

Revised July 2010

CONNECTICUT BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM



# A Family Handbook

Guide III

**Transition to Preschool Special Education**



# A Family Handbook

## Guide III: **Transition to Preschool Special Education**



**For more information, visit:**

**[www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org)**

**<http://tinyurl.com/CSDEPreK>**

**or Google CT Early Childhood Special Education**

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## Centerfold:

- CT Early Childhood Health Assessment Record



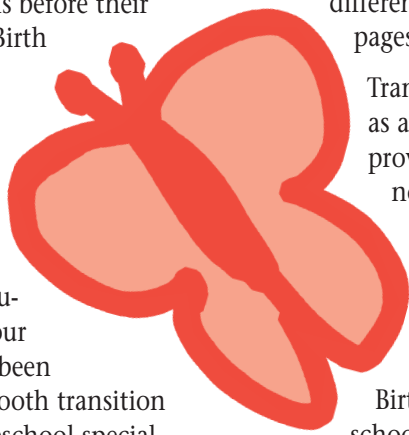


# Introduction

Eventually, all families end their partnership with a Birth to Three program and move to other community programs. Moving from one program to another is called transition. For some, this happens before their child turns three years old, but by law Birth to Three System services must end no later than the child's third birthday.

Your child may be eligible for preschool special education which is provided by your local public school district beginning at age three. If your child is eligible for preschool special education those services would begin by your child's third birthday. This booklet has been developed to help prepare you for a smooth transition from the Birth to Three System into preschool special education. These services, Like Birth to Three, are offered

under the federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, they come under different sections of IDEA and therefore have different rules. See the comparison chart on pages 6-8 for more information.



Transition activities and supports are offered as a part of service coordination which is provided to every enrolled family whether or not the child received direct services from the Birth to Three System. To insure that the transition process is smooth and that services are in place when you exit the Birth to Three System, it is important for families, Birth to Three System providers, and school district personnel to move through the process together, one step at a time.

*Moving from one program to another is called transition.*

# Planning ahead

*As early as your child's second birthday and no later than six months before your child turns three, your*

## **Family can:**

- ♥ Update the transition plan section of your IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) with your service coordinator
- ♥ Give written permission to your Birth to Three program to refer your child to your local school district for your child to begin the special education referral process. You may also make this referral by letter or phone at any time
- ♥ Begin to discuss what types of community programs or services you would like for your child and family beyond the special education referral

## *Your **Birth to Three Staff** will:*

- ♥ Provide your family with information about transition including showing you the Birth to Three DVD, **Transition to School Services**
- ♥ Work with you to identify outcomes and update the transition plan section of the IFSP
- ♥ Assist you in referring your child to your local school district for an eligibility evaluation
- ♥ Schedule a transition conference with your family and the school district staff 9 months (but no later than 90 days) before your child's third birthday
- ♥ Assist with identifying other services for you and your family

## *Your **School District Staff** will:*

- ♥ Work with your family and the Birth to Three staff on transition planning
- ♥ Introduce your family to the school district's planning and placement team members and school staff
- ♥ Describe the process for determining whether your child is eligible for preschool special education





# What is a transition conference?

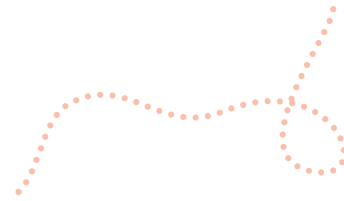
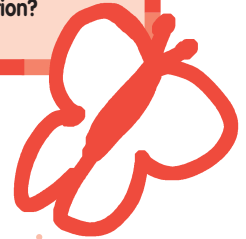
Families of all children leaving Birth to Three will take part in a transition conference to discuss possible future supports and services. When a child is referred to pre-school special education, the meeting will include your family, Birth to Three staff, and preschool special education staff. By federal law this meeting can take place up to 9 months before, but no later than 90 days before, your child's third birthday.

The transition conference allows you to meet a member of your school district's preschool special education team and lets them get to know your child. You may invite anyone you wish to the transition conference, including any providers from outside of the Birth to Three System that have been involved with your family. This is also a good time to update the transition plan section of your IFSP. The plan will outline the steps that your family, your Birth to Three program staff and school district staff will take to address the end of Birth to Three services and the transition to new programs, services, and people.



## Some Questions to Ask at the Transition Conference

- ♥ How will the school district decide if my child is eligible for special education?
- ♥ What kind of testing will be needed?
- ♥ Who can we call if we have questions?
- ♥ What are some of the similarities and differences between Birth to Three and preschool special education?



## At the Transition Conference with your school district

### Your **Family** can:

- ♥ Share your hopes for your child
- ♥ Participate in the transition process at the level that feels comfortable to you
- ♥ Ask questions about anything that is unclear

### Your **Birth to Three Staff** will:

- ♥ Share written information about your child's progress while receiving Birth to Three services
- ♥ Participate in transition planning
- ♥ Help write a transition plan with specific steps
- ♥ Help you identify a variety of community resources and supports

### Your **School District Staff** will:

- ♥ Participate in the transition planning process
- ♥ Explain the rights given to you, the parent, and your child under special education
- ♥ Discuss the special education process, including the steps from referral, to evaluation, determining eligibility and if eligible developing your child's plan

At the transition conference there may be a discussion about what information helpf the school district. Information needed could come from additional testing that could be done by your birth to three provider or school district personnel. The formal decisions about what testing or additional information may be needed will occur at a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting that is convened by your local public school. That meeting will include you and your service coordinator who will be invited unless you object. School district staff who attend the transition conference will help to explain the next steps that will be taken by the school district and school staff.





# A comparison of Birth to Three and Preschool Special Education

The following “side-by-side comparison” is intended to assist families and others in understanding the similarities, as well as some of the differences, between the State’s Birth To Three System and preschool special education.

|                               | <i>Birth to Three</i>   | <i>Special Education</i>   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Governing Federal Laws</b> | Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)  | Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)   |
| <b>Ages Served</b>            | Children with disabilities or significant developmental delays, ages birth through 2.   | Children with disabilities or significant developmental delays, ages 3 through 21, or graduation from high school that require special education.  |
| <b>Goal of the Program</b>    | The focus is on helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability.  | The focus is on the child with a delay or disability and his/her educational needs.  |
| <b>Evaluation</b>             | Two or more professionals from different disciplines complete a developmental evaluation of all 5 areas of development.   | Uses a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather developmental and functional information in the area(s) of suspected delays or disability.   |
| <b>Eligibility</b>            | A child must have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay; <b>OR</b> the child demonstrates a delay of 2 standard deviations below average in one area of development or a 1.5 standard deviation below average in 2 or more areas of development. | A child must fall within one of the special education disability categories that include: intellectual disability, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities <b>OR</b> developmental delay <b>AND</b> because of the disability needs special education. |



| <b>Birth to Three</b>       |   | <b>Special Education</b>   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Family Involvement</b>   | Families must be involved in the process to develop the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP – see below)   | Parents must be members of any group (e.g., planning and placement team) that makes decisions on the education of their child.   |
| <b>Service Coordination</b> | Each eligible infant or toddler is assigned a service coordinator to work together with the family on the process of evaluation, IFSP development and implementation, and coordination of services, including access to other state and community resources.  | Under special education law, there is no requirement that a service coordinator be assigned to a child and their family.   |
| <b>Type of Plan</b>         | An <b>Individualized Family Service Plan</b> (IFSP) is used to document the desired outcomes for the family and child, as well as the services to be provided.<br><br>IFSPs are reviewed at least every six months with the service coordinator and rewritten annually.   | An <b>Individualized Education Program</b> (IEP) is used to document the child's educational goals, objectives, services and program and measure progress.<br><br>IEPs are reviewed periodically, but not less than annually.  |
| <b>Services</b>             | All services are termed “ <i>early intervention services</i> ” which are <b>developmental</b> services provided to support the family's ability to meet their child's developmental needs and the family's desired outcomes.<br><br>Services are provided by any of the state's approved Birth to Three programs. | Special education is an <b>educational</b> service or program that is instructional in nature. Related services (such as OT, PT and Speech) are provided when they are required in order to assist a child in obtaining benefit from the special education program.<br><br>Services are provided by local and regional school districts. |



## A comparison of Birth to Three and Preschool Special Education CONTINUED

|                               | <b><i>Birth to Three</i></b>  | <b><i>Special Education</i></b>   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Service Delivery Model</b> | <p>Enrollment in the Birth To Three System is voluntary.</p> <p>The type(s), frequency, location and duration of services, including personnel providing services, are determined through the IFSP process.</p>   | <p>Preschool special education is voluntary for families. School districts are required to offer special education to eligible children ages 3-21.</p> <p>Services are determined by a planning and placement team and documented on an IEP.</p>  |
| <b>Location of Services</b>   | <p><b>Natural Environments</b></p> <p>Early intervention services are provided in <i>natural environments</i> (such as the child's home or in other sites in the community) where infants &amp; toddlers without disabilities participate. The family's and child's normal routines of the day are used as natural opportunities for learning.</p>    | <p><b>Least Restrictive Environments</b></p> <p>Children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, schooling or other removal of the child from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.</p> |
| <b>Cost of Services</b>       | <p>Parents are billed on a sliding fee scale and health insurance plans are billed for reimbursement of services.</p>   | <p>Free.</p>  |
| <b>Transition</b>             | <p>The child's service coordinator will hold a transition conference for each child at least 90 days before their third birthday, and as early as nine months before the third birthday.</p> <p>The transition conference will include representatives of the child's school district and/or providers of other appropriate services or programs.</p> | <p>A representative of the responsible school district will participate in the transition conference convened by the Birth To Three System.</p> <p>By the child's third birthday, an individualized education program (IEP) has been developed and is being implemented for the eligible child.</p>   |



## What is a Planning and Placement Team?

You, your spouse or partner, and local school district staff make up the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) that decides whether your child will be eligible for special education. If your child is eligible, you – as a team member – will participate in identifying your child’s strengths and needs and writing your child’s educational goals and objectives. Ultimately your child’s strengths, needs and goals will help to define the special education service or program that your child will receive. That information will be written into an individualized education program (IEP). With your permission, your school district may combine the PPT meeting with the transition meeting or may hold a separate meeting to identify the type and location of services to be provided to your child. Your service coordinator and other Birth to Three program staff may also be invited to the PPT meeting. You may ask the school district to invite anyone who has special knowledge of your child and who can contribute to the development of the plan.





## What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

An IEP is a written document similar to an IFSP that describes how your school district will meet your child's **educational** needs during the school year. It includes:

- ♥ Your child's present skills and level of development based on information gathered from Birth to Three records, your description of your child's behavior at home and the results of any other tests that were completed
- ♥ Goals that describe what you and the rest of the team would like to see your child achieve over the next school year
- ♥ Activities and strategies for meeting your child's goals
- ♥ Amount and type of preschool special education and related services
- ♥ Starting date and length of time that services will be provided

- ♥ Methods for measuring whether your child's goals have been met
- ♥ Staff who will be providing services
- ♥ Locations of services – The standard for school districts is called Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) which means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities must be educated with children who do not have disabilities.

School districts have an array of available options that include:

- ♥ Early childhood setting
- ♥ Integrated early childhood settings
- ♥ Early childhood special education setting
- ♥ Itinerant services delivered at a school or other site (applies only when a child does not spend time in any environment with non-disabled peers)

- ♥ Separate school
- ♥ residential setting or
- ♥ Homebound/hospital

When a child requires only a particular service and not a whole program of services, arrangements can be made for a service to be provided outside of these other locations. Your school district is not obligated to use your current community-based providers.



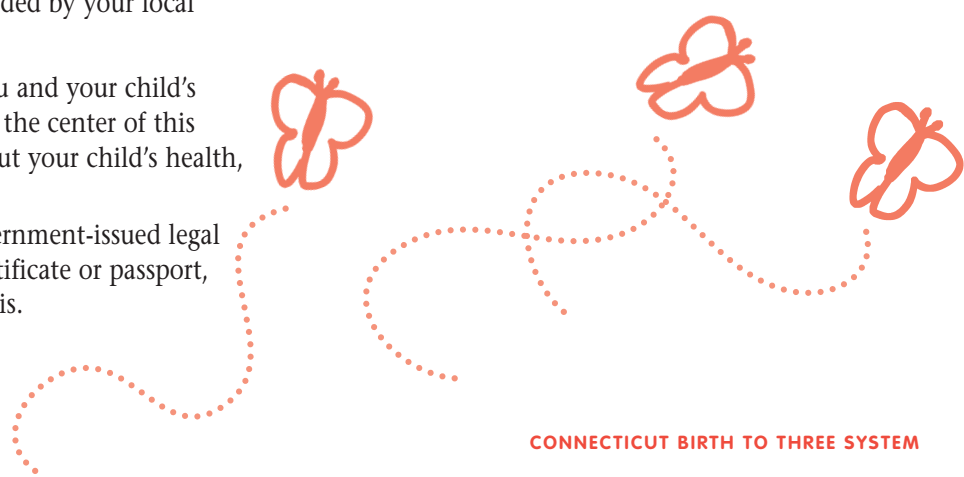


## Enrollment in Your School District

If your child is eligible for special education, you as the parent will need to enroll your child in school. Enrollment will require that you provide various forms of information including information from your child's doctor, information that identifies your child's legal name and birth date and information that indicates that you live in the town in which you are enrolling your child. Some schools may ask for this information early in the special education referral process and in some cases, additional information may be needed by your local public school.

- ♥ *Updated health information:* You and your child's doctor use the yellow form in the center of this booklet to tell the district about your child's health, immunizations, allergies, etc.
- ♥ *Proof of your child's age:* A government-issued legal document, such as a birth certificate or passport, can show how old your child is.

- ♥ *Proof of residency:* You may be asked to show a recent utility bill, rental agreement or mortgage to give proof that you actually live in your town. If you have had to move out of your home and are living with a relative, friend, or in a shelter, there is a federal law called the McKinney-Vento Act that gives you certain protections and affects which school district your child will attend. Talk with your service coordinator for more information.

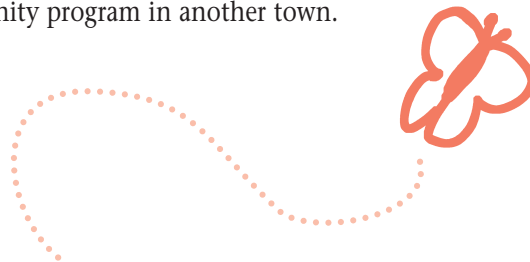


## What happens if my child attends a private or parochial school?

Special education law has some different rules about who is responsible for conducting your child's evaluation to determine if they are eligible for special education and some different rules about whether an IEP or services might be provided should your child be enrolled in a private or parochial school. So, if you have your child enrolled in a private or parochial school or plan to do so when they turn age 3, talk to your service coordinator or your local public school district. Your service coordinator or public school can provide you the information needed to ensure that your child receives an evaluation to determine if they require special education and can also discuss appropriate next steps.

## What happens if my child attends nursery school or preschool?

As a part of transition, you and your service coordinator will be discussing what other community opportunities may be available to you and your child, including child care, preschool programs and nursery schools. Finding these opportunities within the community that you live is optimal for many reasons. Should your child's PPT find that your child is eligible for special education, it will be important for the school to know what community program your child attends and how often they attend it. This will help in the coordination of special education services if your child is eligible. Planning ahead is important if your child is eligible. School districts will not transport a child to or from a community program in another town.





## What if my child turns three over the summer?

If your child will turn age three during the summer months, your school district will determine if your child is eligible for special education before their 3rd birthday and whether your child requires extended school year services (ESY). If your child requires ESY services, your school district will provide an IEP by your child's third birthday even if that occurs during the summer months. If your child's PPT determines that your child does not require ESY services, then the IEP will be implemented on the first day of school following the third birthday.



## Making the transition easier

After the IEP has been written and placement decisions made, it is time to put the program into action. This can be smoother when you know what to expect, so

be sure to have close communication with your school personnel about:

- ♥ special equipment, diet, or medications for your child
- ♥ staff orientation or training specific to your child's needs
- ♥ when and how to communicate with program staff
- ♥ other unique needs and special factors

You may want to bring your child for a visit to the new classroom, take sample bus rides if allowed by the district's transportation company, or help your child pick a toy to bring from home to make the first few days more comfortable. Request time to meet or speak informally with other parents who have a child in the same program. As questions or issues arise, share your concerns with school district staff and work together to make decisions that are in the best interest of your child. All transitions are more successful when you and your child's service providers work through the process together, sharing your views of your child, your understandings of the law, and your creative ideas.

# Some things I want the school district to know about my child



| <i>Area of Development</i>   | <i>Some things my child knows or already does in this area</i> |
|--|--|
| PLAY – sharing, taking turns, playing by self and with others                                |  |
| LANGUAGE – sharing needs, following directions, listening, concepts such as up, down, in, on |  |
| MEALS – eating with utensils, eating a variety of food, table manners                        |  |
| DRESSING – taking clothes off and on, zipping, buttoning                                     |  |
| THINKING – cause and effect, colors, sorting, solving problems, counting                     |  |
| MOVING – walking, running, coloring, building with blocks, playing ball                      |  |
| OTHER – please list  |  |

Some things I would like my child to learn \_\_\_\_\_



## Connecticut Birth to Three Contact Information

**CALL**

### **Child Development Infoline**

**TO ENROLL IN THE AGES & STAGES  
DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING PROGRAM**

**Phone: 1-800-505-7000 Fax: 860-571-6853**

1344 Silas Deane Highway, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

**Email via: [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org)**

**CALL**

### **Family Liaison**

**FOR INFORMATION ABOUT  
BIRTH TO THREE SERVICES**

**Phone: 1-866-888-4188 Fax: 1-860-418-6003**

**Phone: 1-860-418-6136**

460 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

**Email: [aileen.mckenna@ct.gov](mailto:aileen.mckenna@ct.gov)**

## School District Contact Information

The blue pages in your phone book list phone numbers for your town's school offices. Look up the name and number of your Special Education Director, sometimes called the Pupil Services Director, then write it down on the next page. You may also visit the Birth to Three website at [www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org) and look under town preschool contacts in the "Especially for Families" section.



# Names and dates to remember



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>My Birth to Three service coordinator:</b>   | <b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Ph.:</b> _____<br><b>Program Name:</b> _____ |
| <b>For Birth to Three contact information, see previous page.</b>                     |  |
| <b>My school district contact person:</b>   | <b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Ph.:</b> _____<br><b>School Name:</b> _____  |
| <b>Any scheduled evaluations:</b>   |  |
| <b>90 day transition conference scheduled for:</b><br>(Can be 9 months before age 3.) |  |
| <b>PPT meeting scheduled for:</b>   |  |
| <b>Other:</b><br><br><br><br><br>   |  |



**Support Line**

1-866-888-4188

[www.birth23.org](http://www.birth23.org)

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