

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Early Childhood Special Education Services (ECSE) Transition from Early Intervention

Three years old! Hard to believe – it comes so quickly. It is a time to celebrate and a time to make the transition from early intervention services to a preschool program that is a match to your child’s individualized strengths and special needs.

Thinking about your “baby’s” move to a preschool program might make your head spin.



Where will she go? Will she be welcome? Will the teachers understand her disabilities and give her the extra help she needs?

You are not alone in your feelings -- Being anxious is part of parenting and families of children with special needs often feel it more intensely. Many families find the best way to move forward with confidence is to give themselves plenty of time to talk with professionals who know their child and other knowledgeable parents who have already made the journey.

➔ **The Move to Preschool Services** begins **at least 90 days** and as early as 9 months before your child’s 3rd birthday. During that time, you will work through your transition plan with your family’s Early Intervention Service Coordinator. *There is no automatic eligibility for Part B and not all children will be eligible for ECSE. Your Service Coordinator will discuss all your options.*

🕒 **Schedule** a transition planning meeting to review your child’s progress; share your priorities and concerns; talk about possible programs and services; and, discuss the need for any additional evaluations.

📖 **Visit** the different preschool programs available in your community. Check out private preschools in your neighborhood as well as the early childhood special education services provided by your local school division.

🗣️ **Talk** to other parents about their experiences.

🌟 **Participate** in team meetings. If your child is eligible for services and you have selected the program offered by your school division, the team (that includes you!) will develop the IEP. The IEP defines the program, supports, and services your child will receive. If you do not choose the program offered by your school division and your child is eligible to receive services, your division may offer some services under a services plan; talk to your school division about their policy.

Early Childhood Special Education Services (ECSE) Ages 2 – 5

- From ages 3 through 5, Section 619 Part B of IDEA federal law authorizes Preschool (Early Childhood) Special Education services for eligible students. At state’s discretion, services can be provided as early as age 2 through Part B; Virginia allows this.
Note: Early Intervention (IDEA Part C) is available from birth to age 3.
- If your child had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) **and** is found eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), the IFSP will be replaced with an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. The preschool IEP contains goals and objectives to address your child’s unique needs for learning the skills needed for successful transition to kindergarten.

Contact Us:

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Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE): The IDEA requirement that children with disabilities are to be educated with children without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate with the support and use of supplementary aids and services, receiving access to the general curriculum, and participation in typical activities. *Special education is a service, not a place.*

Per the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), "It is the responsibility of the Local Education Agency (LEA) to provide a **continuum of placements** for young children. The *Least Restrictive Environment is always the first consideration.*"

LRE DILEMMA IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

Many LEAs do not offer preschool to non-disabled 3-year-olds and do not pay for students with IEPs to attend neighborhood preschools. As a result, many classrooms for special education preschoolers do not include typically developing peers. Talk with your local school's preschool specialist about the different ways ECSE can be provided in your community. Some divisions might have an inclusive preschool class in a local school.

Choosing a Preschool Setting

- Make a list of what is important to your family before calling and/or visiting a preschool. This will help you narrow down your choices. *Is cost a factor? Location? Education philosophy and/or curriculum? Is the setting child-centered, student or teacher-led? Accreditation? Etc.*
- When visiting the preschool, ask –
 - Do you and your child feel welcomed?
 - Is their mission statement committed to inclusive practices? Is it posted?
 - What is the overall atmosphere like?
 - Does the school use evidence-based developmentally appropriate curriculum?
 - What are the safety procedures for drop-off and pick-up?
 - Are accommodations embedded for diverse learners?

Prepare Your Child for Preschool (Snapshot)

- Read books about preschool
- Visit the school and teacher together before your child starts the program
- Let your child bring his or her favorite stuffed animal

Resources

Child Care Aware of Virginia Preschool Program Checklist –
www.childcareaware.org/preschool-program-checklist

Virginia Department of Education Information for Parents –
www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents

How to Know If Your Child Is Ready for Preschool –
www.understood.org

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

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