—your NYS legislator about this crisis, and what action is needed to help kids get the services they need, when they need them.
- **Join the “Kids Can’t Wait” campaign** at [www.thechildrensagenda.org](http://www.thechildrensagenda.org). Once you’re a member, you’ll be informed about opportunities to take action.