



Indiana's Transition Initiative

Smooth and Effective Transition of Young Children

A Joint Position Statement of
Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners
Indiana Principal Leadership Academy
Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family Resources, Bureau of Child
Development (First Steps)
The Indiana Head Start Association
Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral (IACCRR)

The Challenge

Transition, which involves a process of movement from one environment to another, can be intimidating and uncertain, and, from the family's perspective, a major issue.

- Families report transitions as stressful, often full of anxiety, confusion, and frustration with the transition process (Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, & Stella, 1988).
- Families report that transitions are time consuming (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, & Fowler 1986).
- Families express concern about the lack of coordination between professionals (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992).

Every agency that serves young children, with and without disabilities, faces issues related to transition. As the number and type of provider agencies change and grow, or as programs change and grow, communities need to begin thinking about transition in more focused ways rather than as a series of events in a child's life.

- Agencies report frustration with the process that include: inadequate time for successful implementation, lack of commitment from community partners, lack of knowledge about partnering agencies, and lack of training regarding transition issues (Hains, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988; Rous et al., 1994).
- Because transition occurs across agencies, collaboration is essential but often given minimal attention (Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous et al., 1994; Wesly & Buysse, 1996).
- Agencies report that collaborative, formalized policies and procedures are vital to the success of the transition process for all involved participants but often policies and procedures are never formalized (Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous et al., 1994; Wolery, 1989).
- Recognition that change must occur at the local level is a necessary element for improvement to occur in the transition process (Rouse, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1999).
- Early childhood transition has been identified as an area needing improvement in Indiana. Federal and state transition regulations were implemented inconsistently in many communities (Indiana Self Assessment Report Continuous Improvement for submission to US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, January, 2002).

Position

In order to address the above challenges, the Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners, the Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family Resources, Bureau of Child Development

(First Steps), the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy, the Indiana Head Start Association, and the Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral take the position that a comprehensive, community-wide transition system is necessary to ensure positive and effective transition experiences for children and families. We believe this system includes:

- An interagency team that assesses the needs of the whole community, with all stakeholders involved, while ensuring the successful movement of children and families between and among agencies (Rous et al., 1994).
- Collaboratively developed policies and procedures, which are essential to the success of the community-wide transition system (Rous, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1999).
- Inclusion of the four critical components for implementing effective transitions: administrative supports, staff involvement and training, family involvement, and child preparation (Hains et al., 1988; Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1999).
- Change at the local level that is supported and facilitated at the state level (Rous et al., 1999; Miller, 1992).

Transition success relies on a collaborative team approach between all agencies and individual participants within the community that fosters understanding and agreement on key transition activities, issues, procedures, and formalization of agreements. With advance planning and preparation of the child, family, and staff, the process can be a positive, effective experience for everyone involved. Indiana's Transition Initiative for Young Children seeks to help Indiana communities assess current transition practices and train community teams on becoming a team by assisting them to identify barriers, prioritize transition activities for implementation, and develop a transition work plan. Our hope is that this initiative will serve as a catalyst for change.

Signatures

Robert A. Marra Associate Superintendent Indiana Department of Education	Marie Pace President Indiana Head Start Association
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Lanier DeGrella Deputy Director Bureau of Child Development Division of Family Resources	Marsha Thompson Executive Director Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral
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Vince Barnes
Executive Director
Indiana Principal Leadership Academy