

North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program Procedural Guidance

Reference: Transition to Pre-School and Other Programs Policy

Transition from the Infant-Toddler Program

Introduction

Children receiving early intervention services from the NC Infant-Toddler Program must transition out of the Program at the age of three years and may experience other transitions while in the Infant-Toddler Program (ITP). Families must be informed that the entitlements afforded them and their children under the Infant-Toddler Program end at the child's third birthday.

Assisting the family with transitions, including negotiation of timelines and participants, is a major role of the Service Coordinator. The Service Coordinator must involve the family in planning transitions and provide appropriate assistance and attention to ensure that transition is as smooth as possible. The Individualized Family Service Plan team, facilitated by the Service Coordinator, must develop outcomes for the Individualized Family Service Plan related to transition from the Infant-Toddler Program.

A child and family may make numerous transitions while in the Infant-Toddler Program. Examples of such transitions include hospital to home; agency to agency; provider to provider; home to center-based, and from the Infant-Toddler Program to the Preschool Program or other community settings.

Families have the right and responsibility to make informed decisions about their choices and options. This may include having the opportunity to visit programs and agencies before decisions are made, having discussions with providers or with other families using those services, reviewing videotapes or written materials, etc.

Communities must develop and design their own local transition procedures, based upon the needs of families in the community and local resources.

Supporting families to become more informed about community transition options is important. Service providers should be careful to present facts only rather than personal bias or prejudice.

Transition Processes from the Infant-Toddler Program at Age Three Years

1. Discuss with and prepare the parent about future placements and other matters related to the child's transition at age three years.
2. The Children's Developmental Services Agency shares information with the parent about other community resources, as appropriate.
3. Written authorization from the parent to make any referrals, other than to make the child known to the Local Education Agency is required.
4. Discuss with the parent about the need for service coordination beyond age three and referral to the Care Coordination for Children (CC4C) or another community provider, as appropriate.

5. Notify the Local Educational Agency (LEA), not fewer than 90 days, but no earlier than 9 months before the third birthday of the enrolled child. Child Find Notification does not require parent consent and includes the child's name, date of birth, and contact information. In addition, it also includes the service coordinator's name and contact information and the language spoken by the child and family. *(For additional information, please refer to the Policy on Transition to Preschool and Other Programs.)*
6. Prepare the child and family for changes in service delivery, including steps to help the child adjust to and function in a new setting, as appropriate.
7. Send the **North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program Meeting Invitation** to the family, and other appropriate parties prior to adding the child's Transition Plan to the Individualized Family Service Plan and before the Transition Planning Conference is convened. This allows the parents opportunity to invite anyone they would like to the meetings and give all parties time to prepare for the meetings. If any changes are made to the provision of early intervention services, Prior Written Notice must be given. *(For additional information please refer to the Policy on Transition to Preschool and Other Programs and Policy on Procedural Safeguards.)*
8. Document in the Individualized Family Service Plan the steps to support the transition of the child from the Infant-Toddler Program, including the addition of appropriate outcomes, activities, and timelines.
9. With the approval of the family, convene a Transition Planning Conference including the EI Service Coordinator, the family, and other appropriate parties to discuss any services that the child may need upon exiting from the Infant Toddler Program. Other appropriate parties may include the Local Education Agency or other community programs offering services to young children. *(For additional information, please refer to the Policy on Transition to Preschool and Other Programs.)*
10. Any Transition Planning Conference or meeting conducted to develop the Transition Plan as described above may be combined into one meeting if certain requirements are met.
 - A. These meetings must be conducted:
 - in settings and at times that are convenient for the family; and
 - in the native language of the family or other mode of communication used by the family unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.
 - B. Meeting arrangements must be made with, and written notice provided to, the family and other participants early enough before the meeting date to ensure that they will be able to attend.
 - C. The contents of the Transition Plan must be fully explained to the parents and informed written consent must be obtained prior to the provision of early intervention services. Each early intervention service must be provided as soon as possible after the parent provides consent for that service.
11. With written parental authorization, inform the new provider about the child and family to ensure continuity of services, including evaluation and assessment information and a copy of the current Individualized Family Service Plan. New providers may include the Local Education Agency or other community programs offering services to young children.
12. Complete closure of the child's record by the Children's Developmental Services Agency at the child's third birthday.

Transition Process for Children Not Eligible for the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities

1. After a child's second birthday and prior to the child's third birthday the Service Coordinator in conjunction with Children's Developmental Services Agency staff and the parent discuss whether the child may be eligible for the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities.
2. If the child is clearly not eligible, the Service Coordinator, with the approval of the family, convenes a planning meeting to discuss other possible services that the child and family may want, need, and qualify for.
3. The Service Coordinator and family develop a transition plan that includes steps to support a smooth transition from the Infant-Toddler Program to the other Community programs, as specified by the family, by the child's 3rd birthday.
4. Meeting participants include:
 - parent, guardian, or surrogate parent;
 - Service Coordinator and representatives from current and possible future programs.

Transition Process from the ITP to the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities

The following steps outline the process for transitioning from the Infant-Toddler Program to the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities for all children who may be eligible for the Preschool Program. This process applies to children already enrolled in the Infant-Toddler Program or children who are referred to the Infant-Toddler Program shortly before their third birthday.

1. **Not fewer than 90 days and, at the discretion of all parties, not more than 9-months before the child's third birthday:**
 - A. The Service Coordinator discusses transition with the parent, including steps in the transition process and possible service options. Documentation is made in the Individualized Family Service Plan of steps to support the transition of the child from the Infant-Toddler Program, including the addition of appropriate outcomes, activities, and timelines to the Preschool Program.
 - B. Written parental authorization is required for the Service Coordinator to share more than the child's name, date of birth, and contact information with the Local Education Agency.
 - C. The Service Coordinator must convene a transition planning meeting with the following persons:
 - Parent;
 - Local Education Agency representative;
 - Representative of the evaluative agency if the child has been evaluated, and
 - Any other person or service providers who might help support and develop the transition plan.
 - D. The transition planning conference meeting may include the following steps:
 - A referral may be made to the Local Education Agency, and they may begin official paperwork, if all evaluations have been completed. (From official referral to placement should be ninety days.)

- If more evaluations are needed to determine outcomes of the Infant-Toddler Program, then the Children’s Developmental Services Agency is responsible for completing evaluations in a timely manner until the child turns three.
- Individualized Education Program development and possible placement options may be discussed.
- The transition plan, which is part of the child’s current Individualized Family Service Plan, is reviewed or updated to ensure that:
 - Infant-Toddler Program services continue until the child’s third birthday,
 - the plan delineates responsibilities of sending and receiving agencies, and
 - upon the third birthday, Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities services become available to an eligible child.

2. One to four months prior to the child’s third birthday:

A. The Preschool Individualized Education Program Team may convene a meeting. Members of this Team must include:

- parent, guardian, or surrogate;
- referring agency personnel, Service Coordinator, and current service providers, as appropriate (for children with a vision or hearing problem, a representative from the Office of Education Services);
- director of programs for exceptional children or another designee from the Local Education Agency other than the child’s teacher;
- teacher qualified to provide special education;
- teacher qualified to provide regular early childhood education or services (may be a childcare representative if the child is enrolled in a childcare program);
- person knowledgeable about evaluation results (may be one of the other members of the team); and
- other people who are appropriate.

B. The Preschool Individualized Education Program Team gives Part B rights to the parent and finalizes:

- official referral, if not done earlier;
- eligibility determination, if all evaluations have been completed (when eligibility is determined, the Individualized Education Program must be written within 30 days);
- the Individualized Education Program which may be completed and signed at this time to begin on the child's third birthday (The child’s Individualized Family Service Plan must be considered when writing the Individualized Education Program.); and
- placement decisions which may be made with official forms signed by the parent.

- C. The Service Coordinator, Local Education Agency representative and the parent, as part of the Individualized Education Program Team, work closely together to ensure that decisions regarding service provision, once the child is determined eligible for and needs special education, are made collectively by the entire Team;
- D. at the time of the Individualized Education Program meeting, if differences between team members exist regarding the services for the child, the Individualized Education Program Team must try to come to consensus; and
- E. if the Individualized Education Program Team cannot reach consensus, then the Local Education Agency must make the decision and the parent advised of his rights to due process if he is not in agreement with the Team's or the Local Education Agency's decision on educational services.

3. Upon a child's third birthday:

- A. The LEA assumes responsibility for ensuring a free and appropriate public education and guaranteeing protection of child and family rights.
- B. The Individualized Education Program becomes effective. If a child becomes eligible over the summer, an Individualized Education Program may be written for services to begin at the beginning of the school year if the child is not eligible for extended school year.

Eligibility Categories for the Preschool Program

The term "preschool children with special needs" includes all three- and four-year-old children and those five-year-old children who are ineligible for kindergarten and who, because of permanent or temporary cognitive, communicative, social-emotional, or adaptive disabilities, are unable to have all of their developmental needs met in a normal environment without special education and related services. Preschool children may become eligible for services upon reaching their third birthday. Categories of eligibility, along with other details about Preschool Program services can be found on the NC Department of Public Instruction website, www.dpi.state.nc.us/, and the NC Office of Early Learning, www.ncpublicschools.org/earlylearning/.