

When I'm 3, where will I be?

A FAMILY'S TRANSITION FROM EARLY INTERVENTION



Names and contact information
I don't want to forget.

Name and Title	Address	Phone/Email
Early Intervention Service Coordinator:		p:
		e:
School District Contact Person:		p:
		e:
Community Preschool:		p:
		e:
		p:
		e:
		p:
		e:
		p:
		e:

When I'm 3, where will I be?

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Revised Edition July, 2019
Illinois Birth-5 Transition Guidance Committee
Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois Department of Human Services

This workbook has been published through the Illinois State Board of Education and is intended as an informational resource to families. Please note that this material is not intended to be used as a substitute for legal counsel.

The information contained in the workbook is believed to be reliable at this time. The State Board cannot provide any guarantee, expressed or implied, in terms of the accuracy, completeness or legality of the information contained, either isolated or in the aggregate at any future date. As policy and procedure are updated, changes may or may not be included in the manual; therefore, some information may be out of date. We will work to include updates in the workbook in the form of inserts as needed. We encourage families to communicate questions to their Service Coordinators or school districts regarding transition. If legal advice is necessary, you may wish to consult an attorney of your choice.

Acknowledgements

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- Illinois State Board of Education
 - Early Childhood Education Division
 - Child Find Project of Illinois
 - Early CHOICES
 - Illinois STAR NET
 - Representatives of school districts and special education cooperatives

- Illinois Department of Human Services
 - Bureau of Early Intervention
 - Child and Family Connections Office
 - Early Intervention Training Program

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Dear Families,

Welcome to When I'm 3, Where Will I Be? A Family's Transition from Early Intervention.

This workbook was developed by parents, early intervention (EI) specialists, and school personnel to provide you with information as you approach your child's transition from EI services at age 3. This transition can be an exciting time as you and your family learn new things, develop new partnerships with your school, and your community and continue to shape new hopes and dreams for your child. It may seem as if EI has just started and it is already time to talk about change. Soon your child will be turning three, and the EI services your child currently receives will end. A formal transition process has been established to help you plan for early childhood services, preschool, or other community programs for your child beginning at age 3.

The transition process from EI formally begins by the time your child is 2 years, 6 months of age. This workbook will take you step by step through the six month process. The more you know about the process and how you can participate in the planning for your child, the more comfortable you will feel as you and your child get ready to move beyond EI.

Throughout this transition there will be supports, meetings and services available to you. Your service coordinator and school district representative will provide you information about programs and services for preschoolers in your schools and community. You will learn how services can be individualized for your child in an early childhood setting. The 'Family Pages' within the workbook are a place for you to record your child's experiences, your thoughts, and your ideas to guide your child's transition. We encourage you to explore all types of preschool and early childhood options in your schools and community.

An IEP is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet the student's needs and is developed by a team. The IEP includes a detailed description of what will be done to give the student the extra help needed. The IEP will change based on the student's needs-it is like a road map showing where the student is and where he or she is going. A goal of this transition process is to ensure that if a child is eligible for an IEP that the plan is in place by the child's third birthday. There are several steps in the process, and your participation is key. Ask questions along the way and seek the information you need to participate fully. As you read through this workbook, if you feel that you would like more time to go through this transition process, talk with your services coordinator about beginning the process sooner. Parents of children who are not eligible for special education services also benefit from this workbook as they determine the next steps for their child during the transition process.

We hope you find this workbook useful to you as you prepare for the next step in your child's developmental journey.

With warm regards,
The Illinois Transition Guidance Committee

"I had discovered that learning something, no matter how complex, wasn't hard when I had a reason to want to know it." Homer H. Hickam, [Rocket Boys: A Memoir](#)

Transition at a Glance

It is time to think about what happens when your child turns 3. Will services be necessary? Think about where your child would be if there were no delay or disability. How can he or she receive services in that setting?

At every Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting, you will talk about any transition questions or concerns.

When your child is 2 years, 6 months, your EI service coordinator will put together a referral packet. The coordinator will ask you to sign a consent form so that your child's referral packet can be sent to the school district or special education cooperative. You may also choose to send the information to a community early childhood organization.

By 2 years, 9 months, your service coordinator will arrange for two meetings that serve different purposes. The first is an IFSP meeting to create or update transition steps in the IFSP. The second is a transition planning conference with your service coordinator and other IFSP team members during which you will be introduced to a representative from your local school district and learn more about the services, evaluation, and eligibility process for children over 3.

When your child is between 2 years, 9 months and 3 years, evaluations from your EI providers and the local school district or special education cooperative will be used to determine if your child is eligible for special education and related services.

Before your child exits EI, you will have an IFSP meeting to discuss your child's current levels of development.

On or before your child's third birthday, the IEP team, including you, will write an IEP if your child is eligible for special education and related services. If your child is not eligible, your service coordinator will help you find other opportunities for young children in your community.

The various meetings noted above may be combined. You and your service coordinator, EI providers and school district representative(s) will determine where and how these meetings are held.

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

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STEP 1

Dreams For My Child

What Do I Want for My Child at Age 3?

As you and your child get ready to transition from EI services, it is time to think about where your child might be at 3. Some families find it helpful to think about what their child's early childhood experience might look like. Each community in Illinois 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 early childhood programs
- Park district preschools and other activities
- Faith-based preschools
- Agency-run preschools
- Head Start
- Childcare

School District Programs

- State-funded early childhood program
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms
- Tuition-based programs

The transition period is a good time for you to begin visiting early childhood programs in your community. Such a visit will provide you an opportunity to see what various programs look like. Many families find a visit helpful to picture their child as part of the group and begin to think about what could assist their child in those environments.

If your child is eligible for ECSE services, visiting early childhood programs for preschool children will help you be more informed in your role as a member of the IEP team. The IEP team makes the decision about where your child will receive special education and related services. The first placement consideration for children with disabilities should be where they would be if they did not have a disability, also known as the least restrictive environment (LRE). You will learn more about your role on the IEP team throughout this workbook.

Visiting community programs for young children can help you decide your child's next step whether or not he/she is eligible for ECSE services. You can use this checklist to think about and plan for this part of the transition process:



Checklist

In our family, we talked about our dreams for our child...

Early childhood programs in our community we want to visit:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Adaptations or services that might support my child in these settings:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

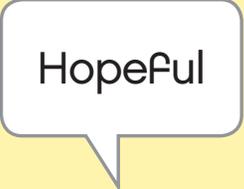
People I talked to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

*Research showed that individualized supports are successful in typical early childhood programs.
-Barton and Smith*

How Do I Feel About My Child's Transition?

The transition from EI 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:
 <p>Hopeful</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * You have good reason to feel hopeful; you are embarking on 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 families and professionals. * You will develop positive partnerships through your experiences.
 <p>Anxious</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Many families are concerned when their children will be away from them for longer periods of time. * Many families 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. * Focusing on your child's strengths and planning for the next step will help manage feelings of anxiety.
 <p>Less than confident</p>	<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 knowledge and understanding of your child is 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. * Talking with another family who has been through the transition process may help you sort through what you want to do next.
 <p>Ready</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Many families are ready for their child to move on to the next step of preschool. * You may be seeking more independence for your child and looking for opportunities for your child to be with other children. * This workbook offers information and tools to use as you move through the transition and plan for your child's preschool years.

Transition Timeframe

The highlighted areas of the timeframe show when each step of the transition process should take place. If you want some or all of the steps started earlier, talk about your concerns and questions with your service coordinator. Make a check in the box when the step has been completed for your child.

Transition Steps	Every IFSP	2 yrs. 3 mon.	2 yrs. 6 mon.	2 yrs. 7 mon.	2 yrs. 8 mon.	2 yrs. 9 mon.	2 yrs. 10 mon.	2 yrs. 11 mon.	3 yrs.
Talk about transition questions and concerns.									
Service coordinator sends referral packet to school district or special education cooperative with parent/guardian's written consent.									
Service coordinator schedules transition planning conference.									
Parent/guardian, service coordinator, evaluator, and school district or special education cooperative representative attend transition planning conference.									
Local school district or special education cooperative includes parents/guardians in domain review process.									
School district or special education cooperative completes evaluations with parent/guardian's consent.									
IEP team, including parents/guardians, meets to determine child's eligibility.									
If child is eligible, IEP team writes IEP.									
IEP team implements IEP									
Exit IFSP takes place.									

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

2

STEP 2

Sharing Information

“Children’s growth and learning are related to their peers’ skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities.” Justice et al 2014

Transition is an ongoing process and the sharing of information between you and members of the team is very important. Time in EI will move quickly, and before you know it, your child will be 3. At each IFSP meeting, your EI team will discuss transition and share strategies to help you prepare for transitions in EI services, and ultimately transition beyond EI services.

The transition process also formalizes the final EI transition at age 3. This transition planning will begin no later than when your child is 2 years, 6 months of age. If circumstances exist and families prefer, the transition process can be as early as 2 years, 3 months of age. The transition process exists to ensure a smooth and effective transition for all children who have been receiving EI services on to early childhood settings. Transition planning typically begins 6 months before your child’s 3rd birthday to give you, EI, school, community and other early childhood professionals’ time to meet, share information and plan. EI sends the school district basic contact information including: name, address, phone number, and child’s date of birth. This helps the district plan for your child.

At some point between the time when your child is 2 years, 3 months of age and no later than 2 years, 9 months, your service coordinator will meet with you to discuss the formal transition planning and explain your educational rights and responsibilities. The service coordinator will ask you to sign consent so a packet of your child’s information, called a “referral” packet, can be sent to your local school district. You may also consent to have your child’s information sent to other programs in your community. The referral is a required first step before the evaluation of eligibility can take place. A referral packet includes your signed consent document, your child’s most recent IFSP, and your child’s most recent EI evaluation and/or service summary reports. You can choose to add other information to the referral packet.

Because your child receives EI services he/she is entitled to begin ECSE services on his/her 3rd birthday, should he/she be found eligible. Without your consent, your child’s IFSP, EI evaluation, and EI service reports cannot be shared with the school district, therefore ECSE services are not mandated to begin on his/her 3rd birthday. Later, this workbook will discuss eligibility for ECSE services. This 6 month period before your child’s 3rd birthday is typically necessary to ensure enough time for a smooth and effective transition.



Remember

If you sign consent, the referral packet will be sent to your local school district or special education cooperative. Ask your service coordinator where the information will be sent. Write important names and contact information.

“The future belongs to those of us who believe in the beauty of our dreams...”
—Eleanor Roosevelt

Putting Together a Referral

Typically, a referral packet will include the most current IFSP, EI evaluation and service summary reports. As you review your child's file, decide what additional information you would like to share. If there is any material that you do not want to share, tell your service coordinator. You should feel comfortable with the information you choose to share. Your child's referral packet is an important part of the transition process.

At this point, you probably have many questions about transition. Your service coordinator is there to help answer your questions and explain the complete process. Use the Family Checklist to help you keep track of the things you have done so far.



Checklist

Date I signed consent to send my child's referral packet:

Date referral packet sent:

Referral packet sent to:

Things I put in the referral packet:

Date, time and location for Transition Planning Conference:

Date

Time

Location

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

3

STEP 3

Transition

When your child is between 2 years, 3 months and 2 years, 9 months of age, your service coordinator will hold a transition planning conference that will also include you, evaluators from your IFSP team, and a school district representative(s). You may want to invite other professionals or family members who know your child, or representatives from community programs you might be considering. The transition planning conference is an opportunity for you to learn about your school district and for the school district representative(s) to learn about your child. It is not a meeting for making decisions about eligibility, services, or where your child might go to school.

Before the Transition Planning Conference:

- ✦ Review your child's EI records.
- ✦ Talk to your service providers about your child's progress and strategies that have been successful for your child.
- ✦ Decide if you want to share additional information, such as medical reports, information from outside services your child received, videos, or photos of your child.
- ✦ Talk to your Child and Family Connections (CFC) parent liaison.
- ✦ Fill out the parent workbook page 17: Things I Want You to Know About My Child.

Research has consistently demonstrated that all young children, both typically developing and those with special needs, benefit from high quality inclusive experiences.

–Barton and Smith



Topics to Talk About:

- Information about your child
- Possible services available in your community and through your school district or special education cooperative
- How will services and adaptations be delivered in early childhood programs with typically developing preschoolers?
- Services available during the summer in your community and through your school district or special education cooperative
- Registration and evaluation process for your community programs, school district, or special education cooperative
- Visits to early childhood classrooms in your community and school district or special education cooperative
- The IEP process
- Transportation for your child
- The next step of the transition process

To ensure everyone on the IFSP team is aware of the upcoming transition, the service coordinator will hold an IFSP meeting shortly before your child turns 3 to update and/or add specific goals and steps for a successful transition based on your child's specific needs.

You may be wondering what will happen next. Feel free to write questions in a notebook. These are great starting points for when your team meets to create the IFSP functional outcome for transition. This begins the next step in the future of your child and family, so remember to celebrate how far you have come.

Remember that the service coordinator is always there to answer questions and that the plan can be updated or changed at any time if you think of something later.

Plan to schedule a visit with the school to help you see the environment and consider what supports your child might need.

The major points the service coordinator will discuss are:

1. Discussions with and training for you (as appropriate) regarding future placement;
2. Procedures to prepare your child for the change in service delivery, including steps to help your child adjust to, and function in, a new setting;
3. Confirmation of the information recorded in the EI data system for proper transition notification to ECSE;
4. Confirmation of any additional information the school district may need to ensure continuity of services;
5. Incorporation of the transition steps and services into an updated IFSP so the whole team will understand what next steps will be coming.



Checklist

I attended the Transition Planning Conference on: _____

I put all of the important contact information on the front page of this workbook.

Others who attended the Transition Planning Conference:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Things I learned at the Transition Planning Conference:

Training and resources available to help me understand the evaluation process, IEP, access to the general education settings, and rights and responsibilities:

Things that will happen next:

Things I Want You to Know About My Child



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

These are my concerns:

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

These are ways my child learns:

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:

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

4



STEP 4

Domain Review and Evaluation

Domain Review

Your school district or special education cooperative representative will contact you about participating in a domain review after your transition planning conference. The purpose of a domain review is to assess if the information known about your child is adequate or if additional information needs to be collected. A form titled the Identification of Needs Assessments, but commonly called the domain form, is used to keep track of the domain review. Participation in EI does not mean automatic eligibility for ECSE services. You will be involved in helping the school district or special education cooperative gather needed information to help determine if your child is eligible.

It is very helpful to share what you know about your child with other IEP team members. You know your child best. You know what your child has learned already. You know what your child likes and dislikes and how your child likes to play. The family page, Things I Want You to Know About My Child (page 17), that you completed can be used as a helpful planning tool for the evaluation process.

Using the completed domain form, your child's IEP team needs to be able to collect information to answer these four questions:

- 1 Does your child have a disability?
- 2 What are your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance?
- 3 Does your child's disability have an adverse effect on your child's ability to participate in and benefit from the school environment?
- 4 Does your child need special education and related services?

Children with disabilities do not need to be 'ready' to be included. Programs need to be ready to support all children.

-Division of Early Childhood/National Association of Education for Young Children 2009, Strain 2015

If your child's IEP team, including you, has enough information to answer all of these questions after the domain review, your school district will not need to conduct any further evaluations before the eligibility determination meeting. If your child's IEP team cannot answer all four questions, the team will decide what additional evaluations are needed prior to the eligibility determination meeting.

School districts cannot evaluate your child without your informed, written consent. Before you give your consent, make sure that you understand the five W's of evaluation:

- ★ **Why** are these evaluations needed?
- ★ **Who** will do the evaluations and how will the evaluations be completed?
- ★ **What** information will be gathered through the evaluations?
- ★ **Where** will the evaluations be done?
- ★ **When** will the evaluations be scheduled and completed?

During the Evaluation

When you sign consent, your child's evaluation process will continue. The evaluation is individualized for your child. Evaluations can be conducted by one person or a team of professionals and will likely take place at the school. You can ask where and how your child will be evaluated.

You may be asked to share information through an interview or as part of a questionnaire. The questions may be about your child's birth and medical history, developmental milestones and progress, and home and family environments.

Informed Consent Means:

You have been fully informed about why your consent is needed in your native 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 any time.

Source: IDEA, 2004, 34CFR Section 300.9

The evaluation process brings together different types of information about your child. Your input is an important part of the child's evaluation. The evaluation process helps members of your child's IEP team paint a complete picture of your child.

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



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

Tips and Strategies for Families

- ✦ Ask for copies of all evaluation reports.
- ✦ Ask someone from the IEP team to talk about the results with you.
- ✦ Discuss the evaluation reports with your spouse, partner, or other family members.
- ✦ Discuss the evaluation reports with your EI providers or others who are important in your child's life.
- ✦ 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 *Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois* on [www.isbe.net](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Educational%20Rights%20Guide.pdf#search=educational%20rights%20and%20responsibilities). [<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Educational%20Rights%20Guide.pdf#search=educational%20rights%20and%20responsibilities>]



Checklist

- I participated in a domain meeting and/or I reviewed the form on: _____
- I signed the form giving consent for my child to be evaluated by school district or special cooperative personnel: _____
- My child's evaluations were scheduled for: _____
- My child's evaluations were completed on: _____
- The evaluations were reviewed with me on: _____
- The date for the Eligibility Determination Meeting is: _____

Good to Know about Including Kids Together

- Science and research show that high-quality early childhood inclusion is effective.
- Educational laws, regulations, guidance and policy find preschool inclusion preferred and to be the first option of consideration.
- Every placement with preschoolers who are disabled requires a continuum of services be made available so that your child may have access to participation in and receive support within the early childhood inclusive high-quality setting.
- The early childhood profession finds high-quality inclusive settings beneficial.
- Early childhood practice is charging to widen inclusive opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities.

Barton, 2015

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

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STEP 5

Eligibility Determination Conference



When your child's evaluation process is complete, it is time for the IEP team to meet and discuss the information that has been gathered. The members of the IEP team include:

- YOU! (Parents/Guardians)
- A general education teacher
- A special education teacher (for early childhood, this could be one teacher certified in general and special education)
- A representative from your school district who is knowledgeable about district programs and able to commit the district resources
- Person(s) qualified to interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results
- Other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding your child, including other specialized school professionals (for example, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or nurse, etc.)

In addition to the required IEP team members, you can invite other people who are supportive to you, such as a friend, family member, EI service provider, or outside service provider. Be sure to let your school district representative(s) know who you will be bringing to the IEP meeting so that they can comfortably accommodate all who attend.

Throughout this workbook, we have 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 new things, what your child can do, and what you want your child to learn next. The questions on the Family Page: Getting Ready for Your IEP Meeting (page 26) will help you prepare for your child's meeting. Use these questions to collect your thoughts, ideas, and concerns to share at the meeting. The information you share is important for the IEP process.

Determining Eligibility

The IEP team, including parents/guardians, reviews the evaluation results to determine if your child meets eligibility for special education services in accordance with federal and state mandates. You can request a copy of the evaluation reports to read before the meeting so that you can note any questions or comments you may have. Your input is important. Make sure you ask questions and share what you know about your child. Evaluation reports contain a lot of information and can be very detailed. Remember that the purpose of the evaluation is to try to capture a full picture of your child, including the things that your child can do well and the things that are difficult for your child.

The IEP team will discuss whether your child is eligible for special education and related services using 13 categories of special education eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). See the resources below to read more about the special education eligibility categories. In Illinois, an additional category, developmentally delayed, may be used to provide special education services to eligible children ages 3-9. Eligibility relates to the disability of the child's ability to learn and participate in the general curriculum.

More information about eligibility categories can be found in Chapter 4 of

Educational Rights and Responsibilities:

Understanding Special Education in Illinois at www.isbe.net.

Also see **Center for Parent Information and Resources** at www.parentcenterhub.org

If the IEP team agrees that your child IS eligible for special education, the next step is to write your child's IEP. Your child's strengths and identified educational needs will be used to develop goals.

If the IEP team agrees that your child is NOT eligible for special education services, talk with your team about home activities or opportunities in your community to support your child's continued growth and development.

You may agree or disagree with the evaluation results. Your parent rights, under the law, provide options for you if you disagree. Talk with your IEP team about your concerns. Please refer to the *Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois* for more information.

Writing the IEP

In EI, your family and child's outcomes and activities were written on an IFSP. When your child is 3, the educational plan will be written on an IEP. To see a comparison between EI and special education, look at the chart on page 27 and 28.

The IEP is the plan that will guide your child's special education and related services. You will continue to have an important role on the team as your child's IEP is written. 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.

After reviewing the evaluation results and determining eligibility, it is time for the IEP team to talk about annual goals for your child. It is helpful when everyone who will implement the IEP participates in writing the annual goals. Measurable annual goals are the things that you and the other members of the IEP team would like to see your child learn in the next 12 months. The goals written by the IEP team will reflect the things that your child needs to learn in the early childhood setting.

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

What is included in an IEP?

- ✦ Statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance
- ✦ Information on how the child's 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 age-appropriate activities
- ✦ Description of how the child's progress will be measured
- ✦ 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 and without children with disabilities
- ✦ Projected date for the beginning of services and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of services and modifications

IDEA, 2004, Sec. 614(d)

After the IEP team has written measurable annual goals, everyone will discuss the supports and related services your child will need in order to make progress on the goals and participate in age-appropriate activities. You might hear the phrase “educationally relevant” during the IEP meeting when you talk about related services. Your child's related services need to be connected to your child's right to make progress in school and to participate in age-appropriate activities.

Remember

Related services are required when the services are necessary to enable your child to benefit from special education.

Related services could include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, adapted physical education, recreation therapy, social work, psychological services, counseling, orientation and mobility, and audiology services.

Related services are determined on an individual basis by your child's IEP.

Your child's annual goals and related services will be individualized to meet your child's needs and strengths. After the IEP team has written annual goals and decided on related services, the next part of the IEP meeting is to talk about placement or where your child will receive the special education and related services written in the IEP. Your child's IEP team must consider a regular education early childhood setting as the first option for placement.

Special education and related services are not a “place.” Special education and related services are individually designed and planned to meet your child's needs. Your child's special education and related services can be given in a variety of different settings. Some of those settings could be community early childhood or child care programs, park district early childhood program, Head Start, state-funded early childhood or Preschool for All programs, or ECSE programs in your school district. The decision of your child's placement will be made by the IEP team during the meeting.

Another important term you will hear quite often is “least restrictive environment” (LRE). When we talk about LRE, we mean an educational setting where children with and without disabilities can learn, play and grow together. Services and supports that children with disabilities receive in their LRE are designed to meet their developmental, functional and academic needs. Inclusion is a term that is related to LRE. Inclusion happens when children with IEPs and children without IEPs share the same learning environment. The children with IEPs have special education services and supports embedded in the everyday routines and activities within those same educational environments.

Other important decisions that the IEP team will make include Extended School Year services (ESY), how progress will be measured, and when you will receive progress reports. 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 in effect by your child’s third birthday.



Checklist

- I attended the IEP meeting on _____
- The IEP team determined eligibility _____
- 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 _____

Family Page: Getting Ready For Your IEP Meeting

What has my child learned this year?

What are my child's strengths, motivators, and special interests?

What are my concerns for my child's education?

What are the adaptations and services I think my child may need in a general early childhood setting with other preschoolers?

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?

Comparing Early Intervention and ECSE Services

	Early Intervention	Special Education
Governing Federal laws	Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Part B of IDEA
Ages for services	Birth to 3	3 through 21
Goal of the program	Helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability.	Helping the child achieve success within the educational setting.
Evaluation	Two or more professionals from different disciplines complete a developmental evaluation of all five areas of development.	A team of professionals completes an evaluation in the area(s) of suspected disability/concern.
Eligibility	A child must have a 30 percent delay in one or more areas of development, a documented medical condition, as determined by IDHS, Bureau of EI, or meet specified criteria for at-risk.	A child is found eligible using one of the eligibility categories for special education and related services.
Service delivery model	Parents/guardians and caregivers enroll their child in EI services. The type(s), frequency, location, and duration of services, including individuals providing services, are determined through the IFSP process.	LEAs are required to provide special education and related services to eligible individuals, age 3 through 21 years. Services are determined by the IEP team.
Family involvement	Families take an active role in the development of the IFSP and in the delivery of services.	Parent/guardians must be a member of any team (e.g., planning and placement) that makes decisions regarding the education of their child.

	Early Intervention	Special Education
Service coordination	Each eligible infant or toddler is assigned a service coordinator who coordinates services and assists the family throughout their involvement in the EI system.	A case manager is assigned to each child with an IEP, although service coordination is not required. The case manager is usually someone on the child's IEP team.
Type of plan	An IFSP documents the family functional outcomes developed by the team. IFSPs are reviewed at least every six months with the service coordinator and rewritten annually by the IFSP team.	An 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.
Services	All EI services are provided to support the family's ability to meet their child's developmental needs and the family's desired outcomes. Families are active participants in the delivery of services.	Special education is an educational service or program that is instructional in nature. Related services (such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech and language therapy) are provided when they are required in order to assist a child in obtaining benefit from the special education program.
Location of services	EI services are provided in natural environments, such as the child's home or in other sites in the community where infants and other toddlers without disabilities participate. Services are provided in the context of the family's normal routines.	Children with disabilities are educated in the LRE and with their typically developing peers. A child may receive services in a more restrictive environment only when the IEP team determines that education in general classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
Cost of services	Many services are provided at no cost, but some families may incur a fee based on a sliding scale that takes into account income and family size. Insurance plans may also be billed.	Children are provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). School fees may apply.
Transition	The transition process for families begins no later than 2 years, 9 months of age. A transition planning conference will be held at least 90 days before the child's third birthday.	An LEA representative will participate in the transition planning conference. If a child is determined eligible for ECSE services, the IEP will be developed by the child's third birthday.

The Transition Process

One Step at a Time

6

STEP 6

Where Will I Be Now That I'm 3?



Going to an early childhood setting for the first time is a new experience for any family with a young child. 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 an early childhood setting is the next step. We want to give you a sense of what the classroom might look like and how your child will spend his/her day.

Early childhood 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 interest areas, such as reading, dramatic play, art, writing, science, 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 playing in the interest areas noted above and children learning through play. A day in an early childhood classroom goes by quickly.

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.

"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

There are many ways you and your child can prepare for this new adventure into early childhood. Take a look at the tips and strategies on this page. Pick the ones that you feel would be beneficial to your child.

When you visit an early childhood classroom:

- Are the children happy?
- Are the children actively engaged with teachers, classroom 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?
- Will my child receive the support needed to be successful in this preschool?
- How are families involved and engaged?
- Does the room arrangement encourage active exploration and play for all the children?
- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- How are the staff trained and supervised?
- In a community program, how will IEP services be delivered to my child?
- Can I picture my child in this classroom?

Checklist:

- Help my child get excited about going to school.
- Make a list and visit community and district early childhood settings available.
- Visit early childhood programs and take pictures (after receiving permission) of the room, building, playground, and staff.
- Share pictures with my child when we talk about going to school.
- Read stories with pictures and watch videos about young children going into early childhood settings.
- Make a picture book of what children do during the day. This book might include pictures of hellos and goodbyes with my child to ease transition.
- 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.
- 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.

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 Illinois 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 our feelings.

Perhaps the most important lesson we learned is that the relationships we build with others extend beyond one meeting, once a year. The relationships that we built have supported Sarah in becoming the accomplished young woman she is today.

—Sarah and Sarah's mom

Exit IFSP Meeting: Saying Goodbye!

Congratulations! You and your child have successfully made it through EI and are now moving to Part B or another early childhood experience! There have most likely been many friends made while in EI. Know that those relationships may continue as your child continues to grow and develop under the coordination of Part B or other early childhood program.

This is a time to celebrate! If you want to share your story with others-do so! Your abilities to help your child are an accomplishment in and of themselves. Your child's progress from when they started with EI to now should be proof of the hard work and time you have put into your family's routines to continue the strategies the team helped you create.

The service coordinator will call your team together one last time to provide final updates to where your child is now with their progress. Members of the team will discuss any questions or concerns you may have and they will also collect information about the progress your child has made to compile what is known as child outcomes data. Collecting and analyzing child outcomes data for all children in EI helps the system grow and evolve, and become the best system it can be for everyone who could benefit from EI.

You will also receive a family outcomes survey within a short time after leaving EI. This survey is very important to the EI program to know whether we met our goal of assisting you, the family, in gaining the needed answers, resources, and skills needed to continue with the progress in your child's development.

Resources for Families

As families look beyond their child's third birthday, they often feel a need to expand their resource and support network. Many parents/guardians 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 to help you find other sources for information and support.

When your child turns three, you may want to expand your support network. Sharing your questions and concerns with new people can be difficult at first. Yet parents/guardians of young children with special needs find that networking becomes an important part of their lives. Keep a list of the resources that provide you with the best support. Write down the names of all of the helpful people you meet along the way in an address book or in this workbook. Your resource and support networks will give you opportunities to learn from other parents and share your knowledge and insights with others.

Family to Family

Some families find that the most helpful information they gather comes from talking with other families that understand the questions, thoughts, and feelings that come with entering a new school or early childhood program. Networking with other families can help you to feel that you are not alone. Other families can offer new ideas or strategies to try. Your parent/guardian liaison or service coordinator can help you connect with families in your area.

Parent/Guardian Groups and Organizations

There are various parent/guardian groups across Illinois that meet routinely for discussions related to parenting young children, special needs information, or special education. Some parent/guardian groups are specific to a distinct disability, others are more broad based. Some parent groups are local, regional, or statewide, while others are based in a school district or special education cooperative. You can find out about parent/guardian groups through your parent/guardian liaison, service coordinator, school district, or other parents.

The Internet and Social Media

Websites and social media can be useful places to turn to for information. Many groups and support and advocacy organizations have websites and social media sites. 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 families where they have found valuable resources.

Be careful with information you find on websites and social media.

Cross-reference what you find on a website with other sources.

Go to recommended websites for accurate information.

Good Starting Points

Child Find Project of Illinois *www.childfind-idea-il.us*

The Child Find Project offers information and resources related to the earliest possible identification of young children and their families who may benefit from EI and ECSE services. Child Find is a component of IDEA. The goal of the Child Find Project is to educate the public about the importance of EI and ECSE services for eligible children as early as possible in their development. The Child Find Project develops and disseminates informational education materials, resources, and service information to Illinois school districts, EI providers, health care providers, families, child care providers, educators, families and the general public.

Early CHOICES *www.eclre.org*

Early CHOICES is the Preschool LRE Initiative of ISBE. It promotes increasing high-quality inclusive education for each and every 3-5-year-old by providing technical assistance and professional development to early childhood professionals and families in Illinois.

Family Matters *www.fmptic.org*

Family Matters provides information, referral, linkages, and training to parents/guardians, students with disabilities, and special education professionals via a toll-free help line at 1-866-436-7842. Individuals can get assistance with special education concerns, obtain information, and request training opportunities. Family Matters trainers offer free workshops on special education rights and responsibilities and related topics.

Family Resource Center on Disabilities *www.frcd.org*

The Family Resource Center on Disabilities provides information on a family's rights and responsibilities under the law, making informed decisions, obtaining appropriate services, communicating with school professionals, networking with other parents/guardians, and EI and transition services.

Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) *www.dhs.state.il.us*

The website provides information about IDHS programs for persons with developmental disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse problems and their families. Information for families with young children includes resources on EI, disability and medical services, child care, and financial assistance and programs that offer assistance to low-income families.

Illinois EI Clearinghouse *www.eiclearinghouse.org*

The Illinois EI Clearinghouse website offers information on health, education, disability, and developmental concerns about your children through a vast collection of books, journals, videos/DVDs, CD-ROMs, special publications, and brochures.

Illinois Early Intervention Training Program *http://eitp.education.illinois.edu*

The Illinois Early Intervention Training Program provides a variety of professional development opportunities for personnel, parents or general public to attend either through online access or in person. The offerings promote evidenced based learning, best practice and family engagement opportunities among many other subjects that all support those who work with infants and toddlers.

Illinois Early Learning Project (IELP) www.illinoisearlylearning.org

IELP is a source of evidence-based, reliable information on early care and education for parents, caregivers, and teachers of young children. The website offers printable tip sheets for caregivers and parents, frequently asked questions, newsletters, podcasts, blogs, videos, and more.

Illinois Life Span Project www.illinoislifespan.org

The Illinois Life Span Project provides information and resources focused on advocacy, services, and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. Most requested information is provided on the website and via toll free help line at 1-800-588-7002. The Advocacy Toolbox section of the website includes information on EI, ECSE, government benefit programs, advocacy training, support groups, assistive technology, respite services and special needs future planning, amongst other topics. Other resources include an extensive link section that includes toy resources for children with special needs.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) www.isbe.net

ISBE is the state agency responsible for the education of your child at age 3. Multiple resources are available on the ECSE page. There are also links to the transition page, early childhood outcomes, and preschool inclusion.

Illinois STAR NET www.starnet.org

Illinois STAR NET provides a variety of opportunities for personal and professional growth for those who touch the lives of young children, birth through age 8, with an emphasis on children with special needs. STAR NET supports family-centered, researched, and effective practices in early childhood education and care. Illinois STAR NET is divided into six regions and provides information and support for families of children with disabilities.

You can also Find resources through:

- * Park district and special recreation organizations
- * Local libraries
- * Pediatric medical centers, hospitals and therapy centers
- * Bookstores

Glossary

Academic Achievement

A child's pre-academic or academic skills and progress.

Adaptations, Accommodations, and Modifications

Adaptations is often used as a broad term for accommodations and/or modifications. Generally, accommodations are changes in the presentation of classroom content, maintaining the same general curriculum material taught to typically developing students in the class while making information more accessible to a student with special needs. Accommodations are provided to allow a child to participate in typical learning activities while circumventing what a child finds challenging or difficult.

Child and Family Connections (CFC)

The agency that employs your service coordinator and manages your child's EI services.

Developmental Milestones

Physical or behavioral signs of development or maturation of infants and children. Rolling over, crawling, walking, and talking are considered developmental milestones and provide important information regarding the child's development.

Domain Review

A review of existing information provided by the parents/guardians and evaluations or observations by teachers and related service providers to determine what, if any, additional information is needed to determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services. The domain review is conducted by the IEP team and other qualified professionals. It covers all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, academic achievement, functional performance, cognitive functioning, communication status, health, hearing/vision, motor abilities, and social/emotional status.

Early Childhood (EC)

Most commonly thought of as the age range from 3-5 years. Classrooms or programs that serve children with or without disabilities might be called Early Childhood Programs.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Special education and related services provided by the public school district or special education cooperative for children 3-5 years of age that have been identified as having a disability.

Early Intervention Providers

Professionals enrolled in the Illinois EI system who provide services and supports to families that have children ages birth to 3 with special needs. Individual providers can include physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, developmental therapists, social workers/counselors, nurses, dietitians, and others.

Extended School Year (ESY) Services

Special education and related services may be provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year if the IEP team determines ESY services are needed.

Functional Performance

Skills or activities that are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement. "Functional" is used in the context of routine activities of daily living.

General Education Environment

A classroom setting where typically developing children participate in academic and nonacademic activities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The authorizing federal legislation that mandates special education and related services for individuals with disabilities, birth through 21.

Part B The section of IDEA that focuses on the requirements for providing special education and related services for children and young adults, 3 through 21 years.

Part C The section of IDEA that focuses on the requirements for providing services and supports for children birth to 3 years, and their families

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

A written statement that plans for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by an IEP team during an IEP meeting.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team

A group of individuals that are responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a child with a disability. The IEP team includes the parents/guardians of the child, at least one general education teacher, at least one special education teacher, the representative of the public school, an individual who can interpret the educational implications of evaluation results, and others who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

An IFSP is a written plan for providing EI services to an infant or toddler with a disability under IDEA and his/her family. The IFSP, based on the child's evaluation and assessment, is developed by the IFSP team and documents the child's current performance levels, measurable goals/outcomes, and services that will be provided to meet the child and family's unique needs.

Identification of Needed Assessments Form

The form that is used as part of the domain review process in reviewing information about a child in the areas of academic achievement, functional performance, cognitive functioning, communication status, health, hearing/vision, motor abilities and social/emotional status. This form is often referred to as the domain form.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The requirement that children with a disability shall be educated to the maximum extent possible with their typically developing peers.

Local Education Agency (LEA)

The public school district or other entity that is responsible for providing education to children with and without disabilities.

Measurable Annual Goals

Written by the IEP team to indicate what specific academic and functional skills a child will learn through special education and related services over a twelve month period.

Parent Liaison

A person employed by EI CFC who is also the parent or guardian of a child with special needs. This person can be a valuable resource and support as you prepare for your child moving beyond EI.

Referral Packet

The packet of information about a child that is sent from Child and Family Connections by the EI service coordinator to the public school district or community early childhood program. The referral packet can only be sent with informed written consent from the child's parent or legal guardian.

Related Services

Developmental, corrective, and other individually designed supportive services provided to help a child with a disability benefit from special education. Related services can include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, recreation, psychology and counseling, social work, orientation and mobility, and others.

Special Education

Specially designed instruction to meet the needs of a child with a disability.

Special Education Cooperative

Many school districts throughout Illinois have joined together to form cooperatives. Each cooperative is given responsibilities according to its member districts. Some responsibilities may include participating in transition, providing evaluations, writing and implementing IEPs, and providing related services.

Supplementary Aids and Services

Aides, services, and other supports are provided in general education classes, other education related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

Supports and Services

Include therapeutic, educational, and behavioral supports that are provided by members of the IEP team to enable a child with a disability to make progress on their goals and to participate in activities with children that do not have a disability.

Transition Planning Conference

The meeting that takes place when a child receiving early intervention services is between 2 years, 3 months and 2 years, 9 months. The child's parent/guardian, a service coordinator, and a representative from the school district are required to attend this meeting



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net



Illinois Department of Human Services
222 South College Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704