

Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education Services

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Video courtesy of CONNECT

Early intervention and preschool special education practitioners can support parents and caregivers during the transition to preschool special education by listening to parents' concerns and preferences, answering their questions, coordinating cross-agency communication, and providing parents clear and accurate information. Practitioners need to be sure parents and family members are informed and prepared to participate as decision-makers in the transition process.

Learning Guide: Practitioners support parent preparation, participation, and decision-making

- Start conversations about transitioning out of the early intervention program well in advance of any required conference where decisions might need to be made. Be sure parents have opportunities to share their hopes, goals, and concerns about preschool special education services. Provide information about and arrange visits to community programs or services the family is considering. Develop a transition plan with parents that lays out steps and services based on their interests in community programs and future services, including preschool special education services.
- Ask the school district for information about preschool special education services, parent rights, the evaluation process and Individual Education Programs (IEP) prior to the transition conference. This information will help support their preparation for actively engaging with the school staff. Ask parents and other caregivers to generate a list of any questions they have for the school staff. Offer to share their questions in advance with their permission.
- Invite a representative from the school district to attend the transition conference. This person should know about both the school system and the preschool special education program policies and requirements.
- During the transition conference, ask the school district staff member to explain parental rights, the evaluation process, the important role parents play in providing information about their child's abilities, and the IEP process. Encourage parents to share their ideas and to ask questions. Make sure parents know they can invite anyone they wish to the IEP meeting, including early intervention staff.
- Early intervention and school district staff, with parental consent, coordinate the transfer of relevant information, such as the IFSP and recent assessments. Ask parents how they would like to participate in evaluation assessments and observations of their child.
- Continue to support family participation and decision-making in the IEP process so that an IEP is developed and agreed to by age three. Make sure IEP team members listen and respond to parent preferences, concerns, and desired goals for their child. Be respectful of parent comments and questions. After the IEP is developed, help parents make arrangements to visit settings where services will occur and to meet the staff.

A Quick Peek

Sarah, a service coordinator, has known the Ramirez family for two years and has been talking to them about the upcoming transition out of early intervention services. They have told Sarah that after reading the written information Sarah shared, they understand the legal requirements for their daughter Lily's transition to preschool special education and are comfortable about expressing any concerns or wishes they have. Sarah has worked to develop a good relationship with Emily, the Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, and the Special Education Director, so that she can share relevant information with them about Lily's needs and abilities. Emily met with Lily's parents during the transition conference and encouraged them to ask questions and share their wishes and concerns about Lily and future school services. Emily and Sarah attended the evaluation and the IEP meeting to support the Ramirez family's participation and decisions.



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

- Parents have the information about transition processes that they need to participate actively in transition meetings and discussions.
- Parents communicate their wishes and concerns for their child with early intervention and school staff.
- Parents make informed decisions about their child's services and supports.

Related online resources from the ECTA Center include:

- [Team Decisions for Preschool Special Education Services: Guiding Questions](#)
- [Key Practices Underlying the IEP Process: Supporting Family Participation, Inclusive Practices, and Positive Outcomes for Preschool Children with Disabilities](#)