

Family Involvement in Transition Planning

(FACTS/LRE grants permission for photocopying of this handout.)

This list identifies ways that families have been involved in transition planning. Check the items that you are interested in and then talk with someone in the Birth to 3 Program about these items.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about the transition process and plans that involve my child and family.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in meetings as a member of the planning team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in evaluating my child's strengths and needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review my child's file and assessment records.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help select goals that staff will use to prepare my child for transition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work on goals to prepare my child and family for upcoming changes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help identify my child's educational needs in the new program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help identify my child's needs for special services in the new program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help identify and evaluate the range of options that are available for preschool programs and services including: (a) school-based programs, (b) community-based programs, and (c) child care or day care programs.

Please list other ways that you would like to be involved in transition.

Preparing for Transition

Preparing Your Child for Transition

One of the objectives of early intervention is to prepare your child for the move to the next program. In order to do this, the transition team should identify transition-related goals that will be placed on the individualized family service plan (IFSP) at least three months before your child's third birthday. Some of these goals will focus on preparing your child for the move to a new setting. Other goals might address your family's concerns, resources, and priorities for transition.

Specific transition goals may range from working with your child on some of the readiness skills that were placed on the IFSP to meeting with other parents who have already completed the transition from early intervention. [Below](#) are some general strategies that families have used to prepare their children for transition. It also has space for you to check strategies that you might use.

Strategies that Families Have Used to Prepare Their Child for Preschool

	Talk to my child about going to a new setting.
	Take my child to meet the new program staff and see the new classroom.
	Read stories and look at books with my child.
	Encourage my child to play alone for short periods of time.
	Teach my child self-care skills.
	Teach my child to follow simple directions.
	Give my child experience with a variety of toys and materials and teach my child how to use toys and materials correctly.
	Give my child experience being around other young children.
	Teach my child to care for own belongings (for example, how to put toys away, hang coat).
	Encourage my child to ask for help when needed.
	Encourage my child to communicate with others (children may do this with gestures, spoken language, sign language, etc.).
	Encourage my child to make simple choices (for example, ask my child if she wants to wear pink or white socks, what toys he would like to play with, or if she wants cookies or applesauce for snack).

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Practice short separations from my child, by leaving him in the care of a responsible adult.

Please list other ways you might prepare your child for transition.

Preparing Your Family for Transition

Transition can be an exciting time, one that can provide new opportunities for your child and family. It also can be a time of great change and adjustment. Your child or family may need to adjust to new teachers and therapists, new children, different schedules and daily routines, new classroom activities, and new options for parent involvement. You may find that both you and your child experience separation anxiety. It may be hard to "let go" of the staff and services in the early intervention program and to learn to trust and communicate with new staff. Your family may need to learn about the public school system, your child's and family's rights, new evaluations and technical terms, and how to advocate for your child when necessary.

All children and families make adjustments during transition. The amount of time required for these adjustments varies across children, families, and programs. It is normal to experience some uncertainty and with that, some stress during transition. This is true for all families and children who start a new program, regardless of whether the child has special needs. Families who participate in transition planning report reduced stress. Some strategies that families have used to prepare for transition are listed below.

- **Plan ahead for transition.** Don't wait until the last minute to begin thinking about transition. Give yourself and your family time to make decisions and adjust to the changes that will occur.
- **Realize that stress, uncertainty, and separation anxiety are normal emotions.** Many, if not all, parents experience these feelings when their child starts preschool or kindergarten.
- **Ask questions throughout the transition process.** You have a right to obtain information about transition and to be involved in the transition planning.
- **Attend transition planning meetings.** Share information with the team about your child and your family, your resources, your priorities, and any concerns that you may have.
- **Talk with other families who have made the transition from early intervention to preschool programs.**
- **Talk with members of your family about transition and some of the changes that may occur.**
- **Learn about your child's and family's rights, how to interact with new program staff, and how to advocate for your child in the new program.**
- **Visit different programs to help select the program that best meets your child's needs.**
- Try to identify aspects of the new program that may be different or difficult for your child and give your child experiences with these aspects before the new program begins. For example, if you think that your child will have trouble working or playing alone, you might give your child an opportunity to play alone for short periods of time each day.

Participating as a Member of the Transition Team

An important step in planning for transition is deciding who will be involved and who will serve as members of the transition team. The transition team will work together to develop a transition plan, amend the IFSP, and prepare for the change in programs. The transition team will include family members, staff from the early intervention program, and staff from the potential preschool programs. If your child attends or receives services from more than one early intervention program or will attend or receive services from more than one preschool program, staff from each of these programs should participate on the transition team. This list contains spaces in which to write the names and telephone numbers of transition team members.

From Your Family		
Name	Relationship to Child	Telephone Number

From the Current Programs and Services		
Name	Role	Telephone Number

From the Potential New Programs and Services		
Name	Role	Telephone Number

Others		
Name	Role	Telephone Number

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Being Part of the Transition Team

Building a relationship takes time, effort, trust, mutual respect, and communication. Here are some additional tips for working on a team that may help both families and professionals work together as they plan for transition.

- **Treat each member of the team as an equal.** Remember that each team member brings different expertise, values, and resources to the meeting.
- **Seek information.** It is okay to say "I don't know," "I don't understand," or to ask for assistance or for more information.
- **Share information that will help team members understand your concerns and priorities.** Do not be afraid to state your opinion, answer questions, and discuss your priorities.
- **Share thoughts and feelings about your child's abilities.**
- **Be honest, clear, and direct about your child's needs and your family's concerns, resources, and priorities.**
- **Remember that differences of opinion are okay and are to be expected.** Team meetings are an opportunity to listen to all points of view and to make decisions using negotiation and problem solving.
- **Try to avoid letting past negative experiences influence your current behavior and interactions with members of the team.**
- **Listen to each member of the team.** Try to identify the reasons for their needs or recommendations.
- **Invite other family members or friends who can offer support and advice to attend transition team meetings.**
- **Be sure you are satisfied with decisions that are made before agreeing to them.** If you are not satisfied, be sure to talk to the rest of the team about it.
- **Select a level of team involvement that you are comfortable with and that fits your schedule.**
- **Generate multiple suggestions to address each issue discussed and identify the pros and cons of all suggestions before selecting one.**
- **Carry through on tasks that you have agreed to do.**

During transition team meetings, information will be shared among all team members. Important decisions about special services, goals, and the new program will be made. Many families are uncomfortable talking with professionals during these team meetings. Some families may hesitate to ask questions, make suggestions, share information, or express their opinions to professionals. If interacting with professionals is difficult for your family, you might develop a list of questions or topics that are important to you and take this written list with you. You also might practice asking questions, sharing information, or expressing opinions with other family members, friends, or a professional with whom you feel comfortable prior to team meetings.

Consider talking to a staff member about your questions and concerns before group meetings. This person can support you when you talk during meetings or can act as your representative, bringing up issues or questions. This person can be sure that there is an opportunity for you to talk by asking if you have information to share or questions to ask. This will provide you with the opportunity to communicate with others without having to start the interaction. Finally, you may schedule a follow-up meeting with members of the team in order to ask questions or provide additional information.

How many meetings will be held to plan a child's and family's transition? It depends, of course, on your availability and your child's needs, as well as the availability of program staff. We recommend that the first meeting to exchange information and plan the transition process occurs six months before the third birthday. At this meeting you will write the transition plan for the IFSP, discuss what new evaluations may be necessary to determine your child's continued eligibility for services, and identify which agency (early intervention or school district) will conduct the evaluation.

A second meeting will be necessary prior to the transition to confirm your child's eligibility, based on the evaluations, and to identify your child's needs and the services that will be necessary to meet your child's needs. This meeting is often referred to as a *multidisciplinary staffing or conference (MDC)*. It includes service providers who are involved in the evaluations, as well as your child's current and potential future service providers. Once your child's eligibility for services is confirmed, it is important to determine specifics about these services. This is usually done during an individualized education program (IEP) meeting. During this meeting, the team develops goals and objectives and discusses the services that the child will receive. Issues to be discussed include: (a) the type of services your child is eligible to receive, (b) when services are to be provided, (c) how long services will be provided, (d) how intense the services are to be, and (e) where services will be provided. This means that your child's placement should not be determined before this meeting. The IEP meeting may be combined with the MDC or may take place at a later meeting. This varies from district to district. It is important that you discuss your preferences for combining or separating the IEP meeting from the MDC with your school district and early intervention program.
