

Planning Transitions for Your Child

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What is a transition?

A transition is a movement from one program to another, such as:

- From the intensive care unit to another nursery
- From the hospital to the home
- From an infant stimulation program to a play group
- From a home teaching program to a program at a center.

A transition happens whenever your child starts special therapy services, home nursing, or an infant stimulation program. A planned transition allows for a smooth movement from one program or service to another. The long-term goal of transitions is to move your child more and more into the educational mainstream of your community.

What's my role in the transition process?

You are the expert on your child. You know your child's development, strengths, and needs. You know how to set goals for your child. Here are some of the important roles you can take:

Advocate. You know your child the best. You are an important team member. Decisions about programs and services should not be made without you—use what you know about your child to make the best possible decisions.

Teacher. You are a teacher every time you talk to, play with, feed, bathe, and hold your child. You help your child practice skills at home and elsewhere. You can tell the program team what your child does at home and what works for you.

Partner. You can be the important bridge between programs and services. Identify your child's needs, and discuss your expectations with the team. Be sure the new program or service has up-to-date records. Get copies of *all* reports. Keep the reports in a notebook or file

box. Take many pictures of your child. Keep a scrapbook.

You'll be writing an *Individualized Family Service Plan* (IFSP) with the team. Federal law (Public Law 99-457) requires an IFSP for preschool and infant programs for children with disabilities. Among other information, the plan must include:

- A written transition plan
- Your role in transition
- Your responsibilities for transition and those of the other team members.

How can my child and I have a successful transition?

You are part of the program team. Write a list of questions. You need to know:

Who is involved—administrators, teachers, therapists, and other service people. Know everyone's names and what they do. Know who the contact person is. Know who is testing your child—you must give your written permission before anyone can test your child. Know who the case manager is and what the case manager's responsibilities are.

What programs are available. Visit programs with your child. Meet teachers and look at the classroom. Ask about the services provided and how placements are made. If you have a home program, establish the days and times the service provider will visit. Ask about goals and objectives of the program.

Where the recommended program is located. Get the name, address, and phone number of the contact person for the agency or service. Ask about transportation and car-pools.

When the move is to happen. Make an appointment with the administrator *before* any new program starts. Plan a time to share information about your child. Ask if a handbook is available. Plan for visits between programs. Make a video tape of your child.

How the transition is to be done. Work with the team to write a step-by-step plan for the transition. The plan should have a time-line of the dates by which each step will be completed. Know who is responsible for what tasks.

Summary

Transition is the planned movement from one program to another. You play a very important role in your child's transition. Take an active part in making decisions—ask questions, visit programs, and get involved.

For more information

Cutler, B. C. *Unraveling the special education maze: An action guide for parents*. Champaign, IL: Research Press

Dickman, I., and S. Gordon. *One miracle at a time: How to get help for your disabled child*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Winton, P. J., A. P. Turnbull, and J. Blacher. *Selecting a preschool: A guide for parents of handicapped children*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

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