

F. TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS (34 CFR 303.148)

The State of Missouri has developed the following policies and procedures to ensure a smooth and effective transition from Part C (First Steps) services to Part B (local school district) services for children with disabilities at age three.

Information about transition to Part B Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) or other appropriate services is shared with the family and explained at the initial IFSP meeting if the child is two (2) years of age or older. For a child participating in Part C First Steps prior to age two (2), this information is provided at the six (6) month or annual IFSP meeting held closest to the child's second birthday.

The Part C Service Coordinator will inform the parent that consistent with IDEA requirements, First Steps is required to notify the local educational agency (LEA) in which the child lives that the child is approaching three (3) years of age and may be eligible for early childhood special education services under Part B of IDEA. This LEA notification includes limited directory information (child's name and birth date, and parent's name, address, and telephone number).

A parent may "opt out" of this LEA notification in writing stating they do not want directory information provided to the local school district. Otherwise, the directory information will be shared with the local school district in which the child lives.

At least six months (and at the discretion of all parties, not more than nine months) prior to the child's third birth date, the Part C Service Coordinator will convene an IFSP meeting to discuss the transition steps with the parents and other IFSP team members in order to develop a transition plan. At this time, the team documents the steps to be taken to provide the child with a smooth and effective transition to the public school and/or other services as appropriate. If the parent agrees, local education agency (LEA) personnel must be invited to attend this IFSP meeting. The purpose of the contact is to explain the process the district will complete to determine the child's eligibility for services under Part B of the IDEA and, if eligible, the steps that will be necessary to assure the provision of services on the child's third birth date unless the birth date occurs during a routine school break.

If a member of the LEA staff was invited, but did not attend the transition meeting, and the parent wants to pursue an eligibility determination for special education and related services under Part B of IDEA, the Part C Service Coordinator shall obtain a release of information to share records with the LEA. Any information that will assist the LEA in determining the child's eligibility and special education and related service needs must be released immediately, and must be done in such a manner so as to ensure a timely receipt by the LEA. Information provided must include at a minimum, the following:

- A. current copy of the entire IFSP which includes present levels of functioning, early intervention services, and transition plan;
- B. all evaluations that have occurred in the previous year, and if not contained in the child's record, where the information can be obtained; and
- C. any written reports from service providers within the last year.

Upon receipt of the information, the LEA must follow initial evaluation procedures as outlined in the Part B State Plan. LEAs are required to provide special education and related services to eligible children as identified in the IEP as of the child's third birth date unless the birth date occurs during a normal vacation period for the public school. The LEA can document that it has made a diligent effort to complete the evaluation and IEP process, but despite that effort, was unable to do so within timelines. IEPs developed in the spring or summer may identify the implementation date as the first day of school in the fall.

Part B eligible children whose third birth dates are May 1 through August 31 may continue in the First Steps program until the initiation of their local district's school year in the fall.

Part B eligible children whose third birth dates are April 1 through May 1 may either transition to Part B services before the end of the current school year or continue services in First Steps until the initiation of their local district's school year in August/September. This discussion is part of the transition conference. Children who enroll in the local school district for the remainder of the school year must be considered for Extended School Year as required by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Financial support for early intervention services that are provided after the child's summer third birth date are as follows:

Early intervention services that were financially supported prior to the child's third birth date by Part C funds will be paid by the Department after the child's third birth date.

If LEA policy allows, eligible children whose third birth dates occur during September may receive services under Part B at the beginning of the district's school year.