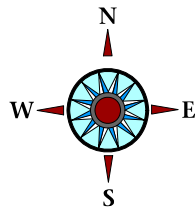


First Steps Transition Team

a division of

Cluster D Local Planning and Coordinating Council

(877) 811-1644



The Cluster D Transition Team will strive for excellence in providing smooth, interagency transitions for families, parents and their children birth through kindergarten. We will collaborate to support successful, child-centered transitions through communication, education and information for families, agencies and our community.

TRANSITION FROM FIRST STEPS

BENTON, BOONE, CARROLL,
CLINTON, FOUNTAIN, MONTGOMERY,
TIPPECANOE, WHITE, WARREN
COUNTIES



First Steps

transition (tran-zi'-shun) Passage from one place or stage or state to another; change.

All of us go through many transitions in our lives. You and your family will soon go through a time of transition as your child turns 3 and is no longer eligible for First Steps services.

Deciding what comes next for your young child is an important journey with many steps. Families and service providers walk through this transition period together, one step at a time.

This booklet is a guide for you from your First Steps Transition Team so that you will know what comes next and how to prepare for each step along the way.

TRANSITION FROM FIRST STEPS

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – the federal law that requires states to provide a free and appropriate education to all children, including those who have special needs.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) – The written plan for how a child with special needs will receive his/her education. It includes specific goals, where & how often the child will receive services & who will be involved.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) – The written plan for services in First Steps for children from birth to age 3. It includes what outcomes we will try to help the child achieve, who will provide services, where and how often.

Multidisciplinary team – Two or more professionals representing two or more “disciplines” that relate to a child’s developmental or educational needs, such as speech therapy, developmental therapy, physical therapy, medical, psychological, etc.

Part B –The section of the federal law I.D.E.A. that has to do with preschool services for children from 3 to 5 who have special educational needs.

Part C - The section of the federal law I.D.E.A. that pertains to services for children from birth to age 3 who have a disability, are developmentally delayed or who are at risk of being delayed in their development.

Service Coordinator – The First Steps staff person who works with a family to obtain and monitor appropriate developmental services for eligible children until their 3rd birthday.

GLOSSARY

Article 7 - The state law that details the rules & regulations that schools and agencies in Indiana must use to comply with the federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Special Education Act (IDEA). Copies are available at (800) 833-2198, or on-line at www.doe.state.in.us by clicking on "Programs & Services, then "Division of Special Education".

Case Conference Committee (CCC) - The team of people assembled to make decisions about the education of a child with special needs. The Committee includes the child's family members and staff from Early Childhood Special Education services and may include representatives from other services the child receives, such as First Steps.

Developmental delay - When a child does not acquire skills within the typical time period or during the time frame that most children usually learn or begin to do a certain skill.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) - The division of the local school system that provides educational services for preschool children (ages 3-5) with special needs.

Early Head Start - A federally funded, community-based program for income-eligible families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women. Its mission is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning.

First Steps - Indiana's early intervention service system. It provides information, therapies and other intervention for families with children from birth to age 3 who are developmentally delayed or at risk of being delayed in their development.

Head Start - A federally funded school readiness program offering comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to income-eligible or disabled preschool-aged children and their families.

STEP 1: PLANNING AHEAD

Successful transitions begin as people think about the future, plan ahead and work together. As you begin to think about planning ahead, there are some resources that may be helpful to you: friends with young children, local parent organizations, a family with a slightly older child than yours, your First Steps Service Coordinator, the local Early Childhood Special Education agency, the Indiana Parent Information Network (IPIN) (800) 359-2010, IN*SOURCE (800) 332-4433, or Family-to-Family (574) 273-6019.

Here are some ideas of questions to consider as you think about your child's future:

- What do we hope 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 didn't have a developmental delay or disability?



As you begin to plan ahead, you/your family, First Steps staff and other involved agencies will each have a part in the planning. Below is a checklist for each of the involved participants.

Our family will...

- Talk about transition with our First Steps Service Coordinator.
- Write a transition outcome for our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- Consider talking with families or other community resources to learn about transition and decide if we want that person to participate in the transition-planning meeting with us.
- Sign a release form for release of information to appropriate school or other receiving agency.
- Send other records to receiving agency, including medical or hearing/vision testing results.

First Steps staff will...

- Give your family written information about transition processes and rights.
- Begin the transition planning process by including transition steps in your Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- 18 months prior to your child's 3rd birthday, ask for your consent to send your child's name, date of birth and suspected disability to the appropriate school district.
- 6 months prior to your child's 3rd birthday, ask for your permission to send to the public school or other receiving agency your child's records including the IFSP and evaluation information.
- Arrange with you to schedule a transition planning meeting with your family at least 90 days before your child's 3rd birthday and include the Early Childhood Special Education staff and other representatives of your choice.



Early Childhood Special Education staff will...

- Receive referral information from First Steps.
- Work together with your family and First Steps staff on transition planning, including the option of attending the transition meeting.
- Prepare to share information with your family about the evaluation process, determination of eligibility for Early Childhood Special Education services and placement opportunities.
- Review records received and determine the need for any additional evaluation. When further evaluation is needed, public school staff will obtain parental consent and schedule the evaluation with your family.

At this point...

...you have worked through the transition process from First Steps to other early childhood services. All transitions are more successful when families and service providers work through the process together. You can use this transition planning process for future transitions. Best wishes!



This booklet was adapted from "Transition to Early Childhood Special Education" developed by: Indiana Department of Education, Division of Special Education; Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Development; Riley Child Development Center, Indiana University School of Medicine, 1997 and adapted from Bridging Early Services Transition Taskforce, Kansas, 1995.

- Health records and immunizations
- Transportation
- Special equipment
- Medications
- Special diet
- Staff orientation or training

Other issues should include planning for 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.

Communication is essential to making the transition smooth. Listed below are some possible questions for the new program.

From families...

- Can my child and I visit the new school?
- Does the teacher understand the times when my child needs special help?
- Are there toddler groups for entering 3-year olds?
- When and how does the teacher prefer to communicate with parents?
- Can we do a trial run on the school bus?
- What activities are there for families at the new program?
- What supplies will my child need?
- What supplies should we provide?
- How are food and snacks handled?

From children...

- Who are all these people?
- Can I play with all these toys?
- Can I bring my blanket to school?
- What if I get tired or hungry?
- Who will help me?

STEP 2: TRANSITION MEETING

The transition meeting is the time when you and your team from First Steps and the next involved agency will meet to develop your child's individual transition plan. Your child may be eligible for Early Childhood Special Education Services through the local school corporation, or there may be other choices that would best meet your child's needs once he or she turns 3. This meeting occurs at least 90 days before your child's 3rd birthday. If the birthday is in the summer or September, the transition meeting may occur in the spring to allow time for plans to be in place before the school year begins.

Here are some questions to ask at the Transition Meeting:

- Will our child be eligible for Early Childhood Special Education service? If so, how will that be determined?
- What additional testing will be done?
- Who can we call if we have questions?
- What are the different services that they can provide?
- If we choose for our child to attend preschool or Head Start, how will services be provided?
- If my child is not eligible, what are some other options or other services that can be provided to my child?

At the Transition Meeting you/your family, the First Steps staff and the next service provider will have different roles. . .

Our family will . . .

- Share our hopes for our child.
- Receive parental rights information.
- Ask questions about anything that is unclear.
- Agree to participate in transition activities.
- Make sure that the transition plan includes options that help realize our dreams for our child.

First Steps staff will...

- Host the transition meeting.
- Share information as requested by your family.
- Participate actively in the transition plan.
- Write the transition plan and time lines decided at the meeting.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will...

- Explain parental rights in special education under Article 7 and answer questions about parental rights.
- Discuss possible service options and places where they might be provided.
- Listen to your family's concerns about transition.
- Make arrangements for participation through other means if school personnel are unable to attend the meeting.



STEP 3: EVALUATION

Every child has a personal set of skills and needs. In order to provide an education that fits your child, it is important for him or her to be evaluated. The evaluations will be used to make decisions that will help your child receive needed educational services. Children who are eligible for First Steps are not automatically eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each child who has been referred ECSE to be evaluated to find out whether he or she is eligible to receive special education services.

STEP 6: PUTTING THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) INTO ACTION

Designing and implementing an IEP that truly meets your child's unique needs is an important accomplishment for you and the other Case Conference Committee (CCC) team members.

As the IEP is developed and put into writing, here are some steps for each CCC team member in order to create a successful plan:

Our family will...

- Ask questions and be open to new ideas.
- Help staff at the new program understand our child.
- Communicate with our child's former and present caregivers about helping him/her be happy and successful in the new program.
- Help our child feel excited and confident about this transition.

First Steps staff will...

- Ask questions and be open to new ideas.
- Share information with your family and the new program.
- Help your child anticipate the new program.

Early Childhood Special Education staff will...

- Ask questions and be open to new ideas.
- Consider your family's needs in making decisions.
- Communicate with your family and staff from First Steps.
- Arrange for the IEP to be carried out.
- Welcome your child and your family.

Now it is time to put the plan into action. Here are some issues that might be considered in putting the IEP into action:



When team members agree upon these issues, the plan will be put into writing, forming your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Before the IEP can be implemented, you must give your written permission for services or placement. Sign the documents only if you fully understand and agree with them. Meetings can be halted and rescheduled if families have questions or reservations about any of the services proposed.

The following should be the result of your Case Conference Committee (CCC) meeting:

- The team met to discuss evaluation results.
- Discussion and decision making included your family, First Steps and Early Childhood Special Education staff.
- Eligibility for special education was decided.
- Agreement was reached and the IEP written.
- First Steps assisted your family in finding community services if your child was not found eligible for special education services.



If your child is not eligible for Early Childhood Special Education...

- Your family may be interested in participating in other early childhood services in the community. Many communities offer programs with enriching social and language experiences for young children. Members of the team will share information about such programs in your community.
- Review parents' rights information for appropriated steps to take if you do not agree with the Case Conference Committee.
- Service providers can help families locate information about funding and scholarships for other local programs.

The following things must occur within 60 school days from the date that the designated individual receives the request for evaluation:

- Parents give written permission to evaluate;
- Evaluation is completed;
- Case conference convened;
- Eligibility determined; and
- If eligible, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is written by the Case Conference Committee (CCC).

However, the 60 school day time limit cannot be used to deny services to the child who is 3 years of age and in transition from Part C (First Steps) to Part B Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services.

The ECSE evaluation must include the following:

- An individually-administered assessment including standardized evaluation tests,
- A developmental and social history,
- Systematic observations of the child in a daily routine setting or other appropriate setting by an appropriate professional,
- Additional evaluation data specific to the suspected disability as described in Article 7 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).



Below is a list of how information is gathered to be used in the evaluation process:

- Records from the First Steps providers' services are received.
- Information from your family is shared and considered.
- Evaluation by the multidisciplinary team and the CCC meeting are completed within 60 school days or by the 3rd birthday.

STEP 4: PREPARING FOR THE CASE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The purpose of the Case Conference Committee (CCC) meeting is to determine eligibility, develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and determine an educational placement. Decisions will be made about the services your child will receive and where he/she will go to get them. Goals will be written to reflect the team's aims for your child. Activities, including therapies, to reach those goals will be planned. Family members, along with First Steps and Early Childhood Special Education staff, contribute to these decisions.

Family members are likely to be asked to describe the child's current development, along with what you wish him/her to learn during the next year. You can prepare for the CCC meeting by talking with relatives and friends about your child and family, be ready to tell what your child is doing now and by imagining an "ideal" day for your child and consider what steps should be taken to make it happen.

STEP 5: THE CASE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

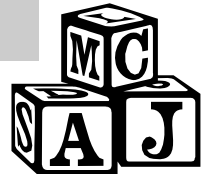
The CCC team will ask you what activities you would like your child to work on during the next year (for example, zipping up a jacket or playing with other children). The goals chosen for your child should fit into your everyday routines and help your child to become more independent in learning and activities of daily living.

Together, the CCC team members will decide:

- Which goals and objectives have the highest priority.
- Where the child should be enrolled to meet the goals.
- Which therapy, transportation and other services are needed in order to reach those goals.

As a member of the Case Conference Committee (CCC) team, you will need to know and understand some of the laws regarding appropriate placement. The law states that your child's placement must occur in the least restrictive environment where the child's goals can be met. Early Childhood Special Education may need to provide some additional adult assistance, training for the staff, changes in surroundings or equipment or specially chosen material in order to help your child learn in the place selected. Each school district must ensure that a continuum of alternative education placements is available to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. For school districts, some alternative methods for meeting the least restrictive environment requirements include:

1. Providing opportunities for participation (even part-time) of preschool children with & without disabilities in other preschool programs operated by other agencies, for ex., Head Start.
2. Placing children with disabilities in private school programs for children without disabilities or private school programs that integrate children with disabilities and children without disabilities.
3. Locating classes for preschool children with disabilities in regular elementary school.



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.