

# Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services

**A**s your child gets closer to turning 3 years old, there are changes in services for infants and toddlers who have had Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs). When a child is 3 or over, laws about Special Education and Regional Center direct if and how services are provided. Turning 3 also is a time when parents start thinking about whether their child will attend a preschool program. Change often creates comfortable as well as uncomfortable feelings of excitement, worry, and hope.

Change is part of life. Perhaps one of the most valuable skills we can give our children is to support their ability to cope and adjust to change. Preparing for the upcoming changes helps you adjust and work through your emotions so that the experience is positive for you and your child.



This packet provides information about the transition to educational services for a child with special needs. For information on transition out of Early Start into Regional Center services for those over 3 years of age, please refer to our Regional Center packet.

You are your child's best advocate. The more informed and organized you are, the more your advocacy skills will help you help your child.

## **Other related information materials:**

*Getting Organized – Birth to 3  
IEP Toolkit  
Individual Education Plan  
Regional Center  
Advocacy and Communication  
Assessments*

## Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services

When a child with special needs who has been in the State Early Start program turns 3 years of age, Federal and State laws dictate how services are provided. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) directs Special Education, and your local school district is responsible for this program. The Lanterman Act of California directs services to individuals with developmental disabilities, and the Regional Centers are the organizations that are responsible for this program.

Preparing for change makes it easier. So, what's next? There will be:

- Decisions about eligibility for Special Education preschool services and Regional Center services.
- New assessments, case managers, learning environments, services, laws, and parents' rights.
- A shift in services from your family's needs to your child's educational and daily living needs.

This packet describes specific things that need to happen at specific times before your child turns 3 years old, such as:

- Requirements of the notice parents receive about this process and the timeline for transition planning.
- Transition meetings with you, your case manager, a school representative, and other key people to plan the transition and discuss assessments and eligibility.
- If eligible for Special Education, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed with your input.
- If your child is eligible for Regional Center services, an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) is developed.
- If your child is not eligible for an IEP or an IPP, you can learn your options, including what to do if you think your child is eligible for specialized services.

**In Summary:** At age 3, the IFSP is closed. If your child is eligible for services after age 3, the IFSP from Early Start could break into two parts: The IPP as part of the Lanterman Act and the IEP as part of Special Education. A child could have both programs. These systems can seem overwhelming at the beginning. Over time, with information and support, you will learn what is needed to be your child's best advocate. Call us with any questions or for advice along the way.



## Getting Ready... Steps to Take

**1. Educate yourself** about the two systems that may serve your child:

- Regional Center
- Special Education

This includes understanding eligibility, services, procedures, and the rights you and your child have under each system.

**2. Calendar: what happens** during the months leading up to your child's third birthday.

**3. Organize your thoughts and papers** regarding your child's needs and strengths, including any assessments.

**4. Explore** what **services** and preschool **setting** will be most appropriate for your child's success at school.

**5. Prepare your child, and you,** for the start of preschool. This is an exciting time that requires some gradual preparation.

Remember to **ask questions** along the way. Matrix is here to help.



# Understanding Regional Center

The Lanterman Act law requires Regional Centers to provide supports and services to children and adults who have developmental disabilities to help them lead productive lives. When your child turns 3, eligibility for continued services takes place. This starts with assessment.

Eligibility criteria changes when a child turns 3 years old. Your child must have a developmental disability that is expected to continue through life and that causes significant limitations. There are five categories that *may* result in eligibility:

- cognitive impairment
- autism
- cerebral palsy
- epilepsy
- “other disabling conditions” similar to cognitive disability



**If your child is eligible**, the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) is closed and an Individual Program Plan (IPP) is created by your child’s third birthday.

- Your child may be assigned a new manager, or, in some instances, your Early Start manager will continue serving your family.
- Your case manager will meet with you to discuss and develop an IPP for your child. An IPP can include both your child’s and your family’s needs. The needs determine goals and services that the Regional Center may purchase for your child or your family. This is why it is very important to be sure all of your concerns and your child’s needs are in the IPP.
- The IPP will be reviewed annually or as needs change.
- Examples of Regional Center services may include:
  - behavior modification/management support
  - respite care
  - parent trainings
- Be sure to ask for a needed service. Don’t assume it is not available to you. Families of children 3–17 may be required to pay for a portion of some services.

### **If your child is not eligible**

You have the right to appeal any Regional Center decision. Ask lots of questions, gather information to support why you think your child should be served by the Regional Center, document your thoughts and request a meeting with those in charge.

Our Regional Center packet has more information on eligibility, the process, timeline, mediation, and fair hearing decisions.

# Understanding Special Education

There is much to learn about Special Education, and if your child is eligible, you will learn as you go along. When you are ready for more, our IEP packet and our workshops (online and in person) provide in-depth information. At this point in your transition process, start with a basic knowledge of the following **KEY POINTS**. Special Education includes:

- **Appropriate assessment** in all areas of suspected disability by qualified professionals.
- **An Individual Education Plan (IEP)** which is:
  - A legally binding document between your school district and you, the parent. It is reviewed once a year.
  - Written by the IEP team, which includes you the parent, administrators, teachers, specialists, and others with knowledge of your child.
  - A plan which includes annual goals appropriate to your student, describes who is responsible for the delivery of specific services and how often services will be provided, and defines the environment in which your child's education and related services will be delivered.
- **A Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE)** based on the unique needs of your child.
- An education in the **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** which means educating your child to the greatest extent possible, using supports and services, with other children who do not have disabilities.
- **Parent and student participation** such as:
  - having access to your child's records.
  - participation at IEP meetings and notice of meetings and proposed actions or changes in the IEP.
  - consenting or not consenting to services in the IEP.
  - asking for an IEP team meeting as needed.
- **Procedural Safeguards** or methods to "safeguard" or protect your rights such as ways to resolve a dispute whether about eligibility or any part of the IEP.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that Special Education is for children who require specialized instruction so they can be part of a preschool curriculum.



**In sum:** Special Education is a collection of supports and services based on assessment information to meet your child's needs. The services and supports are provided in a place that is most appropriate to meet your child's needs. Services are usually given in a school setting. This is different from Early Start where services and meetings usually take place in your home.

# Understanding Special Education Eligibility

At your first transition meeting, specialists who work with your child will suggest which assessments should be conducted to determine your child’s eligibility for Special Education. Assessment will take place during the months before your child turns 3 and should include evaluation in any area of suspected disability to see if he or she meets any of the 13 eligibility categories in Special Education:

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Autism                       | Deaf-Blindness                 |
| Deafness                     | Emotional Disturbance          |
| Other Health Impairment      | Hearing Impairment             |
| Intellectual Disability      | Speech/Language                |
| Specific Learning Disability | Multiple Disabilities          |
| Orthopedic Impairment        | Traumatic Brain Injury         |
| Visual Impairment            | Established Medical Disability |

Even though your child is in Early Start, it does not automatically mean he or she will be eligible for Special Education. The criteria for eligibility are not the same as having a diagnosis. To be eligible, your child must need specialized instruction in order to take part in his or her education.



**KEY POINT:** Parents must approve of any assessment plan in writing before assessments can begin. Make sure you ask any questions and voice any concerns before you agree to the assessment plan and to the final assessment reports. The assessments are the base for what comes next for your child: eligibility, needs, goals, services, and programs.

Within 60 days of your signing and returning the assessment plan, the assessments are scheduled and completed with your child, and the next transition meeting is scheduled. This transition meeting is also your first Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting.



## Special Education — An IEP is developed at the IEP meeting...

At this eligibility IEP meeting, the IEP team — which includes you — will discuss the assessment results to decide on eligibility. If the team recommends eligibility for Special Education, after team discussion and agreement on your child's needs and goals, the school district will offer supports, services, and the place which will address your child's needs. These are written in the Individual Education Plan (IEP). As the parent, you decide if you agree with the IEP team decisions.

**Who will be at this meeting?** You are a most important member of the team; the team may also include any others you would like to invite, such as private therapists or relative/friend, to support you. Others at the initial IEP meeting at transition will be:

- Early intervention service providers.
- Case manager from Regional Center.
- School district personnel: possibly the intake coordinator, preschool principal or teacher, Special Education coordinator, specialists, nurse.

### The meeting will include:

- Review of all assessments including any input from you.
- Eligibility decisions for Special Education.
- Creation of the IEP if your child is eligible. In developing the IEP, the team discussion should follow this order:
  - Determine areas of need from all assessment information.
  - Develop annual goals for each area of need.
  - Determine what services are needed to meet the goals and how often these services will happen. Examples of services include speech/language therapy, specialized pre-academic instruction, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior support.
  - Decide what educational setting or placement is most appropriate for your child based on the needs, services, and goals. ***See our section in this packet on visiting programs and placements.***
- Closing of Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).



At the end of the meeting, you will be asked for your agreement to the plan. You can agree to all of the IEP, to parts of the IEP, or to none of the IEP. You can also document that you aren't ready to decide. Only those items or services you agree to can begin for your child when he or she turns 3 years old. If you aren't sure you agree:

- Ask lots of questions
- Gather information to support what you think your child needs that isn't in the proposed IEP
- Document your thoughts and request another meeting

Special Education law has specific methods to use and rights for parents when there is a disagreement.

It is often wise to review the IEP with someone else before signing in agreement or disagreement with the plan. You do *not* have to sign at the meeting.

**If your child is not eligible for Special Education:**

- You can disagree with the assessments and eligibility and ask for an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense. This is getting a second opinion.
- You can agree and watch over your child's development and learning carefully. Sometimes as a child goes through the school years with new learning demands, he or she might later meet eligibility requirements.

Our IEP packet provides in-depth information on the parts of the IEP, how to organize and prepare yourself, and how to handle disagreements.





## What Happens... Before Your Child Turns 2 1/2 Years Old

Your case manager will help you to start thinking about:

- What you want your child to accomplish during his or her preschool years.
- What assessments/evaluations are needed to understand which services your child will need
- What kind of instructional setting might your child need to make progress? At home? In a Special Education preschool class? In a typical preschool class? Combination?
- What programs there are and what are the eligibility requirements?
- Who can help as a guide through the transition process? Call us at Matrix, as we are one source of help.



Learn the difference between Early Start services and Special Education services:

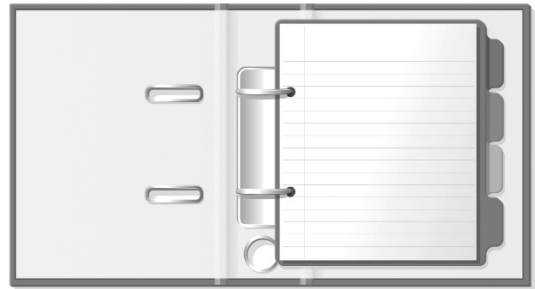
- Preschool programs are outside the home, while early intervention services are usually in the home.
- In preschool, services are usually provided without a parent present; a parent is usually with the child for early intervention service and provides transportation.
- Preschool programs are often three to five days a week for three or four hours each day; early intervention services are usually of shorter duration and not as often.
- Preschool provides play and learning with other children along with specialized small group and/or one-on-one instruction; early intervention services are usually individual one-on-one services with a specialist and your child.
- Early Start services are written in an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) with outcomes for your child and family. Special Education preschool services are written in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and focus on your child's educational needs.

## What Happens . . . When Your Child Is Between 2 1/2 and 2 3/4 Years Old

Your case manager will discuss the upcoming transition from Early Start to preschool and will set up the first transition meeting to create the transition plan. As a member of the IFSP team, your family is included in the development of the transition plan.

Before the first meeting:

- Organize your child's records (for example: assessments, medical reports and IFSP). Our Matrix's *Getting Organized – Birth to Three* packet of information can help with this. Keeping your child's paperwork in one central notebook or binder helps in making future plans.
- Go through your child's records and, based on previous assessments or medical evaluations, think about what new assessments may be appropriate for your child.
- Use the worksheet in this packet, "My Child's Strengths and Needs," to help you organize your thoughts about what areas of your child's development should be a focus.



At this meeting, specialists who work with your child will review general program options and community resources in your area and discuss how to best prepare your toddler for the transition into preschool. They will also go over the steps of the transition plan, which include the timeline of the transition and the suggested assessments and evaluations to determine your child's eligibility for Special Education.

**KEY POINT:** The Transition Plan must be part of the IFSP and include:

- Program options
- Steps and services

Within 60 days of your signing and returning the Special Education assessment plan, the assessments are scheduled and completed with your child, and the *next* transition meeting is scheduled.

## What Happens... Before Your Child Turns 3 Years Old

At the IEP eligibility meeting, assessment results are discussed and eligibility for Special Education is determined. If eligible, the IEP will be written. The IFSP will be closed.

Before the eligibility meeting:

- Ask for copies of all assessment reports and drafts of goals (if any) so you can be better prepared.
- Organize your thoughts. Use the worksheet “My Child’s Strengths and Needs” for this. Our *IEP Toolkit* ([www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)) can also be a helpful tool.
- Prepare questions about the reports so you can understand the assessment results.
- When thinking about goals and needs, consider each of these areas:
  - Language
  - Academic
  - Self-help
  - Motor
  - Social-emotional
  - Behavior



## Steps in Transitioning: Early Start to Preschool

<b>Time Frames/Age of Child</b>	<b>Transition Process Steps</b>
By 2 years 6 months	Your case manager will let you know that transition planning will happen within 3-6 months and will contact your school district to let them know an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting will be held.
Between 2 years 6 months and 2 years 9 months	Transition planning is discussed with your family. A mutually agreed upon date is set for the IFSP/Transition meeting.
By 2 years 9 months (or earlier)	Information will be given to you about transition to Special Education for children who will be eligible OR community resources for children who will not be eligible for Special Education. You and your service providers will discuss how best to prepare your toddler for the transition . The IFSP Transition meeting will be held to develop the transition plan and to discuss upcoming specialist’s assessments which determine eligibility, goals and services—referrals made if appropriate.
Around 2 years 9 months	Within 15* days of referrals, an assessment plan is sent to you. You sign and return the assessment plan. Within 60* days after parent written consent, all specialists’ assessments are scheduled and completed, and an IEP meeting is held.
By 3 years	You, your case manager, school district personnel, and any others who you would like to invite will attend the Transition IFSP/ Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Assessment results are discussed, and Special Education eligibility is determined by Individual Education Plan team. If eligible, the IEP is created. Separate from this meeting, eligibility for continued Regional Center services is determined. If eligible, an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) is developed. The IFSP with Regional Center is closed.
At 3 years	Your child begins Special Education preschool, community preschool and/or services, depending on eligibility.*

*\*Timeline may be altered for long breaks in the district calendar (e.g. summer vacation)*

# My Child's Strengths and Needs Worksheet – Part I

<b>Skill Area</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Needs or concerns</b>	<b>What I hope for in 1 year (goals)</b>	<b>1-5 priority</b>
<b>Language</b>  <i>Receptive</i>  <i>Expressive</i>				
<b>Self-help</b> <i>such as</i> <i>dressing,</i> <i>toileting,</i> <i>eating</i>				
<b>Motor</b>  <i>Gross (large)</i>  <i>Fine (small)</i>				
<b>Social/ emotional and behavioral</b>				
<b>Play</b>				
<b>Pre-academic</b>				

## My Child's Strengths and Needs Worksheet – Part II

Use this worksheet to record your thoughts about your child. **What works for my child:**

Activities my child likes best:

My child learns best when:

How my child's challenging behavior is best redirected:

Three things that motivate my child:





## The Preschool Program: Visiting and Deciding

Congratulations! You and your child have come a long way:

- Your child has gone through Early Start and received early intervention services.
- Assessments have explained your child's eligibility, strengths, and needs.
- Programs have been discussed, and if eligible for Special Education, a recommendation has been made for services and placement.

Consider what is most appropriate for your child, whether it will be a Special Education preschool, a general education preschool, or some combination of both. Visiting non-Special Education preschools may give you some good information about your child's needs and the range of skills needed for a general education program.

Options that could be considered when deciding what is most appropriate for your child:

- A class with children without special needs with your child receiving Special Education services such as speech outside the classroom.
- A Special Education class with other children with special needs. This is usually called a special day class (SDC). Special day classes provide specialized instruction and an environment tailored for children with special needs.
- Your child could also attend both a Special Education class and a community preschool class, receiving the benefit of both.

**KEY POINT:** The IEP team is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to review with you the options available for placement that meet your child's needs. This is referred to as the continuum of program options. The school will make an offer of the one option that they believe is most appropriate for your child to make progress. School districts are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).



## Suggestions for Visiting Preschool Classes

It's always a good idea to check out the IEP team's recommendation before agreeing to the placement. School district personnel arrange any visits. When you visit, keep in mind:

- Your child's needs (refer to the charts you made of needs and strengths) and whether the placement can meet these needs and address the IEP goals.
- Try not to compare your child to others in the class. Each child is unique. Students in classes often have been together for a considerable length of time. They may be older than your child.
- Each year class populations can change with new students coming in throughout the year, depending on when they turn 3 years old.
- Teachers can change from year to year as well as class locations.

You should be able to get an understanding of the:

- Learning environment and structure of the class
- Type of learning activities
- Level and type of staffing
- Type and extent of family involvement



Use the following "Parent Observation Guidelines for Preschool Programs" to assist you during your site visit.

Once a decision is made on services and class placement:

- Get to know your child's new teacher as early as possible.
- Share information about your child and offer to help staff learn about your child's particular needs and interests (e.g. how to make transitions go smoother, indications your child needs to use the bathroom, food issues/likes/dislikes).
- Keep communication with teachers and staff open and flowing freely.
- If you have concerns, bring them up with the teacher sooner rather than later. Follow up with a written note/email and save/file all correspondence. You never know when you might need to refer to a particular conversation.

Connecting with other parents who are going through the same transition or calling the Matrix Helpline and talking with an experienced Parent Advisor may be helpful.

# Parent Observation Guidelines for Preschool Programs

Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Public or Private \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Children in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Teacher & Administrator \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Days: \_\_\_\_\_ School Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Extended School Year? \_\_\_\_\_ Days: \_\_\_\_\_ School Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Extended Day Care? \_\_\_\_\_ If no, transportation to day care? \_\_\_\_\_

## THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Activities I saw included:

- fine motor     circle time     art     social interactions     music  
 gross motor     books/stories     fantasy/dress-up play     speech/language

- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. The equipment in the class is appropriate for my child                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Rooms are large enough for active play and quiet play                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Toys and materials can be reached by my child                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. My child's special equipment will fit in the space (if applicable)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. The outdoor play area is safe and appropriate for my child                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. The furniture in the rooms is arranged so that the teacher can see all children | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. The sink and toilet can be reached by my child                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. The rooms are clean and decorated with children's work                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES**

- There is a daily schedule  Yes  No
- The activities I see are appropriate for my child  Yes  No
- There are activities planned with non-disabled children  Yes  No
- Children are allowed to make choices  Yes  No
- Opportunities for structured play and free play  Yes  No
- Is the atmosphere in the classroom happy, relaxed?  Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

- Parents may volunteer in the class  Yes  No
- Parent visits are encouraged  Yes  No
- Parents are a regular part of the program  Yes  No
- There is a parent support group  Yes  No
- The teacher communicates with parents using:
  - Notebooks  Yes  No
  - Phone calls  Yes  No
  - Email  Yes  No
  - Parent conferences  Yes  No
  - Home visits  Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM STAFF**

- Program staff have knowledge of the special needs in the class  Yes  No
- Number of staff meets needs of children  Yes  No
- The staff are sensitive to the cultural needs of the children  Yes  No
- Number of aides working in the classroom \_\_\_\_\_
- Do volunteers help in the classroom?  Yes  No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM LOCATION**

Is the school near my home?  Yes  No

Who provides transportation?  Yes  No

Will my child ride a bus? Take a taxi?  Yes  No

What is my child's commute time? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS**

Will my child need to be potty-trained?  Yes  No

Will staff work on potty-training with my child?  Yes  No

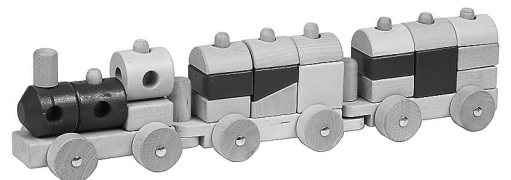
How does staff handle potty accidents?  Yes  No

Can I send in special food and/or medicine?  Yes  No

Who will feed my child and/or administer medication? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_



**RELATED SERVICES FOR PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS: WHERE AND WHO?**

<b>Service/Goal</b>	<b>Provider's Name/Phone No.</b>	<b>Where is this service provided (at this site or another location)?</b>
<i>Speech and Language</i>		
<i>Psychological and/or Behavioral</i>		
<i>Physical Therapy</i>		
<i>Occupational Therapy</i>		
<i>Services for visually or hearing impaired</i>		
<i>Bilingual services</i>		
<i>Specialized healthcare</i>		



## Transition Tips

### Preparing Your Child for Preschool

1. **TALK** with your child, giving information in ways that your child can take in. Some children need small amounts of information given slowly. Others may do better with more information. Preparation really helps. Talk about or show pictures of what your child will do at school. Who will be there? What will you be doing while your child is in school? How will your child get to school? Will you drive your child or will you walk to school together? How long will your child be there? How will your child get home?
2. **VISIT** the school before your child starts. Even if you cannot visit the classroom, visit the school yard. Follow the route to the classroom. If the playground is accessible, plan several outings to it to become familiar with the lay of the land and the equipment.
3. **MEET** the teacher and visit the classroom before the first day if possible. Take pictures of the teacher and the room and make a booklet of the photos. If your child cannot benefit from pictures, make up a "Going to School" story and tell it lots of times before school starts.
4. **GET** library books on going to school. *The Kissing Hand* is a popular favorite. Tell stories about when siblings first went to school.
5. **IF** your child is going to ride a school bus, get a toy school bus for your child to play with. Look for library books about riding the bus. If possible, visit a school bus and point out school buses when you see them on the highways.
6. **GATHER** clothes or special items for "when you go to school."



Going to preschool is a big change for your family, but more likely than not, if you prepare yourself and plan with care, it will be a positive experience for your child — and for you.



**Big steps...**

**New beginnings!**

## Transition Tips

### Preparing Yourself for Your Child Going to Preschool

If this is your first child going off to preschool, saying good-bye can be full of emotions. When children have special needs, sometimes this transition brings deeper emotions. When a child goes to preschool, we are turning over part of our child's day and their development to someone else. We can wonder if this person or school will understand our child well, will know when to help or not help, know the little signs our child gives when he or she is getting upset or needing something.

To make this easier, here are some tips other parents have shared:

- Before school starts, give the teacher a one-page summary about your child. This may include information about your child's home life (has a dog, two sisters, etc.), his or her interests, strengths and challenges. While there is a lot of information on your child in the IEP documents and assessments, giving a one-page summary makes it easier for you to share what is most important.
- If your child has a relatively unknown disability, you may want to provide the teacher with a one-page summary on the disability and how it affects your child.
- Take pictures of the first day — leaving home and arriving at school.
- If your child will ride a bus to school, confirm the schedule so transportation goes smoothly. Maybe try to arrange to meet the driver and have your child sit in the bus prior to the first day.
- Remember, this is the first big step toward independence. Soon your child will be at school for several hours five days a week. Consider this practice!
- Make sure any of your child's extra-special needs are covered at school from the very first day: any equipment, diet/snack foods, change of clothes, etc.
- Do something to keep yourself busy after you say goodbye to your child. Spend some time caring for yourself — don't spend all your child-free time running errands and doing chores.
- Keep a tissue in your pocket and a smile on your face.
- Create positive images in your head of your child doing well at school.
- Call Matrix to talk to a Parent Advisor and find out when the next Transition to Preschool workshop is being held.



## Summing Up Programs: IFSP, IEP, IPP

<b>Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) Under age 3</b>	<b>Individual Education Plan (IEP) Special Education Age 3-22</b>	<b>Individual Program Plan (IPP) Regional Center Age 3 &amp; up</b>
Within 45 days of referral assessment completed with parent consent. If eligible, IFSP developed	Within 60 days of parent consent to assessment, IEP meeting held. If eligible, IEP developed	Before child turns three, eligibility determined. IPP created when IFSP is closed
Team members required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child's parents</li> <li>• Persons who completed assessments (for initial IFSP)</li> <li>• Service providers</li> <li>• Case Manager</li> <li>• Family members or others by parent invite</li> </ul>	Team members required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student's parents</li> <li>• Student if appropriate</li> <li>• Special &amp; general education teacher of child</li> <li>• School district representative</li> <li>• Persons who completed assessments</li> <li>• Others with knowledge/expertise invited by parent or school</li> </ul>	Team members required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client's parents</li> <li>• Case Manager</li> <li>• Other family members or person invited by parents, client</li> </ul>
Statement of child's levels of development in all developmental areas	Statement of student's present levels of educational performance and, for preschoolers, the ability to participate in appropriate activities	Statement of child's and family's needs to be part of the community with a stable and healthy home
Statement of the family's resources, priorities, and child's developmental needs	A statement of student's strengths and needs and parent concerns	Consider strengths and preferences of child and family
Statement of major outcomes expected in the next 6–12 months for the child and family, with criteria to measure progress	Statement of annual goals that are specific and measurable, with expected progress	Statement of goals and specific and time-limited objectives. Services will be monitored and progress measured
Statement of early intervention services provided to the child and family	Statement of Special Education and related school services provided to the student	Purchased services address goals. High priority given for children to live with families and family support
Statement of start of services, frequency, duration, and location	Statement of start and end of services, frequency, duration, and location	Services are purchased for specific time period
Statement about the use of settings other than "natural environments"	Statement about the use of settings other than the general ed classroom with non-disabled children	Goals maximize opportunities for a life similar to non-disabled peers
Describes who will implement, and agencies who pay for services	Describes who will implement services	Describes who will implement services and agencies to pay
Periodic review of IFSP every 6 months	Review of IEP at least annually	Review of IPP at least annually
IFSP reflects parental concerns, is developed with parents, builds on and uses family strengths and resource, and addresses family needs and child's needs in "natural environments"	Parents are members of any group making decisions	Family participates in determining needs and services

# Transition to Special Ed Preschool

## Common Questions

### **Can I stay with my child until he is ready to say good-bye?**

This will depend on the teacher's procedures for managing separations and drop-off. Ask about this before the first day, and prepare your child (and yourself) accordingly. If separation anxiety is an issue for your child, share this with the teacher so there is a plan specific for your child's situation.

As our children pick up on our feelings, your confidence that all will go well can make the separation easier. Be prepared to leave your child with a smile on your face (and if needed, a tissue hidden in your pocket). Also, modeling respect for teacher's rules is a good way of preparing your child for success in school.



### **What happens if my child isn't potty trained? Can she still go to preschool?**

Yes, most likely. Special Education preschools serve students with special needs, so the chances are that other children may be in diapers at age 3. If your child is still in diapers, discuss this at your transition IEP meeting and with the teacher before the first day of school.

### **Why are they talking about occupational therapy (OT)? I thought this was something used to help people with jobs.**

If the IEP Team recommends an OT assessment, they want to find out if your child needs this service to develop skills such as gripping a crayon or pencil correctly; managing sensory input of a classroom; or throwing, catching, and kicking a ball. Ask why your child needs an OT assessment. Since the occupation of a child is going to school, you can think of this as therapy for the job of school.

### **Why can't I go look at the Special Education preschool class that my friends have told me about? It sounds perfect for my child.**

In Special Education, the school district is required to make an offer of the most appropriate setting for your child based on his or her needs. This is done after input from you and the IEP team. The team is required to review with you the options they considered and why their offer is most appropriate. Before an offer is made, make sure you share your ideas about your child's needs. Ask questions about different options. It is the district's role to arrange a visit to the class recommended for your child's needs.

### **Why do they want to do a psychological assessment on my child? Do they think he has emotional problems?**

Psychological assessment in schools is usually to learn about how a child thinks and processes information. In some cases the assessment includes ways to review any emotional challenges. Make sure you understand what this assessment will include for your child.

## Useful Websites

California Department of Education, Special Education Division [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se)

California Department of Developmental Services [www.dds.ca.gov](http://www.dds.ca.gov)

Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)

Special Education Local Plan Areas for Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma

- Marin [www.marinschools.org](http://www.marinschools.org) (go to "Special Education Local Plan Area")
- Napa [www.ncoe.k12.ca.us/selpa/](http://www.ncoe.k12.ca.us/selpa/)
- Solano (not Vallejo) [www.solanocoe.net](http://www.solanocoe.net) (go to "SELPA")
- Sonoma [www.sonomaselpa.org](http://www.sonomaselpa.org)
- Vallejo City Unified School District [www.vallejo.k12.ca.us](http://www.vallejo.k12.ca.us)

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

My Child Without Limits [www.mychildwithoutlimits.org](http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org)

Protection and Advocacy, Inc. [www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org)

Families and Advocates Partnership for Education [www.fape.org](http://www.fape.org)

The Arc United States [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

Family Resource Network of California [www.frcnca.org](http://www.frcnca.org)

Family Village [www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/)

Internet Resources for Special Children

[http://orsaminore.dreamhosters.com/handy/links/uk\\_various.html](http://orsaminore.dreamhosters.com/handy/links/uk_various.html)

Each of these websites provides links to other sites that may be helpful.