

Transition in Early Childhood at Age Three for Children with Special Needs

**Developed by
California Map to Inclusive Child Care
WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies**

**in collaboration with the
Supporting Early Education Delivery Systems (SEEDS) Project,
Sacramento County Office of Education**

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The content in this presentation is supported by the **Handbook on Transition from Early Childhood Special Education Programs**, which is available for purchase through the California Department of Education and can also be downloaded at http://www.scoe.net/SEEDS/literary/handbooks_transition.html

The **Handbook on Transition from Early Childhood Special Education Programs** includes the transition into kindergarten; however, these PowerPoint™ slides focus on the transition of children from Early Start at age three.

Conditions for Use of This Presentation

- This PowerPoint™ and accompanying notes were developed by the California Map to Inclusive Child Care Project for use in training and educational settings
- The content was reviewed and approved by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division, as well as the Special Education Division when appropriate
- The information regarding the laws and regulations, as well as the website links, were accurate at the time of distribution
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Use of the Notes Pages

The notes are included to provide clarification, additional information, and examples for those presenting this information to others. **Presenters are encouraged to review the notes and recommended resources as they prepare to share the PowerPoint™ slides. It is not necessary to share all of the notes.**

When sharing these slides with the audience, it is likely that questions will be raised that are not able to be answered given the information contained in the notes. It would be helpful to have local resource information, including referrals, available for those who would like additional information or to address individual issues. Presenters are welcome to add activities or information to the presentation that assist their audience in understanding and implementing the concepts.

While these slides describe the Early Start transition process as it is intended, some individuals may have had a different experience with their local system. Presenters are encouraged to listen with empathy, yet reinforce that the slides represent an overview, so individual experiences may vary.

Early Start is California's early intervention system. *More information about Early Start available in the Map PowerPoint™ slides **An Overview of California's Early Start: Early Intervention Services in California for Infants and Toddlers.***

Early Childhood Special Education Handbooks

- The Supporting Early Education Delivery Systems (SEEDS) Project is operated for the California Department of Education, Special Education Division by the Sacramento County Office of Education
- SEEDS has developed a series of *Early Childhood Special Education Handbooks* that describe core concepts and recommended practices in early childhood special education
- The handbooks include strategies and practices that support and enhance very young children and their families
- The information for this PowerPoint™ is adapted from the *Transition Handbook* in this series

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A more extensive PowerPoint™ was developed by the SEEDS Project for use with early intervention and early childhood special educators. For information on this PowerPoint™, please contact SEEDS at <http://www.scoe.net/SEEDS>.

Intent of this Overview

To assist early educators in understanding transition out of the Early Start early intervention system when a child is three years of age



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The term **early educator** is used for any person providing early care and education for a child including family child care providers, early childhood teachers, preschool teachers, Head Start staff, elementary teachers, before and after school staff, and so on.

The term **specialist** is used for anyone providing intervention, therapy, or treatment services to a child with special needs and his or her family. Examples include special education teacher, speech and language therapist, nurse consultant, social worker, and physical therapist.

The terms **family** and **parents** are used interchangeably and are meant to represent the variety and multitude of family groupings raising children.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Federal legislation mandates special education for all eligible children

- IDEA Part C: services for children birth to age three years
 - Services in California are provided through Early Start
- IDEA Part B: services for children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one years
 - Services provided by the public school district

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Federal legislation mandates special education for all eligible children

IDEA became law in 1975 and has expanded over the years to include services for children from birth through twenty-one years of age.

IDEA Part B guarantees services for children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one

A free, appropriate public education

An education in the least restrictive environment (and access to regular preschool activities for preschool-aged children)

Related services and the fair assessment in the delivery of special education services

Participation of parents and family members in the process through an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

IDEA Part C guarantees services for children birth to age three with developmental delays or who are at risk for developmental delays.

IDEA was amended in 1986 to include children birth to age three and mandated service in all states for children ages three through five years. Part C is solely for infants and toddlers. In California, this program is called Early Start. Early Start services are provided through a variety of agencies: Regional Centers, private “vendor” programs, public schools.

IDEA Requires Transition Planning

Starting no later than age two years, nine months, children begin to transition from one system to the other



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The law allows for the transition process to begin earlier. Some programs discuss transition from entry into the early intervention program. Others make more information available when the child turns two years of age.

Since a child can enter the Early Start system at any time between birth and age three, some children are referred and become eligible for services close to their third birthday. Programs generally try to coordinate the services with the receiving school program to support the smooth transition.

All Transitions End with a Beginning...

- Transition is a part of everyone's life.
- Young children experience multiple transitions in their early years
 - Hospital to home
 - Different child care and preschool settings
 - Entry into elementary school
- Most of these transitions are typical and expected or are made for family reasons

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Typical and expected transitions include ones that most children and families experience (hospital to home, entry into elementary school). When a transition happens outside of these typical reasons, generally it is by the family's choice, for their reason.

For example, a family may choose to change pediatricians or child care setting.

Transition at Age Three: Systems Driven

- The transitions with the most bumps are often
 - unexpected
 - not at natural or expected times, or
 - dictated by the system ~ not the family or child
- A family's transition from Early Start does not occur at a natural time. It is dictated by law, not the needs of the family or child.

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Early intervention services (through Early Start) and special education services (through the local school district) for children with disabilities and special needs are guided by a federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also called IDEA.

The transition from Early Start services is determined by the age of the child, so services may change at the child's third birthday. This is not a typical or expected transition for most children.

While under the same federal law, there are many differences in the early intervention services provided under age three years and the special education and related services provided when children are older than three years.

Additionally there are usually changes in the service providers and often in the location of services.

Overview of the Transition Process

- Slides 8 through 16 provide specific information about the legal requirements of transition at age three
- The remainder of the slides focus on the ways that early educators can be involved in supporting the family through the process
- Additional resources are also listed at the end of the presentation

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This is a very abbreviated version of the legal aspects of transition with an emphasis on the aspects most pertinent to early educators.

You may discover that local communities use different terminology and have unique operating agreements for their transition process. While this information may be shared, please remember that the information contained in these slides is accurate from the state and federal perspective.

For more specific legal information, refer to the *Handbook on Transition from Early Childhood Special Education Programs*

Basic Differences Come From Different Underlying Goals

Goal of Part C:

To support
families to
support their
children

Goal of Part B:

To support a
child's access to
the general
curriculum

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The focus of special education services is summarized in the goal of Part B: access to the general curriculum. While quality programs continue to support families to support their children, it is no longer built in to the service plan developed for the child.

| Basic Differences Between Part B & Part C of IDEA | | |
|--|---|------------------------|
| | Part C | Part B |
| Ages | Birth-3 years | 3-22 years |
| Eligibility Criteria | Also children at risk | Eligible conditions |
| Focus of services | Family | Child |
| Services available | Types and frequency of services may vary both in Parts B and C | |

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Who is eligible for Part C in California? (This is provided for the presenter. Complete information is available at www.dds.ca.gov/Title17/SectionView.cfm?Section=52022.htm)

Eligibility for California's Early Start Program:

(a) **Developmental Delay** A developmental delay exists if there is a significant difference between the infant's or toddler's current level of functioning and the expected level of development for his or her age in one or more of the following developmental areas: Cognitive; Physical; including fine and gross motor, vision, and hearing; Communication; Social or Emotional; Adaptive.

(b) **Established Risk** An established risk condition exists when an infant or toddler has a condition of known etiology that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay; or when an infant or toddler has a solely low incidence disability

(c) **High Risk for Developmental Disability** High risk for a developmental disability exists when a multidisciplinary team determines that an infant or toddler has a combination of two or more of the listed risk factors that requires early intervention services based on evaluation and assessment or when a multidisciplinary team determines that the parent of the infant or toddler is a person with a developmental disability and the infant or toddler requires early intervention services based on evaluation and assessment

Who is Eligible for Part B in California?

Eligibility is a two-part process, a child must have an eligible condition (see below) and have a documented need for special education and/or related services

A child evaluated as having: mental retardation, hearing impairment including deafness, speech or language impairment, visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. CA Ed. Code §300.7(a)

| Basic Differences Between Part B & Part C of IDEA (cont.) | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| | Part C | Part B |
| Plans | IFSP | IEP |
| Location of services | Natural environment | Least restrictive environment |
| Service systems | Multi-agency | Education |
| Cost to families | Possible costs <i>Rare in California</i> | Free |
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There are two different types of plans for children: Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP). *More information about these plans is covered in the Map PowerPoints™ on Early Start and the IFSP/IEP.*

Natural Environments are settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities, and include the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate.

The intent of the **Least Restrictive Environment** provision is that the first placement option considered for each child is where that child would be educated if he/she did not have a disability, with appropriate supplementary aids and services to facilitate such placement. For preschool children, this necessitates examining community-based settings with typically developing age peers.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements from the law. "Each public agency must ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled [sic]; and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily." CA Ed. Code §300.550(b)

Appendix A of the IDEA Part B 1999 regulations: "Even though IDEA does not mandate regular class placement for every disabled student, IDEA assumes that the first placement option considered for each student by the student's placement team, which must include the parent, is the school the child would attend if not disabled, with appropriate supplementary aids and services to facilitate such placement... Thus, before a disabled child can be placed outside of the regular educational environment, the full range of supplementary aids and services that, if provided, would facilitate the student's placement in the regular classroom setting, must be considered." Fed. Register, March 12, 1999, p. 12471

Attachment 1 – IDEA Part B regulations: "The full continuum of alternative placements at 34CFR §300.551, including integrated placement options, such as community-based settings with typically developing age peers, must be available to preschool children with disabilities." Fed. Register, March 12, 1999, p. 12639

The Transition Process



- Law dictates the transition process
- The intent of the law is to ensure a smooth transition to Part B with no interruption in services
- Even when transition goes smoothly, it is still a change for the child and family

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There is a transition process in the law with steps for early intervention programs and special education programs to follow.

The law is written to ensure a smooth transition from Part C to Part B with no interruption in services, yet there are still reported problems. Sometimes the Part B services do not begin immediately at the child's third birthday and the funding is discontinued for Part C services.

Any change has an impact. Losing an early intervention service provider after two years is often difficult for the family, even when the special education team is very competent and caring. It takes time to develop new relationships.

Transition Steps in Early Start



Transition outcomes and steps are included on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

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Each child has an IFSP with outcomes for the child and family. Transition outcomes are to be included as part of the process of ensuring a smooth change from Part C to Part B services.

A sample outcome might read: “For Jessica to have a smooth transition at age three, Jessica’s family will be provided information regarding the transition process over the next year.” For more samples, see pages 10, 14-15 of the *Handbook on Transition from Early Childhood Special Education Programs*.

Meeting About Transition

- A Transition Conference is required when the child is no older than two years, nine months old
- The conference is attended by
 - the family
 - the California Early Start service coordinator (which may be from the local regional center or infant program)
 - infant-toddler early intervention service providers and
 - the receiving local education agency (LEA) representative
- Other attendees may include friends or advocates invited by the family, **a community preschool teacher/child care provider**, and other agency personnel as appropriate

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Sometimes this meeting is held earlier (at two and one-half years), but not later than two years nine months.

This meeting is usually convened by the service coordinator. The family can let the service coordinator know that they would like their child's community early educator (community preschool teacher, family child care provider, other caregiver) to attend the meeting. This information is bolded in the text to remind the early educators that they can attend the meeting.

Transition Conference

- At the transition conference, participants discuss assessments and other information needed to determine eligibility
- An Assessment Plan is written by the LEA and signed by family 50 days before the IEP meeting
- By the child's third birthday, a meeting is scheduled to:
 - Close out the IFSP
 - Review assessment results
 - Determine eligibility for preschool special education and related services. If eligible,
 - discuss child's strengths and needs
 - develop goals on IEP
 - determine services and placement

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The early educator can contribute to the discussion, particularly the child's strengths and invite observation of the child in the child care setting.

Transition at Age Three: Issues for Families



- Timeline driven by the system and child's age, not family's needs
- There are new service providers with whom to develop relationships and trust
- New schedules may interfere with existing child care and other arrangements
- The change in personnel, services or frequency can be dramatic
- The terms (labels) used to describe the child's eligibility may be difficult for the family to hear

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When a family is going through the transition process, encourage them to connect with their local Early Start family resource center. Parents who have experienced the transition process can offer support and assistance that no one else can. A website linking to the Early Start Family Resource Centers is included at the end of this PowerPoint™.

There usually is a change of agencies at age three. The local regional center oversees early intervention services for most children in California. The local school district or county office of education oversees services for some children in early intervention. At age three, the oversight shifts to the school district; however, some children may continue to be eligible for regional center services.

During the transition process, families may be confronted with labels for the first time, e.g., developmental delay becomes mental retardation; behavior challenges become autism. Often these terms are used to determine an eligible condition; however, the implication to the family can be quite upsetting.

Early Educator Involvement



Parents and family members may not realize they can involve you in the transition process

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The next several slides are directed at early educators (anyone other than the family who is caring for the child including infant/toddler teachers, family child care providers, other child care providers, preschool teachers, nannies, and so on).

Possible Early Educator Roles

- When a child receives care outside the home, early educators can take an active role in the transition process
- Early educators can provide critical information regarding the child's interests, strengths, learning style, and general development
- They may also provide support and continuity for the child and family

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The early educator's role is determined by the family. The family, however, may not realize that the early educator is interested in being involved. If the early educator lets the family know that they are willing and interested in supporting the child and family through the transition, the family will be able to make use of their support.

Support Through the Transition

You (and/or your program) may be the one constant in the family's life during this transition



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Ideally, a child remains in the same early education setting from age two past the third birthday to a more typical or natural transition time. For example, if the child's birthday is November, they might be in an early education group of children starting in September and remain with those children through June or the end of the session.

Similarly, a child who turns three in March will typically have been with the group of children in the early education setting for a while and remain through the summer.

Of course in family child care or settings where there is continuity of care, the child may be with the same early educator and group of children from the time the child enters care until leaving that group.

Moving On...Transition Tips

- Families experience many transitions
- Encourage them to use previous experiences to prepare for transitions
 - Identify the specific transition
 - Organize their thoughts
 - Gather information
 - Prepare themselves as well as their child
 - Keep the lines of communication open with new providers and early educators

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These are tips to share with the family. Examples are included on Page 27 of the *Handbook on Transition from Early Childhood Special Education Programs*.

What Happens If the Child Is Eligible for Part B Services?

- The child may:
 - Attend special day class in a school district preschool
 - Be included in a school district preschool, while receiving special education services
 - Receive services at home or in a child care setting
- This means:
 - The child may stay with you
 - The child may leave your program
 - The child may spend part of the day with you and part with another program

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When a child participates in the transition process, there are two possible outcomes: the child is eligible for Part B services or the child is not eligible for Part B services.

The specific special education and services vary greatly depending on the needs of the child (and, to a lesser degree, on the services available in the local education agency).

The child care settings include private, center-based, faith-based, Head Start, family child care, and other settings.

Transitioning to Part B

No matter which way the Part B services are delivered, the family and child must adjust to new people, different routines, new schedules, and possibly a new environment

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Even relatively minor changes require some adjustment on the part of the family and child, and, perhaps, the early educator.

How You Can Help the Adjustment

- Help the family to get all the information they need
- Make sure the family is connected to resources
- Participate on the planning team, if requested by the family
- If the child is staying with your program, provide scheduling flexibility when possible
- If the child is leaving your program, help the child and family prepare for the change by talking about and planning for the transition

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Specific tips for the early educators.

Not All Children Are Eligible for Part B Services

- This may happen because:
 - Eligibility definitions change from Part C to Part B
 - Children who were delayed as infants are no longer significantly delayed
- If the family still has concerns, they can pursue therapy and/or other support outside of Part B
 - Some therapy may be covered by insurance or the family may choose to pay for services
 - This therapy or service can occur at home or at your program

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Because Part C provides services for children with “risk factors,” some children will not be eligible for services when turning 3 years of age. Additionally, children may make improvement in their areas of delay, yet not be caught up to their age level. In order to be eligible, the child must meet strict criteria and may not have enough of a delay to qualify.

Ongoing Monitoring of Development

- When a child is not eligible, this is a good time to ask the early intervention and local education agency (members of the transition team) for suggestions to continue supporting the child's development
- It may also be important to ask how to request another evaluation or assessment for eligibility from the local education agency/school district if the child does not seem to be progressing over the next year or so

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When a child is no longer eligible, it is helpful for the family and early educator to monitor the child's development and know what to do if they see any indication of delay or re-emergence of concern.

There may also be suggestions for continued supportive activities that can be carried out by the early educator and family.

How You Can Help

- Familiarize yourself with resources
- Make connections with the local Early Start Family Resource Center for information and support
- Offer information to help the family seek other services, if requested
- Encourage the family to pursue other avenues of support and services, if needed
- Continue keeping the lines of communication open with the family
- Continue to provide high-quality, individualized care

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If the child is no longer eligible, provide a high-quality early child care environment to continue to support the child's development.

Long Term Outcome of Early Intervention

The long term outcome of early intervention is the enhanced wellbeing of families, not mourning the loss of a system they have become dependent on, but supported from many directions by people who know and care about them in their home community

New Jersey Natural Environment Service Guideline

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This quote is pertinent because sometimes the family members feel very attached to their early intervention service providers and may not have created additional supports within their community.

This is an area where the early educator can play an important role as a member of the larger community and as someone who may be able to connect the family with others in the community.

Specialist Resources for Families

- Health and medical service systems
 - Primary health care provider, specialists who know the child
 - California Childcare Health Program
www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org
- Local special education or early intervention services
 - Regional Centers in California can be found at
www.dds.ca.gov/RC/RCLookup.cfm
 - You can also call 1-800-515-BABY for local Early Start information
 - Start with your local school district for special education services or try the Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA). Contact information by county may be found at
[http://kcsos.kern.org/SpecialEd/stories/storyReader\\$112](http://kcsos.kern.org/SpecialEd/stories/storyReader$112)

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In many cases, it is appropriate to have the family talk about their concerns with their primary health care provider (generally a pediatrician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant). Some health care providers are well-versed in child development and children with special needs, while others have limited knowledge. Parents must be proactive in making sure that their medical provider is a good match in serving the child's needs.

The website reference on the slide lists all of the Special Education Local Plan Areas in California by county. Each SELPA should have referral information for local school districts providing service to preschool-aged children.

The phone number (1-800-515-BABY) is answered in the California Department of Developmental Services, which provides information on Early Start early interventions services.

There are 21 regional centers that provide services throughout California. Regional centers provide services to individuals with disabilities from birth through the lifespan and are the local representative of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the lead agency for Early Start. Some regional centers serve multiple counties, others serve just one county, and in Los Angeles, there are several different regional centers depending on the zip code. The website has links to all of the different centers and describes the geographic areas served.

Support Resources for Families

- Local Early Start Family Resource Center (FRC)
 - Staffed by families of children with special needs, FRCs offer parent-to-parent support and help families locate needed services
 - www.frcnca.org/
- Family Resource Centers are also an excellent resource for early educators

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The Family Resource Centers referred to on this slide are specifically funded to assist children enrolled in Early Start programs. Many of the Family Resource Centers have additional funding to provide support, services, and information to families for a broader age-range of children.

The local Family Resource Center often has a library of books and other information on disability, family support, and other related topics. In most cases, this agency has knowledge of the local agencies serving children with disabilities or other special needs.

Website Resources

- The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center supports implementation of early childhood provisions of IDEA
 - www.nectac.org/topics/transition/transition.asp
- The National Early Childhood Transition Center examines factors that promote successful transitions between infant/toddler programs, preschool programs, and public school programs for children with disabilities and their families
 - www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc/

Website Resources (cont.)

- Project STEPS is a Training and Outreach Project that enhances services provided by local agencies to young children with disabilities and their families

- www.ihdi.uky.edu/stepsweb/

Local Resource and Referral Agency (R&R)

- R&Rs provide free/low-cost training in topics such as health, child development, and special needs
- www.rrnetwork.org

For More Information

➤ Websites

- Map to Inclusive Child Care: www.CAInclusiveChildCare.org/Map
- Early Start: www.dds.ca.gov/EarlyStart/
- Eligibility for Early Start:
www.dds.ca.gov/Title17/T17SectionView.cfm?Section=52022.htm
- U.S. Department of Education IDEA website: <http://idea.ed.gov/>

➤ Early Childhood Special Education Handbooks are available through CDE Press, the California Department of Education's publisher: www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/ap/pubcat.aspx and through Supporting Early Education Delivery Systems (SEEDS) Project www.scoe.net/SEEDS/

➤ Early Start products are available at no cost: www.wested.org/cd/cpei

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