

From Early Intervention to School-Age: A Toolkit for Parents

If you are a parent or caregiver of a child who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other developmental disability and will be transitioning from early intervention services to school-age in Tennessee, this toolkit is for you.

The transition process begins as your child approaches 3-years-old in preparation for your child's possible exit from early intervention services, also called "Part C" of IDEA, to specific programs or services for children 3-years-old and older, also called "Part B" of IDEA. During the transition planning period, you should be informed about different service options that your child may be eligible for. It is also important for you to know that children who receive early intervention services are not guaranteed to receive special education services under Part B of IDEA. However, additional services may be identified for children who are no longer eligible or for parents who are not interested in school services. Additional services may include enrollment in a Head Start program, clinic-based therapy services, daycare settings, and Parent's Day Out programs, among others.

The information provided in this toolkit is specific to parents and caregivers who are preparing to participate in a transition planning conference with their Lead Education Agency (local



school district) to determine their child's eligibility for Part B services.

Part C vs. Part B

Services provided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B programs can look very different to many families with children transitioning from early intervention to preschool services in Tennessee. It is important to know that even though a receiving program looks different from your child's current program, it can still meet the needs of your child. It is also helpful to learn more about the differences between the two programs.

A more detailed review of this material and additional resources can be found in the interactive online course. Access the free course at vkc.vumc.org/trainings/eitransitions or register for an account at triad.vkclearning.org and visit the **Caregivers** folder.



Part C of IDEA: Birth to 3 services	Part B of IDEA: School-based services
Early intervention (EI) services for eligible children ages birth to 5	Special education services for eligible children ages 3-21
Services provided in “natural environments” (e.g., child’s home or child care setting)	Services provided in “Least Restrictive Environment” (e.g., classroom or clinic setting)
Coordination of care and services provided by TEIS Service Coordinator	Coordination of educational and related services provided by Special Education Case Manager
Eligibility for services based on percentage of delay in certain developmental domains	Eligibility for services based on a current adverse educational impact
Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): Outlines family-centered goals, services, and outcomes based on how your child participates in family life and daily routines	Individual Education Program (IEP): Outlines goals and objectives to address your child’s individual needs in an educational setting, along with additional supports, services, and accommodations (if eligible)
Services generally reviewed every 6 months	Services generally reviewed once a year

Summary of Rights

IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). IDEA emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet a child’s unique educational needs. The federal IDEA law promotes parents’ involvement in the education of their child, and incorporates parents’ and children’s rights as well as protections for these rights. These protections are called **procedural safeguards**. These safeguards spell out what states can and cannot do as they evaluate children and provide special education services.

When schools receive requests for special education services, they must determine if your child has a suspected disability and if there is sufficient evidence to conduct an evaluation. Once it has been established that a child will be evaluated, the school is required by law to give parents a copy of the “Notice of Procedural Safeguards.” Parents may also request a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards at any time. A copy of the TN safeguards can be found at www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/idea/Procedural_Safeguards_english.pdf

Transition Planning

❑ What is a transition planning conference?

The primary purpose of a transition planning conference is to develop a plan for evaluating your child for Part B services. This meeting is initiated by your TEIS service coordinator and should be held 3 to 9 months before your child's third birthday.

❑ Who should be present at the meeting?

1. Child's parent(s) or guardian(s)
2. TEIS Service Coordinator
3. Child's current service providers
4. School system representative
5. Anyone else you would like to invite to the meeting

❑ How can I prepare for the meeting?

To help team members learn more about your child, complete an "All About Me" worksheet to bring to the meeting. Also, be sure to gather appropriate documents prior to the meeting for team members to review at the meeting.



MORE INFO



Download handouts "All About Me" and "Checklist of Materials to Bring to Transition or IEP Meeting" from the online version of this toolkit referenced on page one.

❑ What will happen at the transition planning conference?

During the meeting, you and your TEIS service coordinator will share information about your child and his/her progress with the school system team. To confirm your child's eligibility for special education services, a school representative will ask to review your child's reports and decide if further evaluation is needed.

This evaluation could include assessments of how your child uses and understands language, uses his/her body to navigate a classroom or complete work and self-care tasks, and responds to social interactions.

This meeting is also an opportunity for you to ask questions, express concerns, and share your hopes for your child.

Evaluation to Determine Eligibility

Your child's evaluation will determine if your child has a disability as defined by IDEA, highlight your child's profile of strengths and areas of development, identify any barriers to your child's successful participation in a general education setting, and assist with identifying proper special education and related services.

Your written **informed consent** is required before a formal evaluation can be initiated. However, it is important for you to feel well-informed about the evaluation process before providing your consent. Be sure to take some time to address all of your questions or concerns with your school district.

Consider the following questions when gathering information about the testing process:

What tests are the school proposing to conduct and why?

How will these tests address my primary concerns regarding my child?

How will my child's test results assist with the development of an appropriate education plan?

Will these test scores provide an accurate estimate of my child's current abilities in spite of his/her disability?

Are these tests sensitive to my child's native language and culture?

Will testing be conducted across multiple days or will it be completed in one day?

Where will testing be completed?

What strategies are used to ensure my child's active participation and comfort throughout the evaluation?

How will I be participating or contributing to the evaluation?

According to IDEA, the evaluation must include multiple sources of data. Your child should be evaluated in all areas in which a disability is suspected. Your child's comprehensive evaluation may include assessment and review of:

- Hearing and vision
- Health and medical history
- Developmental history
- Cognitive skills (thinking and problem solving skills)
- Speech/language skills
- Fine and gross motor skills (movement of small and large muscles)

- Adaptive/daily living skills
- Social-emotional and behavioral skills
- Observation of your child in the classroom or school setting
- Parents and teacher rating forms
- Previous screenings or private testing

Eligibility Meeting

Once your child's evaluation is completed, an eligibility meeting is scheduled with the evaluation team to review the results of the evaluation and to discuss whether or not your child qualifies for special education services.

☐ **If your child is eligible:**

If your child is eligible for services, you will have the option to remain in TEIS (Part C) services, transition to the school district (Part B), or opt out of all services.

☐ **If your child is not eligible:**

If your child is not eligible for special education services, the school system is required to provide you with a written explanation of why your child was not found eligible. As indicated in IDEA, you must also receive information about what you can do if you disagree with the school's findings. There are several ways in which you can resolve this dispute, as highlighted in the Notice of Procedural Safeguards. The school is required to review these options with you. TEIS services will stop once your child turns three.

☐ **If you disagree with the results:**

If you do not agree with the results from your child's evaluation, you have the right to obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). The school district must provide you with information about where you may obtain an independent educational evaluation and the school district's criteria that apply to independent educational evaluations.

Extended Option Decision Meeting

If your child is found eligible to participate in Part B, you will have 10 days to determine if you'd like to transition to school district programs (Part B) or remain in TEIS (Part C).

If you opt to remain in TEIS, you may transition to the school district at a later date. You should check with your school district about the process for developing an IEP at a later date and the timeline for making a transition.

Your child must exit TEIS on August 15th the year that they are 5 years old. This should be the same time that they are eligible to attend kindergarten.

If/when you transition to the school district for services, see the IEP meeting section below for additional information about next steps.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

If your child is eligible for services and you plan to transition to Part B, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. If your child did not receive early intervention (Part C) services or is considered a late referral from Part C (i.e., referred to TEIS less than 90 days from his/her third birthday), the Lead Education Agency (LEA) has 60 days to complete your child's evaluation for eligibility and, if your child is determined eligible, an additional 30 days to develop the IEP.

❑ Who are the members of an IEP team?

Core Members (must be present)

- Parent/caregiver of the child
- General education teacher
- Special education teacher
- Evaluation/instructional interpreter
- School (LEA) representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction, knowledgeable about the general curriculum, and knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the LEA

Situational Members (may be present)

- Individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results
- Transition services participants
- Interpreter for language/accessibility (if needed)

❑ How should I prepare for an IEP meeting?

It is important for you to feel prepared as you navigate your child's IEP process. Consider the following tips in preparation for your child's IEP meeting:

Before

- ☑ Learn about the specific services your school system offers.
- ☑ Review your child's records and most recent evaluations.
- ☑ Ask for copies of all documents that will be used at the meeting and those you will be asked to sign.
- ☑ Review the invitation to the meeting to find out who will be there.
- ☑ Write down your thoughts, concerns, and questions on paper to bring to the meeting.

During

- ☑ Bring your child's records.
- ☑ Ask questions; if you do not understand, ask for an explanation.
- ☑ Ask for copies of anything being discussed during the meeting.
- ☑ Take your own notes.
- ☑ Be sure to discuss all of your points (use your list).

After

- ☑ The IEP is only as good as the way it is used. Be sure to follow up on your child's progress toward his/her goals and be actively involved in ensuring the IEP is being implemented as it was written!

❑ What are my child's IEP placement options?

Once you and the other members of the IEP team agree on services your child needs, the next step is to determine where these services will be provided. This is also called your child's "placement." Through Part B, this may include settings like a general education classroom, special education classroom, or therapy clinic services. As a key member of the IEP team, your active participation in discussing your child's placement is also important.

Your child's placement decision should be based on serving the child in what IDEA refers to as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Specifically, if it is decided that your child needs a classroom placement, the school team must make sure that your child has the maximum opportunity appropriate to learn with children without disabilities and that a regular education environment should be the first consideration when making a placement decision.

Preparing for Transition to Classroom

If your child is placed in a classroom setting, there are certain steps that may be implemented to help your child experience a smooth transition. Learn more about recommended steps and strategies that may be helpful when transitioning from early intervention to school-based services from the *Preparing for Preschool* video found in the online toolkit. It is recommended to discuss a plan catered to your child's individual needs with your Early Interventionist and other care providers. The more prepared you and your child are for the transition process, the more smoothly these changes are likely to occur.



Evaluating Preschool Programs

Visiting preschool programs can offer ideas about what to include in your child's IEP and help you decide which programs and placements are most appropriate for your child. Be sure to call the school principal or special education administrator ahead of time to see if the school allows school visitations or offers tours. Don't be afraid to request to visit several programs and to request to visit any one program several times.

**MORE
INFO**



Download the "Questions to Ask the Receiving School" *handout from the online version of this toolkit referenced on page one.*

Additional Resources for Parents and Caregivers

Many agencies and organizations offer support, information, training, and assistance in advocating for persons with disabilities in Tennessee. The following are a few of these organizations that provide services at no cost. A more extensive list of service organizations can be accessed via Tennessee Disability Pathfinder (TNpathfinder.org).

- ❑ Disability Rights Tennessee
(800) 342-1660
Email: GetHelp@disabilityrightstn.org
- ❑ Tennessee Voices for Children
(800) 670-9882
Email: info@tnvoices.org
- ❑ The Arc Tennessee
(833) 596-1553
Email: specialeducation@thearcn.org
- ❑ Tennessee Department of Education
www.tn.gov/education/families/student-support/special-education/special-education-section-619.html
- ❑ Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP)
(800) 280-7837 (English) or (800) 975-2919 (Spanish)
Email: gethelp@tnstep.info

Free and Low-Cost Legal Services:

- ❑ Disability Rights Tennessee, (800) 342-1660, www.disabilityrightstn.org
- ❑ Vanderbilt Legal Clinic, (615) 322-4964
- ❑ Legal Aid of East Tennessee, (800) 238-1443, www.laet.org
- ❑ Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands, (800) 238-1443, www.las.org
- ❑ West Tennessee Legal Services, (800) 372-8346, www.wtls.org

Glossary

The following list provides key words or terms you may come across as you begin the transition process.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

An educational right of children with disabilities that is guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Ensures that all eligible students with disabilities are provided access to free public education, regardless of the nature or severity of their disability, that is tailored and individualized to meet his/her needs as outlined in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A United States federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. IDEA gives states federal funds to help make special education services available for students with disabilities.

Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE)

An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district responsible for the education of your child.

Informed Consent

A procedure that involves informing parents and/or guardians of all information related to the proposed activity to ensure parents and/or guardians understand and agree to participating or carrying out the activity for which consent is being sought.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

A document that outlines the individualized goals and objectives developed for children attending a public school setting who are eligible for special education services. An IEP also includes descriptions of specific services the school district will provide for the child, as well as results from any evaluations completed by the school.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

A written agreement between the family and early intervention providers that documents a plan for services needed by infants and toddlers who are found eligible for early intervention services. The plan focuses on the family's goals for their child and highlights specific supports and services the child and family will receive and participate in.

Glossary Continued

Lead Education Agency (LEA)

An alternative term for your local public school district.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Highlighted in Part B of IDEA; States must have in place procedures assuring that, “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when 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.” (Wrightslaw: Special Education Law, 2nd Ed.)

Part B of IDEA

The section of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that mandates Special Education for eligible children ages 3-21.

Part C of IDEA

The Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. A federal grant program that assists states in operating a comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages birth to 3, and their families.

Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS)

A voluntary educational program, in the state of Tennessee, for families with children ages birth to 3 years of age with disabilities and developmental delays.

Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) Extended Option

If your child is found eligible for Part B services, you may choose to continue with early intervention services until the start of school after the child’s fifth birthday. This option became available on October 15, 2022 for all children turning three on or after that date.

Transition Planning Conference (TPC)

A meeting with your TEIS service coordinator and an LEA representative to discuss your child’s transition from early intervention to special education services.

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