



## HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR TRANSITION?

Early Intervention (EI) services end the day before your child's third birthday. You will be discussing transition, including preschool programming and special education services, multiple times to prepare you and your child for this change. This guide will help you with steps you can take to prepare for this process and provide you with information for each step.

- Visit different early childhood programs to determine what you think is the best fit for your child. If your child qualifies for special education, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) or where your child would be if there were no disability.
- What might support your child in these settings?
- Consider your feelings. You are likely to experience a range of emotions during this transition. Remember that, ultimately, this is an exciting time for your child, and you will work with the school and program to develop the best plan to support your child.



## TRANSITION AT A GLANCE

It is time to think about what happens when your child turns 3. There are several steps in the process of transitioning from Early Intervention (EI) to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). The chart below provides a timeline of the steps. More information on each step can be found elsewhere in this guide. As your child's primary advocate, you can use this time to start gathering information, pictures, and anything you'd like to share about your child for the upcoming Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

Transition Steps	Every IFSP	2 yrs. 3 mon.	2 yrs. 6 mon.	2 yrs. 7 mon.	2 yrs. 8 mon.	2 yrs. 9 mon.	2 yrs. 10 mon.	2 yrs. 11 mon.	3 yrs.
Talk about transition questions and concerns.	●								
Referral packet sent to school district.		●	●						
Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) transition planning meeting held with transition outcome identified.		●	●	●	●				
Transition Planning Conference held.		●	●	●	●				
Domain Review held.				●	●	●	●	●	
District evaluation process continues.				●	●	●	●	●	
IEP team determines eligibility.				●	●	●	●	●	
If eligible, team develops IEP.				●	●	●	●	●	
Exit IFSP.						●	●	●	
Implement IEP, if eligible, and complete Family Outcomes Questionnaire.									●



## SHARING INFORMATION AND TRANSITION PLANNING CONFERENCE

At each Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting, your Early Intervention (EI) team will discuss transition and share strategies to help you prepare for transitions in EI services and beyond EI. Transition planning will begin no later than when your child is 2 years, 6 months of age, but can be started as early as 2 years, 3 months of age. Because your child receives EI services, this transition process allows that, if found eligible, your child is entitled to begin Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services on their third birthday.

### REFERRAL

- A referral occurs when EI shares information with the school district to start the transition process.
- EI sends the school district basic contact information including name, address, phone number, and child's date of birth.
- The service coordinator will ask you to sign a consent form so a packet of your child's information, called a "referral" packet, can be sent to your local school district. The referral packet includes your signed consent document, your child's most recent Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and your child's most recent EI evaluation, and/or service summary reports. You can choose to add other information.
- Your service coordinator is there to help answer your questions and explain the complete process.

When your child is between 2 years, 3 months and 2 years, 9 months of age, your service coordinator will hold a Transition Planning Conference that will include you as the lead expert on your child, evaluators from your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team, and a school district representative(s). This is an opportunity for you to learn about your school district and for the school district to learn about your child. It is not a meeting for making decisions about eligibility, services, or where your child might go to school. Make sure you are alert for a call from an unknown number (the school) and be prepared with any questions you have for the district.

### TOPICS TO TALK ABOUT

- What growth has my child made at home and in Early Intervention (EI)?
- What preschool services does my school district offer?
- How will my child be found eligible for special education services?
- What are the timelines for transition?
- What documentation is required for the evaluation process?



- What happens at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting and who will be there?
- My child's birthday is in May-August. What options are available for services to continue?
- How are services and accommodations delivered in inclusive programs with typically developing preschoolers?
- What happens if my child is not found to be eligible for special education?
- What is required for school registration?
- How do I set up a visit to observe classrooms in the community and the school district?
- Who is the contact person and information for my school district?
- What are my next steps in the transition process?

### SERVICE COORDINATOR ROLE DURING TRANSITION AT AGE 3

- Discuss future placement options and trainings with you.
- Describe how to prepare your child and family for a transition and explain educational rights and responsibilities for families.
- Confirm contact information.

- Ensure initial and updated release form are signed so up-to-date reports and diagnosis (the referral packet) can be sent to school district.
- Add or update transition steps and services into an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) so the whole team will understand what next steps will be coming.

**This is a good time to share information you know about your child to help the district paint a full picture of who your child is, and how your child is doing, prior to the evaluation. This [All About Me](#) form is a good option to help you share information.**

### THINGS TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR CHILD

- What do you want everyone to know about your child?
- What are your concerns?
- How does your child communicate with you and others?
- How does your child learn best?
- What does your child do when help is needed?
- What would you like your child to learn over the next 6-12 months?
- How does your child interact within your family?
- What are some of your child's interests or favorite toys?



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All About Me  
form

**Tip:**  
Put together  
a binder of  
information on  
your child and  
bring a  
picture!



# COMPARING EARLY INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

	Early Intervention (EI)	Special Education
Governing Federal Laws	Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Part B of IDEA
Ages for Services	Birth to 3, unless eligible for Early Intervention/ Extended Services (EI/ES), which continue until the start of the school year following their child's third birthday.	Three through the end of the school year in which they turn 22
Goal of the Program	Helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability.	Helping the child achieve success within the educational setting.
Evaluation	Two or more professionals from different disciplines complete a developmental evaluation of all five areas of development.	A team of professionals completes an evaluation in the area(s) of suspected disability/concern.
Eligibility	A child must have a 30 percent delay in one or more areas of development, a documented medical condition, as determined by Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Early Intervention, or meet specified criteria for at-risk.	A child is found eligible using one of the eligibility categories for special education and related services.
Service Model Delivery	Parents/guardians and caregivers enroll their child in EI program. The types(s), frequency, location, and duration of services, including individuals providing services, are determined through the IFSP process.	Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or the school district are required to provide special education and related services to eligible individuals, age 3 through 21 years. The IEP team determines services.
Family Involvement	Families take an active role in the development of the IFSP and in the delivery of services.	Parent/guardians are a member of the IEP team that makes decisions regarding the education of their child.
Service Coordination	Each eligible infant or toddler is assigned a service coordinator who coordinates services and assists the family throughout their involvement in the EI system.	A case manager is assigned to each child with an IEP. The case manager is usually someone on the child's IEP team.
Type of Plan	An IFSP documents the family functional outcomes developed by the team. IFSPs are reviewed at least every six months and rewritten annually by the IFSP team.	An IEP documents the child's measurable annual goals, services, and program; the IEP also describes how progress will be measured. The IEP team reviews the IEP annually.



	Early Intervention (EI)	Special Education
Services	All EI services are provided to support the family's ability to meet their child's developmental needs and the family's desired outcomes. Families are active participants in the delivery of services.	Special education is an educational service or program that is instructional in nature. Related services (such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech and language therapy) are provided when they are required to assist a child in obtaining benefit from the special education program.
Location of Services	EI services are provided in natural environments, such as the child's home or in the other sites in the community where infants and other toddlers without disabilities participate. Services are provided in the context of the family's normal routines.	Children with disabilities are educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and with their typically developing peers. A child may receive services in a more restrictive environment only when the IEP team determines that education in regular/general classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
Cost of Services	Many services are provided at no cost, but some families may incur a fee based on a sliding scale that considers income and family size for services from birth to 3. As part of the EI/ES option, the current services provided through your child's IFSP will continue without any additional out of pocket cost. Insurance plans may also be billed.	Children are provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).
Transition	The transition process for families begins no later than 2 years, 6 months of age. A Transition Planning Conference will be held at least 90 days before the child's third birthday.	An LEA representative will participate in the Transition Planning Conference. If a child is determined eligible for ECSE services, the IEP will be developed by the child's third birthday.



## DOMAIN REVIEW AND EVALUATION

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disability  
information



The purpose of the domain review is two parts:

- 1 What information do we know about your child?
- 2 What information do we need to collect to determine eligibility for special education services?

**The school may ask you to bring your child in for a screening to collect more information before the domain meeting, but this is not a requirement for the school to do. A form titled the "Identification of Needs Assessments," commonly called the domain form, is used during the domain meeting to keep track of the discussion. You know your child best, so you are the lead expert on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. There are several separate meetings, but they may be combined into one larger meeting.**

### THE TEAM NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO COLLECT INFORMATION TO ANSWER THESE FOUR QUESTIONS

Remember, participation in Early Intervention (EI) does not mean automatic eligibility for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services. Eligibility is based on the answers to the four questions below.

- What are your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance?** This is a description of how your child is doing in different areas (academic performance [pre literacy and numeracy skills], health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, communication, motor abilities, general intelligence, functional performance) and how your child uses what he or she learned throughout the day. For preschool-aged children, this is looking at what your child can do, what your child cannot do, and how they use their skills in everyday life.
- Does your child's disability have an adverse effect on your child's ability to participate in and benefit from the school environment?** This should describe how the student's disability affects his or her participation in the regular/general education curriculum and how the student performs in inclusive academic and nonacademic settings. What is the child able to do at home and how do those skills transfer to the academic setting?
- Does your child need special education and related services?** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that school districts provide whatever related services (other than medical care which is not for diagnostic purposes) a child needs to benefit from his or her special education program.
- Does your child have a disability?** This may be a known disability, or a disability category definition defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Illinois Administrative Code. You can share any medical diagnoses your child may have to consider for the evaluation process.



Related services are support services that may include, but are not limited to, speech-language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, early identification and assessment, counseling, rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, school health services, social work services, parent counseling, and training. For more information on related services, see the requirements in [IDEA Section 300.34](#).

**The previous questions seek to determine if your child needs support within the classroom to succeed academically alongside their peers. This is a major difference from Early Intervention (EI). EI focuses on the child's development whereas special education focuses on success at school and in the classroom specifically. If your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, including you, has enough information to answer all these questions after the domain review, your school district will not need to conduct any additional evaluations before the eligibility determination meeting. If all four questions cannot be answered, the team will decide what additional evaluations are needed prior to the eligibility determination meeting. The school will discuss the details of the evaluation with you and ask for your written consent to conduct the evaluation.**

#### WHAT IS INFORMED, WRITTEN CONSENT?

- Districts cannot evaluate your child without your informed, written consent.
- This means you have been fully informed about why your consent is needed in your native language or other mode of communication.

- You understand and agree in writing to the activity that has been described to you.
- You understand that your consent is voluntary, and you can cancel, or revoke, your consent at any time.

#### BEFORE YOU GIVE YOUR WRITTEN CONSENT, MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE FIVE W'S OF EVALUATION

- Why are these evaluations needed?
- Who will do the evaluations and how will the evaluations be completed?
- What information will be gathered through the evaluations?
- Where will the evaluations be done?
- When will the evaluations be scheduled and completed?

**It is important for you to read through evaluation reports prior to the next meeting. This will give you a chance to understand the results and be prepared with any questions you may have. You may wish to discuss the evaluation reports with your Early Intervention (EI) providers. The school must provide copies of all written materials that will be considered by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team no later than three school days prior to the meeting.**

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information







## ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION CONFERENCE

When your child's evaluation process is complete, it is time for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, including you as the lead expert, to meet and discuss the information that has been gathered. Each evaluator will report out the information and then the team determines if your child is eligible for special education.

### WHO IS A PART OF THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM TEAM?

- You! (Parents/Guardians)
- Regular/general education teacher
- Special education teacher (This may be the same person if the teacher functions in both roles.)
- School district representative who is knowledgeable about district programs and able to commit the district resources
- Staff who can explain the evaluation results
- A qualified interpreter for parents/guardians who need or request interpretation services for meetings
- Additional individuals may be invited, but are not required, by the school or parents. This may include others with knowledge or special expertise about the student (Early Intervention [EI] providers, child care staff, private therapies) or parental supports (family member, friend, parent advocate). If you are inviting someone, you should let the school know in advance.

### DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

- The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team reviews evaluation results and will determine if your child meets eligibility for special education services based on federal and state-mandated eligibility categories.
- Ask questions and share what you know. The purpose is to capture a full picture of your child.
- Eligibility Categories: Remember that Early Intervention (EI) focuses on the child's development whereas special education focuses on success at school and in the classroom specifically, so eligibility differs.
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Deaf blindness
  - Deafness
  - Developmental Delay
  - Emotional Disability
  - Hearing Impairment
  - Intellectual Disability
  - Multiple Disabilities
  - Orthopedic Impairment
  - Other Health Impairment
  - Specific Learning Disability
  - Speech Language Impairment
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Visual Impairment



### WHAT DOES BEING ELIGIBLE MEAN?

- Eligibility means your child can receive additional support and services through special education.
- Eligibility means the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will plan how your child will be educated and included with their peers (least restrictive environment [LRE]).
- If your child is eligible, the next step is to write your child's Individualized Education Program. This will provide the details of what your child's supports and services will look like.
- A certain eligibility category does not equate to specific services or programs.
- Eligibility determination is not a medical diagnosis of a disability, and a medical diagnosis does not automatically make a child eligible for special education services.
- If the team agrees that your child is NOT eligible, talk to the team about learning activities you can do at home and opportunities in the community to support your child's continued growth.
- You may agree or disagree with the evaluation results. Your parent rights, under the law, provide options for you if you disagree. Talk with your Individualized Education Program (IEP) team about your concerns.



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For more  
information on  
eligibility categories,  
see Chapter 4 in  
"A Parent Guide."



## DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Your child's educational plan is known as an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. An **Individualized Education Program is more than a written legal document. It is the plan that specifies the special education instruction and/or accommodations that your child needs to participate in preschool. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) has goals that will be reviewed yearly. You continue to have an important role on the team when developing this document. As the lead expert on your child, it is important to share what you know about your child and actively participate in planning and placement discussions.**

### WHAT IS INCLUDED IN AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM?

- Statement of present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (how your child is currently progressing).
- How the disability impacts your child's participation in school activities.
- Measurable, annual goals for your child.
- How your child's progress on their goals will be measured and shared with you throughout the school year. (Required to be shared at least on the same reporting schedule as regular/general education students.)
- The individualized services, supplementary aids, curriculum modifications, and accommodations the staff will provide to support your child's

progress. Modifications are changes in what the student is expected to demonstrate. Accommodations are appropriate changes to how learning occurs that provide equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge. For more information refer to the [Parent Guide](#).

- The date services begin and the frequency and duration of services.
- Placement or setting/location where your child's services will be provided.

### WHAT ARE RELATED SERVICES?

- Related services means transportation and developmental, corrective, and other supportive services required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.
- Related services may include, but are not limited to, speech-language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, early identification and assessment, counseling, rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, school health services, social work services, parent counseling, and training. For more information on related services, see the requirements in [IDEA Section 300.34](#).

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**WHAT IS THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT?**

- The least restrictive environment (LRE) is an educational setting in which children with and without disabilities can learn, play, and grow together.
- LRE would be where your child would attend if there was no disability. This is typically considered the regular/general preschool classroom.
- [Inclusion](#) is a term related to LRE and refers to children being fully immersed in the regular/general preschool classroom for the entire school day.
- Special education services and supports are embedded in the everyday routines and activities within the classroom.

**WHAT ARE PLACEMENT OPTIONS?**

- The first placement and service consideration should always be the least restrictive environment (LRE), the regular/general education classroom.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires districts to offer a full continuum of placement options for students, ranging from the least restrictive setting to the most restrictive ones. It also requires that students with disabilities be educated alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Placement refers to the educational environment.

- Regular/general early childhood setting (public or private preschool, group child development center, Head Start) with special education services delivered in that setting.
- Regular/general early childhood program with special education services in another location/classroom.
- Separate special education classroom, school, or facility.
- Service provider location (majority of special education and related services take place in a provider location or other location not in any other category).
- Home (receives special education and related services in the home).

**SIGNED CONSENT**

- Special education and related services cannot begin without your informed, written consent.
- It is important to review your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and ask any questions for clarification prior to giving written consent.

The law states that eligibility for a child transitioning from Early Intervention (EI) must be determined, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be ready to implement by the child's third birthday.



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Understanding Inclusion  
Models





## EARLY INTERVENTION/EXTENDED SERVICES

The Illinois Early Intervention Program offers parents of eligible children with summer birthdays the choice to continue current Early Intervention (EI) services after their child's third birthday until the start of the upcoming school year, rather than exiting EI and implementing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) on the third birthday. This option is called the Early Intervention/Extended Service (EI/ES) option. Specific criteria must be met to be eligible for this option. [The Parent Information Notice](#) has complete information regarding this EI/ES option.

### ELIGIBLE CHILDREN

- Children have been determined to be eligible for Early Intervention (EI), with services identified and consented to on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and
- Have their third birthday between May 1 and August 31, and
- Have been found eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services and had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) created for them.

### TRANSITION STEPS FOR EI/ES

- Prepare your child and family for transition out of EI.
- Determine if you would like the Child and Family Connections Office (CFC) to make a referral to the school district. If you would like to do so, your consent is required.

- Attend the EI Transition Planning Conference for your child
- Provide consent for your child to be evaluated and participate in the school district's evaluation process, if needed.
- Meet with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to learn the result of your child's eligibility evaluation for special education services and, if eligible, develop an early childhood education plan with your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.
- If your child has been determined eligible for EI/ES, decide if you wish to extend services in EI or begin your journey with Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). If not eligible, consider the other options for your child.
- If you choose to begin Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services, your child cannot re-enter EI once they exit, following their third birthday.

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The Parent Information  
Notice





## EXIT INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN MEETING

***Congratulations!*** You and your child are transitioning from Early Intervention (EI) and moving to the next chapter of their development. This is a time to celebrate! An Exit Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting is held no more than 120 days prior to the child's third birthday.

- The service coordinator will call your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team together to provide final updates on your child's progress.
- The team will discuss your child's progress in the three outcome areas across settings and situations.
- Document progress toward Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) functional outcomes and Early Intervention (EI) levels of development/child outcomes.
- This meeting also may be combined with the Transition Planning Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting.
- Discuss any questions you may have with the team.
- Complete the Family Outcomes Survey, which will be sent within a few months of EI exit.

You will receive the Family Outcomes Survey within a short time after leaving Early Intervention (EI). This survey is your voice to share your experiences with EI and to provide feedback on how well EI assisted you, the family, in gaining the needed answers, resources, and skills needed to continue supporting your child's development.



## RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Many parents/guardians of young children with special needs find it helpful to reach out to others for support or information. This resource section is a starting point to help you find other sources for information and support.

### GENERAL RESOURCES

- **Family to Family** – Some of the most helpful information comes from talking with other families that understand the questions, thoughts, and feelings that come with this transition period. Your parent/guardian liaison or service coordinator can help you connect with families in your area.
- **Parent/Guardian Groups and Organizations** – There are various groups that meet regularly for discussions related to families. You can find out about parent/guardian groups through your parent/guardian liaison, service coordinator, school district or other parents.
- **The Internet and Social Media** – Websites and social media can be useful places to turn to for information. Searching under a specific topic or disability can enable you find several resources.

### ILLINOIS-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

- [The Child Find Project of Illinois](#) provides information and resources related to the earliest possible identification of young children and their families who may benefit from Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services.

- [Division of Specialized Care for Children](#) partners with Illinois families and communities to help children with special health care needs connect to the services and resources necessary to reach their full potential.
- [Early CHOICES](#) promotes increasing and understanding high-quality preschool inclusive education through resources for families and technical assistance and professional development to early childhood professionals
- [Family Matters](#) provides information, referral, linkages, and training to parents/guardians outside of Chicago. Individuals can get assistance with special education concerns, obtain information and request training opportunities. This is one of two Parent Training Information Center in Illinois.
- [Family Resource Center on Disabilities](#) provides information on a family's rights and responsibilities under the law, making informed decisions, obtaining appropriate services, communicating with school professionals, networking with other parents/guardians, and transition services serving Chicago. This is one of two Parent Training Information Center in Illinois.





- [Illinois Assistive Technology](#) provides Illinois residents of all ages with disabilities and service providers access to assistive technology (AT) devices and services. They also provide training, technical assistance, and a variety of contracted services including professional AT evaluations.
- [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) provides information for families with young children including resources on Early Intervention (EI), disability and medical services, child care, and financial assistance and programs that offer assistance to low-income families.
- [Illinois Early Intervention \(EI\) Clearinghouse](#) provides information on health, education, disability, and developmental concerns, and a statewide lending library for families and professionals in early childhood and beyond.
- [Illinois Early Intervention Training Program](#) offers a variety of professional development opportunities for personnel, parents, or public to attend either through online access or in person.
- [Illinois Early Learning Project](#) provides evidence-based, reliable information on early care and education for parents, caregivers, and teachers of young children.
- [Illinois Life Span Project](#) provides information and resources focused on advocacy, services, and support for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- [Illinois State Board of Education](#) is the state agency responsible for the education of your child at age 3. Multiple Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) resources are available.
- [Illinois STAR NET](#) provides a variety of training opportunities and resources to support family-centered, researched, and effective practices in early childhood special education. Each region has an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) family professional development specialist available.





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