

Transition to School-Age Services

The transition from early childhood programs to school age programs can be an exciting yet challenging process for children and families. To help prepare children and their families for a move to a kindergarten or first grade program, many activities will take place beginning well before the actual transition.

In January or February before a child transitions, the team may hold a transition-planning meeting. This meeting may be informal or may be a formal IEP meeting. At this meeting, the continuum of services and programs for the next school year is discussed. The team may recommend that parents visit the potential school(s)/programs that may be considered by the IEP team. The school team that currently works with the child may also visit programs. Representatives from the schools/programs that the child may attend are also invited to visit and observe the child in the current program. Keep in mind that school personnel may change between the end of the school year and the beginning of the new school year. Teams may also set up dates/times to collaborate to draft IEP goals and objectives for the upcoming school year. As a member of the team, parents are invited to be a part of these meetings. Parents may request a copy of kindergarten or first grade curriculum documents to assist them in participating in selection of goals and objectives.

In March or April the teams and families should schedule their visits. A draft of the new IEP should be in development.

In May or June a transitional IEP meeting will be held. Participants may include the family, the team who currently works with the child, and representatives from any potential school(s)/programs. At this IEP meeting, the current IEP will be reviewed. Any newly proposed goals, objectives and accommodations will be reviewed, special education and related services will be determined, and the location of service delivery in the least restrictive environment will be discussed. Children may receive school-age services in their home elementary school or in regionally located programs. A small number of children who may be in need of more restrictive placements outside of the Howard County Public School System may be referred to a central placement team. The IEP will then be approved for the child's new placement.

Transition can be especially challenging for some children. Parents and the RECC school team can do several things to help make the transition to a new program or school happen smoothly. Some successful transition strategies include taking the child to visit the new school over the summer, taking pictures of the new school/classroom area to share with the child, and taking the child to play on the playground at the new school. The RECC school team and parents will share strategies and materials that have been used successfully.

The Office of Early Intervention Services has created the resource, *Transition Planning for Preschool and Kindergarten Children and Their Families*. It includes checklists and strategies to make a child's transition a smooth one. Families may request a copy from the school team or by contacting the Office of Early Intervention Services at 410-313-7017.