

# Transition to Preschool

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# Matrix Parent Network

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We **empower** families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

We want **you** to become successful advocates and role models for your children.



# Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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## **Federal Parent Training & Information Center**

designated by the *Office of Special Education, US Department of Education*

serving families of children birth through 26 in

Alpine, Amador, Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa,

Shasta, Sonoma, Solano, Sutter, Tehama, Yolo and Yuba counties

## **California Family Resource Center**

designated by *CA Department of Developmental Services,*

serving families of infants and toddlers in Marin, Sonoma and Solano

## **California Family Empowerment Center**

designated by *CA Department of Education*

serving the underserved in Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties



# Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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This workshop was developed in part under a grant from the US Department of Education, the Office of Special Education, the California Department of Education, and the CA Department of Developmental Services

Matrix is grateful for the Federal and State funding it receives, but it's not enough. We rely on other grants and on donations from people like you!

**Help Us Help You: Donate**



# Who are we?

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# You will leave here knowing about:

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1. The Lanterman Act and Regional Center's services
2. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and special education services
3. Key differences between Early Start and special education services
4. The IFSP to IEP timeline and process
5. How to prepare for initial IEP meeting and transition to preschool
6. The importance of self-care during the process



# COVID-19 specific

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*Department Directive: Extension of Early Start Services* (PDF)

This waiver ensures continuation of the delivery of services for children during COVID-19. As of 11/7/21, the extension is in effect for 30 days unless extended by the Director of DDS.

Extension till 12/7/21: Extension of Services from 11/7/21 to 12/7/21

# Let's Begin

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# Steps to Take

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- **Learn** about Regional Center and Special Education: eligibility, services, procedures, and the rights you and your child have under each system
- **Calendar** and understand what happens during the months leading up to your child's third birthday.
- **Organize** your thoughts and papers regarding your child's needs and strengths, including any assessments.
- **Explore** what services and preschool setting will be most appropriate for your child's success at school.
- **Prepare** your child, and you, for the start of preschool.

# Understanding Regional Centers

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- The Lanterman Act of CA requires RCs to provide supports and services to individuals with developmental disabilities 3 years old on up
- Most services from 3 – 22 years are delivered through the school districts, not RCs
- When your child turns 3, Early Start ends and eligibility for continued Lanterman services is not automatic
- Eligibility for Lanterman services is different than eligibility for Early Start services and the RC draws data from assessments to determine eligibility



**North Bay**  
Regional Center



**Golden  
Gate  
Regional  
Center**



[www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)

# Regional Center Lanterman Act Eligibility

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Your child must have a developmental disability *that originates prior to age 18 is expected to be lifelong and constitutes a substantial disability for the individual*. There are five categories that *may* result in eligibility:

- Cognitive impairment/intellectual disability
- Autism
- Cerebral palsy
- Epilepsy
- “Other disabling conditions” that closely resembles an intellectual disability and/or results in the individual requiring similar services to an individual with intellectual disabilities

# Regional Center Lanterman Act Eligibility

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“Substantial disability” means significant functional limitations **in three or more** of the following areas:

- Self-care
- Receptive and expressive language
- Learning
- Mobility
- Self-direction
- Capacity for independent living
- Economic self-sufficiency

# Regional Center Lanterman Act Provisional Eligibility

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## Provisional Eligibility for Regional Center Services as of July of 2021

- Expands eligibility for 3-4 year olds to be provisionally eligible for RC services under specific conditions
- Assessment and reassessment of child at certain points in time: at least 90 days prior to the date that they turn 3 years old; if provisionally eligible at 3 years, at least 90 days before turning five years old
- From 5 years old, the child needs to meet the definition of developmental disability to be eligible for ongoing regional center services

# Regional Center Lanterman Act Provisional Eligibility

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Child has disability “that is not solely physical in nature and has significant functional limitations **in at least two** of the following areas of major life activity, as determined by a regional center and as appropriate to the age of the child”:

- Self-care
- Receptive and expressive language
- Learning
- Mobility
- Self-direction

# Regional Center Eligibility & Provisional Eligibility from DDS memo to RC Directors dated 8.5.21

Enclosure

## Lanterman Act Eligibility Criteria

Lanterman Act Eligibility	Lanterman Act Provisional Eligibility
<p>All of the following must be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diagnosed with an intellectual disability, autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and/or other disability that closely resembles an intellectual disability and/or results in the individual requiring similar services to an individual with intellectual disabilities</li><li>• The disability originates prior to age 18, is expected to be lifelong and constitutes a substantial disability for the individual<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ “Substantial disability” means significant functional limitations in three or more of the following areas:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Self-care</li><li>▪ Receptive and expressive language</li><li>▪ Learning</li><li>▪ Mobility</li><li>▪ Self-direction</li><li>▪ Capacity for independent living</li><li>▪ Economic self-sufficiency</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>	<p>All of the following must be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child is three or four years of age</li><li>• The disability is not solely physical in nature and the child has significant functional limitations in at least two of the following areas of major life activity:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Self-care</li><li>◦ Receptive and expressive language</li><li>◦ Learning</li><li>◦ Mobility</li><li>◦ Self-direction</li></ul></li></ul>

# If your child is eligible for Regional Center

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- IFSP is closed and an Individual Program Plan (IPP) is opened
- Early Start service coordinator may continue serving your family, or you're assigned a new one
- Meeting to discuss and develop an IPP for your child: *it may include both your child's and your family's needs; needs determine goals and RC services*
- Make sure all of your concerns and your child's needs are in the IPP
- IPP will be reviewed annually or as needs change
- Examples services during school age years: respite, parent trainings, behavior modification/management support. Be sure to ask for a needed service.

***Don't assume it is not available to you***



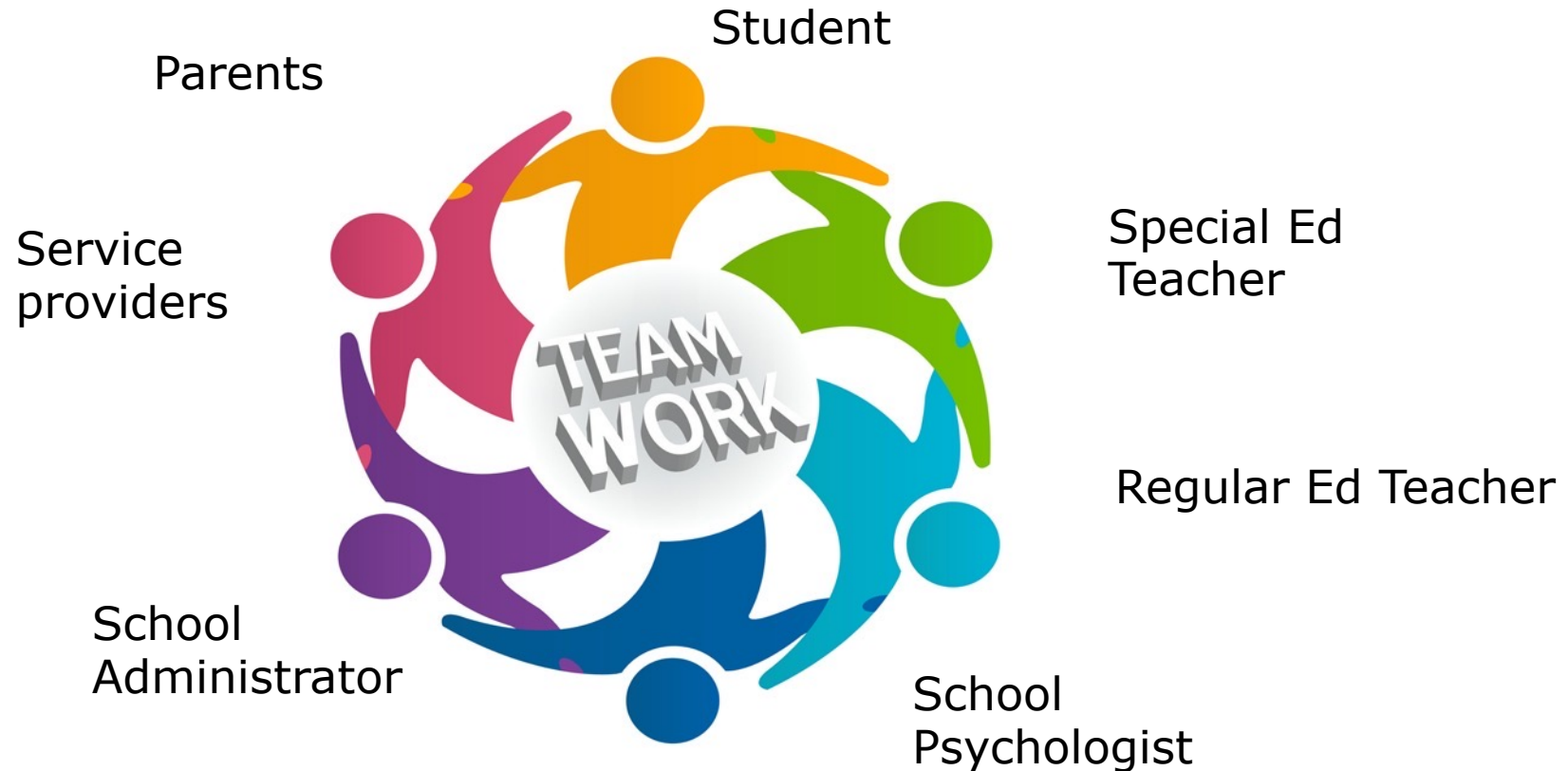
# If your child is not eligible for Regional Center services

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- You have the right to appeal
- Ask questions, gather info, document thoughts/communication
- *Disability Rights California, Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA)* offers free help
- *Introduction to Regional Center Services* is a Matrix publication that you can download and read for more information

# Understanding Special Education

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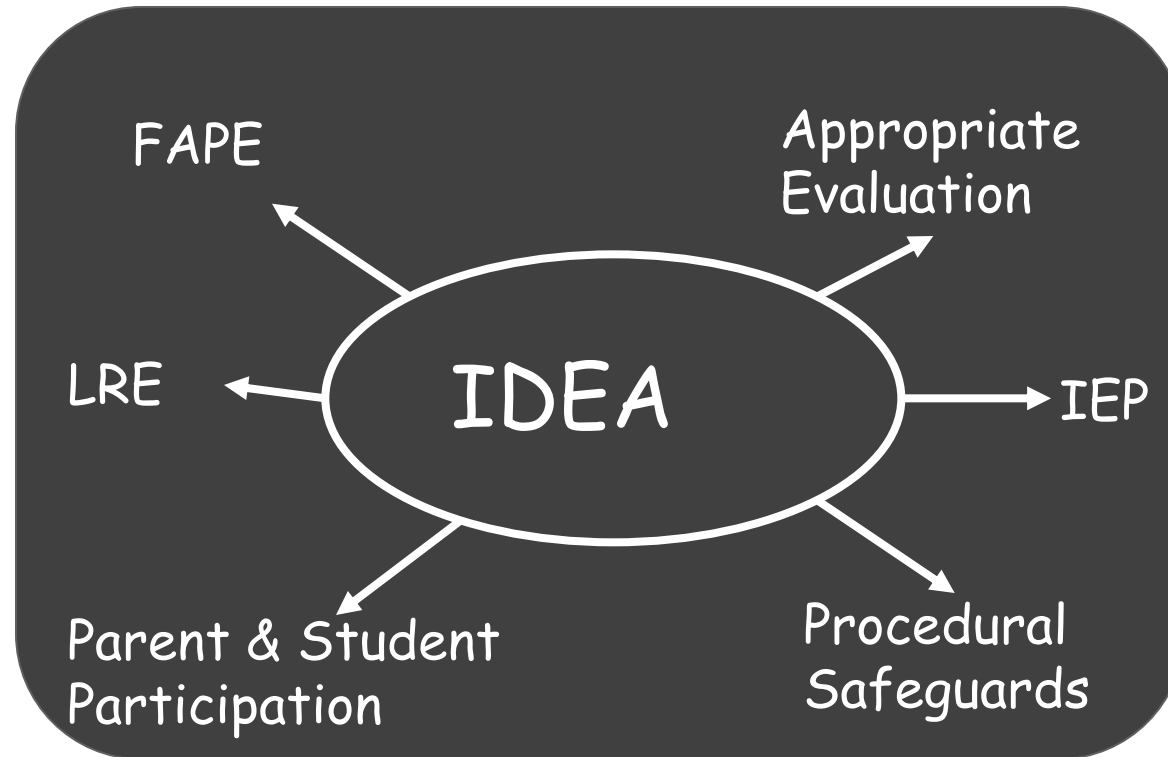


# Special Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Free  
Appropriate  
Public  
Education

Least Restrictive  
Environment –  
education with  
“typical” peers  
whenever  
possible

Access records,  
participate at  
meetings, consent  
to changes/services



It all starts with  
Assessments

Individualized  
Education Program:  
the document, the  
meeting, the plan

Procedural Safeguards  
document your and  
your child's rights and  
remedies (to resolve  
conflict)

# Special Education – Brief Overview

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- [IDEA \(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act\)](#) provides for and governs Special Education Services for children ages 3 up to 22 years who need ***specialized instruction to access the general education curriculum***
- [13 eligibility categories](#) (and the 14<sup>th</sup> Established Medical Disability only from 3 – 5 years)
- Goals (needs), services and placement will be described in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). [See Matrix Individual Education Plan \(IEP\) packet](#) for more
- Annual IEP meetings held to discuss progress and make changes; can ask for a meeting at any time if you have concerns, conducted within 30 days
- Knowledge is Power – becoming familiar with your child's rights will empower you. Check out the [Matrix Advocating for Your Child with Special Needs](#) packet

# Steps in Transitioning: Early Start to Preschool

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- By 2 years 6 months
- By 2 years 9 months (or earlier)
- Around 2 years 9 months
- By 3 years
- At 3 years

View Time Frames/Age of Child • Transition Process Steps Chart describing these 6 steps on page 12 of the Matrix packet: [Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services](#).

Download this chart on the Zoom training invite.

# What Happens ... before 2 ½ years old

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# Before 2 ½ years ...

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Regional Center service coordinator will help you to start thinking about:

- What you want your child to accomplish during their preschool years?
- What assessments are needed?
- 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 are available and what are the eligibility requirements?
- Who can help as a guide through the transition process?  
(Hint: Matrix! Also Early Start specialists/therapists working with your child)

# Learn the differences: Early Start vs Spec Ed

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## **Early Start**

In the home (usually)

Parent present for sessions

Parent provides transportation  
(if needed)

Usually services are short duration;  
maybe 1x or 2x a week

Usually individual 1:1 services

Written document is IFSP

Focuses on outcomes for child  
and family

## **Special Education Preschool**

Outside the home

Parent not present in classroom

District may or may not provide  
transportation

Usually 3x, 4x or 5x a week for 2,3,4 hours a day

Specialized small group and/or 1:1  
instruction/therapy

Written document is IEP

Focuses on child's educational  
needs/goals



# What Happens ... 2 ½ to 2 ¾ years old

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## 2 ½ to 2 ¾ years old ...

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- Service coordinator sets up the first transition conference to create the transition plan; best practice is to have a school district representatives present at this first meeting
- As a member of the IFSP team, your family is included in the development of the transition plan; transition plan must be part of the IFSP and include program options and steps and services
- Specialists who have worked with your child will review general program options and community resources and discuss how to best prepare your toddler for the transition into preschool
- Transition timeline will be reviewed and suggested assessments discussed
- An assessment plan is created to determine eligibility; assessment plan to be signed by parent before assessments begin
- Within 60 days of signing and returning assessment plan, assessments completed, and the *next* transition meeting is scheduled ... the first IEP meeting

# Parent prep during this time

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- Organize your child's records (for example: assessments, medical reports and IFSP)
- See Matrix packets: [\*Getting Organized – Early Years\*](#) and [\*Getting Organized – Your Child's School-Age Years\*](#)
- Think about what areas of your child's development should be the focus of their program
- Use the worksheet "My Child's Strengths and Needs," (pages 13– 14) from [\*Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services\*](#) to help you organize your thoughts

# Your Child's Strengths and Needs

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

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

## 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:



# What Happens ... before 3 years old

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# First IEP meeting

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IEP eligibility meeting:

- Assessment results are discussed
- Eligibility for Special Education is determined
- If eligible, the IEP will be written
- IFSP will be closed

# The IEP Meeting: Preparation



1. Request assessments and draft goals before the meeting, in writing, nicely
2. If possible, request brief pre-meeting conversations with specialists to ask questions
3. Organize paperwork: records, reports, work samples, doctors' notes. [Getting Organized – Your Child's School-Age Years](#)
4. Write down your current observations or concerns about your child; refer to these notes for questions; check if needs are represented in draft goals
5. Organize your thoughts; refer to "My Child's Strengths and Needs" from [Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services](#) (pages 13 – 14). [Matrix IEP Tool Kit: Prep for Annual or Triennial Meeting](#) may be helpful
6. Keep an open mind and remember your child's interest, rather than your fixed position
7. Process your emotions: Even though we know our children best, sometimes reading the assessment reports can be shocking, and stir up our emotions. Give yourself time to process these emotions **before** the meeting



# The IEP Meeting

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# What to expect at the 1<sup>st</sup> IEP meeting

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- What will the initial meeting be like?
- Lengthy: lots to cover, so 1st IEP meetings may last for more than 1 hour
- Familiar Faces: some or all of Early Start team may be there, certainly your Regional Center service coordinator

At the meeting you can:

- Ask for introductions if whoever is facilitating doesn't provide them
- Find out how much time is allotted
- Take notes – or have someone with you who will
- Ask questions for clarification/explanation/specifics
- Take breaks if needed

# Effective and Collaborative Communication



Remember the 3 Cs:  
**Communication,**  
**Cooperation,**  
**Collaboration**

# How to talk so schools will listen ... and listen so schools will talk



- Acknowledge and process your emotions
- Focus on your child's needs
- Listen & ask questions; repeat, reflect and rephrase for clarification
- Build on small agreements
- Use humor and be appreciative; show respect
- Be grateful and assume your IEP team is doing the best they can!

# What will be discussed

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- **Parent's concerns:** Typically parent's concerns begin the meeting; may be good idea to come with your concerns written down so they can be included in the IEP; keep your concerns short and to the point, no more than 1 page!
- **Child's present levels and presentation of assessment results:** Professionals who evaluated your child in each area of suspected disability will present their reports and explain their observations
- **Draft Goals:** Team will discuss areas that need improvement based on assessment results and observations and review draft goals to meet by next year's IEP
- **Services:** Discussion of frequency and duration of special instruction and related services (PT, OT, speech, etc.) that are needed to make progress on these goals
- **Placement:** Where the services will take place? What will the program consist of?

# Notes on Placement

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- “Continuum of options”: IEP team is required by the IDEA to review with you the options available for placement that meet your child’s needs
- The school will make an offer of the one option that they believe is most appropriate for your child to make progress
- And remember that school districts are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE)



# The Preschool Program

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# What program is appropriate?

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Options which may be considered include:

- A class with children without special needs with your child receiving special education related services (such as speech) outside the classroom
- A special education class, called a Special Day Class (SDC) with other children with special needs
- Your child could also attend both a special education class and a community preschool class, receiving the benefit of both
- Classes with a mix of children with and without special needs are offered.



# Visiting the program

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Good to check out the IEP team's recommendation before agreeing to any placement. School district personnel will arrange visits, before or after the IEP:

- Will the proposed placement meet your child's needs and address their 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.
- Class populations may change with new students coming in throughout the year, depending on when they turn 3 years old. So the students you see during your tour may not be all the students in the class when/if your child attends.
- Teachers and aides may change from year to year – so can class locations.

# Understanding the program

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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
- You can use the *Parent Observation Guidelines for Preschool Programs* to assist you during your site visit (pages 17 – 20 of [Transition from Early Start to Preschool Services](#))

# Signing the IEP

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# To sign or not to sign

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**\*\*\*\*\**You do not have to sign the IEP at the meeting*\*\*\*\*\***

- It is perfectly acceptable to take the time you need to review, reflect, ask and answer questions
- You may not have had the opportunity to visit the proposed placement, and would like to do so before signing the IEP
- You can consent to part, all, or nothing
- You can take it home to read/think about
- Maybe a need was overlooked – gather supporting info, document your thoughts, ask for another meeting
- You can call our Helpline and ask us to review the IEP with you before you sign and agree to the IEP

# And even after you've signed in agreement ...

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If you have signed the IEP and the IEP isn't working:

- Lack of progress
- Goals are too easy and met too quickly
- Related service needed but hasn't been offered

Request an IEP **in writing** and the school should hold the meeting within 30 days.

*But be aware that calling too many IEP meetings may not be the most appropriate course of action ...*

# What to do if your child is not eligible for special education

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- Celebrate? Maybe...
- But if you think your child does need “specialized instruction to access the general education curriculum”:
- Disagree with the assessments and eligibility decision
- Request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense
- Or watch, wait and document your child’s learning and development – you’ll know soon enough if all is well or not
- Call Matrix for help!

# Begin Conflict Resolution at the Lowest Level

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If you're having concerns or issues that effective communication, collaboration, and cooperation are not solving, be ready to climb the conflict resolution ladder.

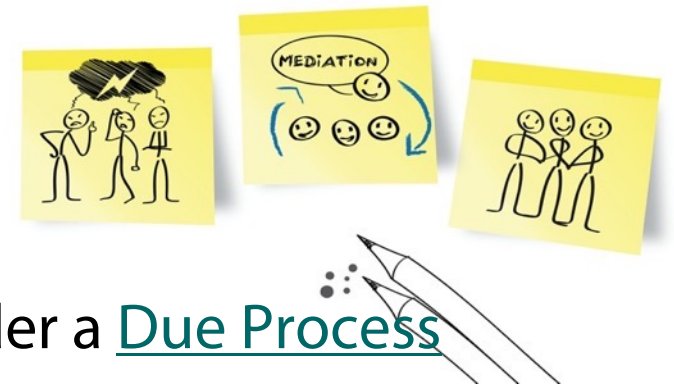


Educate yourself as to your options: the [Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education](#) is a great place to start

# Begin Conflict Resolution at the Lowest Level

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- Call Matrix to discuss and strategize
- Connect with teacher, principal, district program manager, special education director
- Call an IEP meeting; consider a facilitated IEP meeting
- Consider Alternative Dispute Resolution or Mediation
- If necessary, file a [State Compliance Complaint](#) or consider a [Due Process Complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings](#)





# Transition Tips: Prepare Your Child

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Have a Q&A with your child! Encourage their questions: “Who will be at school? How will I get to school? Will you drive me or will we walk to school together? How long will I be there? How will I get home? What will you be doing while I’m in school? Will you miss me?”



# You know your child best ...

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- **TALK** with your child, give them as much or as little info as appropriate.
- **SHOW** pictures of the actual school site or at least what your child will do at school.
- **VISIT** the school before your child starts. Follow the route to the classroom. If the playground is accessible, plan several outings to it and play there if appropriate.
- **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.
- **GET** library books on going to school. *The Kissing Hand* is a popular favorite. Tell stories about when siblings or friends first went to school.
- **LOOK** for picture books about riding a school bus , if your child is going to do that; get a toy school bus for your child to play with.
- **GATHER** clothes or special items for 1<sup>st</sup> day of school!

# Transition Tips: Prepare Yourself

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Sending your baby off to school can be a very emotional experience:  
Will the teacher understand my child? Will they get the services they need and succeed?

Will staff know what they need, when to help, when to stand back and let them try on their own?  
Will they make friends?  
Will they be bullied?



# Tips for parents who've been there, done that

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- Give the teacher a one-page summary about your child: home life, interests, strengths, challenges
- Provide the teacher with a one-page summary on the disability and how it affects your child, especially if the disability is rare
- Take pictures of the first day – leaving home and arriving at school
- Confirm the transport schedule if your child takes a bus
- 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.
- Keep a tissue in your pocket and a smile on your face. Consider the book *The Kissing Hand*.
- Plan to do something for yourself during school hours on the first day – don't spend all your free time running errands or working. Give yourself a break!
- Create positive images in your head of your child doing well at school.

# Get Involved!

***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.***

Margaret Mead



**Want to find out what's new in Special Education?**



**Want to get Involved?**

**Want to make a change?**

Consider joining your local school district's  
**Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**

Find out about CACs in counties we serve

Find out about SELPAs in the counties we serve

# Self-care is not selfish

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- Transition is an intense experience...but temporary
- Your child will change and grow, as will your feelings about transition
- Embrace the moment and appreciate every second with your young one
- Seek support both in navigating the process and with your emotions
- Find a support group – or start your own! Why not go for a hike or get coffee with some parents you meet at drop off?



# **We are our children's role models, they watch how we manage stress, growth and change**

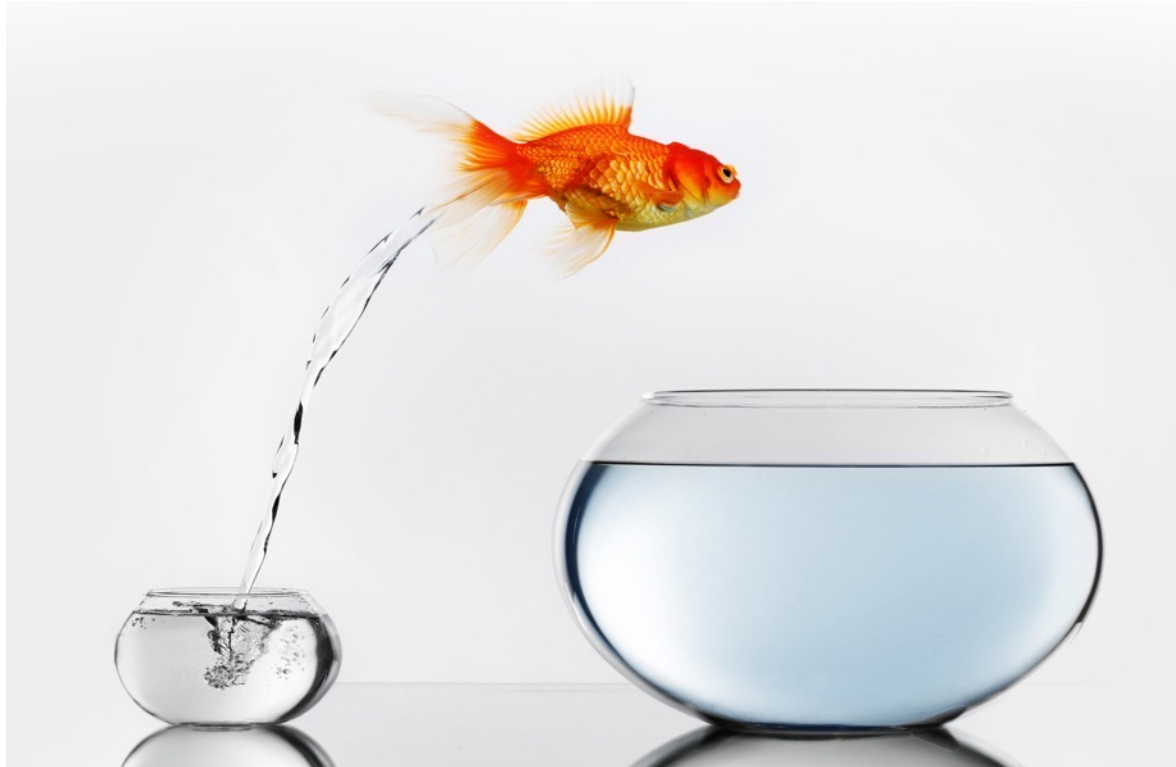
## **Practice self-care:**

- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise is a proven way to reduce stress
- Put enjoyable activities, just for yourself, in your schedule
- Eat healthy foods
- Find people who give you encouragement and hope
- Consider a class in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Try not to feel guilty
- Be gentle with yourself
- Practice asking for help
- Avoid resentment or frustration
- Make self-care a habit



# Hop on in – the water is fine

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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.

# References/Resources

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*California Early Start Neighborhood: Service Coordination Handbook & Resources*

Matrix packet: *Transition From Early Start to Preschool Services*

# Q&A

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