

Your Child's Move from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education Services

As your toddler approaches his or her third birthday, early intervention practitioners will work with you to plan your child's transition from early intervention and, if potentially eligible, to preschool special education services. This transition involves key decisions about your child's future. By communicating and collaborating with both the early intervention program staff and the preschool program staff, you can share information you need to actively participate in the transition planning process, share your concerns and preferences, and help your child adjust to the new setting and services.

Learning Guide: Participating in the Transition Process

- Ask to talk to other families whose children have made the transition from early intervention to preschool special education services. Find out about their experiences and what worked well.
- Attend the transition planning conferences and meetings with early intervention and school district staff. Ask questions that will help you understand the transition process. How are preschool services different from early intervention services? The school district will give you a copy of your legal rights as a parent. Ask questions if anything about your legal rights is unclear.
- Transition meetings provide an opportunity to learn about your child's evaluation process. Ask about what happens when your child is evaluated and how the school district will determine if your child is eligible for preschool special education. Find out how you can participate, share your ideas, and support your child during assessments.
- During the evaluation be sure to share your hopes and concerns for your child. Discuss what you would like to see your child doing and the supports you think your child may need.
- Visit different preschool programs in your community. Learn about the classroom routines, activities, and schedules. Ask about how supports and interventions would be provided for your child. Find out what skills would be expected of your child in the new setting.
- If your child is found eligible for preschool special education, you will participate in a meeting to develop your child's Individual Education Program (IEP). You are part of the IEP team. You can ask the early intervention program staff and others to participate in the IEP meeting. Share information about your child's capabilities, interests, and developmental needs and suggest goals for your child. Ask how the school district staff will work with your child to address their goals. Share your preferences for the preschool placement you think will be best for your child.
- Once the IEP is developed and services are ready to begin in the selected program, prepare your child for the new setting. Visit the new classroom with your child so he or she can meet the teachers, experience the classroom schedule, try out activities, and interact with other children. Identify and discuss with the teachers situations you think your child will be able to negotiate easily and situations where he or she might have difficulty. Work with the program staff to consider and plan for the supports your child will need in the preschool setting.
- Once your child starts preschool, continue to communicate with the preschool staff to support your child's adjustment to the preschool programs.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Video courtesy of Utah Parent Center

You'll know the practice is working if ...

- Your child interacts with adults, peers, and activities in the new classroom
- Your child adjusts to the schedule and expectations of the new setting
- Your child learns new things as part of participation in the new setting

A Quick Peek

Luis and Carla are making plans for their daughter Lily's entry into preschool. The early intervention and school district staff provide information about preschool programs in the community. The parents visit various programs, learning about the classrooms and their approaches. Having visited the programs before the IEP meeting helps them participate in discussions about the options and make informed placement decisions. During the IEP meeting, Luis and Carla discuss their preference for one of the preschool programs. Everyone agrees that this program is a setting where Lily's strengths will be acknowledged and her developmental goals will be addressed. The school district will provide services and supports there. Lily's twin sister also will be a student in this preschool. Arrangements are made for the girls to visit the preschool together while their parents talk with the staff about Lily's abilities and needs. Luis and Carla are confident they can help Lily transition to preschool special education services and this new preschool program.



Among the online resources providing more information about the transition from early intervention to preschool special education services are a [downloadable handout for families from the Pacer Center](#).