

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Fact Sheet for Virginia's Parents

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

Your toddler grows up quickly. If they have a disability and have been served through an **Early Intervention Program**, transition planning is ongoing. Before your child even turns 2, you and the team will start thinking about the transition from EI to a preschool program that is a match to your child's individualized strengths and unique needs.



This might make you anxious. Where will she go? Will she be welcomed? 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. 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 to **other parents who have already made the journey**.

➔ **The transition to preschool** begins **at least 90 days** and as early as 9 months before your child's 2nd or 3rd birthday depending on when you want your child to move from early intervention to preschool. During that time, you will work through your transition plan with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator. **Not all children are eligible for ECSE** so 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** 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.

★ **Participate** in team meetings. If your child is eligible for ECSE services, the team (which includes you) will develop the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. The IEP defines the program, supports, and services your child will receive and the location in which services will be delivered. At the IEP meeting you will also receive a notice of your rights (**Procedural Safeguards**).

If you disagree with the IEP, you do not have to sign it; you also have appeal rights. If your child is eligible for ESCE, but you do not want her to participate in the program offered by your school division, **they may be able to receive some** services under a services plan. You can discuss this with your team.

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

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** has two parts that directly assist children with disabilities. **Part C, Early Intervention Services** is for children birth to age 3.

Part B serves children from ages 2-5 under the **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program as well as those in Kindergarten through age 21**. Parents in Virginia can choose to keep their children in Part C when they reach 2 years old or transition them to Part B if they meet eligibility requirements.

If your child had an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** under Part C **and** is found eligible for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), the IFSP will be replaced with an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.

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Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): IDEA requires that **children with disabilities be educated with children without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate** with the support and use of supplementary aids and services, receive access to the general curriculum, and participate in typical activities. **This requirement applies equally to preschool services.** The school division must provide a continuum of placements for young children with LRE as the first consideration.

If the school division determines that placement in a private preschool program is necessary for a child to receive FAPE, it must make that program available at no cost to the parent. This includes transportation.

The school division is responsible for providing a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** to a preschool child with a disability must ensure that services are provided in the LRE where the child's unique needs (as described in the child's IEP) can be met, regardless of whether the school division operates public preschool programs for children without disabilities. A school division may provide special education and related services to a preschool child with a disability in a variety of settings, including a regular kindergarten class, public or private preschool program, Head Start program, community-based child-care facility, or in the home.

Evaluating a Preschool Setting

If your child is going to be receiving **ECSE services**, ask the team if you can visit the various preschool options available. This will help ensure a good fit for your child. Before visiting, make a list of things important to you. You may want to consider the following:

- ✓ Do you and your child feel welcomed? How is the overall atmosphere?
- ✓ Does the program use inclusive practices?
- ✓ Do you see children with and without disabilities interacting?
- ✓ Is the building physically accessible (ramps, playground, etc.)?
- ✓ Does the school provide an evidence-based, developmentally appropriate education?
- ✓ How does the program adjust for learners with different abilities?
- ✓ What are the qualifications of staff who will be teaching your child?
- ✓ What are the safety procedures and notification procedures?

Resources

**U.S. Department of Education
Dear Colleague Letter (DCL)
related to Preschool Least
Restrictive Environments (LRE)**
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/sp/eeded/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf>

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

**Virginia Department of
Education Information**
www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/disabilities/transition

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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