

**SELECT WISCONSIN
RESOURCES FOR PLANNING
TRANSITIONS FROM BIRTH TO 3 TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL
EDUCATION**

7/99



Compiled by staff from the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Family Services. For specific questions contact Jill Haglund, Early Childhood Consultant, Department of Public Instruction, (608) 267-9625 or Donna Miller, Birth to Three Office, Department of Health and Social Services, (608) 267-5150.

Transition Principles

We will remember that we are transitioning a family, not just a child.

We will elicit, listen to, and respect the needs, concerns, priorities, and dreams of the family during the transition process.

We will help parents understand the change in perspective from developmental to educational as the child gets older.

We will provide consistent primary contacts for the family during the transition process.

We will strive to minimize the number of faces and evaluations with test scores a family has to experience.

We will collaborate to provide a gradual process of transition with frequent contact from the receiving staff.

We will be supportive of each other's programs in all ways and will be respectful of the differences in our requirements and process.

We will encourage parents and throughout the process will attempt to instill hope.

Developed by Dane County Birth to 3 Program and the Dane County School Districts outside of Madison

Early Childhood Transition Goals

The children, their parent(s), the sending agencies and the receiving agencies benefit from strong transition plans. The following goals reflect the purpose of planning for the transition of children and their families from one program to another:

Ensure referral of children who may be eligible for early intervention or special education;

Facilitate the process to meet timelines and to ensure enrollment when child turns 3 years of age;

Share expectations of transition process and new program;

Enhance communication and understanding of referral processes and service provision;

Enhance collaboration and cooperation between sending and receiving agencies;

Provide timely transfer of records;

Provide parents with information regarding the continuum of services;

Decrease disruption and gaps in services;

Decrease duplication of evaluation and assessment efforts;

Prepare and support the parent and child through the transition process;

Encourage parent involvement in program visitations, the referral process, the evaluation process, and the development of the individualized family service plans and education programs;

Plan for and obtain necessary assistive technology or special equipment;

Enhance the child's adjustment to new settings; and

Allow receiving staff to prepare for new enrollment.

Transition Activities

The sending and receiving agencies are encouraged to develop formal transition activities, in addition to the transition meeting. These activities will assist the child, parent, and both agencies in creating and maintaining smooth transition processes. The following activities may be utilized:

Form local transition committees with representatives from sending and receiving agencies to share information and develop procedures to ensure smooth transitions.

Establish formal referral procedures and timelines.

Cooperate in the selection and/or administration of evaluation, assessments and observation techniques.

Involve the sending agency staff in evaluations, development of IFSP/IEPs and in considering placement options, with parental consent.

Develop the IFSP/Imps in conjunction with the goals and outcomes established while the child was in the sending agency.

Jointly plan inservice and training sessions for staff of sending and receiving agencies.

Share information with the receiving agency regarding the children served by the sending agency including the number of children, their disability, and when they turn 3 years of age.

Conduct individual, group, or combined group (sending and receiving agencies) meetings that allow parents to share information, receive answers to questions and discuss transition activities with the sending and receiving staff.

Involve parents in designing and implementing parent meetings and/or training.

Arrange for teachers or other appropriate staff persons from the receiving program to observe children in the sending program's setting.

Arrange opportunities for sending agency staff to visit and observe in the school setting.

Offer an opportunity for parents to visit the receiving program and meet the teacher and other key staff.

Arrange activities to assist children in adjusting to the new setting, such as preplacement visits.

Schedule post-transition conferences, with parental consent, that involve both the sending and receiving agencies.

Elements of Written Agreements

The involved agencies must work together to identify and agree on activities, tasks and responsibilities during the transition process. Through preliminary meetings, staff will develop a better understanding of the other agency's structure and procedures, the children enrolled, and the services provided. Written agreements may be broad based addressing issues related to public awareness, child find and transition, or they may be more limited in scope and address only a single issue, e.g., transition.

At a minimum, all written interagency agreements should address:

- A brief mission, goal or purpose statement;
- Roles and responsibilities of each agency;
- Parameters of collaboration, e.g., joint activities, shared staff expertise, or shared resources;
- Timelines;
- Financial responsibility, if any; and
- Dispute resolution.

Specific to transition, written agreements should designate roles and responsibilities of families, as well as sending and receiving agencies in the areas of:

- The process for obtaining permission from the family.
- Procedures for transfer of information;
- Evaluation and assessment expectations;
- Referral, transition, and evaluation process and timeframes;
- The role of the sending program in the evaluation process and IFSP/IEP development is defined.
- Parent involvement and education;
- Activities for the child including visits to the receiving program; and
- Funding allocations, if necessary.

Other elements of transition agreements can include:

- Definitions and/ or common uses of terminology (e.g., screening, assessment, diagnosis, evaluation).
- Provisions for joint meetings/training of staff to develop a better understanding of each agency's structure and procedures, the eligibility requirements, and the services provided.

Provisions for special cases (e.g., how summer birthdays are addressed, how the family of a child who does not qualify for special education will be assisted in finding services, etc.)

Provisions for staff release time to plan and make classroom observations.

Screening, evaluation, and/or assessment procedures/tools in order to reduce duplication.

Commitments to other collaborative efforts (e.g., combined inservices, home visits occur on the same day of the week across agencies, etc.)

Procedures to evaluate the agreement, as well as the parents' and staffs' perspectives on transition.

Adapted in part from Project Best and FACTS/LRE

Note: Currently there is a written interagency agreement between the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Social Services regarding public awareness, child find and transition for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. There is also a written interagency agreement between the Department of Public Instruction and the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which represents Head Start agencies in Wisconsin. These state level agreements may be helpful to communities as they develop local interagency agreements.

Many counties and corresponding local school districts have developed transition agreements. Agencies may want to review these agreements and use them as starting points for discussion.

Transition Bibliography

Bridging Early Services for Children with Special Needs and Their Families A Practical Guide for Transition Planning. Rosenkoetter, S., Hains, A., Fowler, S., Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624.

Connections Count! An Overview of Early Childhood Screening Issues and Strategies. Maxwell, L., CESA #1, 2930 South Root River Pkwy., West Allis, WI, 53227, (414) 546-3000. To purchase these training modules, including videotape, send \$25.00 or a purchase order.

Early Childhood Interagency Transition Model. Gallaher, J., Maddox, M., Edgar, E., Edmark Corporation, P.O. Box 3903, Bellevue, Washington 98009.

Early Development Awareness: A Community-based Approach to Screening. Balliet, T., Mequon-Thiensvielle School District, 5000 W. Mequon Rd., Mequon, WI 53092, (414) 242-2414. To purchase this training package, including videotape, send \$50.00 or a purchase order.

Interagency Agreements Improving the Transition Process for Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Family and Child Transitions into Least Restrictive Environments, FACTS/LRE Information Series, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 61 Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, Illinois 61820, (217) 333-4123.

The Transition Sourcebook: A Practical Guide for Early Intervention. Contact TeBockhorst, M., Communication Skill Builders, 3830 East Bellevue, P.O. Box 42050, Tucson, AZ 85733, (602) 323-7500.

Your Child Goes to School: A Handbook for Parents of Children Entering School for the First Time. The Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Instruction, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, (301) 333-2495.