Transition from Early Intervention

A Family Guide
Dear Families,

Congratulations on your child’s progress and successes during your time in Early Intervention. Whether you have been in Early Intervention for two years, or two months, you may wonder, “Now what? Change can be difficult; but good information and preparation will make it easier, and your EI providers will guide you through the process.

We found that being prepared and keeping an open mind were two things that made our transitions successful. For us, preparation meant: learning about the transition process and about how it worked for other parents, collecting and sharing good information, and being ready to make decisions with our children’s teams. Keeping an open mind meant focusing on the goals we had for our children and being prepared to discuss the best ways to achieve them.

The transition process, like all change, was much easier when it was broken down into smaller steps. While you may be sad about saying “Good bye” to your EI providers, remember that you are also greeting a new set of professionals who will help you and your child continue to grow and learn. Think about how much you have already learned and have confidence in your knowledge and skills.

Best wishes from families who have been there.
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Transition?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Planning Conference</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Eligibility</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Who Are Not Eligible</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for the IEP Meeting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP Meeting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI Early Learning Standards</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transition from Early Intervention

What Does “Transition” Mean?

Transition is a process in which something undergoes a change and passes from one state, stage, or form to another. For those in Early Intervention, transition is the process of moving from the Early Intervention program to whatever new setting or program will meet the needs and goals of the child.

Rhode Island’s statewide Early Intervention (EI) system provides services to families with children under 3 who have been diagnosed with, or are at risk for, developmental delay. Your school district, often referred to as your Local Education Agency (LEA), is responsible for the education of children with special needs from age 3 to 21.

When your child is 2 ½ years old, your Service Coordinator will begin a plan with you to prepare for the transition from EI. All children should go through the transition process. Some children will be eligible for special education and/or related services from their school districts. For the children who are not eligible for special education, transition will mean connecting you to other community agencies or programs that support the development of young children. As children in EI approach age 3, family contact information will be shared with the child’s local school district. This information will provide Child Outreach Coordinators better information to reach out to families and offer screening opportunities for those children found not eligible for special education. Regardless of what a child will do after Early Intervention, careful planning is important.
**How Does the Transition Process Begin?**

When your child is 28 months old, you will be asked to sign a release allowing a referral to your local school district. Your service coordinator will schedule a transition conference meeting with you and a school district representative, to be held around the time your child is 30 months old. Children who turn 3 during the summer months will begin their transition process early so that plans can be finalized before summer break.

Not every child graduating from EI will be found eligible for services through the school system; however, each of these families should have a transition planning conference. All families should also be informed about Child Outreach screening programs and other resources in their community.

A good transition plan will help your family develop important skills to advocate for your child in years to come. It will also allow you to learn about new opportunities and begin new relationships with professionals and other caregivers who will work with you and your child.

**What is Your Role in Your Child’s Transition?**

You may be thinking, “What do I know about Transition? I've never done this before.” Your child’s transition process is meant to happen with you and your family’s complete involvement. Research and years of experience have shown better results for children whose families are involved in their children’s education decision-making process. Transition teams need your participation to form a complete picture of your child.
**Transition at a Glance**

**28 Months**  
*Referral*  
EI makes a referral to your local school district or other community early childhood programs with the parent’s consent.

**30 Months**  
*Transition Planning Conference*  
The transition team meets to share information about the child, plan for next steps and write an Individual Transition Plan. If more information is needed, a plan is made for who is responsible. Additional evaluations can be scheduled if needed.

**30-35 Months**  
*Eligibility Meeting*  
The Evaluation Team, including the parent(s), decides whether the child is eligible for special education. If the child is eligible, an Individualized Education Program Meeting (IEP) is scheduled.

**If the child is not eligible for special education**  
The transition team will help the family locate appropriate community resources that may continue to support the child’s development as stated in the child’s Transition Plan.

**By 36 Months**  
*Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting*  
If the child is found eligible, the IEP Team, including the parent(s), develops an Individualized Educational Program for the child, and determines the services and placement (if appropriate) where the child will receive those services. The team completes referrals to other community resources, and the child is discharged from Early Intervention.
The Transition Planning Conference is scheduled and facilitated by your EI provider when your child is about 30 months old. The purpose of this meeting is to write your child’s Individual Transition Plan. Each participant will leave the meeting with a copy of the plan.

This plan will outline the steps to complete before the team meets to determine your child’s eligibility. Steps will include those needed to:

- Prepare the child for the upcoming adjustment to a new setting
- Prepare the family through education or exposure to potential learning and/or service settings
- Be completed by the LEA

This is a time for you to share important stories and information. Often in a meeting situation, we forget to mention things that we later wish we had shared with the team. Take some time to write down your ideas and questions. Ask other people (your family, your service provider, your parent consultant, etc.) to help you.

**Include your thoughts on:**

- How your child learns best
- How your child communicates
- Your child’s favorite activities and what motivates him
- Your child’s familiar routines
- Accommodations your child may need (including equipment, assistive technology, medical precautions, nutrition, etc.).

You might want to find a recent picture to bring if your child will not be attending with you.
Who Attends the Transition Planning Conference?

The transition planning conference must include:

- You, the child’s family, and anyone you choose to invite, including your Service Coordinator, therapist, childcare provider, etc.
- Your EI Service Coordinator
- A representative from your school department, referred to as the Local Education Agency (LEA)

What Happens at the Meeting?

**Family:**
- Share information about your child - this will include what you have prepared ahead of time (See page 12)

**EI Service Coordinator:**
- Share information about the child’s participation in EI
- Share information from the child’s IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)

**School District Representative:**
- Share information on eligibility and IEP process
- Reviews special education services
- Provides information on ESY (Extended School Year)
- Provides information on the LAC (Local Advisory Committee for special education)
- Identifies what other information or evaluations are needed
- Schedules future meetings
Eligibility Meeting

What Makes Children Eligible for Special Education and/or Related Services?

The eligibility meeting happens shortly after the transition conference. The purpose of this meeting is to determine if the child is “eligible” for special education services. According to The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Rhode Island Regulations, a child is eligible for special education and related services if he/she meets the criteria in a category of disability and if this disability interferes with his/her ability to learn.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services for children with disabilities. IDEA identifies thirteen categories under which a child would qualify as having a disability.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 (IDEA) list of 13 disability categories are:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Developmental delay (used for children, ages 3 through 8)
- Hearing impairment, including deafness
- Mental retardation
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Serious emotional disturbance
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness
Your school district’s evaluation team, including you, determines your child’s eligibility. Some children, although they have been in EI, may not qualify for special education. Teams will assist these families and provide additional community resources.

**Who Attends the Eligibility Meeting?**

The eligibility meeting must include:

- You, the child’s family, and anyone you choose to invite, including your Service Coordinator, therapist, childcare provider, etc.
- The LEA
- A special education teacher
- A regular education teacher
- An individual who can interpret the results of a professional evaluation

**What Happens at this Meeting?**

The eligibility meeting provides an opportunity for everyone on the team to share the information they have prepared. Your Service Coordinator and/or Parent Consultant can help you generate and organize your ideas in a way that will be helpful for the meeting. The team will review and discuss any evaluations and reports that have been submitted.

The purpose of the eligibility meeting is to determine if a child is eligible for Special Education, not to determine placement and/or services. If your child is eligible, the specific determination will happen at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.
You will work with the team including your school district staff to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child.

The IEP will be based on much of the information about your child that was gathered during the transition process and what we want all three year olds to learn. The RI Department of Education has provided guidance about what children should know and be able to do as they enter kindergarten. You can learn more about the Early Learning Standards on page 17. The IEP will include the goals you and the team have decided are important for your child’s educational progress. It will describe the services that will help your child achieve these goals, including where, when, and how.
If your child’s IFSP team, which includes your family, determines your child will not meet the eligibility criteria for special education as established by RI Special Education Regulations, the team will work with you on a transition plan that includes identifying appropriate early childhood programs and family supports in your community.

If your child is referred to your local school district and the eligibility team decides that your child is not eligible for special education services, the school system must share this with you in writing and explain why your child has been found “not eligible.” Your transition team will help you locate early childhood programs and family support in your community.

All families should receive information about their school district’s Child Outreach program which provides developmental screening for children ages 3 to 5.

Just as in EI, families must be given information about what they can do if they disagree with the decision to find their child “not eligible.” If families disagree, they should discuss it openly with the team. It may even be a good idea to schedule another meeting to allow enough time to reach a resolution. If, after talking with the team, a resolution cannot be agreed upon, the family can access the appeals process by reviewing the Procedural Safeguards or by contacting the RI Parent Information Network Family Resource Center at 401-270-0101 for guidance.

RI Parent Information Network provides information, support, and training to empower parents, families, and individuals to become effective advocates for themselves and their families. They can guide families toward reaching agreement; and if that is not successful, they can provide information on the appeals process.
Families may also want to gather information on other resources such as:

- Head Start
- Parents as Teachers
- Library story hours and children’s programs
- Book store story hours and crafts
- YMCA children’s programs
- Community Action Programs
- Options for Working Families
- Moms Clubs

CEDARR Family Centers

All parents of Medicaid eligible children should be informed about CEDARR Family Centers at an appropriate time during their experience in Early Intervention. With a parent’s permission, the EI Service Coordinator can initiate a referral for your child to CEDARR. CEDARR stands for Comprehensive, Evaluation, Diagnosis, Assessment, Referral, and Re-evaluation. The CEDARR Family Center is a comprehensive source of information, connection to community supports, and assistance to help families meet their child’s needs. A child does not need to be in special education to access CEDARR services.
The IEP meeting is held to develop your child’s special Individualized Education Program. All the information gathered about your child and your priorities will be discussed.

**Before the IEP meeting, families should think about:**

**Now...**
How is your child developing and learning? What is he doing? What does he know?

**Next year ...**
What do you want your child to learn or be able to do?

**How...**
How does your child learns best? Is it ...?
- In a very small group
- With lots of movement and exploration
- With gestures and signs
- By imitating other children

**Services/Supports...**
What is necessary to make this happen?

This can be a somewhat anxious time for families; however, with some preparation and planning, families find they are a valued part of the team in making a plan for their child.
To help prepare for the IEP meeting, complete these sentences about your child

My child’s strengths are…

My child learns best when…

My child is motivated by…

I would like my child to learn…

Activities that my child enjoys…
To help prepare for the IEP meeting, complete these sentences about your child

My child *adjusts to new people & situations* by…

My child’s *temperament (mood)* is usually…

When my child is *upset*, he/she shows it by…

My child can *be comforted* by…

I want *everyone to know* that my child is...
The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

All children who are eligible for special education and/or related services will have an IEP. An IEP is a written document specific to each individual child, that outlines annual and short-term goals designed to help the child access and make progress in the general education curriculum.

School departments are required to give families 10 days notice before an upcoming IEP meeting. The notice will state the purpose of the meeting and who will be in attendance. Meetings take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Families have the right to waive this 10 day notice in writing so the meeting can take place sooner.

The IEP document will describe:

- The child’s strengths and needs with regard to development, functioning, and academics.
- Goals, objectives, and services needed for the child to achieve his goals.
- How the child’s progress will be measured and reported to the family.
- Who will work with the child on IEP goals and where will this happen.
- What additional modifications and supports will be needed.
Initial Consent

At the time of a child’s first IEP, parents will be asked to sign an informed written consent agreeing to special education. This specific consent is only done once upon entering special education.

Who Attends the IEP Meeting?

The IEP team should include:
- You and anyone you choose to invite, including your Service Coordinator, therapist, childcare provider, etc.
- A regular early education teacher
- A special education teacher
- A school district representative(s), who:
  - Is qualified to provide or supervise special education
  - Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum
  - Is knowledgeable about available resources and has authority to commit those resources
- Any other individuals with knowledge of the child invited by the team.

Sometimes a family and the school department agree in writing that a member of the team does not need to be present. The excused member submits in writing to the parent and the IEP team their input for the development of the IEP, prior to the meeting.

The IEP meeting is one of the final steps in the transition process and must be completed in time for services to begin on a child’s third birthday.

At the IEP meeting, just like at IFSP meetings, the team needs to decide first on the goals (outcomes) desired for the child. Discussion about services (how to achieve those goals) can only come after if they are to be meaningful.
Many children are eligible for related services (e.g., speech therapy) and do not require a classroom setting. These children will receive the necessary services from the school department, usually during “walk-in” sessions. Sessions may occur one-on-one or in a group.

Education settings for 3-5 year olds with special needs include:

- A community based preschool program
- A pre-school special education class of children with and without disabilities
- A preschool class in which all students receive special education services
- Special education day school
- Temporary placement when more assessment is needed (no more than 30 days)
- Home-based services (alone, or combined with a classroom)
- Residential school placement
- Combinations of the above

According to IDEA and Rhode Island’s Special Education Regulations, special education and related services must be provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) necessary to support the goals of the child. This means, whenever possible and appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities.

Most pre-school services take place within the school year (September-June). Some children may also be eligible for Extended School Year (ESY) services (i.e., services during the summer) to prevent the loss of skills or protect emerging skills. The decision to include ESY will be made by the IEP team.
(including you). If your child’s birthday is during the summer, you and the IEP team will determine the date when your child’s services will begin.

Once completed, the IEP does not require a parent’s signature to go into effect. From the time an agreement is reached on an IEP goal, the school department has 10 days to put the plan into action. If the family and LEA do not agree on areas in the IEP, the team will continue to work together so consensus can be reached. If agreement cannot be reached, the family may seek resolution through mediation or due process hearings.

RI Parent Information Network can provide guidance to families seeking to resolve disagreement on IEP goals.

**Rhode Island Early Learning Standards**

“The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards provide guidance to families, teachers and administrators on what children should know and be able to do as they enter kindergarten. They are intended to be inclusive of all children — English Language Learners, children with special health care needs, children with disabilities and children who are typically developing — recognizing that children may meet the Early Learning Standards at different times and in different ways.” *Early Learning Standards*

As our children transition out of Early Intervention, we must begin to think in terms of functional academic goals. The RI Early Learning Standards provide a framework on which to focus our planning. It is important to remember that The Early Learning
Standards are not intended to assess the competence of young children, but to give teachers and families information to help guide us as our children head toward kindergarten.

The Early Learning Standards are organized into eight areas that you may want to consider in preparation for your child’s IEP meeting:

**Social and Emotional Development**

Children are dependent upon their interactions with peers and adults to construct a sense of self and to view themselves as learners.

**Language Development and Communication**

Children increase their language and communication skills by engaging in meaningful experiences that require them to effectively express their ideas and feelings, listen and understand others.

**Literacy**

Through natural exposure to books and print, and through conversations that prompt children to discuss the people and important events in their lives, children discover that written words are a way to share ideas.

**Mathematics**

Children are inclined to make comparisons, notice similarities and differences in objects and group their toys and materials. The ability to organize information into categories, quantify data and solve problems helps children to learn about time, space and numbers.
Science

Children are captivated by the natural world and by physical events. By cultivating this sense of wonder, we help children to become scientific thinkers.

Creativity

Through experimenting with sounds, colors, forms, motion and words, children communicate in ways that are distinctly their own and that reflect their own learning style.

Physical Health and Development

Children use their senses and bodies to explore their physical environment. They investigate and practice with intensity the motions that lead to the mastery of fine and large motor tasks.

To learn more about the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards, visit the Rhode Island Department of Education website at http://www.ride.ri.gov/ELS.
Bring a friend or family member to the meeting so that another person can listen and take notes for you.

Organize and be prepared for the meeting. Bring evaluations and reports. Write down ideas about your child’s strengths and needs. Talk about your child at home and in other settings.

Arrive on time to show that the meeting is important to you and that you are ready to conduct business. Begin introductions yourself if no one else does.

Speak clearly and make positive statements, such as: “I believe...”, “I understand...”, “I am concerned that...” etc.

Ask questions to clarify anything you do not understand.

Separate the people from the problems and focus on the issue at hand. Don’t be sidetracked by past experiences, lack of funding, or what “all the other children” are doing.
Make your proposal and expect to get what your child needs. Be flexible about minor revisions, but firm about major issues.

If necessary team members must leave the meeting before decisions have been made, stop the meeting and reschedule it when the complete team can attend.

If it seems that no further progress can be made, end the meeting. Tell other team members that you would like to continue working with them and schedule another appointment for a fresh start.

Take your time to read the IEP thoroughly; bring it home, write your comments, and return it for final revision.

Set the tone for a continued relationship with special educators, service providers, and school personnel. Your child will be in school for many years to come.
RI regulations allow six to eight months to complete all transition activities. A much shorter timeline (due to late referral) challenges the Early Intervention program and the school district’s ability to complete all the necessary steps. However, all appropriate services are still expected to be in place by the child’s third birthday.

If children are referred to Early Intervention after twenty-eight months, when a referral to the school district is typically made, Early Intervention, with your permission, will contact the school district immediately to schedule the Transition Planning Conference. The transition team will create an Individual Transition Plan that can quickly gather the information needed to determine eligibility for special education and related services.

If a child is referred to Early Intervention after the age of 34.5 months, the EI program will connect the family directly to the local school department who will then assist the family in determining eligibility.
How is Special Education Different from Early Intervention?

Families find there are similarities and differences between Early Intervention Special Education. The following provides a brief comparison of the two systems. Remember, even though there are differences, the priority of each system is to support the development of children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Intervention</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Program focuses on supporting the family so they may facilitate the development of their child.</td>
<td>Program focuses on the child and his educational needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages Served</strong></td>
<td>Birth to Age 3</td>
<td>Age 3 to 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan Document</strong></td>
<td>IFSP ~ The <em>Individualized Family Service Plan</em> includes the goals and services agreed upon to enhance the development of the child and assist the family in the process.</td>
<td>IEP ~ The <em>Individualized Education Plan</em> includes a description of the specialized education and related services necessary to meet the educational goals of the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
<td>Eligibility determined by identified developmental delay, certain diagnosed conditions, or particular circumstances which may result in significant developmental problems.</td>
<td>Eligibility determined by significant developmental delay for children under 8 years of age or diagnosed with one of the 13 IDEA disability categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Environment</strong></td>
<td>Services provided at the place where the child spends the majority of his time, his “natural environment.”</td>
<td>Special education and services are provided in the “least restrictive environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recipient of Services</strong></td>
<td>Recipients are the child and his/her family.</td>
<td>Recipient is the child only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural Safeguards</strong></td>
<td>Outline a family’s rights and procedures such as parental consent, disagreement, access to records, prior written notice and more.</td>
<td>Outline a family’s rights and procedures such as parental consent, disagreement, access to records, prior written notice, and more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESOURCES

For information on Early Intervention, as well as:
• Transition to Special Education
• The Educational Advocates Program for children in the care of DCYF and whose parents are not available to act on their behalf
• RI Vision Education and Services Program
• RI Services to Children and Youth with Dual Sensory Impairments
• Collaboration and Transition to Adulthood and Employment Support

Contact:
Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities
Rhode Island College
600 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
Early Intervention Technical Assistance
Tel: 401-456-8072 (v), 401-456-8773 (TDD)
Website: www.sherlockcenter.org

For phone guidance, parent workshops, and other issues relating to your family, contact:
RI Parent Information Network (RIPN)
1210 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920
Tel: 401-270-0101, or 800-464-3399
Website: www.ripin.org

For a copy of the RI Special Education Regulations or issues related to education, contact:
Rhode Island Department of Education
Office of Student, Community, and Academic Support
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
Tel: 401-222-4600
Call Center: 401-222-8999
Website: www.ride.ri.gov
For guidance on IEP’s, and to view sample IEP’s, see the website of:

Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project
Rhode Island College
600 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
Tel: 401-456-4600
Website: www.ritap.org

For information on RI’s Early Intervention system, contact:

Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Child and Family Health
Hazard Building #74
West Road
Cranston, RI 02920
Info Line: 401-462-5300
TTY: 401-462-3363

Helpful Websites

**NICHCY** - National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities.  www.nichcy.org

**Wright’s Law** - Information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities.  www.wrightslaw.com

**LD Online** – Information on learning disabilities and ADHD
www.ldonline.org

**Exceptional Parent** - Information and resources for families of children with special needs.  www.eparent.com
GLOSSARY

**AT - Assistive Technology** - any item that increases a child’s functioning or participation in a typical learning activity (or the selection or training for such an item); examples include: adaptive spoon, picture board, wheelchair or computer touch screen.

**Eligibility** - conditions and/or information that show special education services are necessary.

**ESY - Extended School Year Services** - special education and/or related services provided when school is not typically in session.

**Evaluation** - the process used to determine eligibility.

**IEP - Individualized Education Program** - a written education program to meet the individual special education and related service needs of a child with a disability.

**IFSP - Individual Family Service Plan** - a written plan to meet the individual needs of an infant or toddler and his/her family.

**LAC - Local Advisory Committee** - an organized group of parents and professionals who address special education concerns and issues.

**LEA - Local Educational Agency** - the local school district.

**LRE - Least Restrictive Environment** - to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities.

**Parent Consultant** - parents employed by RIPIN who work at EI programs to help families with support, information and family-to-family connections.

**Procedural Safeguards** - all rights that are guaranteed to the family and child with a disability.

**Related services** - supportive services to help a child with a disability participate in developmentally appropriate activities. Related services are discussed and decided on during the IEP meeting. Examples include: assistive technology, transportation, and occupational, physical or speech therapy.

**RIPIN - RI Parent Information Network** - a statewide, nonprofit agency that provides information, training, support and advocacy for parents seeking help for their children.
Use this page to write down the questions you want to ask your Service Coordinator or transition team.
Use this page to write down the questions you want to ask your Service Coordinator or transition team.
© 2009 - This publication was made possible by a grant from the Rhode Island Department of Human Service’s Early Intervention Program. It is copyrighted by Rhode Island College and may be copied or otherwise reproduced without permission. Attribution to the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College is appreciated. Call (401) 456-8072 (v), (401) 456-8773 (TTD) for information about this publication in alternate format.

To view this publication on the web:
www.sherlockcenter.org
Select “Publications”
Click on “Manuals & Guides.”