



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Transition: From Home or Early Intervention Services to Preschool Special Needs

Transition: The Next Step

Transition is movement or change without interruption. It should be a smooth flow from one place or condition to another. While the transition plan for a student receiving special education services is designed to prepare him or her for life after high school, transition can start when a child enters preschool. The first of six distinct stages of transition is home or early intervention services to preschool special needs.

Factors of Change

A preschool child is defined as one "...who is at least three years of age but has not reached the required age for kindergarten..." (five by September 1), according to Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761 (23).

Children who have not reached their third birthday may be admitted to preschool according to ARS §15-771(G) which states: "The governing board of a school district may admit otherwise eligible children who are within ninety days of their third birthday, if it is determined to be in the best interest of the individual child. Children who are admitted to programs for preschool children prior to their third birthday are entitled to the same provision of services as if they were three years of age."

Eligibility for preschool special education services needs to be determined by the local school district as a child nears his/her third birthday. Eligible children make the transition upon reaching three or at other agreed upon entrance times according to the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

For a child who has been receiving services through the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AZEIP), transition to preschool services needs to be considered. The AZEIP service coordinator will make the arrangements for this conference. It should be held some time between the time the child is two years six months and two years nine months old.

Parents of a child who has not previously been identified as needing early intervention services will need to contact the principal of their neighborhood school or the special education director of the school district in which they live. The same is true for families who have recently moved to Arizona.

All school districts have preschool screening available upon request or during a Child Find event. Screening is a district's effort to find all children with disabilities, ages three to non-kindergarten eligible five-year-olds. Children who are found to have developmental concerns or delays in development during the screening process may then be referred for additional assessment after the parent's consent is given.

A child who enters the preschool setting as a student with a disability will need to qualify for special education services based on the results of tests and information gathered in seven areas: vision, hearing, cognitive development, physical development, communication development, adaptive development, and social and emotional development. A child must meet criteria for one of the following special education classifications, described in ARS §15-761: Preschool Moderate Delay, Preschool Severe Delay, Preschool Speech/Language Delay, Hearing Impaired, or Visually Impaired.

Should the results of the developmental information provided by parents and the comprehensive developmental assessment indicate the child is eligible for special education services, an IEP will then be written. The IEP will contain the details of the preschool services needed for the child and the types of services to be provided.

The change from family centered services to services which focus on the child may be the greatest adjustment for both the parent and child. The setting for service delivery moves from the home or a therapy-based center to a more formal school setting with an emphasis on educational needs.

Ages and Stages: The Toddler Turned Preschooler

Each child with a preschool delay has a unique combination of abilities and disabilities. Skills that most children acquire in the first five years of life may need to be specially taught to children with a combination of needs. Some preschoolers with delays require preschool special needs services which help improve thinking, language, movement, self-help, play, and social skills, which are important for development of a preschool child's potential.

Making the Transition Smoother

Transition from early intervention services to preschool services may be easier if the parent is aware: 1) of the change in types of services from the medical model to the educational model; 2) that services will need to be based on an educational need rather than a therapeutic need; and 3) that the use of classifications or labels for the child will be common place. Parents may need to learn new special education terms. There will be less contact with parents since the focus will be on the child who is now considered as a student. Parents may also need to learn to request more explanations since a case manager or support coordinator will generally not be provided by the school to fill that role.

Meetings with school staff and visits to the proposed school site may be of benefit to the parent and child. Often, introducing a child to just a few students at a time over several days is helpful. Meeting other parents and sharing concerns may help relieve some anxiety. Finding an organization or class to learn more about a child's needs may also be useful.

Reference

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, Parent Information Network. (2005). Information Sheet: *Preschool delays: Moderate, severe, and speech/language*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.

Books

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, Transition Services. (2004). *Navigating the transition highway: From tots to teens with ease*. Phoenix, AZ: Author. Available from the Parent Information Network, 928-679-8102 or 800-352-4558.

Batshaw, M.L. (ed.) (2001). *When your child has a disability*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (2003). *Parenting a child with special needs: A guide to reading and resources*. (3rd ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Organizations

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities, 1789 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-0419, www.azdes.gov

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007 Parent Information Network, 928-679-8102 or 800-352-4558, www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals Preschool Special Education, 602-542-5448 or 800-352-4558, www.azed.gov/earlychildhood

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, D.C. 20013-1492, 800-695-0285, www.nichcy.org

PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044, 952-838-9000, www.pacer.org

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150, www.pilotparents.org

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central Ave., Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-242-4366 or 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org

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