

Understanding Early Childhood Transition: A Guide for Families and Professionals



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INTRODUCTION

What Does Transition Mean?

Change is a part of life and “transition” means changing from one place, stage, or relationship to another. Change happens frequently throughout life, and our children will go through many transitions. Some transitions will signal the start of a new set of activities. Examples of early transitions for your child include the move from the hospital to the home, from early intervention services to preschool services, and from preschool to kindergarten. For some, change is viewed as a time of growth and opportunity; for others, change is stressful. One of the positive things we can do for our children is to teach them to deal with change in their lives.

On the child’s third birthday, the responsibility for funding early intervention services changes from the North Dakota Department of Human Services to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. This transition between programs may mean that new people are providing services in different settings. Such transitions will be easier with careful planning and preparation.

The transition for a child from early intervention to special education preschool or other community programs will be enhanced by collaboration among the family, those who currently provide services, and those who will provide services in the future for the child. It is important that families have the information and resources necessary to be comfortable making decisions for their children and are part of planning through every step of the process. Consequently, effective sharing of information by both families and professionals is vital to successful transitions. Other important ingredients include mutual respect and understanding of another’s perspective. When parents and professionals work together, incorporating these ingredients, a positive transition experience will result that may also serve as a model for future transitions.

How to Use This Guide

This guide was initiated as a workbook to provide an outline of transition activities, timelines, contact and program information, questions, and concerns to guide parents through each step of the transition process. Because it is also critical for professionals from early intervention programs and school districts to have information about both the programs the child has been enrolled in and will be moving into, the workbook was expanded to include information that has relevance for families and for service providers.

Regulations are included from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) Parts C and B where they apply to the issues of transition at age three. Regulations are provided from the 1997 amendments, and revisions will be made as regulations from the 2004 amendments are finalized. It is important to note that the guidance in this document enhances the minimum requirements in federal legislation to ensure collaboration and effective transitions for children and families. Transition steps are presented in this document, including two meetings in which early intervention and special education preschool program staff are required to attend. Special considerations for planning and conducting these meetings will be provided in the guidance.

A section of “worksheet” examples are included in the final section of the document that families might want to use in planning for meetings and to use in developing questions or listing concerns. Several sections of the guide will be useful for professionals and parents to review together. Other sections describing the activities at each of the time lines might be useful in forming the outline of the transition planning meetings with families, early intervention staff, and school district staff. The information about service and program options, timelines, and strategies to enhance the transition process have been provided to be a resource to families and professionals working together in the interest of young children at this important transition period.

A Parent’s Perspective...

I remember being unsure about the big decision of transition. It seemed like she was just too little to have to decide something so important. I researched all my options for our daughter. It was hard to make a decision as everyone had their opinion on what would be best for her. In the end, I decided to follow my heart and what I knew my daughter needed. After many nights trying to decide which transition road to take, we finally made a decision. Once we made our decision, the transition process went very well, and I felt confident in the choices we made for our daughter, even if everyone didn't always agree with them. In looking back at transition, I realized that it was during this process that I learned that as a parent, I know my daughter best and need to follow my heart and mind when making decisions for her.



FOUNDATIONS FOR TRANSITION

Legislative Foundations

Federal legislation mandates how services are provided for eligible infants and toddlers (age birth through two) with special developmental needs. The Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and amendments of 1997 and 2004 govern early intervention services for children from birth through two years of age who have disabilities. Under this federal legislation, a lead agency in each state is responsible for implementation of the provisions of the law. In North Dakota, the Department of Human Services administers early intervention programs and services for infants and toddlers through eight regional Human Service Centers. Early Intervention could include Developmental Disabilities (DD) Case Management, Infant Development services, or other family supports.

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and amendments of 1997 and 2004 outline the services for children with disabilities who are age three through 21. Specific provisions are included for preschool children age three through five. Administration of these special education services is provided by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. Direct services to children are provided by the school district where the family home is located.

The 2004 amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 include responsibilities for Part C agencies. This reference provides clarification of the responsibilities for transition and *a description of the policies and procedures to be used*—
(Sec. 637 (a)(9))

- (A) *to ensure a smooth transition for toddlers receiving early intervention services under this part (and children receiving those services under section 635(c)) to preschool, school, other appropriate services, or exiting the program, including a description of how--*
 - (i) *the families of such toddlers and children will be included in the transition plans required by subparagraph (C); and*
 - (ii) *the lead agency designated or established under section 635(a)(10) will--*
 - (I) *notify the local educational agency for the area in which such a child resides that the child will shortly reach the age of eligibility for preschool services under part B, as determined in accordance with State law;*
 - (II) *in the case of a child who may be eligible for such preschool services, with the approval of the family of the child, convene a conference among the lead agency, the family, and the local educational agency not less than 90 days (and at the discretion of all such parties, not more than 9 months) before the child is eligible for the preschool services, to discuss any such services that the child may receive; and*
 - (III) *in the case of a child who may not be eligible for such preschool services, with the approval of the family, make reasonable efforts to convene a conference among the lead agency, the family, and providers of other appropriate services for children who are not eligible for preschool services under part B, to discuss the appropriate services that the child may receive;*
- (B) *to review the child's program options for the period from the child's third birthday through the remainder of the school year; and*
- (C) *to establish a transition plan, including, as appropriate, steps to exit from the program.*

The requirements under these same 2004 IDEA amendments require the State Part B Office of Special Education to ensure the following support for transition services:
Sec. 612 (a)(9)

TRANSITION FROM PART C TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS—Children participating in early intervention programs assisted under part C, and who will participate in preschool programs assisted under this part, experience a smooth and effective transition to those preschool programs in a manner consistent with section 637(a)(9). By the third birthday of such a child, an individualized education program or, if consistent with sections 614(d)(2)(B) and 636(d), an individualized family service plan, has been developed and is being implemented for the child. The local educational agency will participate in transition planning conferences arranged by the designated lead agency under section 635(a)(10).

The federal law governing early intervention and preschool special education services creates several differences between these programs that may affect the way children move from one program to the other. It will be helpful to have a clear understanding of the differences between programs as you plan for transition. The following comparison of programs and services in North Dakota systems will be helpful in developing an understanding of the similarities and differences in how the programs operate.

A Comparison of the IDEA Part C and Part B Programs

	Early Intervention Program IDEA—Part C	Preschool Special Education Program IDEA—Part B
State Lead Agency	Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Unit	Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education
Local Lead Agency	Regional Human Service Centers, Early Intervention Programs	Local Education Agency (LEA) Local Public School District
Ages of Children Served	Children, ages birth to three years of age, with disabilities	Children, ages three through twenty-one years with disabilities
Eligibility Criteria	<p>Infant and toddler services may be provided to children if there is evidence of a developmental delay or risk of developmental delay.</p> <p>Young children who have a high risk of becoming developmentally delayed, or are developmentally delayed, may receive case management services and be considered for services to meet specific needs.</p>	<p>Based on educational assessment results, eligibility for preschool special education may be determined in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic • Deaf-blind • Hearing-impaired, including deafness • Other health impaired • Orthopedically impaired • Speech-language impaired • Visually impaired, including blindness • Traumatic brain injured • Mental retardation

	<p>“<i>High Risk</i>” means a child who has a diagnosed physical or mental condition and has a high probability of becoming developmentally delayed or who, based on informed clinical opinion and documented by evaluation data, has a high probability of becoming developmentally delayed.</p> <p>“<i>Developmentally delayed</i>” is defined as performing 25 percent below age norms in two or more of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive development • gross motor development • fine motor development • sensory processing • communication development (receptive or expressive) • social or emotional development • adaptive development; <p>or who is performing at 50 percent below age norms in one of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive development • physical development (including vision and hearing) • communication development (including receptive and expressive) • social or emotional development • adaptive development <p>For more information regarding eligibility criteria see: http://ndearlyintervention.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional disturbance • Specific learning disability <p>For younger children in North Dakota, a “Non-Categorical Delay” (NCD) eligibility option may be used when a disability is not clearly identified, but delays are evident. This option may be used ages three through nine. The option is used only in districts where the local board has approved this option. Check the website: http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/NCDguidelines.pdf to find more information about the NCD criteria and districts using this category of eligibility.</p>
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Individualized Plans	Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): The IFSP identifies outcomes and strategies to address family focused concerns, priorities, and resources. Services are designed to be provided in natural environments.	Individualized Education Program (IEP): The IEP is based on the child’s present level of educational performance and goals are developed to meet the educational needs of the child. Related services, needed adaptations and modifications are identified and services in the least restrictive environment are determined. Preschool programs may continue to use the IFSP if it meets all IDEA, Part B requirements of special education and is agreed to by the LEA and the child’s parents.
Family Involvement	The IFSP outlines the early intervention services for the child and family based on the needs of both child and family.	Parents are equal partners in making decisions and the team must consider parent concerns and information they provide regarding their child. The IEP outlines the plan for the child’s special education services.
Primary Contact	A DD Case Manager from the regional Human Services Center will be assigned to coordinate services with the family.	A representative from the local education agency will be referred to as the IEP Case Manager.
Coordination of Services	Service coordination is provided as a component of early intervention services and may be called case management.	IEP case management is provided by the local education agency to ensure provisions of the IEP are coordinated as stated in the IEP. Parents may need to be active in coordinating services between agencies and community programs. Some students may continue to receive Family Support Services and Developmental Disabilities Case Management through the Department of Human Services.
Where Services Are Provided	Services are provided in “natural environments” in the home and community in order to enhance the child’s natural learning opportunities within daily routines and activities of the child and family.	Special education and related services are to be provided in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) and to the extent appropriate with children who do not have disabilities. These placement options may include Head Start, private community programs, preschool programs, childcare and/or home services.

<p>Costs for Services</p>	<p>Children eligible for DD Case Management services receive case management services without cost to the families. Your child’s eligibility for case management services does not mean other services will be provided without costs to your family. In most cases, early intervention services are provided at no cost to the families, but if families do not apply for Medicaid they will incur a fee for some early intervention services.</p>	<p>Federal law (IDEA) mandates the right for children with disabilities to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) and such educational services are funded by the public school through a combination of federal, state, and local funding.</p>
<p>Transition</p>	<p>Early intervention personnel are required to provide a transition conference as part of overall transition planning with families for children exiting from early intervention programs. The schedules and timelines for each activity required in transition are provided in this guide. Transition planning must address program options, child and family preparation, the transfer of records, and referrals that should be made for future services.</p>	<p>Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel are required to participate in the transition planning conference when they have been invited by the Early Intervention Program for a child who may be eligible for special education services. Their participation is prior to the actual transition and should support ongoing planning activities. The LEA is required to provide assistance to assure the transition is a smooth process for the child and the family.</p>

Timelines for Transition

Effective planning will help reduce the stress of transitions for staff and families and promotes optimal access to services and supports for children. The planning process allows for the transfer of records, sharing of information, and responses to questions. Children benefit from the increased continuity, reduced stress, and improved access to services that result from planning efforts.

Both federal and state regulations clearly identify steps in the process and timelines that must be met in order to ensure a smooth transition. Both the early intervention program and Local Education Agency (LEA) have responsibility for providing information and resources throughout this process.

The transition from early intervention to the LEA special education program or other community supports and services must occur by the child’s third birthday. Planning steps at the Individual

Family Service Plan meeting (IFSP) prior to the child's second birthday, at 2 years, 7 months, and at 2 years, 9 months, should provide the information and the activities necessary to develop the Individualized Education Program that will support the child's special education at the age of 3 years if the child is determined to be eligible.

A Parent's Perspective . . . Feeling Timid in Transition

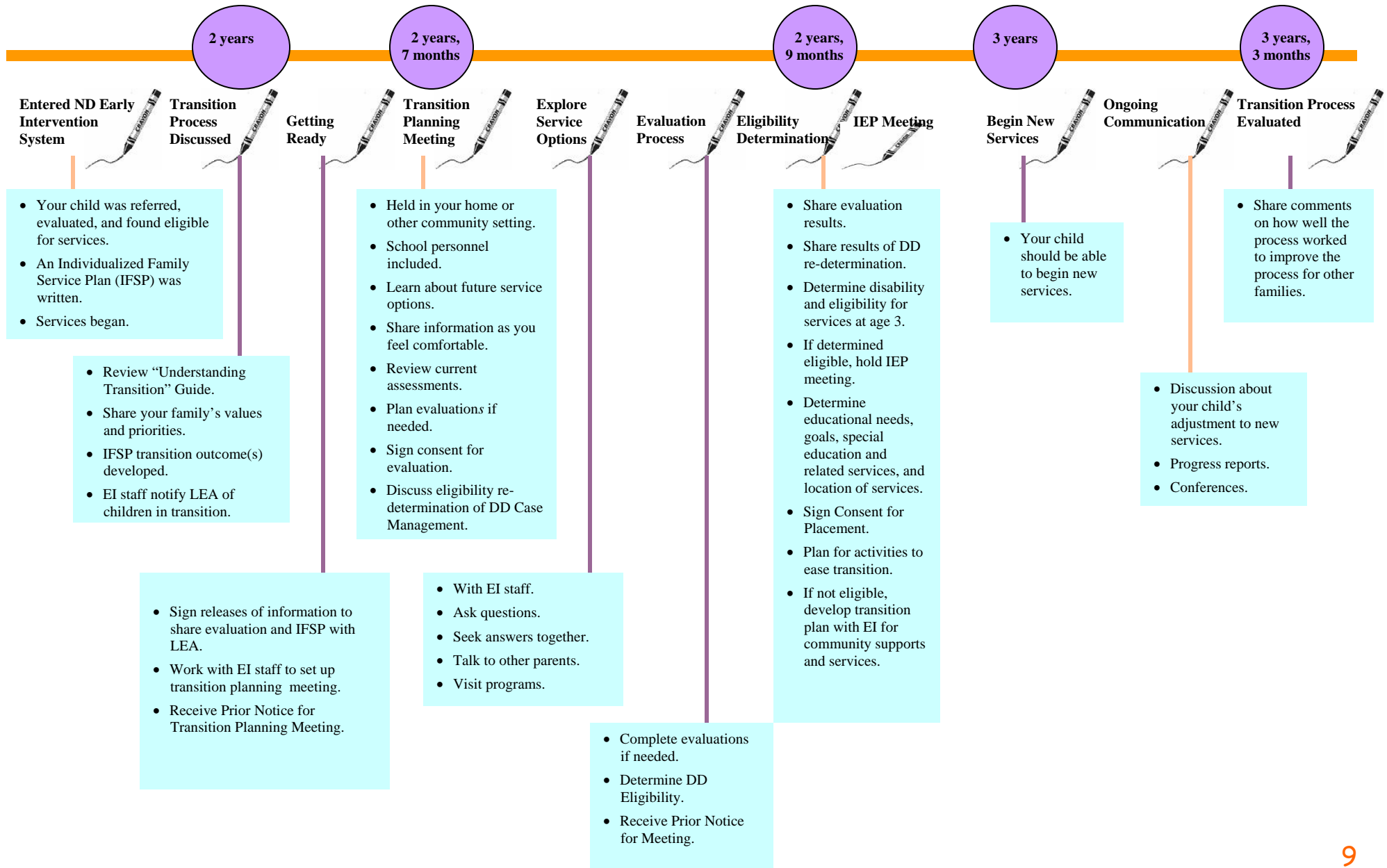
Timid? I can only say that I was lacking in self confidence. Transition, for me, was a scary time. I have twins who were just two and a half year's old. "What! What do you mean enroll my children in special education preschool?" was my reaction when transition was initially mentioned. My train of thought to that point had been just to get my children to be functional walkers and to be able to function in daily life. I knew they had developmental delays . . . but they had two more years before they were old enough to go to school . . . or so I thought.

I had never heard of a child beginning school when they turned three, and I had so many questions. How was my son going to get around with his walker, forearm crutches, and backpack when he could barely walk independently? How was my daughter supposed to carry a backpack that was almost as big as she was?

During the transition process, the early intervention staff and our Developmental Disabilities Case Manager were essential to the process. They answered questions, provided information, coordinated meetings, and assisted with the referral to the Special Education Preschool. I felt that the transition team addressed both the areas of strength as well as areas of delay each of my children had and were helpful in developing an IEP for each child that was a continuation of the services my children received during early intervention.



North Dakota Early Childhood Transition



Being Part of a Team

Important steps in planning for transition is deciding who will be involved in each step and who will serve as members of the transition team and then members of the IEP team. Members for all groups in Transition Planning, Evaluation Planning, and IEP Development may be the same people, or as the needs of the group change, the membership will also change. For all meetings, the membership should include at least these individuals:

- Parents
- DD Case Management (Service Coordinator)
- Other Early Intervention staff
- Representatives from the Preschool Special Education program or Special Education Unit
- Other professionals involved in assessment
- Other professionals who might be providing IEP services
- At the discretion of the parent or the LEA, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child.

Initial team leadership in the transition process is generally provided by the Infant Development program, but if your family has chosen not to receive Infant Development services, your DD Case Manager will facilitate transition activities. As your child approaches 3 years of age, LEA staff will also become involved in facilitating transition activities. Then, as the LEA initiates services such as the evaluation process to determine Part B eligibility and the development of an IEP, they will lead the planning process at these meetings.

Building relationships takes time, effort, trust, mutual respect, and communication. Here are some tips for working on a team that may help everyone involved work together as they plan for transition.

- **Treat each member of the team as an equal.**
Remember that each team member brings different expertise, values, and resources.
- **Seek Information**
It is okay to say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand” or to ask for assistance or more information.
- **Share information that will help team members to understand everyone’s opinions.**
Do not be afraid to state an opinion, answer questions, and discuss priorities.
- **Listen to each member of the team.**
Try to identify the reasons for each person’s specific needs or recommendations.
- **Generate multiple suggestions to address each issue discussed and identify the pros and cons of all suggestions before selecting one.**
- **Remember that differences of opinion are okay and are to be expected.**
Team meetings are an opportunity to listen to all points of view and make decisions together.
- **Try not to let any past negative experiences color the team’s interactions.**
- **If you run out of time and things still need to be done, request that the meeting continue and schedule a future date.**

- When meeting minutes are kept, make sure that parents and each agency receive a copy the minutes.
- Check to make sure that discussion or decision points are included and complete.
- It will be helpful to plan the membership of each team and keep a record of the names and contact for each person on the team.



Special Tips for Families Advocating for Your Child

Being an advocate for your child is an important part of your role as part of a team. You are the constant in your child's life and a constant member on the team while other staff and team members will change. Consequently, your priority will be to keep the team focused on what is best for your child. The information that you provide about your child and your family's strengths, values, and challenges *is as important as any evaluation data provided by professionals and is vital to planning effective programs for your child.*

Remember that families and professionals must work together as the job cannot be done by either alone. Keeping an open mind to look at all the possible options will facilitate decision-making and enhance the team process.

As an advocate for your child, you may build relationships with other team members by:

- Clearly making your thoughts known,
- Respectfully listening to others' perspectives,
- Understanding the law and knowing your rights and basing your suggestions on these foundations,
- Emphasizing the positives and expressing your appreciation when appropriate,
- Being persistent and focused on what is best for your child, and
- Understanding that others have times when they are unsure of the correct course of action and offer support without judgment.

From a Coordinator. . .

We've found that by starting the transition process early we can get to know the child and the family and build a relationship with them that helps them leave the support of the early intervention program. So many stressful situations have been alleviated when we really know the child and can talk with the family about their questions long before concerns become problems.



Child's Age: 2 Years

Beginning the Process of Transition

When children and families enter the early intervention program, an important outcome is to prepare for the transition to the next program. The process of transition begins with several discussions and planning steps long before the formal process begins. There may be several discussions about issues, concerns, needs, and opportunities in preparation for the meetings and activities of transition.

At least one year before the child's third birthday, early intervention staff will begin the process of transition. A transition plan will be developed with timelines that become part of the IFSP. The steps and activities of the transition will be outlined along with activities that will be provided in follow-up to the actual transition. The early intervention program might provide a follow-up phone call, a visit with your child and family, a survey or another type of follow-up activity that will ensure that your child has transitioned successfully to the next program.

Early Intervention Role

- Initiate the transition process and plan activities and time lines
- Make arrangements for the initial transition planning meeting
- Provide written notification to the special education unit (child's name, date of birth, parent contact information) that the child will be transitioning within the next year
- Share information about community supports and services that may be available or may be developed as the child's needs are identified.
- Assist the family with questions and concerns about transition

Family's Role

- Provide written permission for the release of the child's records to the special education unit to share evaluations, IFSP, and relevant information
- Gather information that you feel those who will be working with your child in the future should know about in preparation for the transition planning meeting
- Collect and write down information that you want to share, any changes that you want to make or questions that you want to ask so that your concerns are not forgotten

What Happens Next? This meeting begins the planning process. Now the work begins to prepare child, family, and staff for moving ahead to the next program and new possibilities. Between the first planning meeting and the development of the actual transition plan steps and activities, it will be important to explore settings and services in the community, talk with family and friends about their experiences with their preschool children, and create a vision about where you see your child in the next year.

At this time, the early intervention program will contact the LEA with the initial contact information to provide a referral for the child. The LEA will be given the child's name, date of birth and parent contact information. A more complete transfer of records will occur later with parent permission.

Records Transfer Guidance

Thus records maintained for purposes of Parts B and/or C by the lead agency, the SEA or the LEA on those children referred for, or receiving services under the IDEA are covered as "education records" under FERPA, and must be disclosed only in accordance with FERPA's requirements.

The specific FERPA exception that allows referral for child find purposes without prior parent consent is the exception to disclosure of personally identifiable information to authorized representatives of state and local educational authorities in connection with the enforcement of Federal legal requirements which relate to any Federally-supported education programs.

The specific information that can be included in the referral without prior parental consent by the lead agency for these limited child find purposes are the child's name, date of birth, and sufficient parent contact information (as determined by the SEA) to the SEA and/or LEA so that the SEA and LEA can meet their respective child find responsibilities.

Separate parental consent is required prior to each of the following stages under the IDEA for the; (1) transmission of other information about the child from the lead agency to the LEA; (2) evaluation of the child to determine eligibility under Part B; and (3) if the child is determined eligible under Part B, for the initial provision of special education and related services under Part B.

*Taken from U.S. Department of Education OSERS Policy Letters
February 11, 2004 Letter to Mary Elder*

A Parent's Perspective...

"Never be afraid to ask questions and to talk about those issues about your child that matter most to you. Sometimes everybody else is worried about their agendas and their paperwork, but you need to go ahead and get your needs met. That's the most important."





Special Tips for Families Sharing Information

All members of the team will find it helpful to hear about your child's past experiences, strengths and needs, likes and dislikes, as well as any special relationships your child has developed. You can help the members of your child's planning team to understand your child as an *individual*. Following are some tips that may help you prepare to share information about your child.

- Prior to each meeting, collect and write down information that you want to share, any changes that you want to make or questions that you want to ask so that your concerns are not forgotten.
- Consider the following questions:
What do you dream for your child?
What does your child need now to grow and develop?
Where might it be best for your child to play and learn?
- Write down your hopes for immediate, future and long-term goals. Make a list of the skills your child will need to reach those goals.
- Prepare to discuss your child's likes and dislikes and your family's values and goals. It is also helpful if you share your fears or concerns as well as your dreams.
- Complete the worksheet "Information about My Child" included in the last chapter of this guide to provide information about your child. Consider copying this form to give to others during the meeting.
- Prior to each meeting, obtain an agenda and list of participants (this should be provided to you with a Notice of Meeting form). Let the meeting organizer know who will attend the meeting with you and what topics you would like to discuss so your concerns can be included in the agenda.

To facilitate communication, it is helpful to have regularly scheduled times to share ideas and/or concerns. You may want to establish a communication schedule that is quick to use and efficient for communicating important information between meetings. When the child begins to attend a regular classroom program, some early childhood programs and families have found that sending a notebook to and from preschool, regular e-mails, weekly phone calls or visits to the program enhance communication. A positive relationship with the professionals that work with your child will be enhanced by consistent communication.

Child's Age: 2 Years, 7 Months



A Parent's Perspective...

"If I had been given a chance to keep my child in Early Intervention, I would have made that choice in a heartbeat, but since I had no choice but to move him to Part B services, I made the move. What I came to find out was that it was the best solution for him all around. He was ready for more intervention and truly benefited from it."

Transition Planning

The first joint meeting with early intervention staff, LEA staff, and parents will occur when the child is approximately 2 years, 7 months old. The purpose of this meeting is to begin to share information between the family and the two agencies about the needs of the child and to formalize the activities that will be necessary to complete prior to determining eligibility for preschool special education services. This timeline is set to coincide with the requirements of the LEA to complete evaluation and eligibility determination within 60 days of the consent for evaluation.

A very important topic for this planning meeting is to identify the steps of the evaluation process that will determine the eligibility for special education services. Gathering the evaluation information from the early intervention program, medical service, observations of parents and other family members will be a foundation for determining what new information will need to be gathered during this phase. Special Education has further outlined this evaluation process in Guidelines: Evaluation Process (<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/evalproc.pdf>) and clarifies the responsibility for LEAs to locate, identify, and evaluate all children as part of their responsibilities of Child Find through collaboration with other agencies.

Since the eligibility criteria under Parts B and C are different, the child find and evaluation procedures under Part C must be followed when the purpose is to locate, identify and evaluate infants and toddlers with disabilities who may be eligible for early intervention services under Part C; and the child find and evaluation procedures under Part B must be followed when the purpose is to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services under Part B.

*Taken from U.S. Department of Education OSERS Policy Letters
February 11, 2004 Letter to Mary Elder*

Who Will Attend? Family members and other participants at the request of the family, DD Case Manager, other Early Intervention staff, and representatives of the LEA, which may include special education personnel, regular education personnel (someone who is knowledgeable about early childhood development and curriculum), and related service personnel, such as speech therapist, physical therapist, occupational therapist and others.

What Will Happen? At this meeting, several important activities should occur:

- Parents will be informed of their rights under the law (IDEA Part B Procedural Safeguards) and have their rights explained by a representative of the LEA
- A transition timeline will be finalized and agreed to by all attending
- The child's records and current status will be reviewed
- An evaluation process will be planned with any needed additional assessments scheduled in order to determine eligibility for the preschool special education services, re-determination of eligibility for Developmental Disabilities Case Management, and provide important information about the child's present levels of performance and educational needs
- Potential services options will be discussed with opportunities planned for the family to visit these options

Understanding Rights and Responsibilities under IDEA, Part B

Procedural safeguards are put into place through federal and state regulations to protect the rights of children with a disability and their parents or guardians. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has developed two guidance documents to assist parents in developing a clear understanding of IDEA and their procedural safeguards. These rights must be reviewed with the parents/guardians during the transition process. Additional information relating to procedural safeguards can be obtained through the LEA and at the following website:

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/PWNPCP.pdf>.



Special Tips for Families Visiting Programs

You will gain valuable information if you are able to visit the local preschools and other possible placement options. Some things to look for include those listed below:

- The physical arrangement of the environment
- Routines followed (length of time children stay in one group, degree of independence needed, etc.)
- How frequently the children move about or talk with each other
- The activities the children are engaged in and where modifications may be necessary to allow your child to participate
- The distance your child would need to travel to attend specific programs
- If children without disabilities also participate

Before visiting programs, it is important to make an appointment with the classroom teacher or program director. Someone from the early intervention program or someone on your child's team will help you set up the visit and if you wish, may go with you. Obtain the names of the teacher and other staff members you will be visiting. Stop at the main office, introduce yourself and you may need to sign-in stating your reason for visiting.

Think ahead about the information that you want to share about your child and the things that you want to ask the staff. If class is in session, plan ahead with the teacher for the activities you would like to observe and schedule your visit accordingly. Ask the teacher how he or she would like for you to participate with other children or how to respond to children if they approach you. Find out when it would be best to ask your questions and plan your time to talk with the staff when they are not busy engaging directly with children.

Early Intervention Role

- Invite a representative from the LEA to attend.
- Arrange for the meeting in a location agreeable to all team members, preferably in one of the child's current environments.
- Provide prior notice of the meeting to the family.
- Send assessment results and other records promptly to the LEA if the family consents.
- Share all early intervention records released by the family.
- Develop a transition plan with action steps including participation in joint assessment.
- Help the family identify programs, settings and services as part of the IFSP transition plan.

LEA's Role

- Provide prior notice of the meeting to the family.
- Inform the family of their rights in special education.
- Consider the family's concerns about the transition.
- Review existing evaluation and assessment results including the IFSP.
- Determine whether additional information will be needed.
- Plan how to obtain any needed evaluation and assessment information across a variety of environments in a timely manner.
- Plan activities needed for additional joint assessment process.
- Obtain parent's consent to evaluate.
- Provide information on how the LEA can work with the child and family in different settings.

Family's Role

- Share hopes and dreams for the child.
- Review parental rights information.
- Participate as team members in planning and completing the transition process at a level that feels comfortable.
- Share questions and concerns about anything that is unclear.
- Participate in the planning where any further evaluation procedures will occur.
- Sign necessary consent forms for evaluation.
- Investigate programs and placement options for your child.

Team Approach to Assessment - In addition to family members and the early intervention providers, the preschool special education teacher and other related service providers (e.g. occupational therapist, speech therapist, physical therapist) will come together with others who are integrally involved in the child's life to plan the assessment process. The team works together to understand the assessment results and develop a meaningful plan for intervention.

Sometimes the process is considered a joint assessment, which means that the early intervention staff conducts some assessments and the LEA conducts additional assessment measures. An interdisciplinary assessment is an approach in which members of a team (including both early intervention and LEA staff) employ their own perspectives and materials but who reach decisions collaboratively. Another model sometimes used is arena assessment, which is a process by which all members observe the child in a set of activities to determine the child's strengths and weaknesses in all developmental areas.

The model for assessment should be carefully and individually planned to provide the most complete picture of the child. Members of the team need to work together in observation, conducting the assessments and analyzing the assessment results the team collects. All of this information is important in supporting the decisions regarding the nature and extent of the special education and related services the child needs.

What Happens Next? Assessment appointments will be scheduled at convenient locations and times for the child, family, and staff. Parents can help by seeing that the child has eaten and rested before appointments. Parents will have questions during this process and also need to be prepared to talk about the child's routines, skills, and areas of concern.

This is a good time to begin discussions of potential programs and visits to various settings that might be appropriate for the child's preschool experiences so that considerations of services at age three can be discussed at the next meeting. Staff from the early intervention and LEA programs will be helpful in setting up meetings for visits.

All early intervention services that are part of the IFSP should continue during this time.

A Parent's Perspective. . .

The array of supports that will help your child learn and grow may be very different from what will be right for another child. Remember that the plan can change when needed.



Evaluation Process

An important part of the transition plan is the completion of an evaluation to determine whether the child is eligible to receive preschool special education services. Eligibility for early intervention services in the early intervention program does not automatically transfer to eligibility for preschool special education services at age three, nor does any specific diagnosis automatically qualify a child for special education and related services at age three. It is the responsibility of the local education agency to complete a comprehensive evaluation with assistance from the Infant Development staff and parents and to coordinate the activities of the evaluation through the transition plan.

Coordination throughout the process involves reviewing current assessment information, the current IFSP, and resources provided through the early intervention assessment process. In addition, the expertise of the early intervention specialists will be important in planning and conducting an effective evaluation. The team will need to work together in planning and conducting the required components of the evaluation. Some children will need a comprehensive evaluation at this time while others may need no additional assessments because there are sufficient and current assessments that have been completed through the early intervention program.

The eligibility requirements for early intervention services and for preschool special education are outlined on pages 4–5.

The North Dakota Special Education Office provides a comprehensive guide of the evaluation requirements and recommendations for the planning process. The Guideline: Evaluation Process is available at <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/evalproc.pdf>.

The evaluation process recognizes individual experiences and differences and is nondiscriminatory and unbiased. The findings of the evaluation process will:

- Determine if the child has a disability,
- Provide vital information regarding the educational needs of the child, and
- Guide decision making in appropriate educational programming for each child with a disability.

The criteria for evaluation in each suspected disability area carries a list of assessment practices or procedures to consider in the evaluation process. These procedures might include a need to complete an assessment(s) or an observation(s) in the following areas of a child's development.

- Hearing and Vision
- Health and Medical History
- Developmental History
- Thinking and Problem Solving (intellectual/cognitive development)
- Talking, listening, and understanding (communication development)
- Movement—gross motor and fine motor (physical development)
- Independence, activities of daily living at home, school, and in the community (self care)
- Getting along with others (social-emotional development and behavior)
- Assess the need for a piece of equipment or system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of the child (assistive technology)
- Home/family, neighborhood, community (environmental influences)
- Specific assessments may be considered that relate to the disability of the child

Questions to Ask During the Evaluation Process

- What will be done and why?
- What information can the team expect to learn?
- What can the family expect to learn about the child?
- How long will it take?
- How can the family help?
- Who will gather the information?
- How will information be gathered?

Ways to Complete the Evaluation

- Observation of the child with parents, staff, or other children
- Review of records
- Evaluation appointment with individual teacher or specialist
- Team evaluation
- Parent observation checklist
- Medical evaluation
- Screening results

The multidisciplinary team completing the evaluation will develop a profile of the student based on the information previously gathered from all available sources. The team must gather relevant functional, instructional and developmental information about the child. The student profile will do the following:

- Provide a comprehensive picture of the child
- Identify patterns of current student functioning
- Indicate areas where further information is needed



Special Tips for Families Making Decisions

Important decisions about the services your child will receive and the location in which those services will be provided are made during the transition process. The extent to which you are involved in these decisions is up to you and you may participate at different levels for the various decisions and topics considered. The decision-making process will be more comfortable if you have adequate information on which decisions may be based.

Gathering Information will be a first step in preparing for your child's transition. It may be necessary to learn about laws, talk with school personnel and research placement options. You may find it helpful to keep a written record or notebook of your activities and correspondence for your reference. Types of information can include:

- Laws and regulations that affect children with disabilities. Your early intervention provider or the Special Education Unit Director in your community should be able to provide these. They can also be found on line through the ND Department of Public Instruction Office of Special Education at <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/index.shtm>
- Information about available services, placement options and contact information for other school personnel in your district that may be available to work with your child.
- You may wish to request a copy of the curriculum of preschool programs or other educational placement options to match your child's strengths and those areas where accommodations may be necessary.
- Get ideas from "experienced" parents and service providers about other similar situations and transitions.
- Look into other resources available from your child's early intervention program, preschool programs, and other government agencies (often the information you need will be provided on their web pages).

Child's Age: 2 Years, 9 Months

Disability Determination and IEP Development

Prior to a child turning 2 years, 9 months of age, an eligibility meeting and IEP (Individualized Education Program) planning meeting will be scheduled. In some situations, these meetings may be combined, and in other cases, separate meetings will address each process.

As part of the disability determination process, the assessment results will be reviewed and the child's eligibility for preschool special education services from the local education agency (LEA) will be decided. The criteria for eligibility for services through the local education agency are defined by federal law. It is very important for the early intervention staff to share observations and previous assessment information throughout this process. The involvement of parents in the assessment process is critical.

If the child is found eligible for special education services, an IEP can be developed or a separate meeting can be scheduled for the development of the IEP at another time. The development of an IEP for an eligible child turning three who has been in the early intervention program is the responsibility of the LEA. At the time the IEP meeting is initiated, the LEA must notify the family of their rights in special education and the purpose of the meeting. The participation of early intervention staff in the IEP development must be at the invitation of the parent and is encouraged in order to continue the coordinated planning efforts on behalf of the child.

IEP Team Transition – Sec. 614 (d)(D)

In the case of a child who was previously served under part C, an invitation to the initial IEP meeting shall, at the request of the parent, be sent to the part C service coordinator or other representatives of the part C system to assist with the smooth transition of services.

Who Will Attend? Family members and other participants at the request of the family, DD Case Manager, early intervention staff, representatives of the LEA including special education personnel, regular education personnel, and related service personnel may attend this meeting. Personnel who have been a part of the evaluation process are especially important participants at this meeting.

What Will Happen? At this meeting, the assessment results, including the most current IFSP, will be reviewed and the eligibility for preschool special education will be determined. The IEP may be developed if the child is eligible for services and the placement determined. If this meeting is not scheduled to include the development of the IEP, then it will be a time to continue to pursue important questions about the options for services and placement, concerns that the family has identified and other issues important to the transition process. The IEP meeting will be scheduled subsequently and must occur prior to the child's third birthday to ensure that services begin promptly on the child's birthday.

Early Intervention Role

- Provide assessment information, most recent IFSP, and knowledge of the child's strengths, needs and styles of learning.
- Assist the family in identifying other sources of assessment information.
- Notification of IFSP review, to include preschool special education eligibility information and review of eligibility re-determination for Developmental Disabilities Case Management.

LEA Role

- Gather and review the information to be shared regarding assessment, the current IFSP and issues of concern.
- Provide an integrated written multi-disciplinary team assessment report.
- Determine a mutually agreed upon time and place for the meeting.
- Notify the family of the eligibility determination and IEP meeting date, time, place, and who will participate.
- Develop IEP with the team if the child is determined to be eligible.

Family's Role

- Communicate with the preschool staff regarding any necessary additional assessment procedures, medical information or other information not covered.
- Consider and/or visit the placement options and provide recommendations.
- Share information you feel is important for those working with your child to know.
- Extend the invitation to Early Intervention staff to participate in the IEP.

What Happens Next? Preparing for the new program may involve additional visits with the child, completing enrollment information, and talking about the transition with the child. Riding the bus might be a new challenge to practice, or learning the names of new teachers might help the child get ready. Driving by the new "school" or site may be helpful for the child to begin to identify with the building if the child is participating in a center-based program.

Early intervention services should continue until the child turns three.

When the Child isn't Eligible for Preschool Special Education

Some children receiving early intervention and approaching their third birthday may not be referred on to special education at the parents request and others may be evaluated but not meet the eligibility requirements for special education. This could mean that the child and family are left with limited supports and options. The early intervention programs must try to assist families in determining and arranging for other options to meet the child's and family's needs through the development of a transition plan with steps and activities.

The team may want to come up with activities supporting the child's development at home. Some examples include simple exercises, games, or projects. The team could also consider providing a checklist or simple assessment that the parents can use at home to monitor the child's progress. It is important that the parent knows who to contact if a concern arises in the future.

Parents should be made aware of the community resources that are available in the area. Every community varies in what they may have available, but with some creativity and effort, opportunities can be found.

Early Intervention staff may want to provide a list of local programs that are available in the community and share this with families. Here are some suggestions for places to start: Head Start programs; private preschool facilities; library activities for young children, such as story time or craft lessons; summer recreation programs; and YMCA classes such as swimming or gymnastics.

The team may schedule a follow-up meeting in the near future to “touch base” and make sure that the child’s development is staying on track.

Sec. 637.(9)(A)(ii)(III)

...in the case of a child who may not be eligible for such preschool services, with the approval of the family, make reasonable efforts to convene a conference among the lead agency, the family, and providers of other appropriate services for children who are not eligible for preschool services under part B, to discuss the appropriate services that the child may receive.

Understanding Section 504—Children of all ages who have a disability but do not qualify for special education services may receive support through accommodations and modifications provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 is a federal law that is designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. This law prohibits discrimination based on disability but does not provide additional funding to the entity providing services.

The program serving the child through the Section 504 regulations is required to develop a written plan of the accommodations and modifications necessary to be implemented and to ensure that the child is not discriminated against because of a disability in that setting.

The Individualized Education Program

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) has established the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) as the structure for planning child and family outcomes and services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Under the same IDEA, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) provides the structure for planning and implementing goals and services for children with disabilities starting with services at the age of three.

Comparison of the IFSP/IEP—There are some similarities in how these plans are developed and written, but there are also many important differences. Understanding the differences between the intent of these plans and the content will be helpful for both the early intervention providers and the school program staff when supporting families through the transition.

	Components of the IFSP	Components of the IEP
Statement of Present Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the child’s present levels of physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, and adaptive development, based on objective criteria • Information on the child’s strengths and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the child’s present levels of academic and functional performance including how the disability affects the child’s participation in appropriate activities
Outcomes/Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the major outcomes or changes expected to be achieved for the child and family • Individualized and measurable criteria to determine if outcome is achieved. • Activities to support child and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of measurable annual goals related to how the child will be involved and participate in appropriate activities, as well as how the child’s educational needs that result from the disability will be met
Family Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the family’s resources, priorities, and concerns relating to enhancing the development of the child with a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific family information is not a required part of the IEP. Parents are to be equal partners in making decisions and the IEP team must consider parents’ concerns and information they provide regarding their child.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of specific early intervention services necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family and help the child accomplish the outcomes identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the special education and related services, modifications, and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child

	Components of the IFSP	Components of the IEP
Environments/Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of natural environments in which early intervention services will be provided, including a justification of the extent, if any, to which services will not be provided in natural settings • Other details of where the services will be provided, when and how often these services will be provided, what the funding source will be, and who will work with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IEP team must discuss placement options which will meet the child's specific identified needs. This placement will be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment. An explanation must be provided of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with children without disabilities in the general class and classroom activities.
Review and Progress Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the IFSP will be reviewed and who will be part of that review • The criteria, procedures, and times used to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the outcomes is being made and whether modifications or revisions of the outcomes or services are necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of how the child's progress toward the annual goals will be measured, including how the child's parent will be regularly informed. This includes the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year.
Case Management/Case Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Disabilities Case Management provides Service Coordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education case management supports the coordination of IEP services. Case management for other services may continue through the DD program.
Parent Signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent signature on the IFSP means informed written consent is given for the services listed in the IFSP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent name recorded on the IEP indicates that the parent attended the meeting and participated in the development of the IEP. Informed written consent must be given by the parent for the initial provision of special education and related services under Part B as outlined in the IEP.
Transition Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The steps to be taken to support the transition of the child with a disability to preschool or other appropriate services. 	

It is the responsibility of the team to review the IFSP in the development of an IEP. In some cases, the continuation of the IFSP or the development of a new IFSP can become the individual plan for a child age 3 through 5.

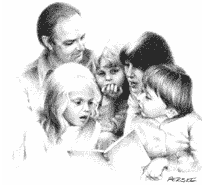
Sec. 614(d)(2)(B)

In the case of a child with a disability aged 3 through 5, the IEP Team shall consider the individualized family service plan . . . and the individualized family service plan may serve as the IEP of the child if using that plan as the IEP is

- (i) consistent with State policy; and*
- (ii) agreed to by the agency and the child's parents.*

A Teacher's Perspective. . .

Transitions are stressful, even for teachers! Sometimes I'm not sure how to help the families adjust. Children are so accepting of children who are different. Perhaps we just need to follow their lead.



*INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM—
Sec. 614 (d)(1)(A)*

- (i) *IN GENERAL—The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section and that includes—*
- (I) *a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including—*
- (a) *how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum;*
 - (b) *(bb) for preschool children, as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities; and*
 - (c) *'(cc) for children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives;*
- (II) *a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to—*
- (a) *meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and*
 - (b) *meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;*
- (III) *a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals described in subclause (II) will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided;*
- (IV) *a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child—*
- (a) *to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;*
 - (b) *to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with subclause (I) and to participate in extracurricular and other*
 - (c) *nonacademic activities.*

The Least Restrictive Environment

After the child is determined eligible for preschool special education, the team writes an IEP and considers the placement options where the services will be provided. By law, the child's placement for Part B services must occur in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in which the goals can be met. LRE is a term used in the IDEA that means children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled to the maximum extent appropriate.

Section 614(d) (1)(A) Individualized Education Program

(IV) . . . a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child - -

(aa) to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;

(bb) to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with subclause (1) and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and

(cc) to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in the activities described in this subparagraph;

(V) an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in the activities described in subclause (IV) (cc);

The least restrictive environment continuum for preschool-aged children with disabilities includes those early childhood settings designed primarily for children without disabilities. These environments allow children with disabilities to participate in appropriate activities and opportunities that support children achieving age-relevant abilities and skills. Depending on the IEP goals, the team will need to consider necessary modifications, supplementary aids, services, and supports that may be needed. Examples might include training for the staff, changes in surroundings or equipment, or specially chosen materials to help the child learn in the new environment.

Unless the IEP requires other arrangements, the location of preschool special education services must be:

- as close as possible to the child's home,
- in the setting the child would attend if nondisabled, and
- a team decision.

For example, at age three, a child who has been successfully participating in a community preschool with typically developing peers should not automatically be placed in a public preschool with children who all have developmental delays. The time for making this decision is at the IEP meeting, after the IEP goals have been written and LRE program options have been explored. The placement decision is a team decision.

Continuum of Placements

The disability category of a preschool-aged child should not determine the placement, location, or services to be provided to meet the child's needs. Placement and services should be individually determined based upon the IEP team's consideration of a child's present levels of performance, abilities, and needs rather than a categorical disability. The IEP team will consider what services and placement are necessary to carry out the goals, objectives or benchmarks for the child in order to benefit from the IEP. Preschool children shall be educated in the environments that the children would participate in if nondisabled, to the maximum extent appropriate.

Where Services Can Occur—Each community has different possibilities for places where preschool special education services can be provided. You may want to consider some of these options if they are available in your community.

- Child Care Center/Preschool
- Child's Home
- Cooperative Play Group
- Family Child Care
- Head Start
- Public School Classroom
- Preschool Special Education Classroom
- Title I Preschool

For more information about the settings and definitions used in North Dakota, references can be found in the "Guideline: Individualized Education Program Planning Process" at <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/iep/index.shtm>

A Parent's Perspective...

"No one could have prepared me for how much she would change in six months...how rapidly she would mature...how she was able to master so much independence. All the while they were talking to me about "school", I couldn't imagine it, but when the day came to send her, I could feel it in my heart that it was time."



An Early Intervention Provider's Perspective...

As an interventionist working in the rural area, the transition process is often dependent on availability of services or what can be created. The transition meetings may be similar to those held in a large city or urban area, but the transition outcome may be unique. Small communities may not have an existing preschool, private or public. I am fortunate in working with a multi-county special services unit whose director has created a preschool setting within the public school setting, actually bringing in children from the community to provide peers for the transitioned child. Daycare settings and one-to-one programs within the home or in the school setting have also been sites for a "created" preschool program following transition. As a rural early interventionist, a bond forms between the family, child, and myself that often remains intact for years, especially if it's a child that lives within my home community. With that personal connection, the transition process doesn't end when the child turns age three...age six...age twelve. Maybe that's what rural early intervention and transition is all about.



The Summer Birthday and Extended School Year

Given the significance of early intervention during the first years of life, the planning team should carefully consider the impact of an interruption in services on the child's developmental progress when making the transition from the Infant Development program at age three. Planning teams need to work closely together when a child's birthday occurs in the summertime or shortly before the public school program ends.

Service providers are challenged to be creative and find ways to develop and implement policy so that children and families do not wait needlessly for vital services. It is important to start the transition process early enough to ensure that school district or special education unit staff are available for the necessary transition planning meetings according to the timelines described for meetings at age 2 years 7 months, 2 years 9 months, and the IEP.

The IDEA provides guidance on providing services at age three. The North Dakota guidance document *Extended School Year Services for Students with Disabilities* can be found at <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/esyglins.pdf> This document also includes the following reference for planning ESY and summer services when the child's birthday falls during the summer months:

...[A] child with a disability must receive FAPE no later than his or her third birthday. The analysis of comments that accompanied the final regulations states, "The IEP or IFSP will specify whether services must be initiated on the child's third birthday for children with disabilities who transition from the Part C to the Part B program, if the child turns three during the summer." (Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 48, 1999, pg. 12577) The IEP or IFSP developed for a child who will reach age three during the summer must

specify the child's program upon the third birthday, including ESY services, if needed by that particular child to receive FAPE. If ESY services are not needed to provide FAPE, the date of initiation of services would be the beginning of the upcoming school year.

Planning Ahead for Summer Transitions— When a child with disabilities reaches their third birthday during the summer, necessary personnel may not be available. Therefore, LEA staff and early intervention personnel must plan ahead to ensure that a meeting is held at least 90 days prior to the third birthday while necessary personnel are available.

Children with disabilities who have their third birthday during summer months are not automatically entitled to receive special education and related services during the summer. The school district must provide services during the summer only if the IEP team determines the child needs Extended School Year (ESY) services in order to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The LEA must either assume responsibility for planning and directly implementing services to be initiated on the child's third birthday or contract for these services directly with the local Infant Development Program service provider or other private providers.



A Bus Driver's Perspective . . .

A school bus is probably the safest form of transportation there is . . . and parents can ride along anytime. Parents will be more at ease if they remember 99 percent of the children love riding the bus. Also, parents may help prepare their children for riding the bus by teaching safety rules and how to sit quietly and encouraging their children to listen to the driver, keep their hands and feet to themselves, and use seat belts.

A favorite memory for me was the one three-year-old boy who didn't learn my name for several weeks; he just called me "Bus."

Child's Age: 3 Years and Beyond

Putting the Transition Plan and the IEP into Action

Getting Started

After the IEP has been written and placement decisions made, it is time to put the program into action. This is an exciting time of new beginnings for the child and family. As with anything new, many questions will arise. It is important for all members of the IEP team to discuss and solve these issues together, share information, and make decisions that are in the best interest of the child.

Other topics may have been discussed as part of the IEP process and will need to be considered during the early days of the new program so that the transition is successful. Visits to the new program, practicing bus or van rides, and/or bringing a familiar toy from home can be part of the transition.

The key to a good beginning is close communication among all that know and care for the child. As the team works together, each member will think of many creative ideas to help the child enjoy the steps ahead. If problems arise, they should be discussed in an atmosphere of openness and respect.

Topics to Be Reviewed with New Program

- Health records and immunizations
- Special health care needs, allergies
- Medications
- Special diet, any specific food preferences
- Transportation arrangements
- Staff orientation or training
- Emergency contacts and procedures
- Other unique needs and special factors

The following documents may need to be provided for school enrollment:

- Birth certificate
- Social Security card
- Current immunization and health records
- Vision and hearing screening results
- Program records
- Medicaid number and copy of card
- Dates of child's developmental milestones
- Proof of residence

Questions Families May Ask About the New Program

- Can we do a trial run on the bus or van?
- What school supplies will my child need?
- Are meals and snacks provided?
- Does the teacher understand the times when my child will need special help?
- What types of discipline are used?
- When and how does the teacher prefer to communicate with parents?
- What activities are there for families at the new program?
- What supplies should the family provide (such as diapers, wipes, extra clothes)?
- When can I come to visit?

The Early Intervention Program will do the following—

- Ask questions
- Share information with the family and the new program(s)
- Help the child prepare for the new program
- Provide a follow-up approximately 3 months after enrollment in the new program.

The LEA will do the following—

- Ask questions
- Arrange for the IEP to be carried out
- Consider the family's needs in making decisions
- Continue to communicate with the family and service providers
- Welcome the child and family
- Provide regular progress reports

Questions Children May Ask

- Who are all these people?
- Can someone I know stay with me for awhile?
- Can I play with all these toys?
- Can I bring my blanket or a toy to school?
- What if I get tired or hungry?
- Who will help me?

At this point, the team has worked through the transition process. The child has transitioned from the early intervention (Part C) services to a preschool special education (Part B) services.

Early Intervention staff will complete an initial follow-up contact with the family within three months after the end of services from early intervention. The transition plan will include a description of follow-up to be provided. The follow-up contact may be a telephone contact with the family, observation or visitation to the preschool program, telephone contact with the preschool teacher or coordinator, or other activities that are planned.

**A Parent's Perspective...**

The most difficult experience that I had was letting go during the three hours a day that my child went to Preschool. He was my baby who *needed* me. However, the school was very receptive to my visiting and popping in whenever I felt the need.

Child's Age: 4 Years—Annual Review Meeting

The school district or special education unit is responsible for an annual review of the IEP. At that time, the IEP team will review the child's progress and the current programs provided for the child. New goals may be developed and if changes in placement are needed these will be discussed. The need for any extended school year services over the summer months will also be reviewed annually.

The IEP may be reviewed at any time upon request by the parents or the school program. This request for a review can be made any time there is a change in the child's needs, a problem that needs to be discussed, or a need for a revision in how services are provided.

Child's Age: 6 Years or Earlier—Reevaluation

Reevaluation must take place at least every three years for children receiving special education services. The purpose of the reevaluation is to determine if there is a change in the child's functioning or skills, if the child continues to be eligible for special education or if there is new information about the child that would indicate changes in services. Parent notification for this reevaluation is required. It is important for parents to participate actively in this process by contributing information about how the child functions at home and in the community. Additionally, pertinent medical history and information gathered from other sources and/or testing should be shared.

A full or partial reevaluation can occur any time that it is necessary for the child's IEP team to gather new or additional information about how to best serve the child. At a minimum, the need for reevaluation is considered every three years. State guidelines for evaluation and reevaluation procedures can be found at: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/speced/guide/evalproc.pdf>.

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.

Information about My Child

These things please me most about my child:	Here's what my child does well:	My child really likes these:
Right now I'm most concerned about:	I would like my child to learn to do these in the future:	My child learns more easily when:
Rewards that work best for my child (such as hugs, praise, stickers, etc.):	How my child likes to interact or play with others:	The help that my child needs for daily activities (such as eating, dressing, toileting, etc.):
I think these services would help my child:	Other help our family could use is:	I would like to be involved in my child's program in these ways:

Transition Timelines Checklist

This checklist is to help you keep track of the steps that have been completed for your child's transition.

Activity	Done	Date
I have reviewed the "Understanding Early Intervention Transition" Guide.		
I have shared family values and priorities for the transition.		
IFSP transition outcome(s) have been developed.		
My child has been referred to our local education agency.		
I have signed releases of information to share evaluation and the IFSP with the LEA.		
A transition planning meeting has been set up with early intervention staff and I have received Prior Notice for this meeting.		
The transition planning meeting has been held with school personnel included. We have discussed future service options, shared information, reviewed current assessments and planned additional evaluations, if needed.		
I have signed a consent for evaluation and those evaluations have been scheduled with LEA staff and EI staff.		
I have explored service options and visited the early child program considered for my child (preschool classroom, Head Start, community programs, etc.).		
Eligibility re-determination of DD Case Management has been discussed and planned.		
Any needed evaluations have been completed.		
DD Case Management eligibility has been determined.		

Activity	Done	Date
I have received the prior notice for the Disability Determination and IEP meeting.		
The IEP meeting has been held to determine educational needs, goals, special education and related services, and location of services.		
I have talked with the special education representatives and understand my rights in special education.		
Any concern or need for extended school year provisions have been discussed and included in the IEP as necessary.		
I have signed Consent for Placement.		
Activities have been planned to ease transition.		
If my child is not eligible for special education services, I have discussed other options with my child's team and special education representative.		
I have gathered copies of records and information needed for school registration.		
I have obtained contact information for those individuals who will be working with my child.		
Transportation arrangements that are necessary have been made.		
I have visited with my child's new teacher(s) and have established a communication plan for the next year.		
I have prepared my child for participation in the new program.		
My child's IEP has been implemented as planned.		
The follow-up plan in the IEP has been completed.		

Add any other items important in planning steps for your child's transition below.

Program Visit Planner

Additional space may be needed to write observation notes and questions.

<p>Program or Center: _____</p> <p>Visit Scheduled: _____</p> <p>Impressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Staff Safety Activities Equipment Schedule <p>Questions/ Concerns</p>	<p>Program or Center: _____</p> <p>Visit Scheduled: _____</p> <p>Impressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Staff Safety Activities Equipment Schedule <p>Questions/ Concerns</p>

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Cast of Transition Participants

Several People will play roles in helping your child and family transition from your current early intervention program to preschool and other service options when your child turns three. Following are brief descriptions of the roles these individuals are assigned in the process and space for you to include names and contact information.

INFANT DEVELOPMENT STAFF (Primary Coach/Home visitor)

This person will:

1. Begin a discussion with you about what will happen during transition and how this will affect the services your child is receiving when your child turns three.
2. Together with you and your family, develop a transition plan for your child that is part of the Individual Family Service Plan.
3. Request your written permission to release information to your local school district as your local school or special education unit will provide services to children with disabilities at age three. The information that will be shared will include evaluations, diagnostic information and current program information such as the IFSP.
4. Attend all meetings about your child's transition with you and provide information about the transition process, preschool and other placement options, continue to provide services for your family and child until your child turns three.
5. Complete a three-month follow-up as specified in your child's Transition Plan

My child's Infant Development staff member: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DD) CASE MANAGER/SERVICE COORDINATOR

This person will:

1. Provide you with information about how eligibility for developmental disabilities case management changes when your child turns age three.
2. Explain the process and assist you with the re-determination of eligibility for DD case management when your child is age three.
3. Participate on the team to assist you in making decisions regarding your child's services after age three.
4. Provide you with information about the supports and services available for your child within your community.

My child's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Case Manager: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE

This individual may be from the local school district or the regional special education unit.

This person will:

1. Maintain the confidentiality of information about your child.
2. Attend the planning meetings for your child's transition and regarding services after your child is three years of age.
3. Provide you with information about the service options available through the school district and assist you in researching those options by arranging visits to the classrooms, meeting therapists, etc.
4. Be responsible for putting your child's first Individual Education Program (IEP) into action and assist in resolving any concerns that come later in the process.

Other teachers and related service providers will provide direct and supportive services that assist your child to benefit from the educational program. There may be a best way to contact each of these people and you will want to keep note of when and how to contact them and how to get in touch with personnel when there is an emergency.

The Special Education Director: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

My child's Special Education Teacher: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

My child's General Education Teacher: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Related Services Provider: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

My child's Bus Driver: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Other Transportation Support Contacts: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Speech Language Pathologist: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Occupational Therapist: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Physical Therapist: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Other: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Other: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

Other: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing & Office Address: _____

NORTH DAKOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PROCESS

<u>TIMELINE</u>	<p align="center"><u>ACTIVITY</u></p> <p align="center">The initials following each activity represent the agency or agencies responsible for the activity. EI- Early Intervention (Infant Development and/or Developmental Disabilities) <i>*Infant Development has primary responsibility if the child is enrolled in the ID program.</i> DD-Developmental Disabilities LEA-Local Education Agency</p>
<p>Prior to child’s 2nd birthday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share “Understanding Early Childhood Transition” Guide – EI • Development of IFSP transition outcome(s)– EI • LEA receives child’s name, date of birth, and parent contact information – EI
<p>Prior to child turning 2 years 7 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent(s) signs release of information to share their child’s: evaluations, current IFSP, and other relevant information – EI • Information sent to LEA – EI • In consultation with parents and LEA, schedule transition planning meeting – EI • Transition planning meeting prior notice sent to family and other team members – EI/LEA
<p>By the time the child is 2 years 7 months of age</p>	<p>Transition planning meeting is held to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the IDEA –Part B Procedural Safeguards – LEA • Discuss eligibility under IDEA Part-B – LEA • Discuss continuum of services and visits to placement options – LEA/EI • Discuss eligibility re-determination of DD Case Management – DD • Review current assessments - LEA/EI • Determine need of additional assessments or information – LEA/DD • If additional evaluations are needed, jointly develop assessment plan – LEA/EI • Parent(s) sign consent(s) for evaluation if further evaluations are needed – LEA/EI
<p>Prior to child turning 2 years 9 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist family in exploring placement options – EI • Conduct multi-agency evaluation if needed – LEA/EI • DD case management eligibility re-determination completed - DD • In consultation with parents, schedule the 2 yrs 9 months meeting – LEA/EI • Prior Notice sent to family and team members –EI/LEA

<u>TIMELINE</u>	<p align="center"><u>ACTIVITY</u></p> <p align="center">The initials following each activity represent the agency or agencies responsible for the activity. EI- Early Intervention (Infant Development and/or Developmental Disabilities) <i>*Infant Development has primary responsibility if the child is enrolled in the ID program.</i> DD-Developmental Disabilities LEA-Local Education Agency</p>
<p>By the time the child is 2 years 9 months of age</p>	<p>2 year 9 month meeting is held to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share DD case management eligibility results – DD • Determine disability under IDEA Part-B – LEA • If the child is found to be eligible, the IEP Meeting is held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review IDEA Part-B Procedural Safeguards – LEA ○ Write IEP or IFSP with IEP required components – LEA/EI ○ Parents sign consent for placement if eligible for IDEA Part B services – LEA • If the child is found not to be eligible, discuss service options and develop transition plan - EI • Update IFSP to reflect transition plan, including follow up activities – EI
<p>By the child’s 3rd birthday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the child is eligible, receive services through the Preschool Special Education program – LEA • If the child is not eligible, transition services will be provided to other community supports and services – EI
<p>By the time the child is 3 years 3 months of age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate follow up activities as stated in transition plan – EI

Terms and Definitions

Many terms have different meanings across States and programs. The following, to the maximum degree possible, follow federal definitions.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A 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).

Caregivers: The people who spend significant amounts of time with the child, such as parents, childcare providers, and teachers.

Child Find: A component of IDEA that requires local school districts to actively locate children, birth to age 21, suspected to have disabilities and be eligible for special education, and who reside in their jurisdiction.

Developmental Disability (DD): A substantially limiting physical or mental impairment that affects basic life activities such as hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, caring for oneself, learning, or working.

Developmental Disabilities Case Management: The purpose of case management is to provide information, referral, and support to eligible individuals so they can access needed services and achieve agreed upon, identified outcomes. Case management provides an interface or connection between individuals with disabilities and the system of public-funded and generic services and supports, and promotes services that meet reasonable standards of quality that lead to outcomes for individuals. The case manager has primary responsibility to facilitate the integrated delivery of all services and supports the individual is receiving.

Due Process: In special education, due process refers to a process for resolving a dispute between the family and the public school district related to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or Free Appropriate Public Education of a child with disabilities.

Early Intervention (EI): A collection of services provided by public and private agencies and designed by law to support eligible children and families in enhancing a child's potential for growth and development from birth to age three. In North Dakota Early Intervention includes Developmental Disabilities Case Management and Infant Development.

Extended School Year (ESY): The delivery of special education and related services provided during the summer vacation or other periods when school is not in session. The purpose for ESY services is to 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: Two or more individuals, one of whom is an adult and the other a child, who are bound to each other through birth, adoption, or guardianship. Every family is different, and families define themselves differently.

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

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): An individualized education program that is 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.

General Curriculum (Preschool): The set of activities planned and 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. The curriculum should be based on an understanding of early childhood development, individual children's interests and the culture of the children participating in the program. The development of a curriculum and supporting activities should be based on a philosophical model of learning and child development that is effective and validated.

Head Start: A federal program started in 1965 aimed at providing a comprehensive preschool program for children ages three to five from low-income families. Planned activities are designed to address individual needs and to help children attain their potential in growth and mental 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: Inclusion, as a value, supports the right of all children, regardless of abilities, 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): The 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 statements of a child's current level of educational performance and an individualized plan including: the goals; specific services to be received; the standards and timelines for evaluation of progress; and the amount and degree to which the child will participate with typically developing. It is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) for all children eligible for special education and related services.

IEP Team: The IEP is made up of the child's parents, 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. The members of the team develop the initial IEP and meet subsequently to review progress and make changes in the written plan. Parents must be included as members of this team.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP): The written document that defines the early intervention services provided to the child (age birth to three) and family. The program is designed meet the needs of the child and the family, and is based on family-identified priorities.

Infant Development: A home-based, family focused early intervention service that provides information, support, and training for families to assist them in maximizing their child's natural learning opportunities.

Interagency Agreement: A document signed by authorized representatives of at least two agencies outlining mutually agreed upon responsibilities to perform certain duties under specified conditions.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities, including students in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated 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 operating in accordance with statutes, regulations, and policies of the State of North Dakota.

Natural Environment: The natural or everyday settings for the child. These are places where the child would be if they did not have a special developmental concern. It is where all children would be (for example, home, childcare, parks, etc.)

Paraprofessional: An individual providing service as an aide, paraprofessional, or paraeducator who provides instructional support in an early childhood through grade twelve setting.

Part B Case Manager: Local school policies and procedures identify the case manager who arranges and convenes IEP meetings, maintains contact with parents, gathers information from team members, and prepares and distributes the finalized document. Typically, a special education provider is assigned case management responsibility. However, other persons may fulfill that role, including building administrators, counselors, general education personnel, or related services providers.

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. At the State level it is referred to as Section 619 of the IDEA.

Related Services: Transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other 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.

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

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: A federal law that protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. This law is closely intertwined with IDEA. Children with disabilities who are not eligible for special education may qualify for accommodations under Section 504.

Service Coordination: The responsibility of the professional most immediately relevant to the infant's, toddler's or family's needs to ensure the implementation of the IFSP and coordination with other agencies and persons, including transition services.

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education. The term includes speech-language pathology services and may include other related services, travel training, and vocational education, if they meet the definition of special education. These services may be provided in a variety of educational settings but are required by IDEA to be delivered in the least restrictive environment.

State Education Agency (SEA): The ND Department of Public Instruction or other agency responsible for the State supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

Supplementary Aides and Services: The term 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.

Transition: The movement from one service, location, or program to another. Young children with disabilities may transition at age three from early intervention to preschool special education services. Children may transition at age five from early childhood special education services to a public school or kindergarten program.