



Preschool Transition Best Practices

Introduction

The federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) regulations describe the timelines required for a smooth and effective transition from Part C services to preschool special education programs under Part B. Children who were served under Part C Early Intervention must have been evaluated, been given an eligibility determination, and have an Individual Education Program (IEP) in place, if eligible, by age three. To ensure a seamless transition, both IDEA Part C and Part B agencies must work closely together at the State and local levels. As a result, there are effective best practices that can help achieve a smooth transition for children and families.

Indicator 12 Data: Referrals of Eligible Children from Part B with IEPs Implemented by Their Third Birthday

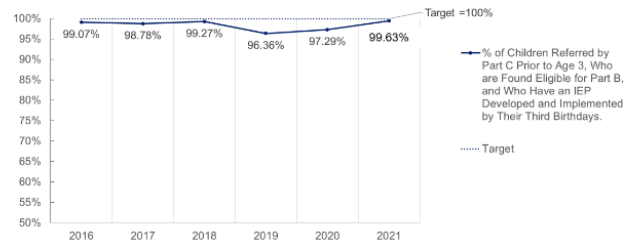


Table: Indicator 12 Data: Referrals of Eligible Children from Part B with IEPs Implemented by Their Third Birthday

FFY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Data	99.07%	98.78%	99.27%	96.36%	97.29%	99.63%

Public Education Agencies (PEAs) Best Practices for Timelines

The federal data point for Transition to Preschool is Indicator 12. Data is collected from each state (and each PEA in the state) regarding the percentage of children who participated in Early Intervention and who have an IEP by the time they turn three years old. In Arizona, schools annually report the percentage of children who were receiving services through Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) and who were determined to be eligible for preschool special education services on time. The compliant practices that are reflected in these results are described in the Arizona Department of Education [Exceptional Student Services' Policies and Procedures document](#). The Early Childhood Special Education unit recommends the following practices to achieve the best possible results.

- Set aside time in the calendar for referrals that are late from AzEIP so that there is time to conduct all the activities necessary to move through the Transition process prior to the child turning three.
- Send regular reminders of upcoming meetings to all Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team members and consider inviting the Service Coordinator and other early intervention service providers to the Evaluation and IEP meeting.



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- ❑ Provide parents with visuals that represent and describe the activities in which the family will be engaged and when the activities must be completed.
- ❑ Plan to conduct Transition activities for children who will turn 3 during the summer months prior to the end of the current school year, if possible, rather than wait until the summer. Conducting Transition activities prior to the summer may entail making more staff available to review existing data, conduct evaluations, and write IEPs for children whose birthdays fall during the summer months (e.g., June, July, August) when fewer staff are on contract.
- ❑ Assign staff to monitor the PEA Notifications during the summer months as well as throughout the school year so that transition activities can be scheduled and completed by the time a child turns 3.
- ❑ Ensure that a process is in place to coordinate activities with the new PEA if a child moves in the middle of transition. The PEA that was initially notified is responsible for ensuring that child is In-by-Three. Coordination may be accomplished by sharing assessments, evaluations, etc.
- ❑ Late notifications to school districts about a child who may be eligible for preschool (less than 90 days prior to the child turning three) make it difficult to complete all of the required activities. [Contact the C2Binbox](#) so that AzEIP can be alerted to this issue. AzEIP will work with the contractor to prevent late notifications from happening in the future.
- ❑ To accomplish timely transitions, communication between the school and the Service Coordinator is essential. Should there be challenges contacting the Service Coordinator send a request for assistance to the C2Binbox.
- ❑ If the PEA was not able to complete the Transition process before the child turns three, collaborate with those involved to determine ways to prevent the issue in the future. Collaboration activities might include working with internal teams or external agencies to identify whether it was the result of not following a practice or not having a practice. Add any new procedures to staff manuals and handbooks.
- ❑ As the date approaches for the child to turn three, there are fewer days for the transition activities to be accomplished. Combining the Transition Conference and the RED, Transition teams can increase the likelihood of being able to complete all of the transition activities.
- ❑ The evaluation team should include information from the AzEIP evaluation as part of the review of existing data. Using current Early Intervention data will streamline the process, which is helpful when there is a shortened timeline before the child turns three.



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Public Education Agencies (PEAs) Best Practices for a Transition Conference

A Transition Conference is a meeting coordinated and facilitated by the AzEIP Service Coordinator. The Transition Conference will include those early childhood programs in which the family has an interest, such as the Public Education Agency (PEA) in which the family lives, Head Start and/or private preschools, and other community programs. The Transition Conference is an opportunity for families to learn about options available to them from those knowledgeable about the program. Participation in the Transition Conference by the PEA is required. The Service Coordinator will provide written notice to the family and the PEA early enough before the meeting date to ensure that these required participants will be able to attend. AzEIP will ensure that an interpreter is provided, should the family need it. The Transition Conference must be held with the family no later than 90 days before the child's third birthday but can be held as early as the date the child turns two years three months old.

- Designate the staff member role that will be responsible for receiving PEA notifications and Transition Conference invitations.
- Share the calendar of events that take place during the year, such as open house, bookfairs, and family nights.
- Share information about services and supports currently being offered by the PEA for its preschool-aged children with disabilities.
- Present information to help the family understand the evaluation process and its timelines, preschool eligibility, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Inform parents about the continuum of placement options and opportunities for inclusion with typically developing children. Describe current program options and the days of operation.
- Explain the parent's rights contained within the Procedural Safeguards and the vital role that parents play when sharing information about their child's abilities, interests, needs, and experiences.
- Provide time within the agenda to answer questions the family may have.
- Be prepared to Review Existing Data by having all necessary school team members available, should the parent consent to the proposal to evaluate.
- Provide contact information to the family and the Service Coordinator for follow up questions.



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Best Practices to Support Family Participation in the Review of Existing Data

As part of the evaluation process, the group of people who would comprise a student's IEP team and other qualified professionals review all relevant existing information about a student. Documents that are important to review include the Early Intervention Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), assessments, progress reports, medical reports, and previous evaluation reports. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center's (ECTA) [Review of Existing Documentation](#) form is one way to capture information that will help the team to decide if additional data is needed to determine eligibility for preschool special education. Families and Part C programs have a wealth of information to share during a Transition Conference, and it is vital to gather all available information to establish eligibility and develop a high-quality IEP. The ECTA document can be used as a checklist during transition activities to gather key Part C information for consideration during the Part B evaluation and eligibility determination process.

- Offer the family a copy of the ECTA [Review of Existing Documentation](#) document to illustrate the information that will be useful to inform the team about the child and his or her strengths and needs.
- Provide time for the family to share any social or cultural background information, such as routines and family expectations.
- Ask the family to share information about all the child's learning environments: home, school, Early Head Start, childcare, outside therapy, or other programs the child attends.
- Be prepared to ask about documentation from those working with the child and the family about the child's strengths and any concerns. This developmental information can be useful for establishing entry ratings for the child outcomes summary process, because it includes information from the family and the child's learning environments.