

Transition from Part C to Part B

Identification of Evidence Based Practices to Support Continuous Improvement of the Transition Process

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December 2009

Strategies to Support Transition for Children with Special Needs

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NECTC recently completed a series of focus groups across the country with families, practitioners and administrators to identify strategies being used to support the transition of young children with special needs from early intervention to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten. Participants represented 18 different states and worked in a variety of settings.

INTERAGENCY STRUCTURES AND SUPPORTS ARE CRITICAL TO THE TRANSITION PROCESS.

Strategies that Work:

A **Supportive infrastructure** to guide the transition process that includes written materials for staff and families, forms that support specific transition activities, transition plans, interagency agreements, specific transition policies that address parental choice and program options, dedicated personnel for transition planning, and support from administration for staff participation in transition planning and activities.

Attention to relationships and communication between agencies to help create a seamless system of transition by attending and participating in interagency meetings, staff meetings, and IFSP and IEP meetings; encouraging dialogue between agency staff; and providing training opportunities for staff that occur across agencies and programs

Continuity and alignment between sending and receiving programs that includes coherence across programs in terms of curriculum and expectations, continuity of related services personnel from the sending to the receiving environment, and alignment in relation to the conscious and transparent connections that are made between program curriculum and expectations.

SPECIFIC TRANSITION PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES MUST BE CLEARLY DEFINED AND SYSTEMATICALLY IMPLEMENTED.

Strategies that Work:

Preparation of families and children for transition that includes family participation in meetings, especially transition specific meetings, sharing of information with families as part of transition planning, and specific workshops designed for parents as a way of helping them better understand the transition process.

Program visitation that includes family visits to programs being considered for their child's placement, child visits to a receiving program, and staff visits between the receiving and sending programs, which also promotes communication between staff.

Instructional activities designed to help children and families with transition, including instructional activities to support the individual child's preparation for a new setting in terms of skills and competencies, and program wide activities designed for both the child and family, such as home visits, formal orientation events, and written materials to support transition planning (e.g., transition packets, handbooks).

Community resources that strengthen the relationship of children and families to schools and help families understand their rights under IDEA, community and neighborhood resources to support the child and family in participating in general community activities, and support groups that help families meet other families who have children with special needs and can provide additional support during the transition process.

The full technical report of Focus Group Findings can be found on the NECTC website.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hadden, D. S., & Fowler, S. A. (2000). Interagency agreements: A proactive tool for improving the transition from early intervention to preschool special education services. *Young Exceptional Children*, 3(4).

Hadden, S., Fowler, S. A., Fink, D. B., & Wischnowski, M. W. (1994). *Writing an Inter-agency Agreement on Transition: A Practical Guide*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois.

Pianta, R. C., & Cox, M. J. (1999). *The Transition to Kindergarten*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Rosenkoetter, S., Hains, A., & Fowler, S. A. (1994). *Bridging Early Services for Children with Special Needs and Their Families*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Rous, B., & Myers, C. T. (2006). *Strategies for Supporting the Transition for Young Children with Special Needs*. Lexington, KY: Human Development Institute at University of Kentucky.



The National Early Childhood Transition Center is supported through a cooperative agreement, PR Award # H324V020003, through the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. However, the contents of this paper do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Office of Special Education or the US Department of Education, and readers should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Rous, B., & Myers, C. T. (2006, September). *Strategies to support transition of children with special needs*. (NECTC Research Brief #3). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute. Retrieved December 17, 2009, from <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/nectc/Publications/resbriefs.aspx>

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Evidence-based Practices for Children Served by Part C and Part B of IDEA 2004 Transition Practices that Impact Child and Family Outcomes

By their sixth birthday, children with disabilities and their families may already have experienced four vertical transitions from one service delivery system to another including (1) hospital to home; (2) home to early intervention programs; (3) early intervention to preschool programs; and (4) preschool programs to kindergarten. Transitions are often stressful for children and families as they leave program staff with whom they have developed strong connections and move into programs with new staff and different methods of interacting with children and families. Transition success has frequently been measured by satisfaction with the overall transition process (Rous & Hallam, 2006; Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler, 1994).

With the advent of the accountability movement, there has been a renewed interest in identifying measurable transition outcomes for children with disabilities and their families and implementing evidence-based transition practices that align with those outcomes (Harbin, Rous, Peeler, Schuster & McCormick, 2007). The Transition Conceptual Framework (Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, & Jung, 2006) identifies interrelated child and family transition outcomes and illustrates the complexity of interaction among systems that impact transition outcomes for young children and their families. Child and family outcomes in this framework are divided into immediate, short-term and long-term outcomes. The long-term outcome for families is family engagement and involvement and for children is child success in school.

Concurrent to developing this framework, researchers from the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC) conducted a research project that included four sets of transition studies. The four sets of studies were

- (1) analysis of existing research to identify evidence-based practices that support transition;*
- (2) studies that involved the identification of how child, family, provider, and program factors impact a child's transition to school and school readiness;*
- (3) studies that involved the identification of policies that impact the child's transition; and*
- (4) studies that involved identifying strategies from the field that support a child's transition via focus groups (Rous & Myers, 2006, p.1).*

The studies identified 21 standard transition practices that positively impact child and family transition outcomes. The standard transition practices identified in this research project were grouped into four categories. The first three categories were related to the community interagency service system and the last category was related to child and family activities. Categories and standard transition practices within each category include:

Supportive Infrastructure to guide the transition process.

- Primary contact person for transition identified within each program or agency.
- Referral processes and timelines clearly specified.
- Enrollment processes and timelines clearly specified.
- Program eligibility processes and timelines clearly delineated.
- Staff and family members actively involved in the design of transition processes and systems.
- Families meaningfully participate as partners with staff in program- and community-wide transition planning efforts.
- Agencies develop formal mechanisms to minimize disruptions in services before, during, and after the transition of the child and family.

Continuity and Alignment between sending and receiving programs.

- Community- and program-wide transition activities and timelines identified.
- Conscious and transparent connections made between curricula and child expectations across programs/environments.
- Transition plans developed that include individual activities for each child and family.
- Children have opportunities to develop and practice skills they need to be successful in the next environment.

Communication and Relationships between agencies to help create a seamless system of transition.

- Methods in place to support staff-to-staff communication both within and across programs.
- Staff roles and responsibilities for transition activities clearly delineated.

Child and Family Preparation and/or Adjustment

- Staff follow-up on children after the transition to support their adjustment.
- Staff knows key information about a broad array of agencies and services available within the community.
- Individual child and family transition meetings conducted.
- Transition team members share appropriate information about each child making a transition.
- Families are aware of the importance of transition planning and have information they need to actively participate in transition planning with their child.
- Families' needs related to transition assessed and addressed.
- Families have information about and are linked with resources and services to help them meet their specific child and family needs.
- Families actively participate in gathering information about their child's growth and development (Rous & Myers, 2006)

Conclusions

Specific strategies or activities that support the research-based standard transition practices are individualized in type, intensity and number to meet the specific needs of

children and families. Some of the specific strategies identified by focus groups as important to support the standard transition practices were

- development of transition plans,
- interagency agreements,
- transition packets and handbooks;
- shared training opportunities across programs,
- program visitation by child and family,
- providing information about parental rights in IDEA, and
- facilitating family to family support groups (Rous & Myers, 2006).

References

- Harbin, G., Rous, B., Peeler, N., Schuster, J. & McCormick, K (2007). *Desired family outcomes of the early childhood transition process*, NECTC Research Brief #5. Lexington, KY: National Early Childhood Transition Center.
- Rosenkoetter, S.E., Hains, A.H., & Fowler, S.A. (1994). *Bridging early services for children with special needs and their families: A practical guide for transition planning*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Rosenkoetter, S., Schroeder, C., Rous, B., Hains, A., Shaw, J., & McCormick, K. (2009). *A review of research in early childhood transition: Child and family studies. Technical Report #5*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute, National Early Childhood Transition Center. Retrieved December 17, 2009, from http://www.hdi.uky.edu/Libraries/NECTC_Papers_and_Reports/Technical_Report_5.sflb.ashx
- Rous, B., & Hallam, R. (Eds.). (2006). *Tools for transition in early childhood: A step-by-step guide for agencies, teachers, and families*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Rous, B., Hallam, R., Harbin, G., McCormick, K., & Jung, L.A. (2006). The research base. In B. Rous & R. Hallam (Eds.), *Tools for transition in early childhood: A step-by-step guide for agencies, teachers, and families* (pp. 13-23). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Rous, B., & Myers, C. T. (2006, September). *Strategies to support transition of children with special needs*. (NECTC Research Brief #3). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute. Retrieved December 17, 2009, from <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/nectc/Publications/resbriefs.aspx>



What Works in Transition
Key Points to Assure Transitions Support Families
Positive Relationships are the Key!

Major findings that relate to families of children in transition and are supported by a moderate/large extent of evidence include the following:

- Transition is a complex process, not a static event. Positive relationships and transition-support activities can ease the stress of transition for families.
- Parental sense of self-efficacy is associated with greater school-related parent involvement and improved academic outcomes for children.
- An additional finding that met a moderate extent of evidence was:
- Needs of families must be met before families are able to help their children with disabilities transition between programs or systems.

References:

- Rous, B. (2009, April). Review of transition research. *Transition Alert*. National Early Childhood Transition Center. Retrieved December 8, 2009, from <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/NECTC/Publications/transalterts.aspx>
- Rous, B. (2008, March). Transitions for children from diverse settings and significant disabilities. *Transition Alert*. National Early Childhood Transition Center. Retrieved December 8, 2009, from <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/NECTC/Publications/transalterts.aspx>
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Family Issues in Transition

Successful Family Preparation and Adjustment:

- Families are aware of the importance of transition planning and have information they need to actively participate in transition planning with their child.
- Families needs related to transition are assessed and addressed.
- Families have information about and are linked with resources and services to help them meet their specific child and family needs.
- Families actively participate in gathering information about their child growth and development.

Potential Barriers to Successful Transition:

There are some common barriers that more specifically affect the transition process for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and/or those with significant disabilities.

- Fears and anxieties of family members about the transition process and their child's move to the next environment.
- Other providers and physicians who do not work in the schools provide recommendations for programming that are not consistent with the educational model.
- Changes in frequency and intensity of services as children transition into new environments
- Difficult to obtain records from families that are transitory.
- Philosophical and institutional differences between environments.
- Shortage of available health providers, therapists, and teachers who feel competent with children from diverse backgrounds or with significant disabilities.

Adapted from Stricklin, S., Hains, A., Rous, B., & Schroeder, C. (2005). *Significant disabilities & culturally-linguistically diverse backgrounds*. National Early Childhood Transition Cener. Retrieved December 17, 2009, from <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/NECTC/Publications/currentpresentation.aspx>

Supporting the Child and Family Transition Within the Sending Program

A. During the year before a child and family will leave your program:

- Review all services family is accessing and plan for continuation of those services family desires that are not offered through Part B
- If child has not been in a playgroup or other group activity, this would be a good time to ask family if they are interested and to assist in locating one in the community so that child has a chance to know what it is like to be in a group with other children.

B. During the 6 months before a child and family will be leaving your program:

- Encourage and assist family to create a story about child. Support family to identify areas of the child's development that can support a smooth transition. For example, if child is very outgoing, those skills will support moving on to a new setting and meeting new people. If child is shy, but loves to sing, think about including some musical activities as a bridge to the next setting or program. Focus on what the child likes and does well as you plan the next steps.
- Encourage family to make a good-bye book or chart. Include photos or drawings of the people and experiences the family has had in early intervention. Encourage family to write down your thoughts or feelings about what they will miss and how they are feeling. Include a "moving on" page that has pictures or drawings of the new setting or program.
- Consider any logistical changes the transition will create. Will the child need to wake earlier in the morning? Will there be a bus? Will they need to prepare clothing, diapers and nap time blankets to leave at the new program? How will these changes fit into the family's existing schedules? Any information you can gather about the logistics, before the transition actually happens, allows more time for the family to prepare.
- Encourage parents to learn as much as they can about the new program before the child begins. Set up time for family to talk with the staff. Ask for information from the teachers as well as asking the family to give them all the necessary information to help them care for the child. Help family to obtain the parents' manual. Offer opportunities for family to know the parents of other children in the program. Networking with other parents can be helpful in finding resources.
- Help family to have opportunities to visit the program with their child. They may want to visit the classroom when it is not in session, or the child may benefit from seeing the program with children there. If possible, encourage them to visit more

than one time. Even though many programs are closed over the summer, staff take a few days before the official opening to prepare the room. Ask if parent can stop in for a brief visit during that time.

Here are a few things to help parents think about and talk about with their children:

- There may now be both “big” and “little” children in the playground or school building, where before the child may have only been around other young children.
- Transportation may be very different – some children may be picked up by a big yellow school bus, or a van, others may still be brought to school by a parent.
- There will be new toys, songs, tables, rooms, smells, sights and sounds.
- The day may be longer, or shorter, with group activities and transitions embedded in the routine.
- Children may be expected to try to do more tasks for themselves, such as putting on coats, zipping, pouring juice at snack time and following more adult directions about things on which three-year-olds can be working.

C. During the last two to four weeks before a child and family will be leaving your program:

- Try a “count down” calendar to the start of the new program. You and parents can make a paper chain representing the days until the new program or activity begins. Taking off a link each day can make the passage of time real to the child, or simply use a regular calendar and mark off each day.
- Encourage the family to practice new routines. These routines could include getting up earlier, or traveling a new route to the new program, before the change happens. Encourage parents to look out for new landmarks to point out to the child. The new route will soon feel familiar.

D. After the child leaves your program:

- Contact parents to evaluate their satisfaction with the transition.
- Keep in touch with the new program to assist if questions arise.
- Evaluate the transition and identify any improvements needed.

List some of your own ideas:

Adapted from Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (2007). *Best practices in early childhood transition: Guide for families, continuing the journey*. Boston, MA: Author.

Providing Support for the Child's Transition to the Receiving Program by Families and Staff

A. Before the beginning of school:

- Observe and interact with the child in the sending program and in the child's home.
- Provide or give information to family to access resources and materials (i.e. books, photos, video of children interacting in the program) about transition to share with the child.
- Provide suggestions to family about opportunities for the child to learn skills that will make transition to a new environment easier (i.e. following simple directions, playing with other children, separating from parents for longer periods of time).
- Encourage family to talk to children about the new program with excitement so the child will begin to look forward to participating.
- Encourage family to begin adjusting the child's schedule to make transition to a new environment easier.
- Provide opportunities for family to participate with the child in group experiences for transitioning families (i.e. program orientation meetings, observations, open house, transition fairs).
- Anticipate possible difficulties child will have in the new program and adjust transition practices accordingly (i.e. bringing familiar object or favorite toy, parent attending program or riding bus with child, decreasing time in setting).
- Provide needed training to personnel including early childhood program staff to support the child's special needs.

List some of your own ideas:

B. During the first few months at school:

- Identify any assistive technology or other special equipment needed for child and make sure it is available on the first day of attendance.
- Plan activities during the first few weeks of class that provide continuity with the previous program (i.e. familiar songs, routines, books, games).
- Review classroom rules, routines, and procedures with the child daily during the first few weeks of class.

List some of your own ideas:

References:

- Rous, B., Myers, C.T., & Stricklin, S.B. (2007). Strategies for supporting transitions of young children with special needs and their families. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 30(1), 1-18.
- Sarathy, P. (2005). *“Together we succeed”: Building a better system for transitioning preschoolers with disabilities*. Horsham, PA: LRP.

Providing Support to Families During Transition

A. During the transition planning process:

- Share information with families about the evaluation and assessment process, determination of eligibility, possible service options and placement opportunities.
- Share legal rights with families using multiple methods of communication.
- Review existing child records and determine the need for any additional assessment with families.
- Obtain written consent for any additional assessment and schedule assessment times that are respectful of families' schedules.
- Involve families in assessment at the level of their choosing.
- Provide families with observation opportunities and options including visiting the classroom when children are not attending to full observation with all children present.
- Schedule time to talk with families during visits to the program.
- Provide for child care during the time the families are visiting the program if necessary.

List some of your own ideas:

B. Before the beginning of school:

- Provide families with a primary contact person from the new program.
- Provide group experiences for transitioning families to meet each other, learn more about the program and meet program staff (i.e. program orientation meetings, open house, transition fairs).
- Provide families with opportunities to meet with other families that have been through the transition process.
- Make home visits to welcome families and to learn more about families' cultures, lifestyles and values.
- Explain the meaning of any unfamiliar terms and educational jargon used with families and check for their understanding.
- Give families choices for involvement in the program and have them decide how they want to be involved.
- Encourage families to share information about their child, any concerns about transition and their expectations for the program.
- Develop an ongoing communication plan between families and the program that incorporates each family's preference for the method and frequency of communication.
- Talk about family activities that will help the child be better prepared for participation in the program.

List some of your own ideas:

C. During the first few months of school:

- Provide opportunities for frequent communication with families (i.e. newsletter, daily parent journal, open house, home visits) according to communication plan.
- Obtain feedback from families on the transition process.
- Refine transition practices based on feedback from families.

List some of your own ideas:

References:

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- Lovett, D., & Haring, K. (2003). Family perceptions of transition in early intervention. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 38*(4), 370-377.

System and Team Supports for the Transition Process

- A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is developed by administrators, practitioners and families with clearly defined agency responsibilities and is reviewed and revised on a regular basis.
- There are formal lines of communication within and between agencies for transition.
- Personnel are familiar with required transition timelines in federal and state regulations and agency responsibilities in the MOA.
- Sufficient time is allocated for transition planning and communication within and between agencies.
- Adequate training is provided to personnel to address transition issues and to collaborate with families during the transition process.
- Personnel review transition referral information and records from sending program
- Personnel visit and observe the child in the sending program. They become familiar with the program's philosophy and curriculum.
- Personnel participate in transition conference.
- Existing child records are reviewed and any additional assessments needed are identified in order to avoid duplication.
- Providing special education services in familiar environments or in environments that will require fewer transitions for the child (i.e. child care, community pre-school setting) is considered.
- Collaboration with sending program to share information and identify solutions to improve the transition process is an ongoing process.
- There is a process developed for data collection and evaluation of transition policies and procedures.

List some of your own ideas:

References:

- Hadden, S., Fowler, S. A., Fink, D., & Wischnowski, M. W. (1995). *Writing an interagency agreement on transition: A practical guide*. Champaign, IL: FACTS/LRE University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Retrieved December 8, 2009, from <http://facts.crc.uiuc.edu>
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