

Book 1:  
Family Rights

Book 2:  
Family  
Guide  
to EI

Book 3:  
The IFSP



*Family Guide*  
to Transition at

Age 3

When I'm  
**THREE,**  
Where Will  
I Be?



Arkansas First Connections  
Early Intervention (0-3)  
Transition Guidance Committee  
Sent 2010 / revised Aug 2012

Moving from one program to another is called "transition."



# Introduction

Welcome to *When I'm Three, Where Will I Be?*, your family's guide to transition. This guide was created to help your family prepare for transition from First Connections early intervention services when your toddler turns three. We hope this booklet is useful to your family!

It may seem as if early intervention (EI) has just started, and it's already time to talk about change! Transition (or moving from one program to another) is a time of change, and change can be challenging. Transition can also be an exciting time as you and your family move on to new experiences, learn new things, develop new partnerships and continue to shape new hopes and dreams for your child.

Your service coordinator will most likely begin talking to you about transition and options beyond EI early on. You will receive information about preschool programs and other services in your community and how those services can be individualized so your toddler can be successful in new early childhood (EC) settings. The more you know about transition and what lies ahead, the more comfortable you'll feel as you and your child get ready to move beyond EI together.

Transition is different for every family. There are several ways in which children transition from EI to the next step in their growth and learning:

- Some children may leave EI before age three
- Some children are eligible for early childhood special education services through the local public school system at age three
- Some children transition to other supports and services available in the community

This booklet takes you step by step through the transition process which may begin as early as nine months before your toddler's third birthday (if you and your IFSP team agree to begin then) and will be completed about three months before your child's third birthday. The supports, meetings and services provided to you throughout the process are tailored to meet your needs. We want you and your child to feel ready to leave early intervention services when your toddler turns three.

The transition process will go more smoothly if you are actively involved and plan ahead since the process involves several steps. Every exciting journey begins with the first step, so we hope you'll use this resource as a map to guide you.

So, let's begin this journey by taking focusing on you and your toddler . . .

With warm regards,  
*The Family's Transition Committee*

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**Let's get ready to take the first step!**

# What is Transition?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law. Part C is the part of the IDEA that provides supports and services to children birth to age three and their families. When your child turns three, early intervention services end.

New services and supports may be available through your Local Educational Agency (LEA) under Part B of IDEA which provides a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for children with special needs from age 3-21.

Your child may not qualify for the same services from the school district that he or she received through First Connections because the two parts of the law have different purposes and regulations.

Determining eligibility for new services and supports that may be available is an important process. This process of moving from program to program is one of many transitions that will occur for your child and family throughout your lives.



## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

### IDEA | Part C

Early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3, and for their families.

### IDEA | Part B

Special education and related services for children ages 3 through 21.

# IDEA

IDEA requires a written plan for transition to become part of the IFSP no later than 90 days before your child's third birthday. A transition conference must also take place in this timeframe. Shortly after your child's second birthday, your early intervention service coordinator will work with you and other members of your IFSP team to begin formally planning for what lies ahead. If all involved in this planning agree, the process can begin as early as nine months before your child turns three. This is especially important if your child has a summer birthday.

All transitions are more successful when families and service providers work through the process together, sharing their views of the child and their creative ideas. This will help to make a free and appropriate public education a reality for every child and family.

Remember, new opportunities await as transition occurs!

# Overview of Transition from Part C to Part B

## Shortly after your child's second birthday:

- Your service coordinator, along with you and other IFSP team members will begin to discuss transition options.

## Between the time your child is 2 years and 3 months -- 2 years and 6 months:

- You and your IFSP team begin work on your child's transition plan. Transition steps, activities, and services will be written on the transition plan that becomes part of your child's IFSP.
- A limited disclosure notification is sent to your Local Education Agency (LEA) and State Educational Agency (SEA).
- If you are interested in preschool special education services under Part B, your service coordinator will *get your consent* to send an EI Referral Packet to your Local Education Agency (LEA) or educational cooperative.

## About 6 months before your child's third birthday:

- Your service coordinator will follow-up with activities included in your transition plan.
- **If you are considering EC special education services under Part B**, your service coordinator, *with your consent*, will send your child's current IFSP and evaluation information to your local school district and invite them to a transition conference scheduled at a time convenient to you and your family.
- **If your child is not eligible for EC special education services under Part B**, your service coordinator will help you find other resources and opportunities in your community. *With your approval*, you will have a transition conference (meeting) with your service coordinator and IFSP team, and a representative from an appropriate program/agency to which your toddler may transition to (like Head Start).

## Shortly before your child's third birthday:

- EC Special Education completes evaluation/s (*with parent consent*).
- EC IEP team, including parent/s, meets to determine child's eligibility.
- If your child **is eligible** for EC special education services under Part B, you work with your local school district to develop a plan called an IEP. Like the IFSP, an IEP – Individualized Education Plan is designed to meet your child's needs. NOTE: You may invite your early intervention service coordinator to the IEP meeting for additional support, if you desire.

## On your child's third birthday:

- Your child will transition out of Arkansas' First Connections early intervention program.
- (if determined eligible) The IEP team implements the IEP on the third birthday or the first school day following the third birthday.



# Comparing EI (Part C) and ECSE (Part B)

*At a glance comparison of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Services:*

	Early Intervention (EI)	Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
<b>Governing federal laws</b>	Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004)	Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004)
<b>Age of service</b>	Birth to 3	3 through 5
<b>Goal of program</b>	Helping the family meet developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability.	Educating the child with a delay or disability.
<b>Evaluation process</b>	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.
<b>Eligibility</b>	A delay of 25% of chronological age or greater in one or more areas of development OR a documented medical diagnosis that is likely to result in a developmental delay OR informed clinical opinion (observation)	Child's condition falls into one of the eligibility categories for special education and related services (Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Hearing Impaired, Visual Impairment, Multiple Disabilities, Non-categorical, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury).
<b>Family involvement</b>	Families must be involved in the process to develop the IFSP and implement learning strategies.	Parents must be a member of any team that makes decisions regarding the education of their child.
<b>Type of plan</b>	IFSP document functional outcomes (goals), services needed to meet goals, and progress. IFSP is reviewed quarterly.	IEP documents child's measureable annual goals, how progress is measured, and any services and programs required. IEP reviewed annually.
<b>Service delivery model</b>	Parents/caregivers enroll child in First Connections. Types, frequency, location, and duration of services are determined through the IFSP development process to meet functional child outcomes.	LEAs are required to provide special education and related services to eligible individuals 3-21. Services are determined by the IEP team based on what supports the child needs to benefit from a free, appropriate public education (FAPE).
<b>Services</b>	EI services are provided to support caregiver's ability to promote their child's early learning and developmental needs and the family's desired outcomes.	Special education and related services are instructional in nature, provided only when necessary for a child to fully participate in activities and to progress academically and functionally.
<b>Location of services</b>	EI services are provided to the "maximum extent appropriate to the child's developmental ability" possible in natural environments and in the context of typical child and family activities/routines such as the child's home at mealtimes or in other community sites where infants/toddlers without a disability participate.	EC special education and related services are provided in the least restrictive environment 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 education settings with the use of supplementary aids cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
<b>Cost of services</b>	No direct cost to families. Insurance plans/Medicaid may be billed with Part C funds supplementing what public or private insurance doesn't cover.	School districts and cooperatives must provide children a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). No cost to parents.
<b>Transition</b>	Transition process begins as early as 9 months prior to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday. The transition plan is written and the transition conference is held at least 90 days before the toddler's 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday.	LEA representative participates in the transition conference (a referral conference for early childhood). If a child is determined eligible, the IEP will be developed and will go into effect by the toddler's third birthday.

# Steps in the Transition Process

## STEP ONE - SHARING INFORMATION

Children receiving early intervention services through First Connections are entitled to a smooth and effective transition by their third birthday. The transition process *may* begin as early as nine months before your child's third birthday (2 yrs and three months of age) to give you and the EI team time to meet and to share information and plan with early childhood professionals and/or school early childhood special education professionals. If you feel your family needs additional time to plan, your child has a summer birthday, or if you have concerns about your child's complex medical needs, talk to your service coordinator about beginning transition as early as nine months before your child turns three.

Between 2 years 3 months -- 2 years 6 months, your service coordinator, as required under the law, will send the LEA Notification to your local school district. LEA Notification is basic contact information which includes your EI service coordinator's name, your child's name and date of birth as well as your name, address, and phone number.

After this initial notification, your EI service coordinator will ask you to sign consent so the Notification/Referral Packet can be sent to your Local Education Agency (LEA). Your child's referral packet includes evaluation results and the most recent IFSP. This can only be sent after you give your signed consent. Without your consent, your service coordinator will not be able to send it, and your child's transition process will be delayed, which could cause a delay and/or a gap in services. If you have concerns or questions about information sharing, you may want to discuss them with your service coordinator in advance. Also, if you want your child's information sent to other preschool programs in your community, be sure to tell your service coordinator.

## Tips for Families on Sharing Information:

You can help the members of your child's planning team understand your child as an individual by using these tips to help you prepare to share information about your child:

- Consider the following questions as you plan for transition:
  - \* *What do you dream for your child?*
  - \* *What does your child need now to develop?*
  - \* *Where might your child to learn and play best?*
- Prior to each meeting, write down information you want to share, changes you want to make, or questions you want to ask.
- Write down your hopes for immediate, future, and long-term goals. Make a list of skills your child will need to reach those goals.
- Prepare to discuss your child's likes/dislikes and your family's values and goals. It is helpful also if you share fears/concerns as well as dreams.
- Before your transition conference, review your child's EI records. If possible, talk with your child's service providers about your child's progress and successful strategies they used.
- If possible, prior to each meeting, obtain a basic agenda and list of participants (this should accompany the Notice of Meeting form). Let your service coordinator know if you'll be bringing someone with you and what topics you would like to discuss so your concerns can be included in the agenda.
- Many parents find it helpful to have a regular communication schedule with their service coordinator for sharing ideas and/or concerns between meetings. Positive, frequent communications with your team members and service providers who work with your child will enhance the parent-professional partnership!

**REMEMBER:** Ask your service coordinator where the referral information will be sent. Write important names and contact information on the contacts page near the back of this booklet.

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## STEP TWO - TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition planning often happens during IFSP meetings and contacts with your service coordinator, though some families request a separate meeting to create the plan. The transition plan may be created during an IFSP meeting as early as nine months, but no later than 90 days before your child turns three. Make sure you keep a copy of your child's transition plan. The plan outlines agreed-upon steps to make your child's transition smooth and effective, when they should happen, and who is responsible for which steps. Generally, the plan's steps will include activities and services needed to:

- Plan next steps after early intervention ends at age three
- Prepare your toddler for the upcoming adjustment to a new setting
- Prepare you through information/education to gain an understanding of services and learning opportunities available in your community and get your questions answered
- Acquaint the family with programs and facilities in the area (some families choose to make an appointment to visit programs and meet preschool staff)

### What Parents Want to Know About the Transition Conference:

#### WHO ATTENDS?

The transition conference, according to IDEA, must include:

- You (and any family member you choose to invite or any provider who has been working with your child)
- EI service coordinator
- A representative from an early childhood educational program (either someone from the LEA or from another agency you've selected).

#### WHAT HAPPENS AT THE CONFERENCE?

##### Family

- Share information about your child (plan ahead!) so that team members get a complete picture of your child.
- Bring questions with you to the meeting. You may want to get the following questions answered:
  - \* Services available during the summer
  - \* Registration process for program
  - \* Evaluation process for program
  - \* Possible services available that might be appropriate for your child
  - \* IEP process
  - \* Transportation for your child (if needed)
  - \* The next step in the transition process

##### EI Service Coordinator

- Share information about your child's participation and progress in early intervention
- Share information from the IFSP
- May conduct the Exit Child Outcomes Summary at this time with your input and input from your child's IFSP team

##### Representative of LEA (or other agency)

- Answer your questions and share information about their program and special educational services
- Share information on eligibility and the IEP process
- Identify what other information or evaluations may be needed (and obtain your consent to schedule them)
- Schedule future meeting (to discuss eligibility determination)



### THE TRANSITION CONFERENCE

Part of Transition Planning in Step Two includes a Transition Conference. Your service coordinator, *with your approval*, will schedule a Transition Conference shortly before your toddler's third birthday (but no later than 90 days before turning three). Your service coordinator will invite a representative from your local school district/educational cooperative or another early childhood educational program in your community that you have selected. The Transition conference is an opportunity for you to learn more about the 3-5 program and to get your questions answered.

**REMEMBER:** The Transition Conference is for planning and sharing information. It is not a meeting to determine eligibility for EC Special Education and services that may be provided through your local school district/education coop or other community-based early childhood education program.

## COMPLETING CHILD OUTCOMES SUMMARY

You and your IFSP team may complete the Child Outcomes Summary at your transition conference, though this step may be completed separate from the Transition conference in an “exit conference” held shortly before the third birthday or some time in the three months following the transition conference prior to your child’s third birthday.

**What is the COS?** The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) is not a “grade.” It is not an evaluation or assessment. The COS is a team process for measuring progress – the results of early intervention or benefits gained. The COS uses a number rating from 1-7 to compare your child’s skills and behavior to age-expected skills and behaviors in three broad *outcome* (or goal) areas:



1.

**Positive social-emotional skills** (including: following rules related to groups or interacting with others and social relationships with adults and other children)

2.

**Acquiring (gaining) and using knowledge and skills** (including: remembering and problem-solving, understanding symbols, understanding the physical and social worlds)

3.

**Taking appropriate action to meet needs** (including: basic needs like showing hunger, feeding, dressing, toileting; getting to place to place; using tools like forks or strings attached to objects; contributing to own health and safety like following rules and avoiding inedible objects)

You and the IFSP team will consider multiple sources of information to determine progress, such as: recent assessment results, progress notes and observations of early intervention professionals who have worked closely with your child, and your family’s observations of your child’s behavior and skills in different situations and settings. Your team will provide tools at this meeting, the **Age Anchor** and **Decision Tree**, to guide the team in working together to assign a number which represents:

(a 6 or a 7 rating) **Age-expected level** (*all skills on the Age Anchor used across situations and settings*)

(a 4 or a 5 rating) **Somewhat** (*uses a mix of age appropriate skills and “younger skills” on the Age Anchor*)

(a 2 or a 3 rating) **Emerging** (*age appropriate skills are not used but immediate foundational skills used*)

(a 1 rating) **Not yet** (*not at age-expected level AND not using immediate foundational skills*)

Information that you provide about how your child performs in these three outcome areas in a variety of settings (at home or relatives’ homes, out in the community, with siblings or other family members) will be very important for determining the most appropriate number rating. Understanding developmental milestones (expected skills and behavior at different ages) is helpful in determining whether your child’s skills and behaviors are at age-expected levels, almost at age expectancy, or not yet. Your service coordinator and IFSP team will provide tools to use at this meeting to help determine the rating as a team.



Yes  
No

For your exit Child Outcome Summary rating, each of the 3 sections will also have a “yes” / “no” question to indicate if your child has shown any new skills or behaviors related to each of the three outcome areas since the last outcomes summary.

## STEP THREE - REFERRAL AND EVALUATION

The purpose of the Referral Conference is to figure out if additional information is needed before your IEP team can determine if your child is eligible for early childhood (EC) special education services. The Referral Conference is, at times, held at the Transition Conference. If the conference is held at a later date, your EC Special Education representative will contact you about participating in a Referral conference after your Transition Conference.

**A form called the “Existing Data” form can be completed at the conference in order to identify the need for additional evaluations/assessments.**

You will be involved in helping the EC Special Education program gather needed information to help determine if your child is eligible. It is very helpful to share what you know about your child with other IEP team members. You know your child best! You know what your child has learned already, ways he/she learns best, his/her strengths, and what your child likes/dislikes. Providing this information in a timely manner can help prevent a delay in services and make transition go more smoothly.

Your child’s IEP team needs to be able to answer these four questions:

1. Does your child have a disability?
2. What are your child’s present levels of developmental and functional performance?
3. Does your child’s disability affect participation in and benefit from age-appropriate activities?
4. Does your child need special education and related services?

If your child’s IEP team (which includes you) has enough information to answer all of these questions, your child does not need additional evaluations. However, if your child’s IEP team cannot answer all four questions; the team will decide what additional evaluations are needed to help determine eligibility and to plan for your child’s education. The Early Childhood Special Education program cannot evaluate your child without your informed, written (signed) consent. Before you give your consent, make sure Parents’ Rights have been explained to you. Also, ask questions to make sure that you understand the “Five W’s” of evaluation.

### “Five W’s” of Evaluation:

- W**hy are these evaluations needed?
- W**ho will do the evaluations and **H**OW will the evaluations be completed?
- W**hat information will be gathered through the evaluations?
- W**here will the evaluations be done?
- W**hen will the evaluations be scheduled and completed?



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## What Else to Know About Evaluations:

- When you sign consent, your child's evaluation/s must be completed within 60 calendar days.
- Evaluations can be conducted by one person or by a team of professionals.
- The evaluation is individualized for your child.
- You may be asked to share information through an interview about your child's developmental milestones, medical history, and home/family environments.
- Ask for a copy of all evaluation reports and take time to read them and discuss with family.
- Ask someone from the IEP team to talk about the results with you.
- Make sure results reflect an accurate picture of your child.
- **You know your child best, if there is anything that you do not understand, *ask questions!* Keep asking until you feel that you have received enough information to completely understand the process.**

Ask questions!  
**Ask questions!**



### IEP Team Members Involved in the Evaluation Process:

- You (and any family member, friend, advocate you choose to invite)
- A "regular education" teacher
- A "special education" teacher
- A representative from the school district/educational coop
- Someone qualified to interpret instructional implications of evaluation results
- Individuals with special expertise/knowledge regarding your child, including related service professionals
- (at parent request) EI service coordinator
- (whenever appropriate) Your child

Source: IDEA, 2004, 34 CFR §300.305

**NOTE:** Even though you and your child received services through Early Intervention, there is not automatic eligibility for EC Special Education services. If your child is determined not eligible to receive Early Childhood Special 'education services, your EI service coordinator or the EC Special Education program representative will work with you to identify other options available and appropriate for your child, such as other community programs.

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## STEP FOUR – THE IEP MEETING

When evaluations are complete, your child’s IEP team (which includes you) meets to discuss the information that has been gathered from both evaluation and outside sources. This meeting accomplishes two tasks:

1. Determination of your child’s eligibility for special education and related services
2. Team development of your child’s individualized plan (the IEP) *if determined eligible*

Sometimes both of these tasks are completed in one meeting. At other times, it may require two different meetings. Let’s look at each part of the IEP meeting.

### Determining Eligibility:

During the first part of the IEP meeting, everyone reviews the results of all of the evaluations. The IEP meeting is a time for you to ask questions about the results and to share what you know about your child. Remember, the purpose of the evaluation is to try to capture a full picture of your child, including the things that your child can do well and the things that are difficult for your child.

You will be asked if you agree/disagree with the evaluation results. If you disagree, you have options similar to the options you had in early intervention. Talk with your EI service coordinator and the IEP team about any concerns you may have.

Using the results of the evaluation, the IEP team will discuss whether your child is eligible for special education and related services based on one or more eligibility categories:

- Autism
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)
- Hearing Impaired (including deafness)
- Deaf-Blindness
- Multiple Disabilities
- Non-categorical
- Other Health Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

If the IEP team determines that your child is not eligible, then your EC Special Education program representative can provide you with ideas about other opportunities available in your community and/or provide you with information about how to handle a dispute, if you so choose.

If the IEP team agrees that your child is eligible for special education and related services, the next step of the process is to write your child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

### “Informed Consent” Means:

- You have been fully informed about why your consent is needed in your native language or other mode of communication.
- You understand the purpose/intent of the activity and agree in writing to the activity that has been described to you.
- You understand that your consent is voluntary and can be revoked (taken back) at any time.

Source: IDEA, 2004, 34CFR §300.9

### Creating/Writing the IEP:

After reviewing evaluation results and determining eligibility, you and the IEP team talk about your goals for your child. In early intervention, your family and child’s outcomes and activities were written on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). When your child is 3, the educational plan will be written on an IEP and will be the plan that guides your child’s special education and related services. Just as before, you continue to play an important role on your child’s team as the IEP is written. It is helpful when everyone who will implement the IEP participates in writing the annual goals.

**Measurable annual goals** are things that you and the other members of the IEP team would like to see your child learn in the next 12 months. The goals will reflect the things that your child needs to learn in preschool.

**REMEMBER:** You can invite others to attend the IEP meeting. Some parents like to invite their EI service coordinator or a service provider. Be sure to let your EC Special Education program contact person know who you want to invite to the IEP meeting, because it is your child’s team! You probably met all or most of your child’s IEP team during the evaluation process.

Your active participation on your child’s IEP team is very important. You have a lot of information and insight about how your child learns, what your child can do, and what you want your child to learn next. Be sure to check out the Parent Page, “Getting Ready for Our IEP Meeting” (page 13) to help you plan ahead and gather your ideas, questions, and concerns to share at the meeting.

### What’s Included in an IEP?

- Statement of your child’s present levels of developmental/academic achievement and functional performances.
- Information on how your child’s disability affects his/her participation in age-appropriate activities.
- Statement of measurable annual goals, including academic/developmental and functional goals designed to meet your child’s needs and enable your child to be involved in and to make progress in age-appropriate activities.
- Description of how your child’s progress will be measured.
- Timeline for providing periodic reports on your child’s progress.
- Statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services available to your child.
- Statement of the program modifications/supports that preschool personnel will provide to enable your child to make progress and to participate in age-appropriate activities, extracurricular and non-academic activities and to be educated and to participate with other children with disabilities as well as with children without disabilities.
- Dates for the beginning of services and the frequency, location, and duration of services and modifications.

Source: IDEA, 2004, §614 (d)

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## Supports and Related Services:

After the IEP team has written measurable annual goals, everyone will discuss the **supports and related services** your child will need in order to make progress on the goals and to participate in age-appropriate activities. You might hear the phrase **“educationally relevant”** during IEP meetings when you to what is being learned and necessary to protect your child’s educational right to talk about **related services**. Related services are:

- Required when the services are necessary to enable your child to benefit from special education.
- Determined on an individual basis by your child’s IEP Team (which includes you)
- Could include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, adapted physical education, recreation therapy, social work, psychological services, counseling, orientation and mobility, and audiology services.

Your child’s annual goals and related services will be individualized to meet your child’s needs. After the IEP team has written annual goals and decided on related services, then next part of the IEP meeting is to talk about **“placement”** or where your child will receive the special education and related services written in the IEP.

Special education and related services are not a “place.” Special education and related services are individually designed services planned to meet your child’s educational needs. Your child’s special education and related services can be provided in a variety of different settings. Some of those settings could be community preschool or child care programs, Head Start, EC Special Education programs in your school district, state-funded pre-kindergarten, in your home or some other location, or DDS Centers.

Another term you will hear quite often is “least restrictive environment” or (LRE). When we talk about LRE, we mean an educational setting where children with and without disabilities can learn, play, and grow. Services and supports that children with disabilities receive in their LRE are designed to meet their developmental, functional, and academic needs.



## What is “least restrictive environment?”

“Least restrictive environment” (LRE) means that students with disabilities are educated with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate and have access to the general education curriculum and all other programs which non-disabled peers access. Students with disabilities may receive supplementary aids and services necessary to achieve educational goals in a setting with non-disabled peers. Academically, a resource room may be available within the school for specialized instruction, with typically no more than two hours per day of services for a student with learning disabilities.

Should the nature or severity of a student’s disability prevent the student from achieving these goals in a regular education setting, then the student would be placed in a more restrictive environment, such as a special school or a special education classroom within the current school. Generally, the less opportunity a student has to interact and learn with non-disabled peers, the more the placement is considered to be restricted.

*Remember: When children with and without disabilities learn and play together, they are more likely to improve academic performance and increase communication and socialization!*

# Parent Page:

## Getting Ready for Our IEP Meeting - Part 1

- ✓ What has my child learned this year?

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- ✓ What are my child's strengths and special interests?

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- ✓ What do I want my child to learn next?

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- ✓ What are my concerns for my child's education?

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- ✓ What are the supports and services I think my child may need to make progress on the next set of goals?

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# Parent Page:

## Getting Ready for Our IEP Meeting – Part II

### ***A planner for sharing information during transition and IEP planning:***

.....

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/s or guardian/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Family's address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Alt. number: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/s and service/s received in early intervention: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Describe your child:***

What are some activities your child enjoys doing most?

What are some things that are most difficult for your child to do or learn?

What are some ways you help your child with these difficult things?

Describe the types of rewards that work best for your child.

What types of guidance or limit-setting works best with your child?

What has been your most challenging experience with your child?

What are your goals and dreams for your child?

## STEP FIVE - GETTING READY for PRESCHOOL

Going to preschool for the first time is a new experience for any family with a young child. Just as you were part of services in Early Intervention, you will be part of your child's new early childhood experience.

*Remember that you are always an important part of your child's team!*

Your planning team will be most effective when everyone builds trust and uses open communication. Now that you are nearing the end of the transition process, helping your child get ready for preschool is the next step.

For many parents, this may be the first time their child will spend part of the day away from home. Often parents talk about feeling anxious when their child begins preschool. They worry whether or not their child is "ready." Or, they wonder, "Will my child be OK?" We want to give you a sense of what a preschool classroom might look like and how your child may spend the day. Using this guide will help you and your child feel prepared for the first big day of preschool. Check out the Parent Page, "Tips and Strategies to Prepare for Preschool" (page 16) for things you and your child can do together to prepare for this big adventure!



Preschool classes are fun, safe places that offer young children opportunities to learn, make friends, and develop new skills. Whatever the name of your child's program, you will find some similarities in all early childhood settings. A typical day might begin with "circle time" in which children talk about what will happen in class that day. Early childhood classrooms often have **learning centers** (areas for different types of learning) like "library," dramatic play, art, writing, fine motor, and blocks. Center time is scheduled throughout the day. Centers focus on play and children learning through play. *A day at preschool goes by quickly!*

"It was the first day of school and our daughter was to ride the bus to school. We walked outside for the yellow bus to come down our street. She was dressed in her shorts and had her book bag on, ready for school. I was nervous for her to ride the bus to school, but when the bus pulled up, the smile on her face relieved my nerves. She walked up the stairs, turned around and waved good-bye. I watched as the bus drove down the street until it was out of sight."

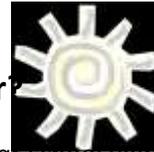
*Jamie, a proud Mom*

# Parent Page:

## Questions Parents Often Ask



### What happens if my child needs services during the summer?



Typically, preschool special education services are provided during the “regular school year” (August through June). In order to have services provided during the summer, the IEP must identify the need for an “extended school year” (ESY). The decision for providing extended year services is based on each child’s individual needs and is a decision that is made by the planning placement team (which includes you, the parent).



### How do I visit a preschool program and what do I “look for?”



Make an appointment with the classroom teacher or program director or ask your EI service coordinator to help you arrange a visit. Get the name of the teacher or person you will be visiting. When you arrive, stop at the main office, introduce yourself, and be prepared to “sign in” if asked. Observe the physical arrangement of the environment and whether or not children without disabilities also participate. Notice the routines (like length of time children stay in one group and the degree of independence needed, etc). Observe how often the children move about or talk with each other. Observe the activities the children are engaged in and think about where modifications may be necessary for your child to fully participate. Think ahead about the information you want to share about your child and the things that you want to ask the staff. Remember that if class is “in session” and the teacher is engaging directly with children, she may not be able to meet with you. You may need to get questions answered from the director or you may need to schedule a time to visit the classroom teacher when she is not in class to get your questions answered.



### What happens if I enroll my child in a private preschool or child care program?



It is the responsibility of the child’s **resident district** (the school district where the child’s parent(s) live) to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children ages three (3) through five (5). If children ages 3-5 attend a child care facility that is not located in their resident district, the resident district is required to provide the services that the child needs to receive FAPE. The resident district may choose to provide the services directly to the child or contract with another agency to provide the services. The resident district is not responsible for the provision of FAPE in out-of-state programs.



# Parent Page:

## Tips and Strategies to Prepare for Pre-School

There are many ways you and your child can prepare for preschool. Take a look at the tips and strategies on this page and pick the ones that you want to do with your child!



Talk to my child about going to school.



Encourage my child to play alone for short periods of time.



Encourage my child to play with other children somewhere away from home, such as a friend's house.



Encourage my child to make simple choices between two items such as, what toy to play with or what snack to have.



Encourage my child to begin taking care of his/her own things, such as hanging up a coat or putting away toys.



Encourage my child to request help when needed.



Visit preschools and take pictures of the room, building, and playground.



Make a list of community and district preschool options I liked.



Share the pictures with my child when we talk about going to preschool or make a picture book of what children do during a preschool day. Include pictures of who will kiss my child good-bye and welcome my child home after preschool!



Read stories with pictures and watch videos about young children going to preschool.



Make arrangements to visit the classroom with my child before the first day of preschool.



Ask the teacher if my child may bring a transitional object or photo book to class for the first weeks of preschool.



Ask the teacher to give my child a tour of the classroom.



Show my child where to hang his/her backpack and coat.



A few weeks before school starts, adjust your bedtime/wakeup schedule and routine to help your child (and you) adjust!



Celebrate our accomplishments!



*What Toddlers Often Want to Know about Preschool:*

- What is preschool like?
- Can someone stay with me for awhile?
- Who are all these people?
- Can I bring my \_\_\_\_ with me? (blankie, favorite toy, etc)
- Can I play with all these toys?!
- Who will help me if I need help?



# Parent Page:

Visiting a preschool or early childhood program you're considering is a great way to get your questions answered and ease any "parent transition fears" you may have as you search out the best options for your child and family. To help you prepare for your visit, the Program Visit Planner below can help you know what to look for/observe and provide a space for you to record your impressions to compare facilities.

## ..... Program Visit Planners .....

Name of Program/ Facility:	Name of Program Facility:
Visit scheduled:	Visit scheduled
Phone number:	Phone number:
Name of contact person:	Name of contact person:
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>My impressions:</i></p> <p> Facility</p> <p> Staff</p> <p> Activities</p> <p> Schedule</p> <p> Safety</p> <p> Equipment</p> <p>Questions/ Concerns I Have:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>My impressions:</i></p> <p> Facility</p> <p> Staff</p> <p> Activities</p> <p> Schedule</p> <p> Safety</p> <p> Equipment</p> <p>Questions/ Concerns I Have:</p>

# National Resources that Might be Helpful:

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- **Educator's Reference Desk (formerly Educational Resources Information Center [ERIC])**  
A national information system funded by the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide access to educational literature and resources. <http://www.eduref.org> or <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
- **Family Voices**  
A national grassroots network of families and friends that advocates for health care services that are family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally competent for all children and youth with special health care needs. The organization promotes the inclusion of all families as decision makers at all levels of health care and supports essential partnerships between families and providers.
- **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (formerly National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities [NICHCY])**  
A dissemination center funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that serves as a central source of information on IDEA, No Child Left Behind (as it relates to children with disabilities), and research-based information on effective educational practices. <http://www.nichcy.org/index.html> (800) 695-0285 [voice/TTY]
- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**  
Federal law supporting educational reform based on stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, use of evidence-based/proven methods of education, and choices for parents. <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>; email: [NoChildLeftBehind@ed.gov](mailto:NoChildLeftBehind@ed.gov)  
1-888-814-NCLB (1-888-814-6252); TTY 1-800-437-0833
- **National Organization on Rare Disorders (NORD)**  
NORD is a national charity that was formed in 1983 by the individuals and organizations that supported the Orphan Drug Act, an important piece of legislation that provides incentives to encourage the development of new medicines for rare disorders. NORD supports research and provides educational materials, referrals, and networking related to rare disorders. <http://www.rarediseases.org/> (203) 797-8600; (800) 879-6673; TDD (203) 797-8600
- **Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)**  
The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is the lead federal office for children with disabilities.  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>
- **Parent Advocacy Center for Educational Rights (PACER)**  
PACER Center strives to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. <http://www.pacer.org/>  
(952) 838-9000; TTY (952) 838-0190
- **US Department of Education**  
<http://www.ed.gov/index.html>  
1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327); TTY 1-800-437-0833

# Glossary

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**Academic Achievement:** a child's progress in pre-academic (school readiness) skills.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** law that took effect in 1992 that defines "disability" and prohibits discrimination by employers, by any facility open to the general public, and by State and local public agencies that provide such services as transportation (public Law 101- 336).

**Assistive Technology (AT):** any item that can be used to increase a child's functioning or participation in a typical learning activity (examples: picture board, adaptive spoon, computer touch screen).

**Child Find:** a part of IDEA that requires birth to three early intervention programs and local school districts to actively locate children, birth to age 21, suspected to have disabilities who may be eligible for special education services.

**Cognitive:** mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, learning, and reasoning.

**Developmental Disability (DD):** a physical or mental condition that may affect activities such as hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, caring for oneself, learning, or working.

**Developmental Disabilities Services:** a division of the Arkansas Department of Human Services responsible for the coordination of services for Arkansans with developmental disabilities and designated as the "lead agency" for early intervention in Arkansas, First Connections.

**Due Process:** a process for resolving a dispute between the family and the early intervention team or the public school district.

**Early Childhood (EC):** "preschool" or, most commonly, the age range from 3-5 years. Classrooms or programs that serve children with or without disabilities might be called Early Childhood programs.

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE):** 3-5 year special education/early childhood intervention under Part B of IDEA and provided by the public school districts for children who have been identified as having a disability.

**Early Intervention (EI):** individual supports and services provided by public and private agencies to enhance family's ability to assist their infant/toddler with a disability in reaching his/her potential.. The early intervention program in Arkansas is "First Connections."

**Early Intervention Providers:** also known as "service providers" or "EIS providers" (early intervention service providers). Professionals certified to provide early intervention services and supports through First Connections to families of infants/toddlers (birth-three) with special needs.

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

**Existing Data Review:** to determine eligibility for "Part B" special education services, the IEP team reviews existing information, evaluations, or medical records, and observations provided by teachers and service providers to determine what, if any, additional information is needed.

**Extended School Year (ESY):** delivery of special education and related services during the summer vacation or other periods when school is not in session. ESY services prevent a child with a disability from losing previously learned skills. The IEP team must consider the need for Extended School Year annually and must describe those services specifically with goals and objectives. Not all special education students require an extended school year. Extended school year services must be individually determined.

**Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** federal law that protects the privacy and transfer of student education records.

**First Connections:** the name of the early intervention program in Arkansas, administered by Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS).

**Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** an individualized public education program designed to meet the child's unique needs and from which the child receives educational benefit. The educational services must be at no cost to the family.

**Functional Performance:** "practical" or life skills used in the context of routine activities of daily living. Functional skills or activities are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement.

**General Curriculum (Preschool):** set of learning activities designed to support the education and development of young children in an early childhood program. The activities encourage growth and development in all areas of speech and language skills, large and small motor development, self-help skills, social and behavioral skills, general knowledge, literacy and numeracy development.

**Head Start:** federal program started in 1965 aimed at providing a comprehensive preschool program for children ages 3-5 from low-income families. Planned activities are designed to address individual needs and to help children attain their potential in growth as well as cognitive and physical development before starting school. Ten percent of enrollment is required to be for children with disabilities.

**Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA):** federal regulation that outlines the confidentiality and protection of medical records.

**Inclusion:** (see LRE) the right of all children to participate actively in natural settings and classroom programs within their communities and schools. Inclusion means full and successful access to health, social, educational, and other support services that promote full participation in family and community life and in education.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA):** federal law that provides the legal authority for early intervention and special education services for children birth to age 21. "Part B" outlines services for children ages three to 21. "Part C" outlines services for children birth to age three.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** written, individualized plan that includes statements of a child's current level of functioning/educational performance, educational goals, specific services to be received, standards and timelines for evaluation of progress, and the amount and degree to which the child will participate with typically developing peers. This plan is required by IDEA for all children eligible for special education and related services.

**IEP Team:** the IEP team is a parent-professional partnership made up of the child's parents/caregivers, special education teacher, a general education teacher, and a representative of the LEA. Other team members may include related service providers, professionals who evaluated the child and others with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child.

**Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP):** the written, individualized plan that defines early intervention services provided to the child (birth to three) and family. The plan states current level of functioning and outlines goals based on family-identified priorities. The plan is designed meet the developmental needs of the child and to support the family in helping their child reach his/her full potential.

**Individualized Program Plan (IPP):** a written, individualized plan of action designed to address a student's special needs and based on diagnostic information to provide the basis for intervention strategies. The IPP is similar to the IEP and is considered by Medicaid to be the "Plan of Care" or the "Plan of Treatment." The IPP is frequently used at Developmental Day Treatment Clinics.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** (see inclusion) the practice of educating students with disabilities, including students in public or private institutions or other care facilities, with students who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students 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.

**Local Education Agency (LEA):** a public school district and/or educational cooperative operating in accordance with statutes, regulations, and policies of the State of Arkansas.

**LEA Notification:** a notice of "potential eligibility" for special education services for a child turning three made to the local education agency. LEA Notification must include basic information to assist the LEA in their child find responsibilities under Part B of IDEA. First Connections transmits a "limited directory" notification which includes: the

toddler's name and date of birth, parent contact information (including name, address and telephone number). The LEA Notification may also include the early intervention service coordinator's name and contact information.

**Measureable Annual Goals:** goals written by the IEP team to indicate what specific academic and functional skills a child will learn through special education and related services over a 12-month period.

**Natural Environment:** the everyday settings (places and routines) where a child would be and would participate if he/she did not have a special developmental concern (for example, home, childcare, parks, library, etc.)

**Notification Packet:** (also called a Referral Packet). The packet of information about a child sent from First Connections to the Early Childhood Special Education Program. The packet can only be sent with informed written consent from the child's parent or legal guardian.

**Paraprofessional:** a professional with experience in early childhood education and related services who works under the supervision and direction of a licensed professional. An individual providing service as an aide, assistant, "paraprofessional," or "paraeducator" providing instructional support in an early childhood through grade twelve setting.

**"Part B" Case Manager:** early childhood special education professional who arranges and convenes IEP meetings, maintains contact with parents, gathers information from team members, and prepares and distributes the finalized documents.

**"Part C" Service Coordinator:** early intervention professional who serves as a single point of contact for families of infants/toddlers birth-three with developmental delays and/or disabilities. The service coordinator works closely with the family to link the family with relevant, appropriate services to assist the family in meeting their goals for their child's development as outlined in the IFSP.

**Preschool Special Education:** An educational program that is designed to meet the unique developmental needs of an individual child with a disability who is three, four, or five years of age. It is a child-focused educational effort (Section 619 of the IDEA).

**Preschool Services in DDS Day Treatment Clinics:** comprehensive day treatment services to children with developmental delays/disabilities ages 6 weeks - 5 years, funded by Medicaid. Services must be medically necessary, prescribed by a doctor, and provided according to a written plan of care (IFSP or IPP).

**Procedural Safeguards:** rights guaranteed to the family and child with a disability.

**Related Services:** supportive services determined by an IEP team as required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education. Such services could include speech-language pathology; audiology services; interpreting services; psychological services; physical and occupational therapy; recreation, including therapeutic recreation; counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling; orientation and mobility services; interpreters; interveners; and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. The term also includes school health services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training.

**Regular Education Environment:** also referred to as general education. Classroom setting where typically developing children participate in academic and non-academic activities.

**Screening:** the process of looking at a child's development to find out if there are any areas of concern, used to recommend children for more in-depth evaluation.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act:** federal law that protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. This law is closely intertwined with IDEA. Students with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility classifications for eligibility under Part B of IDEA but who still require some assistance to be able to participate fully in school would be candidates for a "504 plan."

**Special Education:** specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the needs of a student with a disability.

**Special Education Cooperative:** cooperatives formed by several Arkansas school districts that have joined together. Each cooperative is given responsibilities according to its member districts. Some responsibilities may include participating in transition activities, planning, and conferences; providing evaluations; writing and implementing IEPs; and providing related services.

**State Education Agency (SEA):** the state education agency is the Arkansas Department of Education, responsible for the supervision of public elementary and secondary schools and the licensing of educational professionals.

**Supplementary Aids and Services:** The term “supplementary aids and services” means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

**Supports and Services:** aids, services, and other supports identified on the IEP and provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate in order to make progress on their goals.

**Transition:** the movement from one service, location, or program to another. Toddlers with disabilities transition out of First Connections at age three. Children with disabilities who participate in early childhood special education services may transition at age five to a public school or kindergarten program.

**Transition Plan:** the written plan for a smooth, effective transition out of First Connections into either (1) an early childhood special education program under Part B of IDEA or (2) other appropriate services/programs available in the community. The plan lists the activities, steps, and services identified by the IFSP team. The plan is part of the IFSP and must be completed at least 90 days prior to the toddler’s third birthday but can be completed as early as 9 months prior to the toddler’s third birthday.

**Transition Conference:** the meeting that takes place when a toddler receiving early intervention services is nearing his/her third birthday (must be held no later than 90 days prior to the third birthday but may be held earlier – see above). The child’s family, the early intervention service coordinator, and the LEA representative (for children potentially eligible for services under part B) must attend this meeting. For children ineligible or otherwise not receiving services under Part B, the service coordinator makes every reasonable effort to convene a transition conference to include: the family, the service coordinator, and a representative from the program/agency to which the toddler may transition (such as Head Start or other preschool program).



# Parent Page:

## Important Contact Information

Names	Meeting Dates	Other
<b>My EI Service Coordinator:</b> <b>Contact information:</b> Phone _____ Alt phone _____ e-mail _____	<b>Transition Conference:</b> Date _____ Time _____ Location _____	
<b>EI Service Provider (therapists, teachers, etc)</b> <b>Contact information:</b> Phone _____ Alt phone _____ (role) _____	<b>Visit 3-5 Program:</b> Date _____ Time _____ Location _____	
<b>EI Service Provider (therapists, teachers, etc)</b> <b>Contact information:</b> Phone _____ Alt phone _____ (role) _____	<b>EC IEP Meeting:</b> Date _____ Time _____ Location _____	
<b>My EC Representative:</b> <b>Contact information:</b> Phone _____ Alt phone _____ e-mail _____ (role) _____ Place of business: _____ _____	<b>OTHER / Meeting:</b> Type of meeting: _____ _____ Date _____ Time _____ Location _____	

Parent Page:

## NOTES:

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A large rectangular box with a double blue border, containing 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.

# Division of Developmental Disabilities Services



*When I'm 3, Where Will I Be?* **Family Guide to Transition**

**Book 3 in the family guide series from:**



## **Arkansas First Connections**

*Transition Guidance Committee*, original publication date: Sept. 2010  
Revised Summer 2015