EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PROCESS

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DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Louisiana Believes

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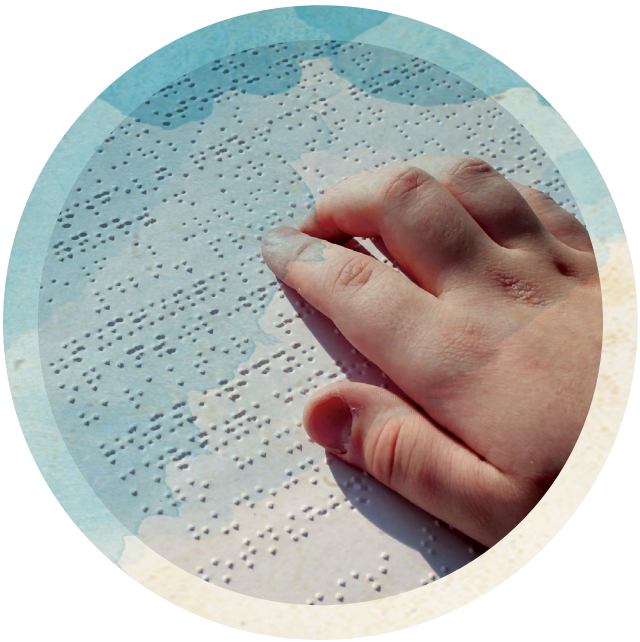

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This guide is intended to help families of young children with disabilities navigate the complex system of special education. This guide provides information to support families in understanding the special education process, make informed decisions for their child, and prepare for smooth and effective transitions at key entry points.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that ensures all children with disabilities are eligible to receive a free and appropriate education through special education services. Infants and toddlers, until a child turns 2, and their families receive early intervention services under **IDEA Part C.** Children ages 3 through 5 receive special education and related services under **IDEA Part B.**

In order to be eligible for special education and related services, children must be evaluated by a trained professional and found eligible for one or more of the following disabilities listed in the IDEA:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Families and caregivers play a significant role as partners in ensuring children receive the appropriate services to succeed, regardless of their educational setting. It is important to understand the key terms and acronyms related to IDEA to stay informed.

Adaptive Physical Education (APE): Physical education that has been adapted or modified to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability so that they are afforded the opportunity to participate in regular physical education programs.

Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&R): A referral agency located in regions across the state to provide support to providers and families.

Child Find: Requires state and local educational agencies (LEAs) to have effective policies and procedures that ensure that all children with disabilities in the State who need special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated, regardless of the severity of the disability.

Early Childhood Special Education Services (ECSE): Special education services for children ages 3-5; also referred to as providing special education for children with a disability or SPED services. ***See table below for additional information***

Early Intervention (EI): Special education services for children and families birth to 3 years of age. Early Interventionists may also reference a certified early childhood special education teacher in a preschool setting. ***See table below for additional information.***

Extended School Year Services (ESYS): Services provided in the summer to some children with disabilities that require services as part of their free appropriate public education. ESYS services must be provided according to the IEP and at no cost to the family.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): A regulation of IDEA that ensures a free public education is available to all children residing in the State between the ages of 3 and 21, including children with disabilities who need special education and related services.

Family Service Coordinator (FSC): A case manager for families in the IDEA Part C system.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A document written annually to determine special education services and placement for children ages 3-21; developed jointly by family and school personnel.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): A document written annually and updated every six months by families and personnel serving infants and toddlers in the Early Intervention system from birth to 3 years old.

Local Education Agency (LEA): A public agency located in every community to coordinate essential activities for early childhood programs, including instructional and educational services.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities front eh general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the child's disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Occupational Therapy (OT): A service for children whose fine motor, perceptual, and/or sensory integration impairments significantly interfere with their learning.

Physical Therapy (PT): A service for children whose gross motor limitations interfere significantly with their academic development.

School Building Level Committee (SBLC): A committee of faculty members and other school personnel who review referrals for school-based and special education services for school-aged children.

Speech Language Pathologist (SLP): Also referred to as speech therapists, assess and provide services related to speech, language, cognitive-communication, and oral/feeding/swallowing.

Speech Therapy (ST): A service for children who have been evaluated and determined to have misarticulated speech sounds; inappropriate voice and fluency disorders and/or impaired understanding or expression of their thoughts.

TIMELINE

It is important for families to understand the process for timely evaluations and services for children who transition from Part C to Part B services. The following visual timeline highlights when key components of the transition process should occur.

3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months	26 months	30 months	31 months	32 months	33 months	34 months	35 months	36 months

INITIAL IFSP MEETING

Families and Family Services Coordinator (FSC) work together to develop IFSP including Early Intervention services and supports

TRANSITION OUTCOMES

Families and IFSP committee members add transition outcomes and activities to the IFSP

COMMUNICATION TO SCHOOL

With your approval, FSC will contact the school system, informing the school system that your child will be turning 3 years old

TRANSITION MEETING

FSC will schedule a transition meeting to discuss exiting or transitioning services by age 3

TRANSITION TO PART B SERVICES

The Local Education Agency (LEA) will conduct an initial evaluation, determine if your child will continue to receive services, and develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

TRANSITION FAQ

› What happens if my child turns 3 and the evaluation by the school system determines that my child is not eligible for services under Part B?

Your FSC and school system will discuss options for your child and provide information on available programs.

› What happens if my child turns 3 before the school year ends?

The IEP Team will review the last Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and determine if your child is eligible for Extended School Year Services (ESYS).

- If eligible, you may choose to have your child receive ESY services during the summer or delay services until the following school year begins.
- If the IEP team determines that your child is not eligible for ESY services, then special education services will begin at the start of the next school year.

› What happens if my child turns 3 during the summer?

The IEP Team will review the IFSP and determine when services will begin.

- If it is determined that your child needs ESY services to begin immediately, your child can receive services during the remainder of the summer.
- If the IEP team determines that your child does not need services immediately, then services will start when the next school year begins.

PART C AND PART B SERVICES

This table outlines how early intervention services (Part C) is different from Child Find services (Part B, Section 619).

	IDEA Part C	IDEA Part B, Section 619
How do I know whether my child will receive Part B or Part C services?	EarlySteps (Part C) provides services to families with infants and toddlers **aged birth to three years (36 months)** who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays.	Lead Agencies (Part B) provide services to families with children **ages three to five** and may be eligible to receive special education services.

	IDEA Part C	IDEA Part B, Section 619
What is the process for determining if my is eligible for special education services?	Anyone can make an EarlySteps referral, including parents, teachers and pediatricians. Children can be referred to EarlySteps by contacting the System Point of Entry (SPOE) in their region. Once the SPOE receives the referral, the family will be contacted to begin the eligibility determination process. Outcomes and activities are developed to address the needs of both the child and family If your child is determined eligible for services, an Individualized Service Family Plan (IFSP) will be developed.	The local school system is responsible for determining eligibility for IDEA Part B services. If it is suspected that your child will continue to need services beyond age 2, this process, called a multidisciplinary education (MDE), will be completed to determine if your child will be eligible for services. A team of qualified professionals, along with your family, will make this determination. An evaluation will include the following: › hearing and vision screening; › health and medical history; › developmental history; › cognitive development; › adaptive development; › social and emotional development; › communication development; › present levels of functioning; and › physical development.
What legal documents should I be aware of?	**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** › Developed by IFSP team and is based on the evaluation and needs of the child and family. › Developed no later than 45 days from the date of the referral at the SPOE and reviewed every six months. › Evaluation and revision will be completed at an annual meeting. › Includes a statement of performance that contains information about the child's present levels of motor, cognitive, communication, social/emotional and adaptive development (self-help skills). › Must be developed jointly by the family and appropriately qualified personnel involved in the provision of early intervention services.	**Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** › Developed by the IEP team. › Reviewed periodically, but not less than annually, to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved › Focuses on providing services and supports to meet the child's needs in the educational setting. › Must contain the child's current levels of academic achievement, annual goals, description of how the child will progress towards their goals, identified related supports and services that will be provided, program modifications, individual accommodations, and frequency, location, and duration of services being provided.

	IDEA Part C	IDEA Part B, Section 619
Who will participate in this process?	An **IFSP team** may consist of the following people: › Parents or guardians of the child › Other family members, as requested by the family › An advocate or person outside of the family, if requested by the parents › Intake coordinator › Ongoing service coordinator › Persons directly involved in conducting the evaluations and assessments; and › Persons who will be providing early intervention services. › The EarlySteps EI Consultant may also participate either in person or by review of records/information prior to the meeting, as appropriate, to assist in interpreting the developmental information.	An **IEP team** may consist of the following people: › You, as the child's parent or guardian and other people you wish to invite › A special education teacher or related service provider › A general education teacher, when appropriate › A representative of the LEA who has expertise in special education, curriculum, and instruction › Transition services participants
If my child is found eligible for special education, who provides the service support for my child?	A Family Service Coordinator will help ensure early intervention services and supports are available. The following services are provided by EarlySteps: › Audiology › Speech-Language (including sign language and cued language services) › Occupation Therapy › Physical Therapy › Special Instruction › Assistive Technology › Support Coordination › Medical Services › Health Services › Nursing Services › Vision services › Social Work Services › Psychological Services › Family Training › Nutrition Services › Transportation	A special education teacher and/or related service provider will provide related services such as physical, occupational, and speech therapy; and supplementary aids and services, such as adaptive equipment or special communication systems.

	IDEA Part C	IDEA Part B, Section 619
Where will my child receive services?	Services are provided in the natural environment. This refers to providing services in a setting where the child would be if he or she did not have a disability. In order for families to receive the maximum benefits from early intervention, it is important for families to fully participate and collaborate with Family Service Coordinators and providers. Providers will make scheduled appointments and follow-up regarding strategies, activities and techniques to implement at home. Additionally, a Community Outreach Specialist (COT) will coordinate parent activities and mentor parents for participation.	The IEP addresses how the child's disability affects his or her progress and participation in appropriate activities in the educational setting. Services should be provided in the **Least Restrictive Environment** (LRE). Refer to the section, ***Settings for Preschool Children with Disabilities*** for more information about the various programs available to support your child.

FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To obtain additional information on EarlySteps services and resources for your child and family, and learn more about what is available in your area, visit the parent's corner.

Each school year, your local education agencies (LEAs) are required to provide parents of **children receiving Part B service**s a copy of the procedural safeguards. The Special Education Process and Procedural Safeguards are used to inform parents of the support, services and protections offered by your local public school district. It is important to know your rights in order to advocate for your child, including:

- The right to **consent**: you have the right to be fully informed in your home-language and consent to any action related to a change in the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child.
- The right to **confidentiality**: you have the right to ensure that LEAs follow the policies and procedures in place to comply with protecting your child's personally identifiable information.
- The right to **participate**: you have the right to participate in your child's evaluation, to provide input as the educational plan is being developed, and to discuss your child's progress and placement options.
- The right to **obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)**: you may ask that a professional, who is not employed by the school system, conduct another evaluation of your child.

SETTINGS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

There are several programs available to preschool children ages 3-5. The following section outlines the programs available and gives a brief description of each.

Dual Enrollment Program Options	**Option 1:** A child is enrolled in a special education program part of the day and in a regular early childhood program for the other part of the day. Classes may be on the same campus or on different campuses. **Option 2:** A regular education preschool teacher and an early intervention teacher teach the child in the early childhood program together throughout the day (also known as team teaching or co-teaching)
Reverse Mainstream Classroom	An early intervention teacher is the lead teacher in an early childhood program which provides services to children with disabilities and contains at least 50% of children in the class that are typically developing.
Itinerant Services	An early intervention teacher works on skills and IEP goals with a child with a disability in the early childhood program (also known as push-in services) or in another service location (also known as pull-out services). › The amount of time the intervention teacher provides services to the child depends on the number of service hours specified on their IEP.
Home Based Services	A child is not yet enrolled in an early childhood program and therefore the special education services are provided in the child's home environment by related service providers.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Louisiana Back-to-School Guide for Parents of Students with Disabilities

A guide that provides families of a child with a disability with a quick overview of what you can do to help prepare your child for a smooth transition back to school.

LDOE Resources for Parents of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may need additional support to achieve their academic potential and long term goals. The resources included can assist parents in advocating on behalf of their child with disabilities and become active participants in the education process.

Center for Parent Information and Resources

A resource page that has been created for Parent Centers around the world to support families of children with disabilities by providing family-friendly information and research-based materials on key topics.

Families Helping Families

A network of individual, non-profit family driven resource centers that promote advocacy and provide training and support to families who have members with disabilities.