

Turning 3 Years Old

Transitioning From Early Start Into the Preschool Years

A Guide for Families in Santa Barbara County



Santa Barbara County
Special Education Local Plan Area
A Joint Powers Agency

A Word From Parents...

As our child turns three years old and graduates from the Early Start Program, we experience another milestone to celebrate. At this time we review the progress our child *has* made and look ahead to changes and new opportunities for our child, which may include receiving services in preschool, new programs, or a change in services. It may be determined that some or all specialized services that our child has been receiving through the Early Start Program are no longer needed. While this is exciting, we may also feel somewhat anxious about the changes that the process of transition to new services brings. During transition, it helps to remember that change offers new ways for us to learn and grow as individuals and as a family.

We may not be the first parents who have stated in exasperation, “Just when we know who’s who and our child is doing so well, it’s time to move on to another program!” As families leaving Early Start, we might find that we are leaving a place of comfort where we established relationships with all the people on our child’s team and we have learned to navigate the services, jargon, and the scheduling issues. Whether we feel as though we are finally just getting settled or perhaps still as if we are in a daze, a change in services can feel overwhelming. Regardless of what stage we are in, *as* parents, we have begun to build upon our own resources and networks of support and will continue to do so. It helps to be prepared before the transition begins.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your child’s transition into the preschool years at age three by providing you with tools and supporting information. It was developed by early intervention specialists, preschool teachers, and parents who have experienced the graduation from Early Start. Many parents will point out that this transition is usually much more difficult for the parents than it is for the child! Congratulations on this new milestone in your family’s life!



Transition is the process of change; a process or period in which something undergoes a change and passes from one state, stage, form, or activity to another.

Tips From Parents

You are the expert on your child. You are also a key member of your child's team. Your child's team can consist of anyone you want to have input on your child's growth and development. This includes your child's educators, care providers, health providers and, if eligible for regional center services, a Service Coordinator from Tri-Counties Regional Center.

Create a team for your child. You are the team leader and the educators, therapists, and other service providers are the other team members. Encourage open, frequent communication and cooperation amongst team members. Remember that you and your child's team can all learn together from each other. Make sure that everyone on your team is acquainted with one another by learning their names.

Ask questions. There is never a "dumb" question. To be prepared and informed, you must gather information and the only way to get answers to things you don't know is by asking questions. You are building your own bank of expertise by gathering information, learning from others, and utilizing resources. Use this information and add it to the knowledge you, other family members, and friends share.

Stay organized. Set up a simple filing system (electronic if possible), even a binder or a box will work. Some things to keep include: medical records, Individualized Education Program plans (IEP), Individualized Family Services Plans (IFSP), Regional Center documents, evaluations, research and information on your child's condition and business cards or other contact information for individuals working with you and your child.

Take a friend to meetings. When it comes to the care and advocacy of your child, it's always good to have "another set of ears" when you go to meetings or important doctor's appointments. A spouse, family member or friend can be a valuable source of help.

Remember, you are not alone. There are many other parents who have children with special needs in your community who are willing to share their experiences and expertise. Network with them through support groups, resource centers and other community resources. Gather information from them and then do what feels right for you.

Don't re-invent the wheel. You are not the first parent to have a child graduate from the Early Start Program. Talk with others, visit your Resource Center, and learn how others have developed successful plans for their preschool age children.

Take care of yourself. Accept this process as part of your life and don't let it overwhelm you. Keep life in balance. Good health requires that you take some time for yourself, your partner, friends and family.

Turning 3: What an Exciting Time!

Early Start services provide early intervention for infants and toddlers birth to age 3. Until now, your child has been enrolled in the Early Start Program. This guide has been given to you to help you prepare for and participate in this important transition from Early Start services to services provided to preschool age children in your community.

At Age 2

When your child turns two, it is an ideal time to begin thinking about what programs or services you would like your child to participate in after his or her birthday. You may want to talk with your child's teacher(s) or early intervention service providers and your Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) Early Start service coordinator about:

- Services for preschool age children in your community
- Preschool alternatives, eligibility and availability
- How to choose quality early childhood care and education programs for your child
- Preschool services for children with special needs
- Eligibility criteria for programs you may be interested in learning more about
- Visiting preschools in your area
- How to contact other parents who have gone through the Early Start transition process
- How to contact your local family resource center for information, resources, and referral
- Transition process and timeline you and your child's team will follow before and after your child turns three years old
- The types of services you think your child may or may not need after turning three years old

By Age 2 and A Half

When your child is 2 ½ (30 months of age), an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) meeting will be held to discuss the transition from Early Start Services. This is also called a "30 month Transition IFSP meeting". If it is anticipated that your child will be receiving specialized preschool services, a representative from your school district in Santa Barbara County may be asked to attend this meeting to discuss preschool program options. Other meeting participants may include your child's current early intervention specialists, your Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) Early Start service coordinator and anyone else you wish to attend. This is a good time for ***you*** to learn about preschool options in the community as well as special education support services your child may be eligible to receive. You may also learn during this meeting what types of further evaluations and assessments will be needed to determine eligibility for services at age three and when they will need to be conducted. Make sure you are present for and involved in all assessments for your child.

Almost 3

Within the month before your child's third birthday a final Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting will be held. At this time one of the following will be determined:

- a) Your child no longer needs specialized services based on the assessments that were performed, and the IFSP will be closed; or
- b) Your child will benefit from special education supports during the preschool years. If you and your team proceed with this determination, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed by your child's third birthday. If your child is eligible for services from Tri-Counties Regional Center after the age of three, an Individual Program Plan (IPP) will also be developed at this time. Please see pages 6, 9, and 11 for more information regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Program Plan (IPP).



Preschool Services

Your child's early intervention specialist and your TCRC Early Start Service Coordinator will help you learn about the preschool services that are available in your community. You may already be aware of some public or private programs that will meet your child's needs. This may include Head Start, State Preschools, and private preschool programs that may include child care options as part of their services. These programs are open to all children, but may have enrollment fees, financial or other eligibility criteria.

IEP: Individualized Education Program Plan

If you and your child's team determine that your child is in need of special education support services after his or her third birthday, an Individualized Education Program Plan (IEP) will be developed by the child's third birthday. You and your child's team will develop the IEP together. The IEP will describe:

- Your child's current strengths and abilities
- The developmental goals you would like your child to achieve during the following year
- The specialized support services your child will receive from the district to help him or her meet these goals
- The locations and frequencies of services to be provided

The IEP will be reviewed at an annual meeting, but if you have questions, concerns, or wish to make changes to the IEP, you can ask for an IEP meeting to be held at any time. Remember that the IEP is a written agreement between you and the other members of your child's planning team, so it is important to ask questions, be involved, and fully understand the contents of your child's IEP.

How these services are provided, including frequency, hours per week, and location is determined by you and your child's team and described in the written Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The level of services your child needs may determine where the services are best provided. These are some of the things you will want to discuss before your child's third birthday and throughout the transition process so that you are prepared to make final decisions at the time of your child's IEP meeting.

Tri-Counties Regional Center and Your Child's Individualized Program Plan

Before your child's third birthday, your Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) Early Start Service Coordinator will begin the process of determining whether or not your child will be eligible to receive TCRC services after he or she turns three. Many children who graduate from Early Start services are no longer eligible for Regional Center services.

Some parents ask why a change in services must take place at age three. The Early Start Program provides early intervention services to help children birth to age three that may have a developmental delay or disability. Many times, early intervention helps the child develop to a level where there is no longer a delay or a need for further intervention. Other times, a child may continue to have a mild delay in one or two different areas and may continue to need special education support for academic purposes. Under these circumstances, the child does not require the types of lifelong services provided by Regional Centers. Children who have a developmental disability as defined by the Lanterman Act may continue to be eligible for regional center services at age of three. Because Early Start services end at age three, this transition period is an important time to assess the child's needs and determine, as best you can at this time, what his or her future needs may be and how to access appropriate services accordingly.

With your permission, a medical and/or psychological evaluation may be given to your child to help determine eligibility. You may also want to ask about other available assessments to re-evaluate your child's progress following the early intervention he or she has received thus far, or to evaluate additional special needs. Let your pediatrician or primary care providers know about this process.

If your child will continue to be served by TCRC after his or her third birthday, you will have a new Service Coordinator assigned to your child's case. The Service Coordinator will work with you to develop an Individualized Program Plan (IPP). This plan is similar to the Individualized Education Program plan (IEP) because it will describe what your child is able to do now, what you want your child to do in the future, and what services will be provided to help your child meet these goals. The Individualized Program Plan or "IPP" focuses on your child's goals outside of school and the Individualized Education Program plan (IEP) focuses upon your child's academic or educational goals while in school. It is important to note, however, that the IPP will include the school information, summarize parent's preferred goals the IEP supports, and outcomes. Your Early Start Service Coordinator will help you to discuss goals when you work together to develop your child's IPP.

A vibrant watercolor illustration featuring a butterfly with multi-colored wings (pink, purple, yellow, blue) on the right side. On the left, there are stylized flowers in shades of blue and green. The background is white with scattered watercolor splatters in various colors. A semi-transparent rectangular box with a black border is centered on the page, containing text.

Resources

The following pages contain some basic resources. It is not intended to be a directory of all resources available, but rather a simple informational guide to help you keep connected to valuable local resources.

Questions & Answers

Q: What is transition?

A: Transition is change or movement from one program or service to another. If your child is receiving Early Start services and is turning 3 years old, he or she is ready to transition to another program or services.

Q: When does this transition process begin?

A: The transition process begins as close as possible to your child's second birthday.

- Your child's service coordinator will begin to discuss transition when your child is 2 years old. At this time you will also want to be thinking about what programs or services you would like your child to participate in after he or she turns 3.
- When your child is 2 ½ (30 months) a Transition IFSP meeting will be held. The purpose of this meeting is for you and the other team members to determine which program will be best for your child and family, after looking at all the possibilities.
- A final IFSP meeting will be held within a month of your child's 3rd birthday.

Q: Why must my child transition on his or her 3rd birthday?

A: After age 36 months, your child is no longer eligible for Early Start according to federal law – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. However, your child may be eligible for services under IDEA, Part B, or for other preschool services in your community.

Q: What are some of the questions I may be asking at the transition meeting?

A: Some of the frequently asked questions you may want to ask are listed below:

- What are the community-based or specialized preschool options for children?
- What is the difference between an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
- Who will be my child's service coordinator?
- Who are the agencies who will be involved in my child's program?
- How many children and teachers will be in my child's program?
- How long is the school day or class and what is the daily routine of the program?
- Will my child participate with other children who do not have a disability?
- Will I be responsible for transporting my child to and from the program?
- What if I do not want my child to participate in a preschool program?

Q: What choices do I have for my child after his or her 3rd birthday?

A: There may be many settings in your community that will meet your child's needs, such as:

- Public and private preschools/child care centers, or school readiness programs
- Family child care homes
- School pre-kindergarten programs
- Other community-based public or private programs

Q: Will I be responsible for the transportation of my child to and from services?

A: Transportation is an IEP team discussion.

Comparing Individualized Plans: How Different Plans Measure Up

Name of Plan	Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)	Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	Individualized Program Plan (IPP)
Timeline of Plan	Age Birth to 3	Age 3 through 22	Age 3 Throughout Lifespan
Purpose of Plan	To assist families and their children with special needs meet developmental goals	Implementation of special education and related services when a child qualifies for special education support	Qualifying individuals are eligible for comprehensive services and supports to the extent they are not provided by generic agencies
Plan Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family concerns and desired priorities/preferences • Child and family’s strengths • Child’s present levels of development and current abilities • Child and family goals and outcomes • Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequency ○ Site/Location ○ Begin/End date • Parties responsible for implementation • Sources of funding for identifies services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present levels of educational performance • School-related goals and outcomes • Educational and associated services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequency ○ Site/Location ○ Begin/End dates • Parties responsible for implementation • The extent to which your child will participate with other children with and without special needs in the school environment • Whether your child will participate in state and district-wide tests, with or without accommodations, or have an alternative assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and family’s lifestyle preferences, strength and capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Persons and groups to relate to ○ Community activities ○ Leisure activities • Living Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequency ○ Begin/End dates • Extracurricular Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequency ○ Site/Location ○ Begin/End Dates • Parties responsible for implementation • Sources of funding for identified services • Health & wellbeing

Acronyms and Terms Used in This Guide

Early Start	<p>In California, infants and toddlers from birth to 36 months may be eligible for early intervention services provided through the Early Start Program if, through documented evaluation and assessment, they meet one of the criteria listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a developmental delay in either cognitive, communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development including vision and hearing; or• Have established risk conditions of known etiology, with a high probability of resulting in delayed development; or• Are at high risk of having a substantial developmental disability due to a combination of risk factors.
IEP	<p>Individualized Education Program</p> <p>Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly <i>individualized</i> document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, students, and others the family may wish to participate, including care providers, friends, and other family members, to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability. The Individualized Education Plan is the written document describing the <i>individualized education program</i>. The IEP meeting is held annually, or when a change in services is desired.</p>
IFSP	<p>Individualized Family Service Plan</p> <p>A plan written to document the delivery of community-based, specialized, interagency services to families with infants or toddlers, birth to age three with developmental disabilities or who may be at risk of developmental delay. The IFSP identifies the Early Start services a child receives. It includes the priorities of the family, family resources, and future goals. It is reviewed every six months.</p>
IPP	<p>Individualized Program Plan</p> <p>A child over the age of 3 who will receive services from Tri-Counties Regional Center will have an Individualized Program Plan (IPP). This is developed by parents, the child, the service coordinator and any other the family consents to participate in the planning process. The IPP describes what the child is able to do at present, goals for the future, and the services needed to help the child achieve these goals. The IPP focuses upon goals outside of school and the IEP focuses on academic goals worked on in the school setting. Having a good, functioning IEP is one part of your child's overall IPP.</p>
SELPA	<p>Special Education Local Plan Area</p> <p>SELPA (pronounced sell-puh) stands for Special Education Local Plan Area. SELPAs are made up of school districts and county offices of education within particular geographic areas. The Santa Barbara County SELPA is made up of all</p>

school districts in Santa Barbara County and includes the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO). These coordinated educational entities have joined together to provide a full range of services to students with special needs.

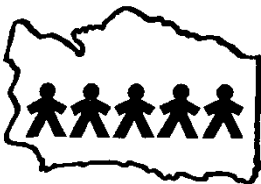
TCRC

Tri-Counties Regional Center

The state of California contracts with Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) to provide supports and services for children and adults with developmental disabilities living in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. These services cover the life span of individuals, from early assessment and intervention for infants and young children, school-age children, transition-age young adults' recreational, employment and residential needs to the residential, service and medical needs of adults and seniors.

For more information on acronyms, special education jargon, parental rights, or other resources, contact your service coordinator or call Alpha Resource Center of Santa Barbara.

(805) 683-2145 or toll free 1-877-414-6227



SBCSELPA is a joint powers agency that provides oversight, guidance, training and support to member local education agencies (LEAs), parents, guardians, and the community related to identifying and providing compliant, best practice Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Services to students with disabilities.

Contact Information

Alpha Resource Center of Santa Barbara
A Family Resource Center Serving Santa Barbara County
www.alphasb.org

4501 Cathedral Oaks Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
(805) 683-2145 - Santa Barbara
(805) 347-2775 - Santa Maria
1 (877) 414-6227 - Toll Free

California Children Services (CCS)
A Public Health Program of California Medical Services
www.sbcphd.org/cms/ccs.html

Tri-Counties Regional Center
www.tri-counties.org/tcrc3/

520 E. Montecito St
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
(805) 962-7881

1234 Fairway Dr.
Santa Maria, CA 93455
(805) 922-4640

Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area
(SELPA)

401 N Fairview Ave.
Goleta, CA 93117
(805) 683-1424

My Child's Early Start Team

Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:

My Child's Preschool Team

Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:
Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:	Name: Title: Agency: Phone: Notes:

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