

Turning 3 Years Old

Transitioning From Early Start into the Preschool Years

A Guide for Families in Santa Barbara County



November 2023

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 transition 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 of Santa Barbara County.

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 (IEPs), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), regional center documents, evaluations, research and information on your child's condition/disability and business cards or other contact information for individuals working with you and your child. Additionally, create a section in your file for notes, questions, and concerns to share with your student's team. If you need guidance in organizing your child's paperwork, reach out to Alpha Family Resource Center. (See page 14 for contact information.)

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 doctors' 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 disabilities in your community who are willing to share their experiences and expertise. Network with them through support of community groups such as a Family Resource Center and other community resources. Gather information from them and then do what feels right for you. If your child is served by Tri-Counties Regional Center, reach out to your Service Coordinator. (See page 14 for contact information.)

Don't re-invent the wheel. You are not the first parent to have a child transition from the Early Start Program. Talk with others, visit your Family Resource Center such as Alpha Family 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 third 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 Childhood 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 disabilities.
- 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.
- Write down notes, questions, and concerns about your child to share with your providers.

By Age 2.9 (33 months)

When your child is between 2.3-2.9 (between 27 to 33 months) a transition meeting will be held to discuss the transition from Early Start Services. With your written consent, a representative from your school district in Santa Barbara County may be asked to attend the meeting to discuss preschool program options. Other meeting participants will be your Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) Early Childhood Service Coordinator and anyone else you wish to attend including your child's current early intervention specialists. This is a good time for you to learn about preschool options in your 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 give input about your child by completing the forms and questionnaires provided to you by the school. The information you provide through the forms and questionnaires be included in the assessment report for your child.

Almost 3

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 will be transitioning from the Early Start program, which ends effective the child's third birthday. A final meeting will be held to review the Infant Family Service Plan (IFSP) and to review for the last time the Early Start assessment, ending Early Start services as of the third birthdate.

Following the evaluation through the regional center, your child's case management with the regional center ends Early Start services at age 3 due to no concern of significant delays or developmental disability.

Or

Following an evaluation through the regional center, your child's case management with the regional center will continue services through an Individual Program Plan (IPP). An IPP is provided to students who continue to qualify for regional center services under the regional center eligibility criteria.

- b) If school services are recommended and your child is found eligible for an Individual Education Plan (IEP), then the school will organize their related services and supports moving forward.

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 childcare options as part of their services. These programs are open to all children, but may have enrollment fees, financial or other eligibility criteria. If your child is eligible for an IEP and if you choose to have your child attend a private preschool, services provided by the school district may vary. Students attending a private preschool may be eligible for an Individualized Service Plan or "ISP." Families will want to discuss the ISP with the school district and private school.



IEP: Individualized Education Program Plan

If your child's school team determines that your child needs special education support services after his or her third birthday, an Individualized Education Program Plan (IEP) will be developed. 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 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 Childhood 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 transition 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 delays in 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 the 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 needs. Let your pediatrician or primary care providers know about this process.

If your child continues to be served by TCRC after his or her third birthday, you will continue to work with a 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 like 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 Service Coordinator will help you to discuss goals when you work together to develop your child's IPP.

A child may qualify for provisional eligibility for regional center services without needing a diagnosis of developmental disability as specified in the W&I Code section 4512(a) (1). Provisional eligibility is for a child with significant functional limitations in at least two major life activities to have additional monitoring up until the 5th birthdate when provisional eligibility for all children ends. A child has an IPP in place and may obtain similar services of someone with a developmental diagnosis, except for qualifying for specific programs such as institutional deeming and self-determination. Regional Center will re-assess a child prior to the 5th birthdate. Some cases close at the 5th birthdate, whereas some children are found eligible for continued services.

A watercolor illustration featuring two blue flowers with green stems and leaves on the left, and a large, colorful butterfly with pink, purple, and yellow wings on the right. The background is white with scattered blue and pink watercolor splatters.

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

A: At 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)?
- Will my child have a Service Coordinator or a Case Manager? If so, who?
- 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/childcare centers, or school readiness programs
- Family childcare 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 Program Plan (IPP)	Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
Timeline of Plan	Birth to Age 3	Age 3 and throughout lifespan based on eligibility status.	Age 3 through 22
Purpose of Plan	To assist families and their children with disabilities to meet developmental goals.	Qualifying individuals are eligible for comprehensive services and supports to the extent they are not provided by generic agencies.	Implementation of special education and related services when a child qualifies for special education support.
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. • People responsible for implementation. • Sources of funding for identified services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's strengths, interests, and what is important the child. • Goals related to home, health, school, community. • Identification of the nature of supports and funding sources family, health, insurance, school, or regional center. • Start and end dates of goals, services and the IPP. 	<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. • People responsible for implementation. • The extent to which your child will participate with other children with and without disabilities in the school environment. • Whether your child will participate in state and district-wide tests, with or without accommodations, or have an alternative assessment.

Acronyms and Terms Used in This Guide

Alpha Resource Center:

Alpha Resource Center provides services and supports for individuals and families who have children with intellectual and similar developmental disabilities or children who may be at risk of developmental delay and other disabilities. All it takes is a phone call or email to get started.

Early Start:

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:

- Have a 25% 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.

Family Resource Center (FRC):

Family Resource Centers are community-based or school-based, flexible, family-focused, and culturally sensitive hubs of support and resources that provide programs and targeted services based on the needs and interests of families.

Alpha Family Empowerment Center (FEC):

Alpha Family Empowerment Center specializes in providing training and information on the special education system to families of children and young adults with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 22. Navigating special education can be challenging. Alpha Family Empowerment Center assists parents to better understand their child's educational and developmental needs, how to effectively communicate with service providers, and serves as a resource for supporting and participating in the Individual Education Program (IEP) process.

Help Me Grow Santa Barbara County:

Building coordinated systems of care to ensure early identification of children with developmental delays or who are at risk of disability through partnering, closed loop referrals between child health providers, schools, early care programs, early intervention services with follow-up.

Individualized Education Program (IEP):

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 individualized 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 individualized education program. The IEP meeting is held annually, or when a change in services is desired or upon family or service provider request.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):

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 or upon family or service provider request.

Individualized Program Plan (IPP):

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 can do at present, goals for the future, and the services and supports suggested to help the child achieve their 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. Reviewed annually or upon family request.

Individual Service Plan (ISP):

A written plan created by a public school and private school to provide individual supports to a child found eligible for special education services.

Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO):

The Santa Barbara County Education Office provides service and leadership to 20 public school districts and 10 charter schools. SBCEO offers 200 distinct programs and services in support of nearly 70,000 children throughout Santa Barbara County. Our local partnerships, non-profits, and programs reflect a collective community belief in the value of public education.

SBCEO is one of 58 county offices in California. County offices support local school districts by providing services that can be delivered more efficiently and economically at the county level. These include implementing new standards, staff development and training programs; fiscal support for districts including payroll; designing business and personnel systems; and performing many other services to meet the changing needs of local school districts. County offices of education also provide a wide range of instructional programs, including special education, early childhood education, career and technical education, programs for youth at risk, and instruction in juvenile detention facilities.

Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SBCSELPA):

SELPA stands for Special Education Local Plan Area. SELPAs are made up of school districts and county offices of education within geographic areas. The Santa Barbara County SELPA is made up of all 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 disabilities.

Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC):





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 can 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 Family Resource Center of Santa Barbara. (See page 14 for contact information.)



Contact Information

<p>Alpha Resource Center Alpha Family Resource Center Family Empowerment Center</p> <p>Alpha Family Resource Center of Santa Barbara County provides services and supports for individuals and families who have children with intellectual and similar developmental disabilities who may be at risk of developmental delay located throughout Santa Barbara County</p>	<p>Website: https://alphafrcc.org/</p> <p>Address: 520 East Montecito Street, Santa Barbara, California 93103, United States</p> <p>805-452-8789</p> <p>Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO):</p> <p>The Santa Barbara County Education Office provides service and leadership to 20 public school districts and 10 charter schools. SBCEO offers 200 distinct programs and services in support of nearly 70,000 children throughout Santa Barbara County. Our local partnerships, non-profits, and programs reflect a collective community belief in the value of public education.</p> <p>SBCEO is one of 58 county offices in California. County offices support local school districts by providing services that can be delivered more efficiently and economically at the county level. These include implementing new standards, staff development and training programs; fiscal support for districts including payroll; designing business and personnel systems; and performing many other services to meet the changing needs of local school districts. County offices of education also provide a wide range of instructional programs, including special education, early childhood education, career and technical education, programs for youth at risk, and instruction in juvenile detention facilities.</p>	<p>Website: https://www.sbceo.org</p> <p>Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6307 Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307</p> <p>Address: 4400 Cathedral Oaks Rd. Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307</p> <p>(805) 964-4711</p> <p>Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.</p>

<p>Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area (SBCSELPA):</p> <p>The Santa Barbara County SELPA (SBCSELPA) and its member districts actively seek out all individuals with disabilities, ages birth through 22, including infants and children enrolled in parentally placed private schools. Special education programs are available to all eligible students with disabilities, ages birth to 22 in Santa Barbara County.</p> <p>If you are concerned about your child’s development or have reason to believe your child needs special education due to a physical, mental, emotional, learning or speech problem, you may contact either the SELPA office or your local school district Special Education Department if you have questions about referring a child for special education services.</p>	<p>Website: https://sbcselpa.org</p> <p>Address: 5385 Hollister Avenue Building 7, Box 107 Santa Barbara, CA 93111</p> <p>(805) 683-1424</p> <p>Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Tri-Counties Regional Center:</p> <p>Tri-Counties Regional Center is one of twenty-one non-profit regional centers in California providing lifelong services and supports for people with developmental disabilities residing in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties.</p>	<p>Website: www.tri-counties.org/tcrc3/</p> <p>Address: 520 E. Montecito St Santa Barbara, CA 93103 (805) 962-7881</p> <p>1234 Fairway Dr. Santa Maria, CA 93455 (805) 922-4640</p> <p>Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.</p>
 	 

Santa Barbara County District Special Education Programs

Adelante Charter School	805-966-7392
Ballard School District	805-688-4222
Blochman Union School District	805-922-0334
Buellton Union School District	805-688-4222
Carpinteria Unified School District	805-684-7657
Cold Spring School District	805-964-4711
College School District	805-922-0334
Cuyama Joint Unified School District	805-922-0334
Family Partnership Charter School	805-686-5339
Goleta Union School District	805-681-1200
Guadalupe Union School District	805-343-2114
Hope School District	805-682-2564
Lompoc Unified School District	805-742-3300
Los Olivos School District	805-688-4222
Manzanita Public Charter School	805-734-5600
Montecito Union School District	805-964-4711
Orcutt Union School District	805-938-8960
Santa Barbara Charter School	805-967-6522
Santa Barbara County Education Office	805-964-4711
Santa Barbara Unified School District	805-963-4331
Santa Maria Bonita School District	805-928-1783
Santa Maria Joint Union High School District	805-922-4573
Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District	805-688-4222
Solvang School District	805-688-4222
Vista del Mar Union School District	805-688-4222

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:

Thank you to the following contributing Agencies!

Alpha Resource Center:

Gina Stabile
Meghan Davy

Help Me Grow:

Patty Moore

Parents of Special Education:

Dena Davis
Mariana Murillo
Norma Puga
Carrie McKiddie

Santa Barbara County Education Office:

Kirsten Escobedo
Armando Uribe
Ashley Johnson
Andy Evans

Santa Barbara County SELPA:

Jennifer Connolly, SBCSELPA
Brian Helt, SBCSELPA

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Tamika Harris
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Updated November 2023