

Transition to Early Childhood Special Education

A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities Who Are Turning Three



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Family and Social Service Administration, Bureau of Child Development

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Family and Social Service Administration, Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, Bureau of Child Development Services, First Steps

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

On or before the third birthday, a child moves from First Steps Early Intervention services (First Steps) to Early Childhood Special Education services and/or other community services. Moving from program to program is called transition. This guide is to help parents understand what happens when their child makes the transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education from public schools. Parents need to be aware that there is a plan for transition and that there are regulations that guide the process. A child's transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education should be a time of collaboration among parents, First Steps, and school personnel.

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Step 1: Planning Ahead

Transitions are natural events for all children and their families.

Successful transitions begin as people think about the future, plan ahead and work together.

As your child nears age 3, he or she may transition from the First Steps System to Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start or other services. In Indiana, infants and toddlers, birth through age two, receive services from various providers under the Bureau of Child Development Services in the Family and Social Services Administration. Eligible children with disabilities who are ages 3 to 22 years receive special education services through public schools. Although there are differences in the process and eligibility under the two agencies, families who are aware of the differences find that transition can be smooth. Families need to be prepared for the changes that are about to occur.

This parent guide is a tool to assist you and others who are involved with your child to plan together to make wise decisions for your child. A transition checklist has been prepared to help you keep track of what steps in the transition process have taken place (**See Attachment 1, Transition Checklist**). Other resources may also be helpful as you begin to think about transition: friends, family or parent organizations (**See Attachment 2, Additional Resources**).

There are important activities and timelines that must occur during the transition process. These activities and timelines must occur in order to have a smooth transition process for families, children, First Steps providers, and Early Childhood Education Staff (**See Attachment 3, Transition Activities and Timelines**). Children are no longer eligible for early intervention services past the age of three.

To Plan Ahead...

Our family will:

- talk about transition with our service coordinator;
- decide how we will be involved in the planning process;
- decide if we want to have a friend, relative or other person involved;
- write a transition outcome for our individualized family service plan (IFSP);
- consider talking with friends or others to learn about transition;
- sign a consent form for release of information to the school or other agency; and
- provide birth certificate, updated immunization record, proof of residency within the school district, medical or other records as needed.

First Steps staff will:

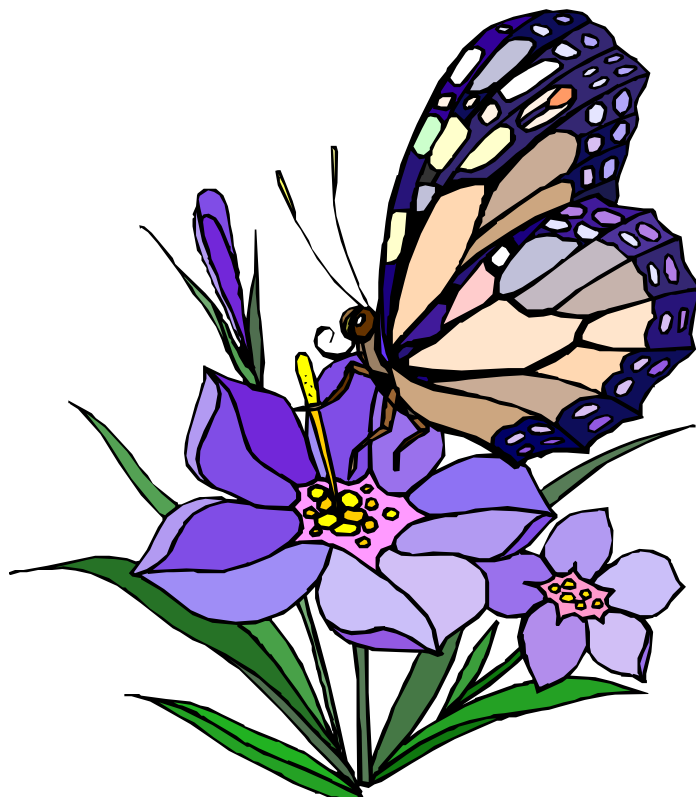
- give our family formal written information about transition processes and rights;
- begin the process by addressing transition in the IFSP;
- discuss with us the federal child find requirement to send the child's name, date of birth, and family contact information to the school system 18 months prior to our child's third birthday; information is sent twice a year, generally in April and October;
- obtain our written consent to send our child's records, including the IFSP and evaluation information to the school system, 6 months prior to our child's third birthday;
- schedule the transition planning conference with us and the Early Childhood Special Education staff at least 90 days prior to our child's third birthday; and
- develop with the family and team an outcome related to transition.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will:

- receive and review referral information from First Steps;
- work together with our family and First Steps staff on transition planning;
- attend the transition conference;
- share information with our family about the evaluation process, determination of eligibility, and placement opportunities;
- review records and determine the need for additional evaluation; and
- obtain our written consent for additional evaluations and schedule evaluation times with our family.

Some Questions to Consider:

- What are our hopes for our child?
- What does our child need to grow and develop?
- Who do we want our child to play and learn with?
- Where would our child be if he or she did not have a developmental delay or disability?



Step 2: Transition Conference

The transition conference is the time when you and your team from First Steps and Early Childhood Special Education staff meet to develop your child's transition plan. This plan outlines the steps that your family and the two service programs will follow over the next months to help make your child's transition smooth and pleasant. The transition conference occurs at least three months before your child's third birthday, at a mutually agreed time.

If your child's birthday is in the summer or early fall, the transition conference may occur in early spring to allow time for plans to be in place before the school year begins. This is because some children may be eligible for Extended School Year (ESY) services. These are special education services beyond the regular school year provided to a student in order for the student to receive a FAPE (free appropriate public education). A decision about providing ESY services is made on a case-by-case basis by the case conference committee (See page 7).

At the Transition Conference...

Our family will:

- share our hopes for our child;
- receive procedural safeguards information;
- ask questions about anything that is unclear; and
- agree to participate in transition activities.

First Steps staff will:

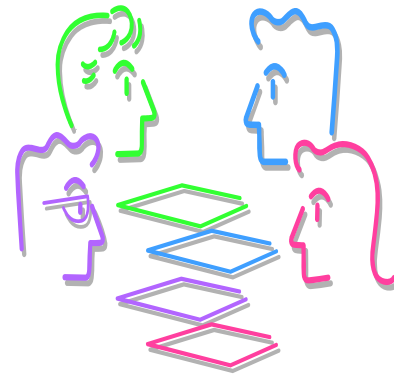
- schedule and chair the transition conference;
- share information as requested by our family;
- participate actively in the transition plan;
- invite providers of other appropriate services, with parent consent; and
- modify the transition outcome and strategies to add strategies for the meeting.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will:

- attend the transition conference;
- explain and answer questions about procedural safeguards under Article 7;
- discuss possible service options and places where services might be provided; and
- listen to our family's concerns about transition.

Some Questions to Ask at the Transition Conference:

- How will our child's eligibility for special education be determined?
- What additional testing will be done?
- Who can we call if we have questions?
- What are the different ways services can be provided?
- If our child is in a private early childhood program or Head Start, how will services be provided?
- Who do we contact if we and our child want to visit a class?
- When will we meet to decide on eligibility?



Step 3: Evaluation

Children who are eligible for First Steps are not automatically eligible for Early Childhood Special Education. The eligibility criteria for Early Childhood Special Education is different from the eligibility criteria in First Steps (**See Attachment 4, Program Comparison**). Also, some children who received physical or occupational therapy through First Steps may not be eligible to receive these services through Early Childhood Special Education. In First Steps, occupational and physical therapy may become the primary service options. In the school, occupational and physical therapy may be provided when the case conference committee agrees that the therapy is necessary to enable the child to benefit from special education and the therapy directly impacts educational progress. Therapy needs for medical reasons or for the ability to function in any aspect of daily life are not provided by the schools. In the educational setting, occupational and physical therapy are related services, provided only when needed to help the child benefit from special education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each child who has been referred to Early Childhood Special Education be evaluated to find out whether he or she is eligible to receive special education services. The evaluation will be used to make decisions that will help your child receive needed education services. The initial evaluation must be conducted and the case conference convened within 60 instructional days from the date the written parent consent is received by certified personnel. By the eligible child's third birthday the school shall:

- Complete its evaluation;
- Convene a case conference committee to determine eligibility for early childhood special education and related services;
- Develop an individualized education program; and
- Implement the individualized education program.

Note: *The 60-day time line cannot be used to deny services to a child who is three years of age and in transition from Part C (First Steps) to Part B (Early Childhood Special Education).*

Some of the information needed for the evaluation may come from a review of your child's records. New information may come from additional informal or natural play situations, and formal assessments with required activities. An evaluation team of qualified professionals will work together for the evaluation.

Children who receive Early Childhood Special Education services must first be found eligible under one or more of the Article 7 (Indiana special education rules) disability categories (**See Attachment 4, Program Comparison**).

During the Evaluation Process...

Our family will:

- share with the team what we feel is important to learn about our child and family;
- try to schedule evaluation activities at our child's best time of day;
- ask questions about the evaluation, what will be done and why;
- request to be present during testing if possible;
- find out who to call for assistance; and
- learn what the team expects to learn about our child.

First Steps staff will:

- with written permission from parents, share records and testing information;
- invite school staff to see the child during current activities;
- answer questions for the family and the Early Childhood Special Education staff; and
- assist the family in exploring community resources.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will:

- explain and plan the evaluation with the family;
- locate and review records and testing information that is already on file;
- decide what new information is needed and provide team to evaluate child; and
- complete the evaluation and conduct the case conference committee meeting within 60 instructional days from the date written parent permission is received by certified personnel.

Questions to Ask During the Evaluation Process:

- What will be done and why?
- What information can the team expect to learn?
- What does the family hope to learn about our child?
- May a family member be present when our child is tested?
- How can we help?

In the event your child does not receive early childhood special education services by the third birthday because of a breakdown in the transition process due either to your early intervention service coordinator or the school failing to meet transition requirements, you may file a written complaint with the Bureau of Child Development Services or the Division of Exceptional Learners. For more information refer to each agency's "Notice of Parent Rights."

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Services
Bureau of Child Development Services
402 West Washington Street, Room W-386
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-1144
1-800-441-7837

Indiana Department of Education
Division of Exceptional Learners
Room 229 State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-0570
1-877-851-4106



Step 4: Case Conference Committee Meeting

The case conference committee (CCC) meeting will be a significant event for your child and family. Those who know your child best have an important role in developing the individualized education program (IEP). Taking time to prepare for this role will make a difference in the educational services developed for your child.

The purpose of the CCC meeting is to determine eligibility, develop an IEP, and determine appropriate services and placement. All of the observations and assessments that have been carried out by family members and professionals will be put to practical use. Goals will be written to reflect the team's aims for your child. Services, including therapies, to reach those goals will be planned. Decisions will be made about the services your child will receive and where they will be provided. Family members, First Steps staff with parent permission, and Early Childhood Special Education staff, contribute to these decisions. The CCC members must include the parent(s), an early childhood special education teacher, an individual representing general early childhood education, a public agency representative, and someone who can explain evaluation results when no other committee member can interpret the evaluation results.

You are likely to be asked to describe your child's current development, along with what you wish your child to learn during the next year.

During the CCC Meeting...



Our family will:

- be ready to tell what our child is doing now - **the next page can be used to bring your ideas to the case conference committee meeting;**
- consider inviting a friend, relative or other person important in our child's life;
- participate in making decisions about eligibility and future steps; and
- discuss possibilities for services and placement.

First Steps staff will:

- answer questions that the family may have;
- consider evaluation results and possible goals and objectives for the IEP; and
- assist our family in finding community services if our child is not eligible. The CCC meeting must occur prior to the child's third birthday. The service coordinator cannot bill for service coordination activities past the child's third birthday.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will:

- choose a date for the CCC meeting at a mutually agreed upon time and invite us with advance notice by letter;
- answer questions from our family;
- participate in making decisions about eligibility and future steps;
- consider possible goals and objectives for the IEP;
- conduct the case conference committee within the 60 instructional day time line and prior to our child's third birthday; and
- implement the IEP by the date of the third birthday (if the student's third birthday occurs during the summer, the case conference committee determines whether ESY services are required. If not required, the student's IEP will be initiated at the beginning of the school year).

Preparing for the Case Conference Committee Meeting

A look at my child's development.....

Area of Development	Some things that my child knows or already does	Some things that I would like my child to learn
Play – sharing, taking turns, playing by himself and with others		
Language – sharing needs, following directions, listening, nonverbal communication, concepts such as up, down, in, on		
Dressing – putting clothes on and off, zipping, buttons		
Toileting – sitting, standing, timing, training		
Pre-Reading – looking at pictures, listening to stories, favorite characters		
Meals – eating with utensils, eating a variety of foods, table manners, drinking from a cup		
Thinking – colors, sorting solving problems, counting		
Moving – walking, running, coloring, building with blocks, playing ball		
Other		

Least Restrictive Environment

By law your child's placement must occur in the least restrictive environment (LRE) where the child's goals can be met. Each school district must ensure that a continuum of placement options is available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. LRE means that to the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities. For school districts, some alternative methods for meeting the least restrictive environment requirements may include:

1. providing opportunities for the participation (even part-time) of preschool children with disabilities in other early childhood programs operated by public agencies (e.g., Head Start);
2. placing children with disabilities in community-based or school-based early childhood programs designed for children without disabilities; and
3. locating classes for preschool children with disabilities in regular elementary schools.

In each case, placement must be based on the child's needs, and it must be a decision agreed to by the parent and the school's representative. The time for making this decision is at the case conference committee meeting. The goal is to have your child work on his/her learning goals and still be learning with children who do not have disabilities. Parents will be asked to give written permission for services. You will receive a copy of the evaluation report, the IEP, and the case conference committee report. Your child's IEP must be updated at least once a year, and you will be invited to the meeting.

What Options May Be Considered if Our Child is Not Eligible for Special Education Services?

- Head Start
- Community early childhood programs
- Community recreation programs
- Library story hours
- Mom's morning out programs
- Cooperative Play groups

If your child is not eligible for services in the school, your transition plan can include exploring other resources.

While these programs are the parents' responsibility upon the child's third birthday, the First Steps Service Coordinator can help families locate information about funding and scholarships until the child turns three.



Step 5: Putting the IEP into Action

Writing an IEP that truly meets your child's needs is an important accomplishment for you and the other members of the team. Now it is time to put the plan into action. This is an exciting time of new beginnings for your child and your family. As with anything new, many questions will arise, and decisions will need to be made. It may be necessary to provide some additional training for the staff, changes in surrounding or equipment, adaptations, modifications or specially chosen materials in order to help your child learn in the place selected. It's important for you and other members of your CCC to share information to make these decisions together in the best interest of your child.

Other issues may include planning for your child's first days in the new program and finding ways to make those transitional days happy and successful. This may require trial visits to the new classroom, sample bus rides or bringing a familiar toy from home. The key to assuring a good beginning is communication among all who know and care for your child: your family, First Steps, Early Childhood Special Education staff, and others your child sees regularly.

Important issues that should be considered:

- A Birth Certificate and immunizations records must be available at the time of enrollment
- Transportation
- Special equipment or materials
- Medications
- Special diet
- Staff orientation or training

Possible Questions About New Programs:

From families	From children
What transportation services will be available for my child?	Who are all these people?
Can my child visit the new school with me?	Can I play with these toys?
Does the teacher understand the times when my child needs special help?	Can I bring my blanket to school?
How do the teachers and families communicate?	What do I do if I'm tired or hungry?
Are there activities for families?	Who will help me?
What supplies will my child need?	

To Put the IEP into Action...

Our family will:

- ask questions and be open to new ideas;
- help the staff at the new program understand my child;
- communicate with our child's former and present care givers about him being successful in the new program; and
- help my child feel excited and confident about this transition.

First Steps staff will:

- assist us in asking questions about the new program;
- provide discharge summaries (all services); and
- help my child anticipate the new program.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will:

- arrange for the implementation of the IEP;
- consider our family's needs in making decisions;
- communicate with our family and staff from First Steps; and
- welcome our child and family.

Wrapping Up:

At this point...

you and those people who have been and will be working with your child have worked through the transition process. You have new beginnings and new people that are involved with your child and family. Transitions are always better with an atmosphere of working together, sharing views, and finding creative ways to help make a successful transition for everyone. You have practiced ways of transition planning that we hope you can use in the future.



TRANSITION CHECKLIST

Attachment 1

(Use this checklist to help you keep track of what steps have taken place)

Planning ahead:

- First Steps discussed with us the federal child find requirement to send the child’s name, date of birth, and family contact information to the school system 18 months prior to our child’s third birthday, during procedural safeguards discussion at Intake and before the child reaches 18 months of age.
- First Steps transmitted to the school system, with our written consent, our child’s records, including the most recent IFSP and evaluation information, six months prior to our child’s third birthday.
- Transition conference has been scheduled at least 90 days before my child’s 3rd birthday.
- Community resources have been located.

Transition Conference:

- Parent’s rights in special education were explained.
- Options for early childhood special education and other appropriate services were discussed.
- A transition time line was developed.
- A transition plan with an outcome for transition was written into the IFSP.

Evaluation:

- We signed consent for evaluation.
- Records from Early Intervention Services were received at school.
- Information from our family was considered.
- Evaluation by the evaluation team was completed and the case conference committee meeting was convened within 60 instructional days and by the 3rd birthday.

Case Conference Committee meeting:

- The CCC meeting was scheduled with adequate notice.
- Discussion and decision-making included our family, First Steps, with our permission, and Early Childhood Special Education staff.
- Eligibility for special education was decided.
- If the child was eligible, the IEP was written and agreement reached. See your “Notice of Parent Rights” for steps to take if there is disagreement.
- Consent for placement signed by parents.

Putting the IEP into Action

- Our child made the transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education services or to another pre-kindergarten arrangement.
- The IEP was in place by our child’s 3rd birthday (unless the child has a summer birthday, see ESY page 7).
- We worked together to resolve any issues that arose.
- All are continuing to communicate during this time of change.

Names and telephone numbers of people involved in transition conference:

First Steps Service Coordinator: (Name) _____ (Number) _____
 Early Childhood Special Education: (Name) _____ (Number) _____
 Other: (Name) _____ (Number) _____
 Other: (Name) _____ (Number) _____

Public School Evaluation Team:

Name:	Specialty Area:	Phone:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

My Questions and Concerns:

Additional Resources

Attachment 2

Indiana Partnership Center

The primary focus of the Center is to promote and strengthen partnerships for children's learning. The Center has information related to helpful research, promising programs, successful partnership models, tools for parents, education and training, and other web sites.

Website: <http://www.fscp.org/>

Phone: 317-205-2595

Toll free: 1-866-391-1039

About Special Kids (ASK), formally known as Indiana Parent Information Network (IPIN)

This is an organization of parents, professionals, and volunteers working together to provide information, peer support and education and training to families of children with special needs.

Website: <http://www.ai.org.ipin>

Phone: 317-257-8683

Toll free: 1-800-359-2010

IN*SOURCE

This organization consists of families and service providers in Indiana who provide information and training necessary to help assure effective educational programs and appropriate services for infants, toddlers, children and young adults with disabilities.

Website: <http://www.insource.org>

Phone: 1-574-234-7101

Toll free: 1-800-332-4433

Other website resources:

First Steps

http://www.state.in.us/fssa/first_step/index.html

Division of Exceptional Learners

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/exceptional>

Department of Education

<http://www.doe.state.in.us>

Indiana Reading List

<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/standards/readinglist.html>

United States Department of Education – Publications for Parents

<http://www.ed.gov/about/pubs/intro/index.html>

On or before the third birthday, a child leaves First Steps and moves to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) or another appropriate program. First Steps services end when the child turns three. The following chart indicates the required timeline for activities that need to occur to make sure that transition is smooth and effective for the child, family, and service providers.

TIME	ACTIVITIES	WHO
Entry into First Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family is introduced to transition. • Family questions about transition, service options and natural environments are answered. • Planning for any upcoming transitions occurs in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). 	First Steps and parent
18 months prior to child’s third birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to comply with Part C and Part B mutual Child Find obligations in federal law, First Steps electronically sends 18 month Child Find data (child’s name and date of birth, and parent’s contact information) to the public school twice a year, generally in April and October • The Service Coordinator discusses this transmission of Child Find data with the child’s parents during procedural safeguards at Intake and before the child reaches 18 months of age. 	First Steps and parent
6 months prior to third birthday (30 months of age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service coordinator reviews evaluation/eligibility documentation with the family and the procedural safeguards on transmission of information including evaluation reports and the most recent IFSP; discusses the need for the transition conference; and, plans for exploring options for the child/family after the third birthday. • An outcome related to transition is included in the IFSP. • If the parent gives written consent, the service coordinator forwards copies to the school of legal settlement. • If the parent declines to give consent, the service coordinator explains continuity of services may not occur. 	First Steps and parent
At least 90 days before third birthday and before the end of school year if child’s birthday is in summer or early fall (33 months of age)	<p>Prior to 33 months of age, or earlier if agreed to by all parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service coordinator communicates with parent and receiving school district as to a convenient time to hold transition conference and chairs the transition conference. • A transition plan should be developed which includes desired outcomes, identified service providers, outline regarding transfer of information, timelines with dates of anticipated conclusion of early intervention services, commencement of subsequent activities, and with concurrence of the parent, a statement of the family’s priorities, concerns, and resources related to transition experiences. • If the parent does not give consent to inviting the school representative to the transition conference, the service coordinator should make the parent aware that a delay in referring the child to the school system may cause a delay in receiving services if the parent reverses the decision upon the child’s third birthday. 	First Steps with parent, ECSE staff, current service providers, and other potential service providers with parent consent
Prior to third birthday and within 60 instructional days from the date written parent consent is received by certified personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial educational evaluation must be conducted and the case conference committee (CCC) meeting convened within the required timelines. • ECSE staff reviews procedural safeguards with parent and obtains written parental consent to evaluate. • After reviewing existing data and with input from the parents, additional data that is needed is identified. • During the personal meeting to discuss the referral for an educational evaluation, ECSE staff offer the parent the opportunity to have the results of the evaluation explained prior to the case conference committee (CCC) meeting. • ECSE staff notifies the parent and ensures the evaluation reports are available no less than five days prior to the CCC meeting. • The First Steps service coordinator and Head Start, if Head Start may be a placement option, may be invited to the CCC with parent consent. • The CCC will review evaluations, determine eligibility, develop the individualized education program (IEP), and document decisions. 	ECSE representatives, parent, other service providers with parent consent
After the CCC meeting (36 months of age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECSE staff will ensure the parent is aware of all specifics regarding implementing the IEP. • With parental consent, the sending and receiving teachers and related services personnel may confer to support a smooth transition. • If the child is not eligible for ECSE, the service coordinator will work with the family to explore other appropriate service options and resources. This must occur prior to the child’s third birthday. 	ECSE staff First Steps

<p>Program Lead Agency</p>	<p>Early Childhood Special Education Division of Exceptional Children</p>	<p>Early Intervention – First Steps Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Services Bureau of Child Development Services</p>
<p>Eligible Children</p>	<p>3 – 5 year olds with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autism spectrum disorder, communication disorder, deaf-blind, developmental delay, emotional disability, hearing impairment, learning disability, mental disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, and • who, by reason of the disability, require special education and related services. </p>	<p>Children from birth to 36 months of age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental delay in cognitive, physical, including vision and hearing, communication, social-emotional development, adaptive development; or • Diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay. </p>
<p>Services</p>	<p>Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, designed to meet the unique needs of a student eligible for special education and related services. Special education includes instruction conducted in the classroom, the home, hospital and institutions and other settings. It includes speech-language pathology services.</p> <p>Related services include, but are not limited to: audiological services; counseling; early identification and assessment; medical services for evaluation; occupational services; orientation and mobility; parent counseling and training; physical therapy; psychological services; recreation; rehabilitation counseling; school health services; social work services in the school; transportation; other supportive</p>	<p>Individualized services on the IFSP include but are not limited to: assistive technology devices and services, audiology, family training, counseling and home visits, health services, medical services only for diagnostic evaluation purposes, nursing services, nutrition services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, service coordination services, social work services, special instruction, speech-language pathology, transportation and related services, vision services.</p>
<p>Individual plans</p>	<p>The Individualized Education Program includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the student’s present levels of educational performance. • A statement of measurable annual goals including benchmarks or short-term objectives. • A statement of special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the student. • A statement of program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the student. • The projected dates for initiation of services and program modifications and anticipated length, frequency, location, and duration of services and modifications. • An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in general education classes or settings. • A statement of how student’s progress toward annual goals, including benchmarks or short term objectives will be measured and how the parents will be informed of progress at least as often as parents of non-disabled students are informed. • A statement of student’s need for extended school year services. • Identification of placement in the least restrictive environment. • A statement listing or describing any additional devices or services that the case conference committee determined on the basis of the general and specific factors listed in Article 7, that the student needs in order to receive a free and appropriate education. 	<p>The Individualized Family Service Plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the child’s present levels of physical development, including vision, hearing, and health status; cognitive development; communication development; social or emotional development; and adaptive development. • With parental agreement, a statement of the family’s resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing their child’s development. • A statement of major outcomes to be achieved for the child and family which include criteria, procedures, and timelines. • A statement of early intervention services necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family related to the outcome statements which include frequency, intensity and method of delivering services. • Natural environments including justification of extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment. • Location where a service will be provided, payment arrangements, projected dates for initiating each service and anticipated duration dates of services. • To the extent appropriate, a description of medical and other services needed but not provided through early intervention, and funding sources for each service. • The name of service coordinator. • Steps to support transition.
<p>Integration</p>	<p>“Least Restrictive Environment”</p> <p>“To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities,...are educated with nondisabled students. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students from the general education environment to special classes or separate facilities occurs only when it is documented that education in general education classes using supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved.”</p>	<p>“Natural Environment”</p> <p>“To the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate.”</p>

- 1. When do my child's First Steps services stop?**
 - Services will stop on your child's third birthday.
- 2. Why does my child have to leave the First Steps program?**
 - In Indiana, the lead agencies for providing early intervention for infants and toddlers and early childhood special education are different. Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Development Services (First Steps) is responsible for services to children ages birth to 3 and Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners (Early Childhood Special Education) is responsible for educational services for children ages 3 – 5. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that schools assume responsibility for special education upon the child's third birthday.
- 3. What is going to happen near the time when my child turns three?**
 - Children who are suspected of having a disability that requires educational intervention will be referred to the public school for evaluation.
 - The First Steps Service Coordinator will assist families of children whose skills are developmentally age-appropriate in finding other services and potential funding sources as appropriate.
- 4. Will my child be able to stay with his/her present therapist?**
 - Children who are eligible for Early Childhood Special Education services may need continued therapy. Schools employ their own personnel to provide those services.
 - Children with other non-First Steps funding resources may choose to continue with their present therapist in addition to what is provided by the public school.
- 5. What is Special Education?**
 - Special education consists of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of an eligible child that result from the child's disability and adaptations to ensure access to appropriate activities. Special education assists the child with disabilities in taking advantage of, or responding to, educational programs and opportunities. Special education provides a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment to meet the educational needs of each eligible child regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. All students found eligible for special education are guaranteed a free appropriate public education.
- 6. Does Special Education mean that my child has a "label?"**
 - There are eligibility criteria for special education just as there are for First Steps. To receive special education services a child must have a particular category of disability. The thirteen disability categories are: autism spectrum disorder, communication disorder, deaf-blind, developmental delay (early childhood only), emotional disability, hearing impairment, learning disability, mental disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairment. The disability label is necessary for eligibility and to determine the educational needs of the child. The disability label does not determine the services for the child. At least every three years, the eligibility is re-considered.
- 7. How is my child's eligibility for special education determined?**
 - A comprehensive individual evaluation will be done to determine the existence of a disability and the child's educational needs. A review of existing evaluations and information provided by parents and current service providers will be done as part of the initial evaluation. The evaluation will be conducted by a team of qualified professionals in the area of suspected disability. The area of suspected disability will determine the evaluation components. A case conference committee, of which you are a member, will consider the information and decide if your child is eligible for special education services.

8. How are my child's services determined?

- The Case Conference Committee, of which you will be a member, first determines present levels of performance, then sets goals and objectives for your child (What would you like for your child to do that he is not doing now?). The committee determines which services are appropriate to make progress toward those goals and objectives as well as how often and where services are provided. Services may include therapies as well as special education instruction. Therapies in the schools will be educationally oriented rather than medically based.

9. Will services be provided in my home?

- A continuum of services is provided by your local public school. The Case Conference Committee will determine the most appropriate services for your child and where they will occur.

10. Will transportation be provided if services are not in my home?

- Transportation is considered a related service and will be provided if the Case Conference Committee determines it is necessary to enable the child to benefit from special education. Parents shall not be required to provide transportation. If the parent does transport the child subject to agreement with the school, the school will pay for mileage at the per mile rate that school personnel are reimbursed.

11. What happens to my child's services during the summer?

- Services are written according to the school calendar; therefore services are usually terminated during the summer unless the Case Conference Committee determines that Extended School Year (ESY) services are necessary. ESY services may be based on several factors, such as difficulty maintaining a critical skill, regression of skills if ESY services are not provided or special and unusual circumstances. The school must ensure the ESY services are available when necessary to provide a free appropriate public education.

12. What early childhood placement options such as community preschools or Head Start are available for my child?

- According to federal and state laws, the child's "placement" is decided by the case conference committee. Placement options tend to vary from school district to school district. However, all are guided by the mandate that children be educated in the "least restrictive environment" (children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate).

13. May I visit a prospective placement between now and the case conference?

- Discuss prospective placement options in concert with the First Steps service coordinator and public school personnel who can help you make arrangements to visit a prospective placement site. Parents are encouraged to visit sites before final plans are made.

14. May I invite a child care teacher or Head Start teacher to the transition conference or case conference committee?

- With parent consent, other individuals who may have knowledge of the child may participate in the transition planning conference or case conference committee. When invited, school personnel are expected to attend a transition conference.

15. How much will Early Childhood Special Education services cost me?

- The local school district will be financially responsible for providing educationally related services to a child who is found eligible for Early Childhood Special Education. There is no cost to the parent.

16. What resources might help pay for some of my child's medical needs?

- If your child is on Children With Special Health Care Services, the program will continue.
- If your child is involved in medically based therapies, private insurance or Hoosier Health Wise insurance may be available to continue those therapies.

EVALUATION
Transition to Early Childhood Special Education
A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities Who Are Turning Three

The intent of this document is to help parents understand what happens when their child makes the transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education. This document is provided to assist families experience a smooth and effective transition.

We are interested in tracking the use of the document and its effectiveness. We would appreciate your letting us know what you think. Please complete and mail the evaluation form to:

Sheron Cochran
Indiana Department of Education
Division of Exceptional Learners
Room 229 State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Fax: 317-232-0589 **email address: scochran@doe.state.in.us**

Today's Date: _____

Circle Primary Role: **Parent** **Infant/Toddler Provider** **School Personnel**
Other _____

Overall, what do you think of the Guidelines?

Readable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Relevant	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Very helpful	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> No

How did you use this document?

What specific sections/suggestions were most useful to you?

What specific information would you like to see included for additional help?

General Comments:

Thanks for taking time to complete this evaluation.