

Leaving the Birth to 3 Program-- Transition at Age 3 8/30/10

The Birth to 3 Program, as part of its services to your family, will be assisting you with transitioning out of the program. For some families, they leave the Birth to 3 Program due to moving; for others it is because of the progress their child has made in their development. For most families, it is because their child is close to turning three and, in Wisconsin, the Birth to 3 Program's services end at the age of three. Transition in each of these cases is similar—the Birth to 3 Program will help you plan for the transition which includes discussing your needs, connecting you with resources, and helping you and your child prepare for the change.

When a child is going to leave the Birth to 3 Program due to turning three, there are several common steps that will occur to help prepare you and your child for the transition. These common steps are 1. transition planning; 2. Transition Planning Conference; and 3. LEA Notification/referral.

Transition Planning:

Transition planning will be a discussion, often during an IFSP meeting, to discuss possible program options at age three. This discussion, which occurs when your child is 2 years old, will outline the various choices of future services that you can pursue for your child and family. Documentation on the transition page of the IFSP outlines the steps to be taken by you and the Birth to 3 Program staff to support you and your child with the transition out of the Birth to 3 Program. Many things will be discussed during this transition planning. One discussion point is whether or not your child is potentially eligible for the Local Educational Agency (LEA or school district) services. This decision helps determine next steps in you and your child's transition out of the Birth to 3 Program and into the school system. The decision about whether or not your child is potentially eligible for LEA services is documented on the transition page of the IFSP.

Transition Planning Conference:

If your child is determined potentially eligible for LEA services, when your child is between 2 years, 3 months and 2 years, 9 months of age, the Birth to 3 Program will, with your approval, schedule a Transition Planning Conference (TPC). The purpose of the TPC is for you to meet with the LEA, and other agencies, to learn what these programs have to offer and how to transition to their services smoothly. The TPC informs the LEA that your child is potentially eligible for LEA services; it is considered a "referral." (See LEA Notification Step 2 below.)

LEA Notification/referral:

Many children benefit from ongoing services after age three. Your child might be eligible for special education services through your local school district. To ensure children don't have a lapse in services and families can have any questions answered about the LEA option at age 3, the Birth to 3 Program is required to share with your local LEA your child's name, date of birth, and parent contact information. This process is called LEA Notification. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) views transition between two educational agencies as one

way to support a seamless and smooth transition for children and families. IDEA Part C section 637 (a)(9)(A)(ii)(I), therefore, requires all Birth to 3 Programs to share this basic information with the local school district prior to your child turning three, unless you, the parent, “opt out” of the LEA Notification process by your child’s age of 27 months. (See Opt Out section below.)

LEA Notification in Wisconsin consists of two steps:

STEP 1: At 2 years, 3 months of age, LEA Notification is sent to your local school district to let them know your child is close to turning three. It will include limited contact information about your child (child’s name, date of birth and parent contact information).

STEP 2: If your child is determined potentially eligible for LEA services, by 2 years, 9 months of age (at least 90 days prior to your child’s third birthday), LEA Notification is again sent to your local school district to let them know your child is potentially eligible for special education services. In Wisconsin, we call this second step of LEA Notification a “referral.” It will include only your child’s limited contact information. If your family chooses to hold a TPC, the TPC will be considered the “referral”. When a “referral” is sent to the LEA, the LEA will begin discussing with you the process of evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services at age three.

You will be asked by the Birth to 3 Program to provide “*consent to release information*” when your child is determined potentially eligible for LEA services and the “referral” will be sent. This consent allows the Birth to 3 Program to share additional information with the LEA. At your discretion, the “*consent to release information*” will include any or all of the following information:

- your child’s area(s) of delay
- services your child received while in the Birth to 3 program
- where the Birth to 3 program provided those services
- exit data on your child’s outcomes
- The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Progress Reports/Plan of Care
- Evaluation Reports from:
 - The Speech Language Therapist
 - The Occupational Therapist
 - The Physical Therapist
 - Special Education Teacher
 - Others as indicated

When you provide “*consent to release information*” it helps the LEA plan for your child’s possible arrival. The school staff will have an opportunity to “get to know” your child by reviewing the reports and IFSPs and reading about the progress your child has made while in the Birth to 3 program in order to provide better programming for your child. This information may also help determine eligibility for special education services. If you give consent to share this information, your child may not need to have additional evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.

If your child is not determined to be potentially eligible for LEA services, the second step of LEA Notification is not completed by the Birth to 3 Program. Please note: school personnel and other professionals who believe a child may be a child with a disability have an ongoing legal responsibility to refer the child to the LEA to determine if the child needs special education. If a referral is initiated by the LEA, you will receive a letter from the LEA around your child's third birthday stating the LEA is initiating a referral for your child to be evaluated for special education services. When you receive this letter, you have options on how to respond:

- You may have some questions and want to talk with the LEA about their services for children aged three to five years old. If so, please contact the LEA contact on the letter;
- You may agree that your child should be evaluated for eligibility of special education services. Please note that a form will be sent to you by the LEA asking for consent to evaluate your child for special education services or letting you know that additional assessments are not needed;
- You may determine that you are not interested in an evaluation for your child through the LEA to determine eligibility for special education services. If so, when you receive the form requesting consent to evaluate your child, tell the LEA that you refuse to give your consent to evaluate your child for special education services. If the LEA does not request your consent to perform additional assessments to determine whether or not your child is a child with a disability in need of preschool special education services, but you do not want your child to receive special education services, you may refuse to give your consent for these services once the child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and proposed placement developed by the school district.

Opt Out

“Opt Out” is a decision families can make that tells the Birth to 3 Program ***not*** to send LEA Notification, as described above, to the LEA. If a family chooses to “opt out” of the LEA Notification process, then LEA Notification is not sent to the LEA. A TPC is also not provided, since holding a TPC is the same as sending LEA Notification/referral to the LEA.

To “opt out” of both steps of LEA Notification, a parent must indicate in writing on the “Opting Out of LEA Notification” form by the time their child is 2 years, 3 months of age (or 27 months) that they do not want LEA Notification sent to the LEA. If the “Opting Out of LEA Notification” form is not signed and received at the county Birth to 3 Program by the time a child is 2 years, 3 months, LEA Notification will be sent to the LEA. If a family had chosen to “opt out” and want to reverse their decision about opting out of LEA Notification, they may do so, in order to allow a “referral” to the LEA to occur.

Please see the Opt Out Policy attached for more information.