



# Mild Moderate Programming FAQ's

\*For Families

Big PLANS is recognized as a “school” although we do not function as a typical school. For example, our “class-list” of children does NOT inhabit a classroom in a single “brick and mortar” facility. Instead, our “classroom” environments take place within various communities in Calgary and area, and we are considered an Independent School because our vision is to provide enrichment services to children with mild-moderate (MM), severe (PUF) and English Language Learners (ELL) needs. Our services are layered over top of the preschool programming they receive where they are currently registered.

**Did You Know?** *Almost 29% of children entering kindergarten in Alberta are experiencing difficulty in one or more of the five key areas of development (Physical health, Social skills, Emotional maturity, Language and Thinking, Communication). Please see the published study where data was collected exemplifying this. \*\*<http://www.ecmap.ca/project/about.html>*

**What programs are in place to help children who are experiencing developmental delays?** Early Intervention agencies like Big PLANS are licensed and funded by Alberta Education for the purpose of identifying and helping children who are demonstrating delays. **Big PLANS is recognized as a “school” though we do not function as a typical school.** We have certificated teachers as well as teams of contracted therapists who can screen and assess your child to know exactly how their skills are developing as compared to other same-aged children across the country.

## As parents, what do we have to do?

- You will need to sign the consent form if you would like your child screened. If your child is identified as having needs, a therapist will review the results of the assessment and offer therapy services.
- You will need to provide a copy of your child’s birth certificate.
- You are invited and strongly encouraged to participate in therapy sessions when they occur.
- You will need to review the IPP together with the Early Learning Specialist (Certificated Teacher).

**What is the difference between screening and assessments?** A developmental screening is a short test that reveals if a child has acquired basic skills or if there are delays. Children participate in 15-minute screenings with an SLP and/or an OT. Children who demonstrate potential delays and require further assessment to ensure this is true are identified through the screening. An assessment is a process of gathering information about a child. The various assessments our therapists use are ‘standardized’, meaning they are created by having thousands of children take the test before it is published. Based on these results, formulas are created to break scores into average, below average, above average, etc. as well as percentiles. When a child is tested using a standardized assessment their scores can be compared to a very large sample of same-aged peers.

**Why do you need a copy of my child's birth certificate?** Your child's birth certificate serves as proof of their age. Early Intervention Programs are only available to children of a certain age and we need to ensure we are providing services to those who meet the age-eligibility criteria. Your child's birth certificate also serves to verify legal name, which is required by Alberta Education at the time of Alberta Student Number (ASN) creation.

**Is there a cost?** No, this program is funded by Alberta Education.

**Can I access early intervention services through both Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education at the same time?** No. Both Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education are funded through the Alberta Provincial Government. Alberta Health Services will refer assessed preschool and kindergarten-aged children that qualify for funding to Early Intervention Agencies in order for them to receive programming in a timely manner at their educational settings.

**When will therapy start?** Therapy typically begins in Mid-November.

**How often will it be?** Typically therapy services will occur twice a month but the frequency and amount of therapy are directly related to the severity of the child's needs.

**How many sessions will my child receive?** The number of sessions depends on how quickly the child achieves their goals. If the child achieves their goals quickly, therapy is discontinued and the child graduates from the program. A child receives a maximum of 18 sessions when receiving MM funding.

**What happens when my sessions are used up?** When allotted therapy hours are used up the child is released from the program.

**What happens if my child's goals are not achieved and they have used up their therapy hours?** Recommendations are made for your child to continue therapy in kindergarten or for your family to seek out private therapy.

**Where does therapy happen?** Therapy can occur at your home, at the school (before or after class - we will NOT remove a child from class), or at the therapist's office. Your therapist can discuss this with you based on scheduling and transportation.

**Do I have to be there for therapy?** You are invited and strongly encouraged to participate in therapy sessions when they occur.

**What is the time commitment?** Sessions usually occur twice per month for one hour each time. You will be given ideas for fun activities to practice at home with your child.

**What is the IPP and why does my child need one?** Our agency is funded for enrichment services, which means that all of the children receiving funding are required to have an Individual Program Plan (IPP). This IPP lays out the specific 'enrichment' activities that will be conducted with your child. These activities are written in the form of goals and strategies.

**What benefits are there to participating in the program?**

- All children are expected to have acquired specific foundational skills that they are using independently when they enter kindergarten. Early Intervention ensures these strong skills are present.

**Truthfully, there are no disadvantages when a child receives funding; however, you should be aware that:**

- Your child will have a code (code 30) on their cumulative file for preschool and kindergarten. The code has no bearing past kindergarten.
- Your child will have an IPP on file from preschool through to kindergarten.
- Some private schools may require an explanation from parents about WHY the child needed additional help or why they have an IPP on file.

**Will my child's code follow them for the rest of their life?** No. The code has no bearing past kindergarten.

**Do I need to tell the Kindergarten teacher about this intervention work?** No. If your child has been released from the program, you are not required to mention their participation in the program. If ongoing help is recommended, it is beneficial to speak with your kindergarten teacher about ongoing services your child may be eligible for.

**Why is my child being observed in the classroom?** Classroom observations serve as the means for the certificated teacher to ensure that the enrichment goals being worked on in therapy, are functionally assisting the child in their classroom experience. For example, does working on speech sound clarity help my child to have meaningful conversations when they are interacting with their peers?

**Will Big PLANS follow my child into kindergarten?** Big PLANS is only able to continue services into private kindergarten settings.

**At what age does my child have to go to kindergarten?** A child who turns four years old on or before March 1st is eligible to attend kindergarten in the fall of that same calendar year. However, a child who is not yet five years old on September 1st has the option of waiting until the following year before entering kindergarten.

**What is the risk of me not moving forward with services this year and just waiting to see how my child does?** You may be placing your child in a position of 'risk' if you choose not to access Early Intervention. The expectations for children entering kindergarten are high. Early intervention places all children on an equal play-field when it comes to foundational skills required for successful learning in kindergarten.