

The Transition Summit Guide recommends transition practices for all children. Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and their families may have unique concerns that need to be supported during transitions. This guide for site leaders offers tips and resources to help ensure that the needs of children with disabilities are met during the transition to kindergarten. Many of these tips are also applicable when supporting children with 504 plans or interim services.

General Approaches for Transition Planning:

- Include special education and disability service coordinators in your Transition Summit.
- Develop a Disabilities Service Plan that includes a description of procedures and activities that support smooth and successful transitions to kindergarten for children with IEPs.
- Develop inter-agency agreements with local education agencies (LEAs) that support successful transitions for children with IEPs.
- Refer to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Head Start Program Performance Standards for requirements and recommendations for transition practices that include inter-agency collaboration, supports for families and children, and training for educators and staff.

School and Community Practices to Help Children With IEPs Make Smooth Transitions:

- Provide joint trainings and other professional development activities for school district and early childhood educators and staff on the transition to kindergarten.
- Provide opportunities for school district and early childhood educators and staff to observe each other's programs and learn about their curricula and teaching practices.
- Provide education and family support activities to help families understand their rights and responsibilities and how to advocate for their children.

- Include information about the transition to kindergarten during IEP meetings held during the preschool years.

Family Outreach Before Transitions:

- Confirm dates and work with the school district to make sure the child has a current IEP in place when the kindergarten year begins.
- Establish a transition team that includes a primary contact person within both the sending and receiving programs.
- Help families learn about kindergarten options, the special education and related services that may be provided, as well as available community resources.
- Hold a transition meeting with family members, the kindergarten teacher, and the school's special education team to develop a transition plan for the individual child. Make sure the plan includes transfer of the child's records.
- Visit the new school with the family and child to learn about its expectations and routines.
- Partner with the family to identify and prepare for activities the child will encounter in kindergarten. These include participating in larger groups, following group directions, attending meal times, going to the bathroom, and following school bus routines.
- Introduce the family to other families who have already experienced the transition process.

Family Outreach During Transitions:

- Work with the family and the kindergarten teacher to discuss strategies and modifications that can help the child feel safe and welcomed during the first weeks of school.
- Help families and the kindergarten teacher establish a system to communicate about the child's adjustment to the new school.
- Check to see whether the child's records have been transferred to the new school.
- Partner with the family to make an "Introducing Me" book to share with the new teacher.
- Help family members advocate for their child's specific needs.

Family Outreach After Transitions:

- Make a follow-up contact with the family and the kindergarten teacher to let them know you are interested in the child's continued progress.
- Help the family know about community resources that are available for families of children with IEPs.



Resources

Transitioning from Early Childhood Special Education to Kindergarten: Tips for Parents of Children with Challenging Behaviors

<https://www.pacer.org/ec/transition-to-kindergarten/transition-from-special-ed-to-kindergarten.asp>

Head Start Program Performance Standards

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-61-additional-services-children>

This section of the Head Start Program Performance Standards describes additional services for children with disabilities, including supporting the transition to kindergarten for children with an IEP.

Fenlon, A. (2005). Collaborative steps: Paving the way to kindergarten for young children with disabilities. *Young Children, 60*(2), 32-67.

Rous, B.S., & Hallam, R.A. (2006). *Tools for transition in early childhood: A step-by-step guide for agencies, educators, & families*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0012 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care by the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

Winter 2020