

When I'm 3, Where Will I Be?

Family Transition Handbook



**New Jersey Early Intervention System
NJ Department of Health**

February 2013



This handbook was adapted from the Transition Handbook developed by the Illinois Early Intervention System. New Jersey appreciates the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois State Board of Education for sharing this handbook.



Names and Contact Information to Remember



Name and Title	Address	Phone/Email
NJEIS Service Coordinator:		Phone #
		Email Address
School District Contact Person:		Phone #
		Email Address
Community Preschool Contact:		Phone #
		Email Address
Community Program Contact:		Phone #
		Email Address
		Phone #
		Email Address
		Phone #
		Email Address
		Phone #
		Email Address
		Phone #
		Email Address

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Letter to Families

Dear Families:

Welcome to *When I'm 3, Where Will I Be?* This Family Transition Handbook was developed by parents and early intervention and school personnel to provide information as you approach your child's transition from early intervention services. We hope it will be useful to you and your family.

It may seem as if early intervention has just started and it is already time to talk about change. Transition from early intervention is a time of change, and change can be a challenge for all of us. Families that shared their stories and experiences in this handbook want you to know that transition can also be an exciting time as you and your family move on to new experiences, learn new things, develop new partnerships and continue to shape new hopes and dreams for your child. We hope that you will use the stories, insights, and resources shared in this handbook to better understand the transition process. The more you know about transition, the more comfortable you will feel as you and your child get ready to move beyond early intervention together.

The formal transition process begins around your child's second birthday and the IFSP meeting nearest that date; continuing until your child turns three. This handbook will take you step by step through the transition process. The supports, meetings and services that will be provided to you throughout the transition process are tailored to meet your needs.

The transition process is more than just one meeting or one document. It includes a series of transition planning activities tailored to your child and family. You will discuss options for preschool programs and services in your school district and community and how services can be individualized so your child will be successful in the new early childhood setting.

You are encouraged to contribute your ideas, participate in the complete transition process, and take advantage of all the supports and services that will be available to you.

With Warm Regards,

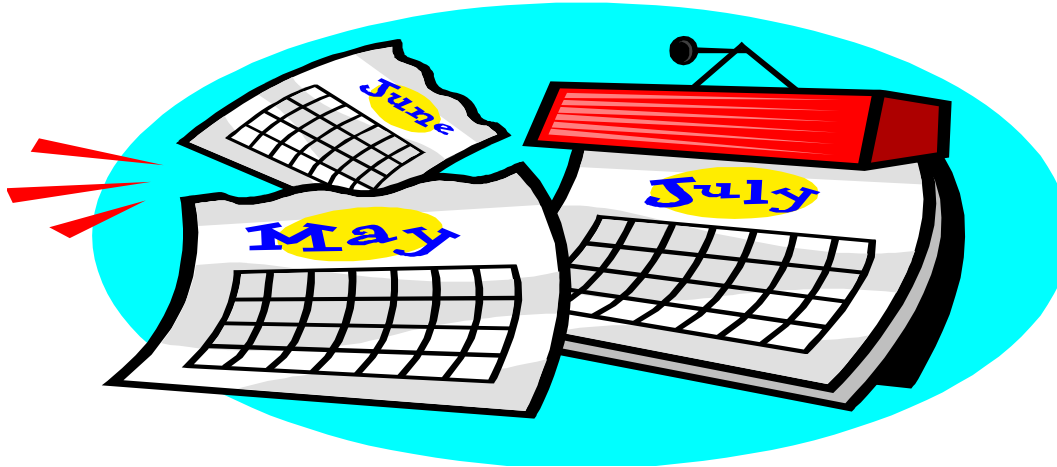
Early Intervention System, NJ Department of Health

My Child and Family as We Approach Transition

You know your child better than anyone and have information about him/her that is vital to planning for the future. The details that you have to share about what makes your family and child unique play a big part in planning activities that will address any concerns or questions you have about transition and preparing for your child's educational needs. A great way to help you organize and present your thoughts is to create a profile of your child and family. Sharing this profile with personnel in your school district or staff in a community early childhood program will help everyone understand *who* your child is and the *vision* you have for him/her.

About Our Family
1. Important people in our family:
2. Things we enjoy doing as a family:
3. How early intervention services have helped my child and our family:

About My Child	Child's Name:
1. Describe your child, including information such as place in the family, personality, likes and dislikes:	
2. Highlight areas in which your child does well, including problem-solving, communication, motor, adaptive, and social or emotional.	
3. List things that are difficult for your child to do:	
4. List supports that will help your child learn; engage in activities at home and school; and socialize with peers and adults:	
5. What are your dreams and hopes for your child:	
6. Other helpful information - List any important information, including health/medical needs, which have not been mentioned elsewhere in this profile:	



Transition at a Glance

The following information provides a quick overview of major transition activities. Each of these activities will be explained in more detail later in this handbook.

At any Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Meeting you are encouraged to talk about any transition questions, concerns and supports you need.

At the IFSP meeting closest to your child's second birthday, you and other members of the IFSP team will start planning for transition at age three and begin the process of developing and implementing transition outcomes, strategies, and activities. Your service coordinator will share information with you about the transition process, describe the variety of programs and activities that may be available after your child exits the early intervention system, and discuss procedures to prepare you and your child for changes in services. The service coordinator will also discuss with you plans to refer your child to your local school district for consideration of eligibility for preschool special education and related services unless you tell us not to refer your child ("Opt-Out").

At least ninety days (typically between 120 and 135 days) before your child's third birthday:

1. **Unless you "opt-out"** of notification in writing, early intervention will refer your child to your local school district to determine if your child is eligible for preschool special education and related services.
2. **With your approval**, a Transition Planning Conference will be held with your service coordinator and early intervention practitioner(s). Depending on the future preschool options that you are considering for your child, a representative from your local school district and/or staff from other preschool programs will also be invited.

It is never too late to refer your child to your local school district: If you refer your child to NJEIS shortly before your child's 3rd birthday; or sign the form to "opt-out" of notification and referral, and later want to explore the possibility of special education and related services for your child:

1. Send a letter to your school district that includes:
 - a. A request for an evaluation to determine your child's eligibility for special education and related services;
 - b. Child's Name;
 - c. Child's Date of Birth;
 - d. Contact information including your name, address, and telephone number;
2. Your service coordinator is available if you need assistance to send a letter to your local school district.

Within 20 days of the written notification/referral from the early intervention system, an identification/evaluation planning meeting with school district personnel must be held to review current information about your child, determine whether an evaluation is warranted, and if so, whether additional assessments are needed.

Before your child's 3rd birthday, if your child is evaluated and found eligible for preschool special education and related services you will participate, as a member of the IEP Team, in developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child.

If your child is not eligible for special education and related services, your service coordinator will help you find other opportunities for young children in your community (for example, school district early childhood programs, private preschools, Head Start, child care).



Comparing Early Intervention & Preschool Special Education

Early intervention and preschool special education and related services are both governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, there are differences between the two systems. The table below provides a brief comparison of early intervention and special education.

IDEA Components	Early Intervention System	Special Education
Governing federal laws	Part C of IDEA	Part B of IDEA
Ages	Birth to age 3	Age 3 through 21
Goal of the program	Helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability	Educating the child with a delay or disability
Evaluation	Two or more professionals from different disciplines complete a developmental evaluation in five areas of development.	A team of professionals completes an evaluation in the area(s) of suspected disability.
Service coordination	Each eligible infant or toddler is assigned a service coordinator who coordinates services and assists the family throughout their involvement in the early intervention system.	Although service coordination is not required, a case manager is assigned to each child with an IEP. The case manager is usually someone on the child's IEP team.
Type of plan	An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) documents the child and family outcomes developed by the team. IFSPs are reviewed at least every six months and rewritten annually by the IFSP team.	An Individualized Education Program (IEP) documents the child's measurable annual goals, services and program; the IEP also describes how progress will be measured. The IEP team reviews the IEP annually.
Cost of services	Families may have co-pay for some services based on an ability to pay.	Children are provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).



The Transition Process – One Step at a Time

The following presents the major steps and activities in the transition process. A checklist is provided at the end of Step 5, IEP meeting, that can be used to keep track of events and dates as you navigate through the transition process.

Step 1: Preparation

Where can you get information to help you be better prepared for Transition?

- Attend a transition workshop offered by the NJEIS Regional Family Support Coordinators and/or Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN).
- Meet or conference call with your NJEIS service coordinator, a service coordinator associate or regional Family Support Coordinator to discuss transition.

What Do You Want For Your Child at Age 3?

As you and your child get ready to transition from early intervention services, it is time to think about where your child might be at age 3. Some parents find it helpful to think about what their child's early childhood experience might look like. Each community in New Jersey offers different options for preschool-age children. A good beginning point when you start thinking of transition is to explore the options for young children in your community. Some of those options might include:

Community Programs

- Community preschools and other programs
- Faith-based preschools
- Agency-run preschools
- Head Start
- Child Care

School District Programs

- State-funded Early Childhood Programs
- Preschool Special Education

The transition period is a good time for you to begin visiting preschool programs in your community. When you visit an early childhood site, you will have an opportunity to see what various programs look like. Many parents find it helpful to picture their child as part of the group.



Here are questions to keep in mind when you visit an early childhood classroom:

- Are the children having a good time and will my child like it here?
- Are the children actively engaged with teachers, materials and other children?
- Would this be a safe, comfortable place for my child?
- Does the preschool allow and encourage full participation by children with different personalities, backgrounds and abilities?
- How will my child be supported to learn and thrive in this setting?
- Will my child receive the support needed to be successful in this preschool?
- How are families involved?
- Does the room arrangement encourage active exploration and play?
- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- How are the staff trained and supervised?
- Can I picture my child in this classroom?

Community Preschool and Program Options

If your child is eligible for preschool special education and related services, you and other members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will decide where your child will receive these services.

Whether or not your child is eligible for preschool special education and related services, visiting community programs for young children may help you decide your child's next step. The table below may be helpful in exploring community options.

Community Preschool and Program Options for My Child
This is available in our community:
Places I went:
People I talked to:

How Do I Feel About My Child's Transition?

The transition from early intervention services brings new experiences and new challenges. Each family adjusts to all of the changes in their own way and in their own time. During the transition process, you will probably experience a range of feelings. This page describes some typical feelings and some positive strategies that parents have used during their transition process.

If you are feeling	Remember
Hopeful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have good reason to feel hopeful; you are entering into a new journey with your child. Your input will help shape and guide that experience.• You will find support and encouragement as you form relationships with other parents and professionals.• You will develop positive partnerships through your experiences.
Anxious	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents are concerned when their children will be away from them for longer periods of time.• Some parents recall experiencing more anxiety than their children.• Change can be scary; change can be exciting.• You will be able to take pride in sharing new experiences with your child.• Adjusting to a new and different setting takes energy and effort.• You might find it easier to manage feelings of anxiety by focusing on your child's strengths and planning for the next step.
Less than Confident	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are an expert on your child.• The insight you have gained from personal experience is as important as the information gathered by professionals.• Your perceptions are needed to develop a complete picture of your child.• Your confidence will grow as you gain experience in supporting your child's education in the new setting.• Sharing with another parent who has been through the transition process may help you sort through what you want to do next.
Ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many parents are ready for their child to move on to preschool.• You may be seeking more independence for your child and looking for opportunities for your child to be with other children.• This handbook offers information and tools to support you as you move through transition and plan for your child's preschool years.

Step 2: Sharing Information

The goal for all children who receive early intervention services is to have a smooth and effective transition by their 3rd birthday. Transition begins early to give you and others who are or may become involved with your child and family, time to meet, share information and plan.

Starting the process early will help you:

- ★ Understand the steps of the transition process
- ★ Learn about the variety of programs and activities available in your school district and community after your child exits the early intervention system
- ★ Plan for meetings with your school district and/or community early childhood programs your child might attend
- ★ Identify what specific resources would be helpful throughout the transition process

At the IFSP meeting closest to your child's second birthday, you and other members of the IFSP team will start planning for transition at age 3. Transition outcomes, strategies and activities will be added to the IFSP.

Notification/Referral to Your School District

No later than ninety days before your child's third birthday, unless you "opt-out" of this notification, the early intervention system has a legal requirement to notify your school district that your child will shortly turn three and may be eligible for preschool special education and related services. Your child's name, date of birth, and your contact information (name, address and phone number) will be given to the school district unless you specifically request in writing that we do not share this information ("Opt-Out"). Your service coordinator will discuss this option with you and provide a form should you choose to "opt-out".

Notification also serves as a referral of your child to your school district. It begins the required process and timelines for your school district to determine whether your child meets eligibility requirements to receive preschool special education and related services.



Questions I Have About Transition

At this point, you may have questions about transition. Your service coordinator is there to help answer your questions and explain the process. You may want to keep track below of the questions you have or that come up during the process.



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Step 3: Transition Planning Conference

With your approval, your service coordinator schedules a Transition Planning Conference (TPC) no later than 90 days or earlier than 9 months before your child's 3rd birthday. The TPC will include you, your service coordinator, your EI practitioner(s), and, if you agree, a representative from your school district's Child Study Team (CST). You may want to invite other professionals or family members who know your child or representatives from community programs you might be considering. The TPC is an opportunity for you to learn about your school district and for the school district representative to learn about your child. This is not the meeting for making decisions about eligibility, services or where your child might go to school.

A Transition Planning Conference is important for every child and family; even if you are not interested in special education or if your child may not be eligible for these services. Regardless of what the next step will be after your child turns 3, the Transition Planning Conference is an opportunity for you, others who know your child well and representatives from future program options to exchange information and thoughtfully plan for your child's exit from the EI system.



Before the Transition Planning Conference

- ☐ Review your child's EI records.
- ☐ Talk to your service practitioners about your child's progress and successful strategies they used with your child and family.
- ☐ Decide if you want to share information such as medical reports, information from outside services your child received, videos or photos of your child.
- ☐ Fill out the Parent Page: Things I Want You to Know about My Child.
- ☐ Write down all of your questions and bring them with you to the TPC.

Topics to talk about at the TPC:

- Information about your child and family
- Possible services available in your community and through your school district
- Services that may be available during the summer in your community and through your school district
- Preschool special education and early childhood options in your school district
- Registration requirements for your community and/or school district programs
- Visits to early childhood classrooms in your community and school district
- The school district's referral, evaluation, and IEP process - what it looks like and when it starts
- Transportation for your child



Parent Checklist - Transition Planning Conference

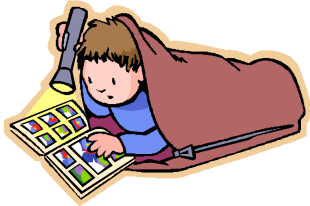
- ☐ I attended the Transition Planning Conference on:
- ☐ I put all of the important contact information on the "Names and Contact Information" page of this handbook

- ☐ Others who attended the Transition Planning Conference:

- ☐ Things I learned at the Transition Planning Conference:

- ☐ Information available to help me understand the evaluation process, Individualized Education Program (IEP) and parent's rights under special education:

- ☐ Things that will happen next and people I want to talk to:



Parent Page

Things I Want You to Know About My Child

These are things I want everyone to know about my child:

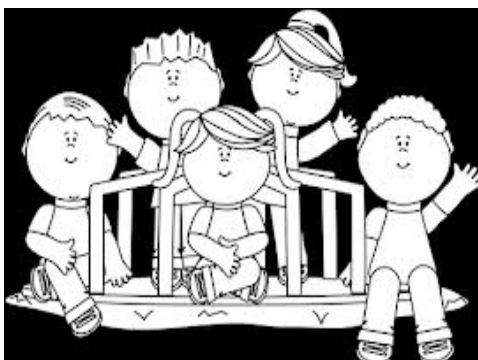
These are things I'm concerned about now:

This is how my child communicates with me and other people:

These are ways my child likes to learn new things:

This is what my child does when he or she needs help:

These are things I would like my child to learn over the next 6-12 months:



Step 4: Referral and Evaluation

Referral

Even though you and your child received services through the New Jersey Early Intervention System, it does not mean that your child will be eligible for preschool special education and related services.

If you do not opt-out of notice to the school district as described in Step 2, your service coordinator sends notification to your school district which is considered referral.

If you do opt-out, no personal information is sent and your child is not referred.

If you opt-out and decide later that you want your child referred, you need to send a letter requesting an evaluation to determine whether your child will be eligible to receive special education and related services. A sample letter is included in this handbook. Your service coordinator can help you write the letter and identify the address for the office in your local school district where this letter should be sent. A list of special education offices in local school districts is available on the NJ Department of Education, Special Education web site <http://education.state.nj.us/directory/pub.php>.

Identification/Evaluation Planning Meeting

If your child is referred, the school district will respond with an invitation to you to participate in an Identification/Evaluation Planning Meeting.

The Identification/Evaluation Planning Meeting is conducted to:

- ★ review currently available information about your child,
- ★ figure out if additional information is needed,
- ★ decide whether an evaluation is warranted, and, if so,
- ★ develop an evaluation plan if your child is potentially eligible for special education and related services

This meeting must be held within twenty (20) days after the school district receives the referral at a time and place mutually agreeable to all participants. You will meet with the CST and a teacher with knowledge about the district's programs.

A CST consists of a school psychologist, learning disabilities/teacher consultant (LD/TC), and school social worker. For children age three to five, the CST also includes a speech-language specialist.

If the CST decides that evaluation is needed, they will ask for your consent and will evaluate your child and determine whether he/she is eligible for special education and

related services. School districts cannot evaluate your child without your informed, written consent.

If your child is determined eligible, one CST member will be designated as a case manager with responsibilities, along with other IEP team members, for developing, implementing and reviewing the IEP. The case manager is also responsible for coordinating meetings with you and school staff. The case manager serves as the contact when you have questions regarding your child's special education program and services.

You will be involved in helping the school district gather needed information to help determine if your child is eligible. It is very helpful to share what you know about your child with school district staff. You know your child best. You know what your child has learned already. You know what your child likes and dislikes. You know your child's strengths and needs. The Parent Page: 'Things I Want You to Know About My Child' that you completed can be used again as a helpful planning tool for the evaluation process.

Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation process is to help members of the CST paint a picture of your child. The evaluation is individualized for your child and will be conducted by at least two members of the CST, at your home, preschool or school district. You can ask where and how your child will be evaluated.

The evaluation process brings together different types of information about your child. Your input is an important part of your child's evaluation; you will be asked to share information through an interview. Additional information will be gathered through formal tests, informal measures such as checklists or surveys, a review of records, and by observing your child in a setting appropriate for three year old children.

Informed Consent Means:

- You have been fully informed about why your consent is needed in your native (primary) language or other mode of communication.
- You understand and agree in writing to the activity that has been described to you.
- You understand that your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at anytime but revocation is not retroactive.

Source: 34 CFR 300.9

When the evaluation is completed, you will be invited to a meeting to determine whether your child is eligible for special education and related services. Using the results of the evaluation, the team will discuss whether your child is eligible for special education and related services based on one or more eligibility categories. Your team can decide to use "developmental delay" to determine eligibility.

If you disagree with the evaluation results, talk with your CST about your concerns.

You may request an independent evaluation by a qualified person who is not employed by the school district. You can also refer to the Independent Evaluation section of the *Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE)* at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf> or the Protection in Evaluation Procedures in the NJ Special Education Code available on the NJ Department of Education website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap14.pdf>

If the team determines that your child is NOT eligible for special education and related services, then your service coordinator can help you find other community early childhood opportunities for your child. Your school district may also be able to provide you with ideas about other opportunities available in your community or school district.

Remember, you know your child best. If there is anything that you do not understand,

Ask, Ask, **ASK QUESTIONS!**

The more you understand, the better you will feel about making decisions as an active member of your child's educational team.

Parent Tips and Strategies - Evaluation

- Ask for a copy of all evaluation reports.
- Ask someone from the school district to talk about the results with you.
- Take time to read the evaluation reports before the eligibility meeting.
- Discuss the evaluation reports with your spouse, partner or other family members.
- Discuss the evaluation reports with others who know your child well.
- Make sure the results reflect an accurate picture of your child.
- Write down any questions or comments you have regarding the reports.
- Bring your copy of the evaluation reports with you to the meeting.
- Read more about the evaluation process in *Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE)* available on the NJ Department of Education website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf>

Step 5: IEP Meeting

Children found eligible for preschool special education receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) according to an Individualized Education Program (IEP). After your child has been found eligible for preschool special education and related services, it is time for the IEP team to meet and discuss the information that has been gathered from the evaluation process.

Your child's IEP team members include:

- You
- A general education teacher
- A special education teacher
- A representative from your school district
- Your case manager
- A representative from the CST who is qualified to interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results
- Other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding your child, including related service professionals
- Your child, whenever appropriate

You can invite others to attend the IEP meeting including your early intervention service coordinator as a designated representative from NJEIS. Be sure to let your contact person from the school district know who you want to invite to your child's IEP meeting.

Getting Ready for the IEP

Throughout this handbook, it is emphasized how important it is for you to be an active member of your child's IEP team. You have a lot of information and insight about how your child learns, what your child can do, and what you want your child to learn next. The "Parent Page; Preparing for the IEP Meeting" will help you collect some of your thoughts, ideas and concerns to share at the IEP meeting.





Parent Page: Preparing for the IEP Meeting

What has my child learned this year?

What are my child's strengths and special interests?

What are my concerns for my child's education?

What do I want my child to learn next?

What are the supports and services I think my child may need to make progress on the next set of goals?

Developing the IEP

In early intervention, your family and child's outcomes and activities were written on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). When your child is 3, the educational plan will be written on an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The IEP is the plan that will guide your child's special education and related services. You will have an important role on the IEP team as your child's Individualized Education Program is written and implemented. Some parents find it helpful to review a blank IEP form before the meeting so they will have an idea of what the document will look like and what the IEP team will discuss at the meeting.

"What do I want my child to learn in the next 12 months?"

The IEP team will talk about the goals for your child. Measurable annual goals are the things that you and the other members of the IEP team would like to see your child learn in 12 months. The goals written by the IEP team will reflect the things that your child needs to learn in school.

What is included in an IEP?

- Statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance including for preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in age-appropriate activities.
- Statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child's needs and enable the child to be involved in and make progress in general education curriculum and meets the child's other educational needs.
- Description of how the child's progress will be measured and timeline for providing periodic reports on the child's progress.
- Statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services available to the child.
- Statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to make progress and participate in curricular, extracurricular and nonacademic activities and to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children.
- An explanation of the extent, if any, the child will not participate in the regular class and activities.
- Discussion of any statewide assessments and necessary accommodations.
- Projected date for the beginning of services and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of services and modifications.

Source: IDEA, 34 CFR 300.320(a)

After the IEP team has written measurable annual goals, the team will discuss the special education and related services and supports needed for your child to make progress on the goals and participate in age-appropriate activities. You might hear the phrase “educationally relevant” during the IEP meeting.

Your child's annual goals, services and supports will be individualized to meet your child's needs. After the IEP team has written annual goals and decided on services and supports, the next part of the IEP meeting is to talk about placement or where your child will receive these services and supports.

Special education services are not a “place”. Your child's special education and related services are individually designed and planned to meet your child's needs. Your child's special education and related services may be provided in a variety of

Related Services

- Are required when the services are necessary to enable the child to benefit from special education.
- Could include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, adapted physical education, recreation therapy, social work, psychological services, counseling, orientation and mobility, assistive technology and audiology services.
- Are determined on an individual basis by your child's IEP team.

settings. Some of those settings could be community preschool or child care programs, school district preschools, Head Start, or Early Childhood Special Education programs. The decision of your child's placement will be made by the IEP team during the meeting but it must be in the least restrictive environment (LRE). All children, to the maximum extent appropriate to their needs, are educated with children who are not disabled.

Other important decisions that the IEP team will make include how your child's progress will be measured and when you will receive progress reports. The IEP team will also decide whether or not your child needs extended school year services (ESY). After the IEP is written, you will be asked to sign consent for services to start. Special education and related services cannot begin without your informed, written consent. The initial IEP must be implemented by your child's third birthday.



Important Transition Events and Dates

- ☐ I participated in the Transition Planning Conference (TPC) on:
- ☐ I participated in a identification/evaluation meeting on:
- ☐ I signed the form giving consent for my child to be evaluated.
- ☐ My child's evaluations were scheduled for:
- ☐ My child's evaluations were completed on:
- ☐ I reviewed the results of the evaluations or someone reviewed these results with me on:
- ☐ The date for the eligibility meeting is:
- ☐ If my child is eligible for special education and related services, the date of the IEP meeting is:
- ☐ I attended the IEP meeting on:
- ☐ My child's IEP was written.
- ☐ I signed consent for my child's IEP to begin.
- ☐ My child's special education and related services will begin on:

Step 6: Where Will I Be Now That I'm 3?

Going to preschool for the first time is a new experience for any family with a young child. Just as you were part of services in early intervention, you will be part of your child's new early childhood experience. Remember that you are always an important part of your child's team. Your team will be most effective when everyone builds trust and uses open communication. Now that you are nearing the end of the transition process, helping your child get ready for school is the next step.

Remember

When children with and without disabilities learn and play together they are more likely to improve academic performance and increase communication and socialization skills.

We want to give you a sense of what a preschool classroom might look like and how your child will spend the day. Preschool classrooms are fun, safe places that offer young children opportunities to learn, make friends and develop new skills. Whatever the name of your child's program, you will find some similarities in all early childhood settings. Early childhood classrooms often have learning centers such as a library, dramatic play, art, writing, fine motor and blocks. A typical day might begin with circle time in which children talk about what will happen that day. Center time is scheduled throughout the day. Centers focus on play and children learning through play. A day at preschool goes by quickly.

"It was the first day of school and our daughter was to ride the bus to school. We waited outside for the yellow bus to come down our street. She was dressed in her shorts and had her book bag on, ready for school. I was nervous for her to ride the bus to school, but when the bus pulled up the smile on her face relieved my nerves. She walked up the stairs, turned around and waved good-bye.

I watched as the bus drove down the street until it was out of sight."

Jamie, a proud mom

For some parents, preschool may be the first time their child will spend part of the day away from home. Some parents talk about feeling anxious when their child begins preschool. Questions like "Will my child be OK?" or "how will the teacher know what my child wants?" are typical. Using this handbook will help you and your child feel prepared for the first big day of preschool.

There are many ways you and your child can prepare for this new adventure into early childhood. Take a look at the "Parent Tips and Strategies: Preparing Your Child for Preschool" and select the ones that you want to do with your child.



Parent Tips and Strategies: Preparing Your Child for Preschool

- ☐ Talk to my child about going to school.
- ☐ Visit the preschool and take pictures of the room, building and playground.
- ☐ Share pictures with my child when we talk about going to school.
- ☐ Read stories with pictures and watch videos about young children going to preschool.
- ☐ Make a picture book of what children do during a preschool day.
- ☐ Include pictures of who will kiss my child good-bye and welcome my child home after school.
- ☐ Make arrangements to visit the classroom with my child before the first day of school.
- ☐ Ask the teacher to give my child a tour of the classroom.
- ☐ Show my child where to hang his or her backpack and coat.
- ☐ Ask the teacher if my child can bring a transitional object or photo book to class for the first month of school.
- ☐ Encourage my child to play alone for short periods of time.
- ☐ Encourage my child to play with other children somewhere away from my home such as a friend's house.
- ☐ Encourage my child to make simple choices between two items such as what toy to play with or what afternoon snack to have.
- ☐ Encourage my child to begin taking care of his or her own things such as hanging up a coat or putting away toys.
- ☐ Encourage my child to request help when needed.
- ☐ Celebrate our accomplishments!

Sarah's Story

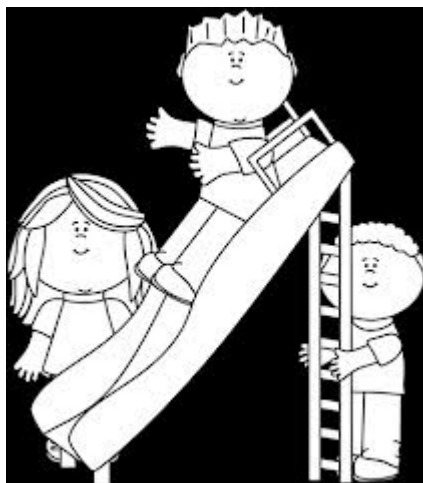
As I look back on my daughter's transition from early intervention, I remember having many mixed emotions. It was exciting to think of my daughter going on to preschool. Yet I was nervous about all the changes that would take place for Sarah and our family. What I know I'll never forget is the support my early intervention providers gave me to better understand that important next step, what options I might consider, and what I could do to help this transition work for Sarah. I asked many questions over those last six months, went to meetings, and then asked more questions. When Sarah started preschool special education I was excited because I knew she was in the best environment, with an excellent IEP.

My daughter and I learned a lot in early intervention. When I talk to transitioning parents today I share my story and encourage them to ask questions, use available resources, explore their communities and take advantage of all the early intervention system offers to them.

Sarah has had several transitions over the years. The lessons we learned transitioning from early intervention have helped us throughout Sarah's life.

- *We learned that it is important to be involved and stay involved in our child's IEP Team. As a team we celebrated each of Sarah's small and large successes.*
- *We learned that it is OK to disagree and it is OK to ask questions and it is OK to share your feelings.*
- *Perhaps the most important lesson we learned is that the relationships we build with others extend beyond one meeting, once a year. It is the relationships that we built have supported Sarah in becoming the accomplished young woman she is today.*

Sarah and Sarah's Mom



Resources for Families

As families look beyond their child's 3rd birthday, they often feel a need to expand their resource and support network. Many parents of young children with special needs find it helpful to reach out to others for support or information. Some parents feel that they can never find enough information; others feel overwhelmed by all of the information that is available. This resource section is a starting point.

When your child turns 3 you may want to expand your support network. Sharing your questions and concerns with new people can be difficult at first. Take the time to look for one source of information or one support group until you find what works for you. Keep a list of the resources that provide you with the best support. Write down the names of all the helpful people you meet along the way in an address book or in this handbook.

Parents of young children with special needs find that networking becomes an important part of their lives. Through your resource and support networks, you will have opportunities to learn from other parents and share your knowledge and insights.

Parent-to-Parent

Some parents find that the most helpful information they gather comes from talking with other parents that understand the questions, thoughts and feelings that come with entering a new school or early childhood program. Networking with other parents can help you to feel that you are not alone. Other parents can offer new ideas or strategies.

Parent Groups

Many parent groups meet on a regular basis to discuss topics related to parenting young children, special needs information, or special education. Some parent groups are specific to a disability; others are more broad-based. Some parent groups are local, regional or state-wide while others are based in a school district. You can find out about parent groups through your service coordinator, school district or other parents.

The Internet

Websites can be a useful place to turn for information. Many parent groups and support and advocacy organizations have websites. By searching under a specific topic or disability, you can find several web-based sources of information. You can also find links to websites by visiting some of the starting points given in this section.

Remember

- Ask other parents where they have found valuable resources.
- Be careful with information you find on websites.
- Cross-reference what you find on a website with other sources.
- Go to recommended websites for accurate information.

New Jersey Resources

NJ Department of Health (DOH)

<http://nj.gov/health/>

New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS)

<http://nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/index.shtml>

The New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS), under the Division of Family Health Services, implements New Jersey's statewide system of services for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, with developmental delays or disabilities, and their families. The Department of Health is appointed by the Governor as the state lead agency for the Early Intervention System.

Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives (REICs)

<http://www.njeis.org/>

The REICs are responsible for assisting the DOH in regional planning and administration of early intervention services and for ensuring services are provided in accordance with Part C of IDEA. Regional responsibilities include: child find/public awareness; System Point of Entry (SPOE) for referrals to NJEIS; data management; family support; and training and technical Assistance for service coordination and early intervention providers and practitioners.

Family Matters

<http://www.thefamilymatterswebsite.org/>

The NJEIS Family Matters website offers resources and supports to enhance the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health related needs of children birth to age three with delays or disabilities.

Special Child Health Services (SCHS) County Case Management Units (CMU)

www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/sch/sccase.shtml

Each of the State's 21 counties has an SCHS Case Management Unit jointly funded by SCHS and the county freeholders. SCHS Case Managers, with parental consent, work with the child's parents and the physician to evaluate an affected child's strengths and needs; and develops an individual service plan for the child and family. Medical, educational, developmental, social and economic needs of the child and family are targeted.

New Jersey Parent Link

<http://www.njparentlink.nj.gov/>

NJ Parent Link is a statewide website initiative made possible by the work of the New Jersey Early Childhood Comprehensive System (NJ ECCS) Team. The focus of the website is to highlight NJ state services and resources. Federal, nationally-respected and community partner resources are also included. The goal of the website is to improve the accessibility, coordination and delivery of information and

services to parents of young children, and to improve communication capabilities for ongoing service collaborations and policy development.

NJ Department of Education (DOE)

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>

Office of Special Education (OSE)

The parent section of the NJDOE website listed under special education offers information for parents on topics including special education at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/>

You can also download a copy of *Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE)* at

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf>

NJ Department of Human Services (DHS)

<http://www.dhs.state.nj.us/Pages/HumanServices.aspx>

NJDHS helps families achieve self-sufficiency, independence and health to the maximum extent possible. Information about DHS programs that relate to persons with developmental disabilities, mental illnesses or substance abuse problems; employment, training and independent living programs for persons with disabilities; financial support, employment and training programs; child care; and other family services for low-income families is available online.

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

<http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/families/>

The Department of Children and Families funds various programs throughout the state to help and strengthen families.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/child/ccrr/>

CCR&Rs offer a blend of direct services and planning services, CCR&Rs help families and communities ensure that families in NJ have access to information and support for all of their child care needs.

NJ Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE)

www.njcie.net

NJCIE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation dedicated to the inclusion of students with disabilities in effective general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools. NJCIE is the only statewide organization in New Jersey whose sole focus is inclusion. NJCIE's ultimate mission is the meaningful education of all children within their public schools in preparation for future lives as independent as possible in the community.

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)

www.spannj.org

SPAN offers families and professionals information, resources, support and advocacy assistance addressing: effective parent involvement, child care, general and special education, dropout and bullying prevention, child welfare, health care, mental health, youth leadership, transition to adult life, incarcerated youth, military family support, violence prevention & more.

Federal Resources

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth to age 3) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B.

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

<http://ectacenter.org/>

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs to improve state early intervention and early childhood special education service systems, increase the implementation of effective practices, and enhance the outcomes of these programs for young children and their families.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

<http://nichcy.org/babies/transition>

NICHCY serves the nation as the central source of information on disabilities in children. This extensive web resource offers many useful and informative publications on many topics of importance to families that have children with special needs. Information is available in English and Spanish.

Notes