

TATS TALKS WITH FAMILIES

ABOUT THE TRANSITION PROCESS

2011, Volume 1, Number 1



What is the transition process from Early Steps to Pre-K?

In Florida, Early Steps is the comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Early Steps has the responsibility of providing services until a child's third birthday. After that, the responsibility belongs to the school district Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Program for Children with Disabilities, or other community programs. There are certain requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and a timeline of specific activities that must take place to ensure a smooth transition from Early Steps to Pre-K or other community programs.



Families and professionals work together to prepare for a smooth transition.

What is your role in the transition process?

There are many ways you can help to make the transition process go smoothly, such as attending scheduled meetings and taking your child to screenings, developmental evaluations, and physical examination appointments. In addition, you can gather important papers needed to assist with the transition process. These may include the following:

- Your child's birth certificate and social security card
- Proof of your residency, such as a recent copy of a utility bill
- A record of your child's immunizations
- Your child's recent individualized family support plan (IFSP) and any current reports from professionals providing services to your child

Ask your service coordinator for a copy of *TRANSITION—A Booklet to Help Children and Families Transition from Early Steps at Age Three to Other Community Programs*. It answers many questions you may have about the transition process, and includes information about programs that may be available in your community. A transition video is also available and may be helpful for you to watch. Your local Early Steps should have copies of both, or you may visit Florida's Transition Project (FTP) at <http://www.floridatransitionproject> to view or download them.



This *TATS Talks* discusses the transition process from Early Steps to Pre-K and the steps that are involved to ensure a smooth transition for the child and the family.



What is the transition timeline? There are certain activities that must be completed within an established timeframe before a child turns three years old to ensure a smooth transition from Early Steps to Pre-K services.

What? →	Transition Planning →	Notification →	Transition Conference →
When?	Ongoing	By 2 years, 6 months	9 months to 90 days prior to the third birthday

The Transition Process

Transition Planning - Your Early Steps service coordinator will talk with you about the transition process and will help you develop a plan throughout the time your child receives services from Early Steps. The plans you make will be written on your child's IFSP.

Notification - At least nine months before your child's third birthday, Early Steps is required to notify the school district Pre-K program that your child may be eligible for services. This information helps the school district plan for services for your child. However, you may choose not to share your personal information at that time. Your service coordinator will provide a copy and explain Understanding Notification brochure.

Transition Conference - Early Steps must hold a transition conference by the time your child is 2 years and 9 months of age, if your child is potentially eligible for school district services. Even if your child is not potentially eligible for school district services, Early Steps will still make a reasonable effort to hold a transition conference and will provide you with information about community resources.

- You and your service coordinator will decide the date, time, and place where the transition conference will be held. The service coordinator will invite other participants.
- You and your service coordinator are required participants in the transition conference. If your child is potentially eligible for the Pre-K program, with your consent, the service coordinator is required to invite the school district representative to the transition conference.
- Other participants you may want Early Steps to invite include the following: other members of your child's IFSP team, someone from the program where your child is currently being served, representatives from Head Start, child care, Children's Medical Services, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), or others. You may also want to invite a family member or friend. If you need a translator, Early Steps will arrange for one to be present.

The Early Steps service coordinator will facilitate the transition conference and invite participants to discuss topics that may include the following:

- Your concerns regarding transition
- Activities and strategies to address your concerns
- The services available from the school district
- How and when evaluation and eligibility determination takes place for the school district
- Other agencies and community providers that may benefit your child and family

Since there are regulations that guide transition, careful planning helps the process go smoothly. Successful transitions happen when everyone who works with your child thinks about your child's future and works together. At the transition conference, you are an active participant in deciding which program is best for your child. At this time, you may be asked for your consent to send information to a Pre-K program, the school district, Head Start, or other community programs. Throughout this process, there may be additional paperwork to complete and you may be asked to provide information to that program about your family and your child. This is done to be sure that programs have the most recent information about your child's needs and your concerns.

After transitioning from Early Steps, the services your child will receive from the school district or other program will be different from those in Early Steps, and will depend upon your child's eligibility. The school district focuses on services that will help your child make progress in his or her educational setting, and these may not be the same services as those your child received in Early Steps.





Child Outcomes Measurement Evaluation - If your child has had an IFSP in place for at least six months with Early Steps, and if your child is potentially eligible for school district Pre-K services, either Early Steps or the school district may administer an evaluation. In Florida, the Battelle Developmental Inventory-2 (BDI-2) is the evaluation tool used to determine your child's progress. This evaluation will be scheduled at a time that works for you and your child, and the information is shared, with your permission, when your child transitions.

Referral to the School District and Determination of Eligibility for School District Services - If you are interested in school district services, you will be given information about the process for determining eligibility for the school district program. You will be asked to sign a consent form so your child's information can be shared with the school district.

The school district will review information provided by Early Steps and your child's service providers to determine if your child is eligible for school district services, or if there is a need further evaluation. If further evaluation is recommended, an appointment will be arranged with you. Once the evaluations are completed, you will be invited to a meeting to discuss your child's potential eligibility for school district services.

Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Written and Implemented - Once your child is determined eligible, a meeting is held, and an IEP is written. The IEP meeting must include your family and others that you ask the school district to invite, such as the Early Steps service coordinator, a staff member from the program where your child has been receiving services, or anyone else you would like to have present at the meeting. If your child will be receiving services in a Head Start program, a representative from that program will also be invited.

If your child received Early Steps services, had an IFSP, and has been determined eligible for school services, an IEP must be written and implemented by your child's third birthday.

If your child is eligible for school district services, you will be given information about enrolling your child in the Pre-K program in order for the IEP to be implemented. It is important for you to follow the guidelines for enrollment so services can begin on time. If you decide not to send your child to the school district, you will be given information about other community programs. It is important to let the school district know if you change your mind at any time.





Helpful Resources

What are some acronyms I need to know?

AWI	Agency for Workforce Innovation
BEES	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
CARD	Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
CMS	Children's Medical Services
DBS	Division of Blind Services
DCF	Department of Children and Families
DOE	Department of Education
DOH	Department of Health
ES	Early Steps
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
HS	Head Start
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Support Plan
LEA	Local Education Agency (School District)
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
OEL	Office of Early Learning
Pre-K	Prekindergarten
VPK	Voluntary Prekindergarten



Useful Website Links:

Early Steps State Office

The office that administers Florida's early intervention system under IDEA, Part C for eligible infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) with significant delays or a condition likely to result in a developmental delay.

http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps/early_steps.html

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

The Bureau in the Florida Department of Education that administers the IDEA, Part B program for Pre-K children with disabilities. <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services (Central Directory)

A statewide information and referral service for individuals who work with children, birth to age 21 years, at risk for developmental delays or who have disabilities and special health care needs. 1 (800) 654-4440

http://www.central_directory.org

Florida's Transition Project

Assists local communities to develop and implement interagency agreements for a seamless system of transition for young children with disabilities, birth to six years of age, and their families. <http://www.floridatransitionproject.com>

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)

A statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. Provides information to families, teaching staff, and program administrators. <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>



Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)
4000 Central Florida Blvd.
UCF Teaching Academy, Suite 403
Orlando, FL 32816-1250

Tel: (407) 823-3058
Fax: (407) 823-1360
E-mail: tats@mail.ucf.edu
Website: <http://www.tats.ucf.edu>