

Transition: First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Q/A

July 1, 2008

- 1) Can the First Steps transition meeting be held 1 to 3 months early to accommodate the needs/wishes of ECSE and/or the family?

Answer: It is good practice to hold the Transition Meeting within 30 days prior to the child turning 2 ½ years old, when possible. However, it is not a compliance issue if the meeting is held earlier, depending on circumstances (i.e., summer birthday).

- 2) To be in compliance, are service coordinators required to invite the Local Education Agency (LEA) to all Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings held after the transition meeting at age 2 1/2?

Answer: While Part C Compliance Standards and Indicators do not dictate that the LEA representative must be invited to any subsequent meetings, the current Phase I contract states that any meeting held after age 2 ½ for a child who is transitioning to ECSE must include the LEA representative (with parental permission), and the current Phase II contract states the same for any child age 2 years 9 months.

- 3) Who is responsible for extending an invitation to the First Steps Service Coordinator (SC) or other First Steps representative to attend the initial Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting – the family or the LEA?

Answer: Parents must be informed of the right to request that a SC or other First Steps representative be invited to the initial IEP meeting to assist with a smooth transition of services (Part B Standards and Indicators 200.620). If the LEA doesn't "formally" invite the service coordinator, or FS representative, the family can. It should be noted that FS providers may be invited, and certainly may attend if they wish, but cannot bill FS for attending IEP meetings.

- 4) Is it acceptable to obtain a Release of Information (ROI) for ECSE at any age (example – for a child who is 6 months old).

Answer: It is *not* good practice to obtain the ROI for the ECSE referral until the child is around 2 years old in order to ensure it is in place for preparation for the transition meeting held prior to age 2 ½.

- 5) If the service coordinator is seeking to obtain a ROI for two programs operated by one entity (e.g., Parents as Teachers and ECSE in the same LEA), can the ROI list only the larger entity or does the ROI have to be specific to each individual program?

Answer: The ROI needs to be specific to each individual program. In this example, the SC would obtain an ROI for *both* PAT and ECSE.

- 6) Is a referral to ECSE from Parents as Teachers (PAT) or Early Head Start considered the same as a parent referral?

Answer: Yes. Both agencies will have obtained parental permission to make the referral to ECSE.

- 7) Is the current ROI a two-way or one-way release?

Answer: The ROI is a one-way release. Service coordinators need to use separate forms when sharing information with another party and when requesting the other party release information to First Steps.

- 8) What timelines must the LEA follow for a child transitioning from First Steps?

Answer: The date of the transition meeting is the referral date. For referrals received more than 120 days prior to the child's third birthday, the required timelines associated with an initial evaluation are not applicable; however, eligibility must be determined and the IEP in place by the child's third birthday. For referrals received less than 120 days prior to the third birthday, the LEA has up to 120 days to evaluate, determine eligibility, and develop an IEP for a child found eligible for Part B services.

- 9) When ECSE receives a referral for a child who did not participate in FS, what timelines must be followed by ECSE?

Answer: The referral process for a non-First Steps child is identical to a parent referral for any other age child: the referral process should not exceed 120 days. The date of referral is the date a member of the agency's certificated staff receives a request for an evaluation from the child's parent (either verbal or written).

For children under three years of age, if the referral is received more than 120 days prior to the child's third birthday, the expectation is that an IEP will be in place by the child's third birthday, if the child is found eligible for Part B services. The timelines associated with an initial evaluation are not applicable, as long as an IEP is in place by the third birthday.

If the referral is received 120 days or less prior to the child's third birthday, the LEA will follow the required timelines associated with an initial evaluation. NOTE: See SELs message June 25, 2008, "Evaluations/Referrals for Children Prior to Age Three."

- 10) Can the school district combine the Eligibility Determination meeting with the initial IEP meeting?

Answer: The eligibility determination meeting and the initial IEP meeting may be held "back to back" if all parties are in agreement to do so. The meeting notification to the family would include both purposes: 1) to determine eligibility and 2) to develop the IEP, if the child is eligible for Part B services.