Achieving Seamless Birth-to-Five Transitions

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and discuss family and child-centered practices to ensure programs and services achieve seamless birth-to-five transitions for children, partnering with families:
  - Aided with family capacity-building tools and case-scenarios to prepare themselves and their children for the future environment.
  - Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool Services
  - Transition from Preschool to School age Services

Major Objectives for Service Providers

- Demystify the transition process for families:
  - Provide a roadmap of upcoming events
  - Provide highlights of early intervention and early childhood special education services
  - Players and their roles in the process: what the sending and receiving programs and families will do (and need to do) at different stages
  - Explain the associated terminology (We use a lot of jargon and acronyms.)
  - Empower families to ask the right questions and seek the most relevant information
  - Build trust and lasting collaborative relationship with families

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices

- Practitioners in sending and receiving programs exchange information before, during, and after transition about practices most likely to support the child’s successful adjustment and positive outcomes.
- Practitioners use a variety of planned and timely strategies with the child and family before, during, and after the transition to support successful adjustment and positive outcomes for both the child and family.
- DEC Recommended Practices also include Teaming and Collaboration strategies and Family-centered Practices. You can access them at: http://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices.

Which Transition Issue Presents the Greatest Challenge?

- Sending/Receiving Program communication & collaboration
- Teaming for service coordination to serve child
- Inadequate staff preparation (pursuing child and family focused practices)
- Family Involvement in transition
- System inflexibility in meeting needs

Sarathy’s Publications: Books and Quick Reference Guides

Recent Publications: 12/2018 & 2/2019

- Behavior Guide (Preventive and Positive Approaches)
- Early Childhood: Transition, Parent Guide and STEM Teaching Strategies
- Executive Function – Early Years
- Paraeducator Training Guide and DVD
- Severe and Multiple Disabilities
- Significant Disabilities and ESSA

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Family and Child-Focused Services

Essential Components

- Parent Education and Empowerment
- Collaborative Relationships
- Staff Preparation
- Child Preparation for the Next Environment and Follow-up Support
- Evaluation of the transition process (ongoing)
- Cultural Sensitivity

Family Concerns Related to Transition

Families experience stress and anxiety during the transition process due to:

- Differing policies and procedures of EI, preschool services, and school-age services.
- Insufficient information provided by professionals.
- Differing eligibility requirements.
- Differing service provisions.
- Lack of sensitivity and responsiveness to families from diverse backgrounds. Some may feel intimidated by the IEP development process and the meeting.

A Child-parent Scenario

Maria, Her Family, and the Service Providers

Maria (2 years 8 months old) is currently receiving EI services in the home setting. She has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. She has significant cognitive, communication, and motor impairment. The plan is to make her transition to preschool as smooth as possible. Her parents are extremely concerned and resistant to the move to another delivery system.

Strengths

✓ Alert and active most of the time
✓ Responds with a smile to adult attention
✓ Communicates her need when hungry or wet or diaper change through crying
✓ Eager to explore her environment
✓ Gets around by crawling around the floor

Needs

✓ Requires feeding through a gastronomy tube
✓ Limited communication and language skills
✓ Addressing family concerns for transition
Collaborative service provider activities with active involvement of family
Building family knowledge about new program

A Case Study – Michael

Michael (4 years 8 months old) currently receives preschool special education services with eligibility of developmental delay (also has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder). His parents are actively involved both in nurturing his strengths at home and in the transition process. The plan is to get him ready for transition to Kindergarten.

Strengths

✓ Communicates mostly in single words and occasionally in 3-4 word phrases
✓ Shows interest in using the computer
✓ Responds to yes/no questions (somewhat inconsistently)
✓ Names common pictures/objects
✓ Responds well to music

Needs

• Has difficulty staying focused during group activities longer than a few minutes
• Throws tantrums when asked to change tasks
• Shows limited social engagement skills
• Finds it difficult to play cooperatively with peers
• Experiences difficulty with transitions

A Case Study – Brian

Brian is a five-year-old diagnosed with ADHD and has developmental delay. He will be transitioning to a Kindergarten program in a few months, currently receiving preschool special education services at a Head Start program.

Strengths

✓ Communicates using words and phrases.
✓ Is eager to please the adults around him and desires to play with his peers.
✓ He likes music and enjoys outdoor play.

Needs

(academic skills, literacy, and social skills)
.Requires frequent redirection to stay on a task (listen to stories, play at centers, etc.)
Requires help with following teacher instructions.
Experiences difficulty getting along with peers – playing cooperatively with them.

The Process

What Families Need to Know

Eligibility for EI Services:

- Children with a diagnosed mental or physical condition with a high probability of resulting in developmental delay;
- Children experiencing developmental delay;
- Children at risk of developmental delay (at the discretion of the State).

The Evaluation Process (and what it involves):

- A multi-disciplinary team will conduct the evaluation.
- Identify child's strengths and needs.
- Identify family's needs in supporting the child.
- Parents are an integral part of the evaluation process.
The Process: Preschool to School-age Services
What Families Need to Know

Eligibility for Services:
Legal requirements are very similar to this type of transition –from preschool to school-age services – as before.

The Transition Process and what it involves:
- The sending program staff may include diverse services and programs (e.g., district pre-k program, Head Start, private preschools, etc.).
- Prepare child to gain helpful competencies for kindergarten and family for the change.
- Provide any follow-up support to family and child after transition.
- The receiving program coordinate efforts with the sending program & family. Identify child's strengths and needs; family's needs in supporting the child, arrange for program visits and plan ahead for any child-specific adaptations and supports.

Comparison of EI and Preschool Services:
A Helpful Resource for Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Intervention Services</th>
<th>Preschool Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages Served: Birth to 3</td>
<td>Ages Served: 3 to 5 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility for services: Developmental Delay</td>
<td>Eligibility for services: Developmental Delay or under one of the 13 disability category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: EI services will meet the needs of the family and child</td>
<td>Focus: Preschool Special Education Services focus on the child and meet child's educational needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Plan Used: FPSP</td>
<td>Type of Plan Used: IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the FPSP meeting, desired final outcomes and strategies are developed based on the developmental needs of the child and the family goals for the child.</td>
<td>During the IEP meeting, goals and objectives are developed by the IEP team (including parents) based on the child's present level of performance, and the family concerns and goals for the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Services Delivery Model:</td>
<td>Preschool Services Delivery Model:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Served at home, in child's natural environment</td>
<td>Served in a center-based setting (at elementary school sites, Head Start programs, community preschools, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost: May vary (free or on a sliding scale)</td>
<td>Cost: Offered at no cost to families (FAPE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family and Child Focused Strategies and Activities
(Adapted from Sarathy, 2005)

- Parent Education & Preparation
  - Guidance and Support for Transition Process
  - Parent Education Seminars
  - Informational Brochures
  - Community Fairs
  - A Single Point of Contact
  - Child Preparation for Next Environment and Follow-up Support

- Collaboration and Teaming
  - Between Sending and Receiving programs

- Transition Advisory Committee
  - Community Involvement

- Staff Preparation
  - Evaluation of Transition Process

Support Tools and Strategies
Beyond the Orientation Meeting

- Providing a Welcome Packet for families
  - A Transition Information Brochure
  - A Preschool Program Information Brochure
- Assisting families to prepare a profile of their child for the receiving program
- Explaining differences in educational services between the EI and the receiving program.
- A Comparison Chart showing EI and preschool services.
- Site visits to receiving programs

The Receiving Program’s Role
Building Relationships: Supporting Family and Child

- Respond to family questions and concerns.
- Multiple parent participation opportunities: Invite family to Parent Education Support Seminars and other special events offered by the school district.
- Offer community education and support seminars
- Early Childhood Learning Fairs for families, community preschools and EI staff
- Support to community preschools offered by school district personnel
- Pair the family with a mentor family.

The Sending Program’s Role
Providing Support to Family

- Plan a timeline - a road map of events- leading up to child's third birthday with the family and the receiving program.
- Provide for a language interpreter, if needed.
- Discuss with the receiving program family preferences for placement for the child.
- Record the decisions made at the conference—the transition plan and the timelines.
- Organize visits to potential programs.
- Arrange for the transfer of records at times convenient for both programs, after getting parent consent.
Timeline of Events
A Roadmap

Initial planning
Begin family, child & professional preparation for the new program

6 Months Before

Begin plans for Transition meeting
Government Procedures & Parent consent

3 Months Before

Collaboration between R & S programs
Assessment
Parent input

Child’s 3rd Birthday

Child begins services

Follow-up monitoring by S program
Family visit to new program to assess child adjustment

9 Months Before

Child begins in the new program

After child begins in the new program

Family and Child Focused Transition Activities
What do you currently provide...

- Offer a Welcome Packet to families with informational brochures?
- Present a comparison chart of EI and Preschool Special Education Services?
- Provide guidance to families with Parent Education Seminars?
- Have a designated person as a single point of contact to assist families?
- Prepare child for next Environment and provide follow-up Support?

Addressing needs of Families and Children from Diverse Cultures
Developing cross-cultural competence:
- Get an awareness of one’s own cultural limitations.
- Develop an awareness, appreciation and respect for cultural differences.
- Acknowledge the integrity and value of all cultures.
- Recognize intercultural interactions as learning opportunities.
- Develop the ability to use cultural resources in interventions.

(Hanson & Lynch, 2011)

Questions to Consider
For Service Providers During the Transition Process

- What does the transition process mean to your family? Does the family fully understand the process?
- Is your family aware of all the options for their child?
- What are the family’s expectations of this transition?
- Do family members understand the terminology associated with transition?
- Does your family have social support?
- How does your family cope with stress? Are there other stressors that your family is currently experiencing?
- Are there established and effective lines of communication between the family and the practitioner?

(Adapted from Ann Connolly, 2007)

Child Issues - Transition

Child may have difficulties in adjusting to the new setting.
- Difficulty in transferring skills to unfamiliar settings, activities, people and routines.
- Fears and anxieties about the new program.
- Important gains made may be lost during initial emotional adjustment.
- Child’s current skill and functioning level present challenges.
- Need for survival/coping/age-appropriate social skills.
- Need for appropriate responsiveness to various instructional styles and environmental structures.
- Difficulty in adapting to and adjusting to match the complex and diverse needs of the child.
- Skills that facilitate active engagement.
- Inadequate preparation of child for new setting

Child-centered Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education and to School-aged Services

Pre-transition planning meeting
Share information with receiving program to prepare for transition

Sending Program Child Preparation
Teach child transition competencies to ease adjustment to new program

Receiving program Prepares
Prepare environment to facilitate smooth transition of child

Child Preparation Activities
Prepare child for new program and facilitate smooth transition

Collaboration activities with a common goal
Collaboration between professionals of sending and receiving programs and families to promote smooth transition

Site visit to observe program and child
Strengthen child preparation and facilitate child adjustment

Follow up monitoring after transition
Monitor child adjustment and provide support to staff

Staff Training Activities
Training staff to individualize transition preparation and support to child and family

Adapted from Sarathy, 2005
Teaming for Success: Child Preparation Activities

- Sending program together with the family to develop an action plan.
- Familiarizing with the skills that will facilitate the child’s smooth adjustment to the new program’s routines and expectations:
  - Focusing on transition competencies and social survival skills.
  - Teaching/adapting activities from the new program to facilitate easy transfer of skills.
- Teach skills that move the child toward greater independence.
- Incorporate routines from the new program to familiarize child.

Kindergarten teachers rank skills like self-discipline and attentional control as more critical for school readiness than content knowledge (Diamond, et al., 2007)

Activities to Support Smooth Transitions

- Observes the child in the current setting or in the home.
- Invites child and family to visit the program.
- Shares information about the program, the activities and routines.
- Involves families to assist with easing the transition for the child.
- Gathers information about child’s favorite songs, activities and toys to facilitate smooth adjustment and to incorporate it within daily routines.
- Makes child-specific adaptations after the child’s move to the new program/environment to enable successful transition.

Evaluation of Transition Practices

- Family feedback on transition process
- System in place to refine the process on an ongoing basis
- Programs & family work to prepare child
- Offer training and technical support
- Diversity addressed with sensitivity

Child-centered Transition Preparation

- Begin planning for the transition process early (4-6 months before the end of the school year).
- Prepare the child for the new environment by teaching the specific skills required: transition competencies and survival skills for smooth adjustment.
- Adapt activities from the new program to facilitate easy transfer of skills.
- Plan visits for child and family to potential program sites or kindergarten programs.
- Establish a partnership with families involved providing them with the needed information about the transition process and the different programs and options.
- Pre-transition site visits by child, family, teacher and related service providers.
- Prepare a portfolio of the child, including input from family and other professionals.
- Make follow-up visits and contacts to ensure child adjustment to new program.

The MAPS Mandala Planning Process

- What is the Plan of Action to avoid the Nightmare and make the Dream come true?
- What are the Person’s (Child’s) Needs? What do we need to do to meet these needs?
- What is the Person (Child) good at... Strengths, gifts, talents?

The MAPS planning process gathers information from people who know the student and who care for the student’s future (contributing to this process).

Evaluation of Transition Practices

- Family and Child-focused Practices Assessment Checklist
  - Provide families with comprehensive information early in the transition process.
  - Assess specific family needs and the skills they require for involvement.
  - Strengthen family competence with a variety of family-focused activities.
  - Respond sensitively to families from diverse backgrounds & individualize approaches.
  - Ensure team planning and collaborative relationships between programs to individualize transition planning for child.
  - Prepare the child for the new environment by teaching the specific skills required.
  - Provide follow-up monitoring of child in the new environment after transition to facilitate successful adjustment.
Evaluation of Transition Practices

Collaboration and Staff Preparation Assessment

▪ Promote ongoing and continuous communication among the parties involved focusing on shared goals.
▪ Plan joint service provider collaborative activities.
▪ Have a single point of transition contact person.
▪ Have developed interagency agreements.
▪ Provide training and onsite technical assistance – staff inside and outside the system.
▪ Offer staff training on diversity and sensitivity issues
▪ Provide onsite coaching and support to staff to facilitate child adjustment.

References


An Action Plan
Identify three activities to implement in each category for your program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengthen Current Practices or Initiate New Activities</th>
<th>Personnel Responsible</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Start/End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-centered Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Empowerment &amp; Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration and Staff Preparation</td>
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The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

(ECTA Center)

The ECTA Center offers two transition checklists:

▪ Transition from Early Intervention Services to Part B Preschool Special Education Checklist
(http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/TR-2_EI_to_Preschool_2017.pdf)
▪ Transition from Preschool Special Education to Kindergarten Checklist
(http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/TR-3_Transition_to_Kindergarten_2017.pdf)

Helpful Web Resources

▪ Family Guide for transition from EI to Preschool with video: http://ectacenter.org/
▪ IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association 2010:
http://www.ideainfanttoddler.org/
▪ National Early Childhood Transition Center:
http://www.hdl.uky.edu/nectc/NECTC/Home.aspx
▪ National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pub/q1-44.pdf
▪ OSEP Part C Guidance and Training Resources are available at:
http://www.parentcenterhub.org/legacy-partc/
▪ Pacer Center offers a variety of materials to inform families of the early childhood transition process, www.pacer.org.

Evaluation of Transition Practices

How are we doing in meeting child and family needs and achieving positive outcomes?

▪ Evaluate the transition process gathering feedback from the families and staff involved (using surveys, checklists and interviews) and from data on child adjustment and success in the new setting.
▪ Review (family, child and professional data) data from various sources to refine and improve the transition process.
Family Resources

- **Help Me Grow National Center**
  - **Help Me Grow**: For parents and other key caregivers who have questions about their young children’s development.
  - Services available to families include an online information and referral service, developmental screening using Ages and Stages questionnaires, and referrals to community resources along with care coordination.
  - Help Me Grow is being implemented in a number of states. ([https://helpmegrownational.org/resources/](https://helpmegrownational.org/resources/))

- **Zero to Three**
  - **Zero to Three** offers a variety of resources to families and educators on infants and toddlers – Early Development and Well-being Early Learning, Parenting and Policy and Advocacy, etc. ([https://www.zerotothree.org/](https://www.zerotothree.org/))

Thank you.

**Successful Transitions Lead to Positive Outcomes for Children, Families and Professionals.**

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