



EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITIONS OVERVIEW

**A Caregivers Guide
to Navigating Your
Child's Path
through the Three
Special Education
Transitions.**



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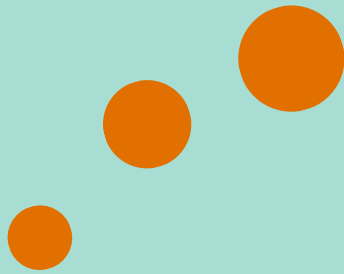
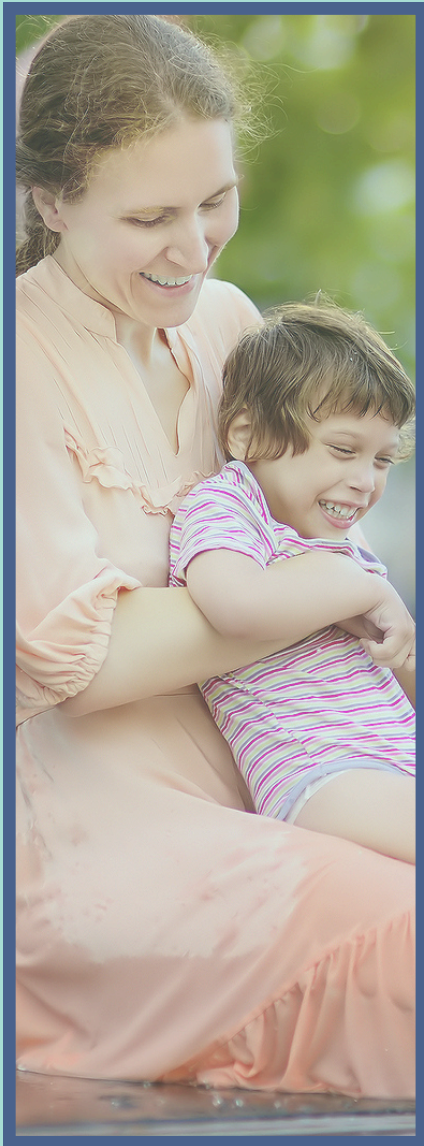


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The Transitions between early intervention and preschool services, and later preschool and kindergarten, are emotional for all parents as they watch their little ones grow. Add a disability such as hearing loss, and these emotions are magnified. Issues associated with the disability intertwined with the responsibility of making the right choices for their children's future often results in a time of uncertainty that is exacerbated by an education process that can seem unwelcoming.



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a U.S. federal law ensuring that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). It mandates early intervention, special education, and related services for eligible children from birth through age 21.

Early Intervention Part C to Part B 619 Transition

Most difficult for families is the change from the family-focused services of early intervention (Part C) to the child-centered education programs of Part B. In Part C, family involvement is mandatory and parents are expected to be the decision makers for their child's services. Throughout the Part C years, families are taught and encouraged to provide and advocate for their children's needs. Then when they enter Part B programs at age 3, the school assumes the primary educational responsibility. During this time, the values and priorities of the parents may not match those of the educational team.

The IDEA requires a minimum 6 month transition period from early intervention to preschool. This period is filled with the evaluations and meetings that are required by the law, and families often feel rushed to make decisions. As a result, parents frequently feel the need for additional conversations to answer questions about their child's potential services. The extra time not only helps to ease some of the feelings of uncertainty but also begins to build a positive relationship with the school personnel.

Timeline of Transitions In Early Childhood

EARLY INTERVENTION AGE 0-3



For infants and toddlers up to 3 years old, the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) offers early intervention services. Administered by the Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs), the ITP provides support in various developmental areas, including physical, cognitive, communication, social & emotional, and adaptive development. Services are provided in natural environments such as the child's home or childcare settings. Families can access these services by contacting their local **CDSA Children's Developmental Services**.

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PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION AGE 3-5



Children aged three to five who are not yet eligible for kindergarten and are identified with disabilities may receive special education services through their local public school systems. If your child is eligible for an individualized education program (IEP), services may include specialized instruction, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other related services tailored to the child's needs. These services are provided at no cost to families.

NC Department of instruction

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As children approach their third birthday, a transition plan is developed to move from early intervention services (IFSP) to preschool special education services (IEP). This plan ensures continuity of services and supports the child's adjustment to new educational settings.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION



The transition from preschool special education services to kindergarten is a significant milestone for children with disabilities and their families. In North Carolina, this transition is carefully planned to ensure continuity of services and to support the child's adjustment to a new educational setting.

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Explore the toolkit for more a more detailed look into each transition.

Early Intervention Part C of IDEA



Before the Child's Second Birthday

- Families should start discussing the upcoming transition with their Early Intervention (EI) service providers.
- It's beneficial to inquire about the transition process during IFSP meetings to understand the steps involved.

Notification to Local Educational Agency (LEA):

- The Part C service coordinator officially notifies the LEA that the child will soon be eligible for Part B services.
- This notification is intended to provide the LEA with ample time to plan for the child's evaluation and any services that might be needed under Part B 619.

By the Child's 2.6-2.9 years : Initial Transition Planning Meeting

- A transition planning meeting should be held around the time the child turns 2 years 6 months old.
- This meeting involves the Part C service coordinator, parents, and potentially representatives from the local education agency (LEA) responsible for Part B 619 services(Preschool Services)
- The purpose is to review the child's current IFSP, discuss future needs, and begin formulating a plan for the transition to preschool services.
- The transition plan is developed and included as part of the child's IFSP.
- This plan outlines the steps and services required to support the child and family during the transition, including timelines and responsible parties.

At Least 90 Days Before the Third Birthday: Convening the Referral Meeting:

Before the Child's Third Birthday

- The LEA should conduct evaluations and assessments necessary to determine eligibility for Part B 619 services.
- An IEP meeting is scheduled to develop the Individualized Education Program if the child is found eligible.

Special Education Preschool Services Part B 619 of IDEA



By the Child's Third Birthday: Transition to Part B 619 Services:

- the transition should be completed by the child's third birthday.
- Services under Part B 619 begin according to the IEP, either in a preschool setting or another appropriate environment as determined by the IEP team

Post-Transition Follow-up: Monitoring and Adjustment:

- After the transition, it's important to monitor the child's adjustment to the new setting and services.
- The IEP team should meet periodically to review the child's progress and make any necessary adjustments to the IEP.

If Your Child was Not Involved in Early Intervention Services(IFSP):

- **Referral:** A parent or caregiver can refer a child for evaluation if there are concerns about the child's development or a suspected disability. A written referral is made to the school system of residence, local education agency (LEA)
- **Evaluation:** A comprehensive assessment is conducted to determine the child's eligibility for special education services- done through the school system of residence
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** If eligible, an IEP is developed, outlining the child's current performance levels, measurable annual goals, and the specific services to be provided.

Services may include specialized instruction, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other related services tailored to the child's needs. These services are provided at no cost to families.

Contact for School System Referrals

Asheville City Schools:	Zachary Cohen	zachary.cohen@acsgmail.netka	828-350-2936
Buncombe County Schools:	Kara Lauffer	ren.lauffer@bcsemail.org	828-255-5983
Haywood County Schools:	Eunice Ledford	eledford@haywood.k12.nc.us	828-421-7288
Henderson County Schools:	Jennifer Shelton	jshelton@hcpsnc.org	828-697-4566
Madison County Schools:	Jo Ann Allison	jaallison@madisonk12.net	828-206-0017
Yancey County Schools:	Leanne McCurry	leanne.mccurry@yanceync.net	828-682-8156
Mitchell County Schools:	Anthea Biddix	abiddix@mhsllive.net	828-766-3439

Preschool Options

In Western North Carolina, preschool education services are designed to support the early development and learning of children from birth to five years old. These services are provided through a combination of public programs, private centers, and non-profit organizations, each aiming to prepare young children for future academic success and holistic growth

Head Start and Early Head Start: Federally funded programs that promote school readiness for children from low-income families. Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers up to age three, while Head Start caters to children aged three to five. Click Below to explore headstart

WNCSources

Serves Henderson
County

Blue Ridge
Partnership

Serves Mitchell
and Yancey Counties

Community
Action

Serves Buncombe
and Madison counties

Mountain
Projects

Serves Haywood
County

NC Pre-K Program: A state-funded initiative, NC Pre-K offers high-quality pre-kindergarten education to eligible four-year-old children. The program focuses on enhancing school readiness through structured learning experiences. Families can apply through local school districts or designated agencies

Important Resources

- [NC Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](https://dpi.nc.gov) - Exceptional Children Division (dpi.nc.gov)
- [FIRSTwnc](http://www.firstwnc.org) (www.firstwnc.org)
- [Exceptional Children's Assistance Center](http://ecac-parentcenter.org) (ECAC) (ecac-parentcenter.org)
- Local School District Special Education Coordinators (e.g., Buncombe County Schools Exceptional Children's Services)
- [The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](http://www.ectacenter.org) (www.ectacenter.org)
- [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\)](http://www.dec-sped.org) -www.dec-sped.org
- [NC Kindergarten Readiness Guide](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CATzzRm8sAsvMKsN0rYFa5YjzeB0ngM3/view)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CATzzRm8sAsvMKsN0rYFa5YjzeB0ngM3/view>

Kindergarten Transition



Transition from Part B 619 to Kindergarten

- Timeline: Start planning at least one year before the child is due to enter kindergarten.
- Awareness Sessions: Attend informational sessions provided by local school districts about kindergarten enrollment and the transition process.

Collaboration with Current Service Providers

- Transition Planning Meeting: Schedule a meeting involving the child's current service providers, kindergarten teachers, and school administrators to discuss the child's needs.
- Review of Current IEP: Assess the goals in the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and determine what needs to be updated or changed for the kindergarten setting.

Adjust the Current IEP for Your Child's Current Needs

- Setting IEP Goals: Work with the kindergarten IEP team to set realistic and appropriate goals for the child's kindergarten year.
- Service Arrangement: Discuss and confirm the support services the child will receive in kindergarten, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or special education support.

Familiarization and Transition Activities

- School Transition Activities: Participate in activities that the school offers to help new kindergarten students become familiar with the school environment.
- Summer Programs: Consider enrolling the child in summer programs offered by the school or community organizations to help them adjust to the new setting.

Parent and Guardian Support

- Parent Training and Workshops: Attend workshops offered by the school or community organizations on topics such as advocating for your child, understanding the special education process, and supporting your child's education at home.
- Networking with Other Parents: Connect with other parents of children with disabilities who have gone through or are going through the transition to kindergarten.

Monitoring and Adjusting

- Ongoing Review: Regularly review the child's progress in kindergarten and adjust the IEP as needed.
- Communication: Maintain open lines of communication with teachers and service providers throughout the school year to address any concerns or adjustments needed for the child's success.

Other Considerations

Making the Transition Process Family Friendly

What can schools and parents do to make the transition process and preschool experience meaningful and productive? The first and most essential step is to build strong partnerships between families and schools. Successful outcomes are most likely to be reached when both the school and family are working together toward the same goals. Some additional steps to support a transition into preschool are suggested below.

Establish roles and expectations together:

Families need a game plan. They need to know what to expect from school as well as what is expected of them. Discuss this relationship with your child's school so that everyone is clear about respective roles and responsibilities.

Stay Organized:

Use a color-coded binder or create a digital folder system to store your child's evaluations, medical records, IFSP, and IEP documentation. Keep a running list of questions, meeting notes, and follow-up tasks to ensure nothing gets overlooked.



Prepare for the IFSP/IEP transition meetings:

Should visit preschools and meet with the preschool teachers and other staff prior to the transition meeting. It is often helpful for parents to bring along another parent or family member or the family's early intervention specialist so that there is someone with whom they can discuss their visit. The preschool teacher may be willing to meet with the family members in the home. Parents may also want to bring another person to support them at the transition meeting.

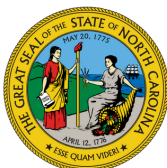
Flexible programs and schedules: Young children entering preschool for the first time may not be ready for the same preschool experience as that of older preschool children. Parents can discuss with the school the amount of time that their child will attend preschool. For some children, a combination of home-based support and preschool may be most effective.

Advocate for Your Child:

Prepare a "strengths and needs" profile for your child, highlighting what works best for their learning and development. Build a positive relationship with your child's educators and service providers by maintaining open communication and being a collaborative partner.

Hands and Voices. (2025, February 13). *Supporting Families in Transition between Early Intervention and School Age Programs*. <https://handsandvoices.org/articles/education/law/transition.html>

Use this QR Code
to access the links.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities and
Substance Use Services

This grant-based program receives funding from
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