

# First Steps

## Module 4: Transition

### Module 4, Tab 1: Introduction

**Module 4: Transition** looks at the process of moving from the First Steps program to other community options for three year olds. Transition is a process of change. Transitions may be stressful, as change can be upsetting for children and families. It is important for First Steps providers to work with families during this change to reduce stress and increase understanding to facilitate a smooth transition process. As we have seen in previous modules, transitions may occur at a number of points. Examples of transitions that occur within First Steps were seen in modules 2 and 3. The focus of this module is the transition from First Steps to other programs in the community when the child turns 3.

**Module 4: Transition** is required for all individuals who provide services in the First Steps program. Other individuals who are interested in learning more about early intervention and the First Steps program are welcome to review the module.

#### OBJECTIVES FOR MODULE 4

1. Participants will define the following terms and describe how they relate to the First Steps program:

- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
- Extended School Year (ESY)
- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Local Education Agency (LEA)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Recoupment
- Regression
- Related Services
- Special Education
- Summer Third Birthday
- Transition
- Young Child with Developmental Delay (YCDD)

2. Describe the timelines for transition activities and what happens at each stage.

3. Discuss community program options for children transitioning out of First Steps.

4. Describe what is included in the transition plan.
5. Compare and contrast the philosophy and legal requirements for Parts B and C of IDEA.
6. Compare and contrast IFSP requirements and IEP requirements.
7. Discuss the responsibilities of Part C and Part B agencies and personnel related to transition.
8. Discuss the transition timelines for children with summer birthdays.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children who receive services through First Steps, and their families, experience a range of changes throughout the early years that may require specific resources and supports as these children transition from First Steps. IFSP teams are required to discuss transition issues facing the child and the family and to make plans that assist the child and family to make smooth, effective transition. Families, together with their present and future providers, share responsibility to make this transition smooth and successful for young children.

### **What Does the IDEA Say?**

The lead agency for early intervention must include a description of the policies and procedures to be used to ensure a smooth transition, for children receiving early intervention services, to preschool or other appropriate services, including:

- (a) A description of how the families will be included in the transition plans;
- (b) A description of how the lead agency will notify the local educational agency for the area in which the child resides that the child will shortly reach the age of eligibility for preschool services under Part B of IDEA.

Typical transition events for children in First Steps include enrolling in First Steps, beginning early intervention services, changing intervention services, and exiting the First Steps system of services. One of the most critical factors affecting transitions in early intervention is the way in which families, providers, and school personnel view transition planning. When transition is viewed as an isolated event that children and families go through, transition is often disjointed and leads to increased anxiety for many of the parties involved. On the other hand, when transition is viewed as a process, the transition experience is much more meaningful and successful for families, service providers, and school districts.

Although transitions are unique experiences for all young children and families, the transition experiences of young children with disabilities can pose significant challenges for the child, families and professionals (Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, & Hung, 2005). There are some common barriers that more specifically affect the transition process for children with significant

disabilities. Several of these barriers relate to a lack of parent involvement and interest. It is important for the people working with families to understand these barriers and provide support for families as they continue to deal with the challenges of raising a child with a disability. Strong support for families when these children are very young is important to laying a strong foundation for these families as their children grow and develop.

## **BETH'S STORY**

*(Continued from Modules 1 – 3. Reminder: Beth is a recent graduate who wants to become a First Steps provider and Shelby is a current First Steps provider.)*

“Hi Shelby. I can’t believe that we’ve gone through almost the entire First Steps process. I’m going to miss our lunches and walks,” said Beth. “In addition to learning about Part C and First Steps, I now know some really good places to hike!”

“We can still get together to talk and even to hike if you want. Once you’re working with families we might even want to have a Service Coordinator join us. I know when I first started providing services things came up that I wasn’t quite sure how to handle. Although because of confidentiality issues we can’t talk about specific families, we can talk about issues related to our practice. But, let’s get started,” responded Shelby.

“We’ve talked about many activities in the First Steps process and this last piece is called Transition, which is basically preparing a family for life beyond First Steps. Though the First Steps family-centered philosophy begins with the first contact and continues throughout the process, transition is a big change and change is hard for most of us. Transition means giving up something comfortable or familiar and getting used to something new. It is an ongoing process that can be stressful, especially when the change involves relationships with people who work closely with your family. Providing support to families as well as to their infants and toddlers is central to First Steps.”

Shelby continued, “This may sound strange, but from the moment a family enters First Steps, we start planning for their transition *out* of First Steps. In the beginning, when the child is really little, transition is about having conversations with the family and informing them that First Steps ends at the age of 3 and what to expect during the transition process.”

“I have a few resources that might help you out,” said Shelby. “First is a presentation on the DESE First Steps website called *Transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)*. The presentation explains the need to plan for transition and how these discussions prepare the family for their child to leave First Steps to attend a preschool, child care, ECSE or another community program. The presentation also talks about how transition must be addressed at every Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting, regardless of a child’s age.”

Shelby continued, “The other helpful resource available on the DESE First Steps website is the *Parent Transition Handbook*. The handbook walks parents through the transition process,

including the timelines for transition, options after they leave First Steps, what happens at a transition meeting and more.”

“That would be great. As I said, I have a notebook with everything that you’ve given me or what I’ve gotten from the DESE website. When I think of questions I often go there to make sure I understand. Having that resource would be really helpful. Can you make me a copy?” asked Beth.

"Sure. If you don't get it by tomorrow please e-mail me because although I have good intentions, I sometimes forget what I've promised to do," said Shelby with a smile.

"Me, too!" remarked Beth.

Shelby continued. "Now, where were we? Oh yeah, planning for transition. When the child is near two years of age, the Service Coordinator begins more detailed conversations with the parent about plans for the child after First Steps and the timelines for a transition meeting. This discussion typically occurs at an IFSP meeting near the child's second birthday to give the parent time to research different options for services at age three including ECSE at the local school district, early childhood programs or other community services. The Service Coordinator shares a packet of information with the parent, as appropriate, at the IFSP meeting. The packet of information may include: the Parent Transition Handbook, and a list of local programs and service options for children over age three. The Service Coordinator needs the parent's consent, on a Release of Information form, before any information about the child is shared with the community program. The Service Coordinator also helps the family prepare for the transition meeting by answering any questions the family has about the process.”

Shelby continued. "Many times families find it difficult to imagine their little baby at the age of 3; it seems so far in the future, but at every IFSP meeting the family is gently reminded that when their child is approximately 2½ years old a transition IFSP will be created. Then, as the child gets older, transition conversations become more about introducing families to the various transition options available in their community, such as Head Start, early learning centers, preschools, or their local school district's ECSE program. Often, the scariest part of change is the unknown. By answering questions and taking the time to really listen and understand the family, many times we can help the transition process be a positive experience."

“I understand change can be scary, but why would transitioning out of First Steps be so difficult? asked Beth. “If children and families still need support from providers, does that continue?”

“Well yes, but not in the same way that families are used to or even with the same providers,” responded Shelby. “Remember that Part C of IDEA provides the regulation and funding to states for infant/toddler services to children with disabilities from birth through the age of 2. Services from age 3 to 21 are covered under Part B of IDEA.”

“The two pieces of the law have some rules in common. For example, parental rights are guaranteed and all children who meet criteria must be served. But there are also lots of differences between the programs. The most important difference is that the vast majority of children in Part B receive services in school settings from district personnel rather than receiving

services at home. That means the people who provide the services will change and the place where services are provided will change. That's a lot of change for families."

"I know you've talked about Parent Rights before and I know they're really an important part of the law but it's hard for me to remember them. Can you tell me one more time?" asked Beth.

"Sure, I get to know these because I talk with families about them. But in the beginning I needed to reread them frequently. I'll email the sheet to you that has all of the information, but in general, parent rights include the right to: give signed consent, have all of their information remain confidential unless they give consent to share it, written prior notice for any changes to the child's program, and review all of their child's records. They also have a right to a due process hearing if they disagree with the decisions about eligibility, services, or placement. But, you need to read the details in order to really understand what the rights are."

"Plus, we have to understand them so that we can explain what they mean to families. It isn't enough to hand them a paper and ask them to sign. Informed consent means that parents really understand what their rights are."

"OK, I'll make sure I read those," said Beth. "There sure is a lot to think about when preparing for transition."

"Oh, please ask whatever questions you have," said Shelby. "There are a lot of things to learn. Hearing the information more than once makes it easier to remember. I promise we'll talk more about the similarities and differences between the two programs, but first I want to help you understand the transition process and the Transition IFSP meeting itself."

Beth nodded.

"So, let's go back to your original question," Shelby said. "Yes, First Steps children who meet criteria under Part B may continue to receive services. But, the services are typically no longer provided at home and the services providers aren't the same. Those changes may be hard for some parents."

"I can see how it would be hard to say goodbye to families and children and how it may be sad for families," said Beth thoughtfully.

"Yes, and because of that, our role is to provide the support and encouragement that families' need for the transition process to be a positive experience. It also really helps when you know your community well, so you know the teachers in the next setting and what kinds of programs are available. One of our responsibilities is to be able to provide information to parents about all of the options, so the more we know, the better able we are to do that," replied Shelby. "One of the most important things we do during the transition process is to provide families with the support they need. Over the years, I've learned a number of things that make it more likely that transition will be a good experience for families."

"Probably the single most important thing we do is support families in their role as an equal partner in the transition process," said Shelby. "It is a parent's role as a team member to advocate

for the needs of their child and what is best for the child. The parent is the only member of the team who remains constant through all of the transitions the child experiences. In order to support them, we have to acknowledge the family's fears and anxieties about the changes that will take place. One way to address those fears that is helpful to many families is to arrange for families to talk with other families who have successfully completed the transition process with their child. You know, connecting them with local support groups for families or other parent networks. Hearing about positive experiences from other parents often provides more reassurance than anything we can say."

Shelby continued, "Another thing that helps is to have formal mechanisms in place for ongoing communication, within and between agencies. When people at the different agencies work well together and have clear expectations of who does what, things are apt to move pretty smoothly. This coordination also contributes to providing adequate time for providers, school personnel, and families to plan and prepare for transition. No one likes to feel rushed, particularly for big decisions."

"It seems pretty evident that, just like for the rest of First Steps, the focus during transition is on supporting both the child and the family. The program's philosophy and family-centered practice continues even as families are leaving. Services after age 3 will be different because the two laws are different but I can see how the strategies you've described would make it as easy as possible for everyone," said Beth.

"That's right," said Shelby. "Although we help families through different transitions frequently as part of our job, this is all new to them. Our support and ability to collaborate with the school district or others in the community make a huge difference in how it feels to families. I also think that how we support families may help them to feel empowered and better equipped for future transitions. Sometimes I've heard back from families during the transition from ECSE to kindergarten and they've said that they felt more prepared because of their experience during the transition out of First Steps." Shelby stopped talking and walked quietly for a few minutes.

"Do you have any other questions before I talk about the actual meeting?" asked Shelby.

"No, what you've said fits well with the other aspects of the program. I'm ready to hear more about the process," responded Beth. "But let's wait until we get to the top of the hill."

### **Steps to Success – Transition at Age 3**

This video discusses the steps to take to prepare a child and family for moving out of the First Steps program and into the next set of services.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Think about the following questions as you reflect on the information in this section of the course:

1. Many families find transitions difficult. How do you think providers can help parents feel supported throughout the process?
2. What do you think are some of the differences between First Steps and ECSE that might be difficult for families? What are some of the similarities?
3. Why is the law different for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) than it is for preschoolers (age 3 to 5)?

## Module 4 Tab 2: Transition Meetings

Transition planning may involve the formal planning of small steps such as having a new provider meet the child and family in an introductory visit, visiting a new community setting, or moderating the delivery of services depending on family circumstances. When the child is near age 2, the Service Coordinator prepares a transition packet of information to give to the family and informs them about the process of sharing directory information with the local school district.

### What Does the IDEA Say?

The Part C Service Coordinator will inform the parent that, consistent with IDEA requirements, First Steps is required to notify school district, also known as the local educational agency (LEA) in which the child lives, that the child is approaching three years of age and may be eligible for early childhood special education services under Part B of IDEA. This notification consists of directory information, which is the child's name and birth date, parents' names, address, and telephone number. Sending directory information to the local school district/ECSE is the same as making a referral to Part B of IDEA.

Parent consent is not required to release directory information; however, in Missouri, parents have a specific period of time to object, or opt out, to the Service Coordinator providing directory information to the school district. Under the Opt Out policy, the parent has until 90 days before the child turns 3 years old to decide to opt out, in writing, or the directory information will be sent to the school district in which the child lives.

State regulations require not fewer than 90 days (and at the discretion of all parties, not more than nine months) prior to the child's third birthday, the Part C Service Coordinator convene an IFSP meeting to discuss the transition steps with the parents and other IFSP team members in order to develop a transition plan.

Every child in First Steps will have a meeting to develop a transition plan; however, parents who want directory information sent to the local school district to refer their child to early childhood special education may request for the Service Coordinator to have a transition conference with ECSE.

At the transition plan meeting, the IFSP team must discuss what the family and child need to prepare for changes in service delivery, including steps to help the child adjust and function in a new setting. At this time, the team determines the steps to be taken to transition to the public school and/or other services, as appropriate.

It is important that all options, including referral to the public school, are considered and discussed with the family. Other appropriate options for the child and family may include private preschool, Head Start, childcare or other community early childhood programs.

If the parent agrees to share directory information with ECSE, this starts the referral to determine if their child is eligible for special education and related services under Part B of IDEA. The Part C Service Coordinator arranges a Conference with ECSE. The conference with ECSE may be combined with the Transition Plan Meeting in order to have one meeting with the parent to discuss the child's transition from First Steps. The Service Coordinator also obtains a Release of Information to the school district for any additional information to be shared beyond the directory information.

Any information that will assist the district in determining the child's eligibility and program needs should be considered for release. That information should include, at a minimum, the following:

- A copy of the most recent IFSP; and,
- A copy of the most recent evaluation and assessments of the child.

## **BETH'S STORY**

Shelby and Beth reached the top of the hill and stopped to catch their breath. Shelby took a deep breath and continued. "OK, we're at the top. Let's start talking about the transition meeting. Just like for the rest of the activities in First Steps, there are timelines for transition. It's important for families to be aware of the transition timelines and to share with them everything you will be doing. Keeping a constant flow of communication will help ensure that families receive all of the information they need. Although the transition itself occurs when the child turns 3, as we've been discussing, the process begins much earlier."

"Wait a minute," Beth interjected, "how much of this transition stuff am I supposed to know as a provider working with the child and family?"

Shelby replied, "That's a good question. Although the Service Coordinator may handle the paperwork and the specific transition details, the provider is in the home, too, and the family may ask questions about transition so you'll need to know this basic information in order to support the family and answer their questions when possible."

"OK," said Beth, "that makes sense to me."

"Good, now back to the transition process. The first step is sending directory information to ECSE. Directory information includes the child's name and birth date, and also the parents' names, address, and telephone number."

"The First Steps office will send this information to the school district in which the child lives unless the family does not want the information shared. If the family doesn't want directory information sent, then we say the family 'opts out.' Most families are interested in the school's services and want the information sent, but some families do not. Are you with me so far?"

"I think so," replied Beth. "Unless parents 'opt out,' the Service Coordinator notifies the district and provides 'directory information.' "

"You got it!" remarked Shelby. "If the parent opts out of sharing directory information with the local school district or if the parent is unsure, the Service Coordinator must schedule a transition plan meeting to determine the next steps for the child and family once the child turns 3 years of age."

"Now then, the next step in the transition process is scheduling that Transition Plan IFSP meeting. About six to four months prior to the child's 3rd birthday, the Service Coordinator will convene an IFSP meeting to discuss the transition process with the parents and other team members. At the transition meeting, they develop a transition plan for the child. The transition plan may be developed during a periodic or annual review of the IFSP; however, if everyone agrees, the meeting can be held up to nine months before the child's 3rd birthday. Remember, the meeting must be held no later than 90 days before the child turns 3, which is why the Service Coordinator starts planning early."

"Just like for other IFSP meetings, the time and place have to be convenient for the family. And, just like before, the parent decides who will be invited to the meeting. Participants usually include the professionals who work with the child and family and additional family members or other family supports."

"Throughout the transition process we want to make sure we're focusing on supporting the family. When we're helping parents consider their child's 'next steps' it's important to remember that this transition is a natural growth process that all children experience. It's also the first of many transitions that families will go through with their child and if we do it well, they end up feeling more confident and more prepared for future transitions. If we view transition in that way, it's more likely that parents will view it that way, too. That makes it easier to help parents consider what kind of early childhood setting is most appropriate for their preschooler."

"So let's get back to the different meetings that we have for transition. Remember, every child will have a transition plan meeting. This meeting has to be held no later than 90 days before the child turns 3. There are a lot of people who could be invited to the transition meeting, such as representatives from preschool programs, Head Start and family or friends that the parents want to invite. Of course the Service Coordinator, First Steps providers and the parents are at the meeting and together, the team develops a transition plan."

Beth replied, "And you talked about some of the things in the transition plan that can help make the transition easier – empowering families to be partners in the process, letting them talk to other families, having the team identify and target new transition skills for the child, and exploring options in the community for preschool settings. Did I get it right?"

"Yep, you got it!" said Shelby. "At the transition plan meeting, all of the possible options are discussed with the family. The options can include private preschool, Head Start, childcare or other community early childhood programs. Transition planning can also involve setting up visits to some of the settings the parents are considering, or meeting new probable providers. First Steps personnel and community early childhood personnel each have critical responsibilities to carry out during the process of planning transition with families. Everyone has to work together to ensure a smooth transition to appropriate early childhood settings for young

children when they leave First Steps. Exactly what happens depends on what the child needs, what the family wants, and what's available in the community.”

Shelby continued, “In addition to providing support to the family, the team discusses things it can do to help the transition be successful for the child. First, we do everything we can to help the child be ready to participate in the next setting. We can do this by having the parents, service providers and others at the meeting to determine the skills the child will need in the next program. Once we've identified the skills, the team develops plans for how the parents, service providers, and other caregivers will help the child acquire these ‘transition skills.’ ”

Beth nodded.

"Another part of that preparation can include helping the family prepare information about the child that will be beneficial for the teacher in the new setting. This way we're helping the child to be successful in the new program and we're also making it easier for the teacher to be ready for each child and the various strengths and challenges each child has. All of this is documented in the IFSP."

“So for those families that know they want to go to ECSE, is the process any different?” Beth asked.

Shelby paused. “Before we go into what happens when the parent wants to go to the local school district, let me make sure that you remember - by the end of the Transition Plan Meeting, the parent needs to determine whether to pursue a referral to the local school district to see if the child qualifies for ECSE, otherwise directory information is sent to the district where the child lives.”

“So what happens if the parent decides at the transition plan that they want to go to programs at the local school district, like ECSE?” asked Beth.

“It is a bit different,” explained Shelby. “The part that is the same is the discussion about where the child will go after age 3 and how to help prepare the family for this change. Once the school district receives the directory information, this starts the referral for ECSE services or since it's only for children age 3 to 5, before they go to kindergarten we just call it the ECSE program. The Service Coordinator will then schedule a meeting for the Conference with ECSE. The challenging part for this is, if the family already had a Transition Plan Meeting, then the Service Coordinator has to schedule another meeting for the transition conference and it also has to be held no later than 90 days before the child's third birthday!”

“Gosh,” said Beth. “I bet it is hard to get everyone together again so quickly.”

“Sometimes it is,” said Shelby. “That's why we can combine the transition plan meeting and conference to occur simultaneously if we know that the parent wants to pursue a referral to the school. To combine the meetings, we just send directory information and invite the folks from ECSE to the transition plan meeting, the first meeting that all families must have, and then we can discuss the transition plan and referral to ECSE at the same time.”

Shelby continued, "During the conference with the school, a representative from the school district will explain the legal rights—or procedural safeguards—to the parent concerning the district's services for the child. The representative from the district will also share information about the evaluation process, the range of services, options that may be available for the child, and where these services can be obtained. This is simply a time to discuss the referral, the need for further evaluation, program options, and to answer any other questions the parent might have. Does that make sense?" asked Shelby.

"Yes, it's beginning to. Are district personnel there so eligibility can be determined at the meeting?" asked Beth.

"Oh, no, eligibility determination for ECSE comes later in the process," said Shelby. "The district personnel are there to explain the criteria for eligibility in ECSE, the process the district will take to evaluate the child and determine the child's eligibility for services and, if eligible, the steps that will be taken to assure the provision of service on the child's 3rd birthday. Someone from the district will also explain the legal rights—or procedural safeguards—to the parent concerning services for their child. Basically, they want to give parents a brief overview of their program so the parents have some idea of what to expect."

"That's a lot of information! What if someone from the school cannot attend?" asked Beth.

"School personnel are supposed to attend the First Steps transition conference. If, for some reason, district personnel don't attend, the Service Coordinator provides some of this information. But, having district folks there is best. Remember, we do this kind of a program overview at the beginning of the First Steps process, too."

"Right," said Beth, nodding in agreement. "Giving parents the information before they have to make a decision can help them be more prepared."

"Yes it does," said Shelby. "Do you have any other questions?"

"I do have one. I was wondering how many children in First Steps end up going to ECSE?" asked Beth.

"Most do." Shelby continued, "I know it's more than half of the First Steps children go on to participate in ECSE. Remember, a referral doesn't mean that the child will be eligible. Not all children who have been in First Steps qualify for ECSE."

Beth thought for a minute and responded. "Where I used to work, we didn't go to any of these meetings. I've always wondered how parents figure it all out." Shelby replied, "It is important for all of us in First Steps to understand transition so we can help families during this time."

"I do remember some parents asking me questions about what we thought they should do, and I just didn't know. I wish I had known more then," sighed Beth.

"One of the things that I really like about working in First Steps is how much support we can give families," said Shelby. "We don't ever make decisions for them, but we do try to make sure that they have all of the relevant information so they are able to make the best decision possible for themselves and their child."

"I like that I can help make a difference for my families," Beth said.

Shelby responded, "Yes, and at the end of the transition process we evaluate the transition services from the family's view and get feedback from them on what they found to be helpful and what else we might have done. That way we can make sure that we have helped families in ways they feel are beneficial. Remember, our goal is to make the transition process a positive experience for the family," Shelby said with a smile.

### **What Can the Team do to Prepare Families for Transition?**

- 1) Discuss with, and provide information to parents regarding future placements and other matters related to the child's transition.
- 2) Prepare the child for changes in service delivery including steps to help the child adjust to and function in, a new setting.
- 3) Provide directory information to the local school district, unless the parent opts out.
- 4) With written parental consent, transfer additional information about the child, including copies of evaluations, assessments and IFSP records, to the school district to ensure continuity of services.

"OK, let's continue with a few more important things about the transition conference," Shelby said. "To assist with the referral to ECSE, the Service Coordinator provides the district with a copy of the current IFSP and all recent evaluations and assessments. Of course, as you know, this can only happen if the parent gives consent and signs a release of information."

"What about the provider's notes, you know, what we keep for documentation about the child's progress?" asked Beth.

"Good point," said Shelby. "Provider notes or any other kind of progress notes are not required to be provided to the district, but that information is very helpful to the district so it should be considered. I have heard Service Coordinators ask parents if progress notes are something the parents want to send, so the district has not just the testing reports, but also the progress reports for their child. Generally anything that has been done in the past year is good information for the district to have available in the district's review of existing information."

"That makes sense to me. If the district has all of the information—with parent consent of course," said Beth smiling, "then parents and children won't have to redo what's already been done. It's just like when eligibility was being determined for First Steps. You want to collect all of the relevant information that's already out there and then see what else is needed. So tell me more about how eligibility for ECSE works."

"Sure, I can do that," said Shelby. "But we're back where we started walking so I think we'll save that for another day. How about if we meet for lunch on Friday? It's supposed to rain the rest of the week so I don't think we'll be able to walk again."

"That works for me," replied Beth. "And this time it's my treat. Same place as last time?" Shelby nodded in response.

## **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Think about the following questions as you reflect on the information in this section of the course:

1. The transition plan needs to be in place 90 days before the child turns 3. Why do you think this is necessary to have the transition plan in place so far in advance of the child's 3rd birthday?
2. The transition plan meeting includes parents, the Service Coordinator, First Steps providers, plus anyone else the parent wants to attend. Why do you believe all of these people should be present at the transition plan meeting?
3. Why is it important to have a conference with ECSE to discuss transition to the school?

## Module 4 Tab 3: Differences Between Part C and B of IDEA

Service providers spend a great deal of time interacting with parents and children participating in the First Steps program. Because of this, providers play a critical role in ensuring a smooth transition out of First Steps.

There are several differences between Part C and Part B services, and these differences can feel overwhelming when combined with the natural anxiety families feel about new programs, people, and services.

### What Does the IDEA Say? (Part C)

The purpose of an early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities for this part is to:

- Develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, birth to age 3, and their families,
- Provide quality early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, and
- Identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of historically underrepresented populations, particularly minority, low-income, inner-city, and rural populations.

### What Does the IDEA Say? (Part B)

The purpose of special education services for children with disabilities for this part is to:

- Ensure all children with disabilities, age 3 to 21, have a free appropriate public education available to them,
- Design special education and related services to meet the unique learning needs of eligible children with disabilities, ages 3 to 21, and
- Prepare students with disabilities for further education, employment and independent living.

Service providers are able to guide families into and through these transitions by being knowledgeable and projecting a positive attitude about the upcoming changes.

The most effective way for providers to be knowledgeable is to contact and establish relationships with local school districts and other community programs and be aware of the basic procedures these agencies use. In this way, people familiar with the family can answer questions as they arise and ease the transition process.

## BETH'S STORY

Shelby arrived at the restaurant first and got a table in the front. Beth arrived a few minutes later and sat down. They chatted about the rain until the waiter came to take their orders.

"I'm hungry, but let's get started while we're waiting for our food. Do you remember what we were talking about?" asked Shelby with a smile.

"Yes," said Beth. "I was asking you about the evaluation and eligibility process for ECSE. I meant to look it up, but got distracted. I did review everything we've talked about so far and I think I understand the transition meeting and referral process to the Part B program. When I was thinking about it on the way over I had a question about the eligibility process. I know the parent is part of the team for the earlier steps and continues to be on the team, but does the First Steps Service Coordinator participate in the ECSE evaluation and eligibility, too? What about service providers?"

"Good question, and yes, they do. They help provide information on the child's history and current level of functioning," answered Shelby. "I'm glad you have these questions. These are the same questions and topics that families ask and worry about. I know we are First Steps providers, but it is important to really understand the process for the ECSE program as well. There are so many things going on behind the scenes in preparation for the change in services. When we do our jobs the right way, families trust us and depend upon us to be able to help them understand everything that is going on."

Shelby continued, "Let's back up a little bit. Throughout our talks I've mentioned that there are similarities and differences between Part C and Part B of IDEA. Differences between the laws mean there are differences between the programs. I'll try to cover the important differences such as eligibility, individualized plans, and service provisions. It's important to know the differences between the programs so we can help support families and answer their questions. I have a document on my computer that lists the similarities and differences between Parts B and C on it. I will make a note to e-mail that to you."

"Thanks!" remarked Beth.

Shelby continued talking. "By the time we get to transition we usually know the child really well and have a wealth of information. This information becomes part of the data that the school will consider when deciding whether to move forward with the evaluation process. It's also how the evaluation process begins—by reviewing existing information. The ECSE evaluation team will consist of the parent(s), a special education teacher who is knowledgeable about the child's suspected disability, someone from the district who can commit personnel and resources, someone who can interpret evaluation results, the child's First Steps Service Coordinator, and anyone who has knowledge regarding the child and his or her needs. The school evaluation team reviews the existing data to determine if there is a need for additional testing to determine eligibility."

"That's a pretty big group," remarked Beth. "It's good that along with the new school district folks, the First Steps folks can be there, too. I'll bet that makes families feel more comfortable."

"You're right about that," responded Shelby. "I think it can be reassuring to families to feel like there's a whole team that will help make sure their child will get what he or she needs. Over time, the First Steps Service Coordinators, providers and the school district folks become really good collaborators and families and children benefit. During the evaluation process the team gathers information about the child's strengths and educational needs beginning, as I said before, with the information that's already there. School district personnel will evaluate the current information and determine, with the input of the team, if additional information will be needed to determine eligibility."

"What kind of information does the school need?" Beth asked.

"The school district will usually be looking for a lot of the same information we look for when we are trying to determine eligibility for First Steps. They need information about the child's vision and hearing, a developmental and social history that includes health concerns, and information about all areas of development to see if further assessment is needed. Do you remember what those areas are?" asked Shelby.

"Yes," said Beth. "In First Steps we have to know about the child's cognition, communication, motor development, social/emotional development, and self-help or adaptive behavior skills."

"Right," continued Shelby. "They also need evaluations in specific areas of expected delay and observations of the child in his or her natural environment. If the child has a diagnosed disability, they'll also want specific information about that."

"What happens if there isn't enough information to determine eligibility? I'm guessing that for a lot of children, more evaluations are needed. Does First Steps take care of those?" asked Beth.

"Good question," answered Shelby. "No, First Steps doesn't do any more evaluations when ECSE eligibility is being determined. Any additional evaluations—after parents give written consent—are the responsibility of the local school district. The district will arrange for these evaluations to take place in the child's home, at the child-care center, or anywhere the child may be comfortable. When the evaluation is complete, a meeting is arranged to discuss the results. The next step is eligibility determination. The team will use the evaluation results to determine if the child is eligible for services through Part B of IDEA."

"I know you said that the eligibility requirements are different for the two programs," said Beth.

"How are they different? Can you remind me of the eligibility requirements for Part C and then explain them for Part B?"

"Sure," answered Shelby. "For First Steps a child has to have a diagnosed condition that will likely result in a developmental delay, a documented half-age delay in one of the developmental domains, or a newborn condition.

For ECSE, a child may qualify under one of the specific disability categories, or may qualify under the category of Young Child with Developmental Delay—or YCDD. In Missouri, children qualify if they have a score two standard deviations below the mean in one developmental area,

or 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two areas. I brought a copy of both eligibility requirements for you to look at later.”

“Thanks,” smiled Beth. “I’ve printed out all of the handouts and materials you’ve given me and have it organized in a binder so I can find what I’m looking for. I keep my binder handy so I can find information if I’m having trouble remembering. I know I’ll need to review it often when I’m providing services.”

“Yes,” said Shelby. “Being organized and keeping up with all of the program requirements is really important. I’ve been doing this a long time and I still need to review them! I also sometimes review the presentations that are on the First Steps website. It always helps to hear or read things more than once. You know, because of state and federal law changes, the birth-to-3 policies are often changing and being updated. As a provider it’s going to be your responsibility to keep up with changes. Over the years First Steps has changed as we’ve gotten better and better at implementing the family-centered philosophy. Re-reading and making sure I am up-to-date is part of the job.” Shelby paused and looked at Beth. “OK? Are you ready to move on?” Beth nodded in response. “I see the waiter with our food. Let’s wait just a minute.”

They both paused as they began their lunch. After a few bites, the conversation continued.

“OK, back to determining eligibility for ECSE. Once all of the information about the child has been collected and all necessary assessments are done, the team evaluates the assessment results to determine if the child is eligible for the program. If the child is eligible, we go to the next step, which is developing the Individualized Education Program,” said Shelby.

“Wait! What happens to children who aren’t eligible?” asked Beth.

“If the child is not eligible then the IFSP team helps the family identify other community programs that might be a good fit for the child. This could include a variety of things such as Head Start, child/family therapy or parenting education, a mommy-and-me class, a playgroup, developmental movement classes, or a community preschool or childcare program. There are lots of options,” answered Shelby. “Whatever the case, the team helps the family figure out what the next steps will be for the child, again based on what works for the family and what the child’s strengths and needs are.”

Beth asked, “So, if the child doesn’t qualify for ECSE, do First Steps services stop?”

“No,” Shelby replied. “First Steps services will continue until the day before the child turns 3, unless the parent decides they don’t want services anymore.”

“Ok,” Beth said.

Shelby continued, “For children eligible for ECSE, the next step is developing the Individualized Education Program, or IEP. In First Steps, the plan for intervention is called the Individualized Family Service Plan, but at age 3, the intervention plan is called the Individualized Education Program. The change in the name isn’t just semantics. The focus changes from the child and family to a focus on the child. The IEP is often developed at a different meeting that is held a

little later. This allows time for the parents to think about what goals would be important next steps for their child and the programs or services that will be most appropriate in meeting their child's needs. The IEP is similar to the IFSP in that goals are developed for the child, but there are also important differences. I'll send you a blank copy of the IEP that we use in Missouri. Although the federal regulations for what needs to be in an IEP are the same for every state, each state's form looks a little different, just like the differences in each state's IFSP forms. I did remember to bring a handout that compares the IFSP to the IEP so I won't have as much to e-mail to you as I did last time."

Beth smiled. "I really do appreciate all of your help. I sure will be better prepared than I was when I first moved here."

"Again, you're welcome. It's been good for me to explain it to you, but let's get back to the IEP. After the team determines that a child is eligible for Part B, a written IEP will be developed for the child. I'm not going to go into detail about writing the IEP since, although we're part of the team, we don't actually write the plan," said Shelby. "I know it may seem strange to be breaking down the Part B process like this, especially since we are First Steps providers, but remember it's important for us to understand what happens so we can help prepare the families. Are you following me so far?" asked Shelby.

"Yes, this all makes sense so far," replied Beth. "I think the most important things for me to learn are the First Steps rules and processes, but I definitely agree that it probably offers families a great deal of comfort if a provider they are familiar with is able to help them understand the process and what to expect with the new program. If I'm following along correctly, the child isn't even 3 years old yet during this process, so the child will still most likely be in the First Steps program anyway. You're right. It will be helpful for me to understand everything that is going on behind the scenes so I can help the families make sense of it all."

Shelby continued. "Exactly! So, let's assume we have a written IEP that targets important goals for the child, and both the family and the professionals. In other words, everyone on the team is in agreement. The next step is for the team to determine the services and placement. The range of services will be explained to the team by the district folks. In Part B, children receive services only in the areas where they show significant delays. Services on the IEP will be provided by school staff and other listed implementers. Just as First Steps providers are responsible for ensuring that services are carried out as written in the IFSP, the ECSE folks will be responsible for providing instructional activities to help the child achieve the goals as outlined in the IEP. They'll keep records of how the child is doing throughout the year. Parents will receive progress reports and updates according to the IEP. Most programs keep the parents well-informed. 'Placement' is where the services will take place. For example, this might be an ECSE classroom, Head Start, or a Title 1 preschool. In Part C we are mandated to provide services in the child's natural environment. In Part B, we are mandated to provide services in the least restrictive environment, or LRE."

Beth interrupted, "I'm going to have to learn a whole new set of Part B acronyms—IEP, LRE, YCDD! I'm sure there are lots more. I just felt like I was getting good at the ones for Part C!"

"You said that with a smile but you raised a good point," said Shelby. "Those of us who use those terms every day sometimes forget that parents and even new providers don't always know what we're talking about. I'll try to be more careful about the terminology and explain what it means. When you're working with parents, think about this moment and how overwhelmed you felt trying to keep all of the letters straight."

"You're right," said Beth. "Initially it can feel overwhelming, even for providers. Imagine how much harder it must be for parents. I will try to be careful about explaining and using words that most people understand rather than jargon."

"OK, I'll explain more," continued Shelby. "LRE or least restrictive environment means that the child will be served as much as possible with other children his or her age who do not have disabilities. The school district will have a range or continuum of where services can be delivered. When considering placement, the team will first look at the place where the child would be if he or she did not have a disability. Of course, before placement can occur a parent must provide written permission for the child to receive special education services."

Beth thought for a minute. "What if there are a number of options? How will the decision be made?"

"If there are a number of options that the team thinks would be appropriate, the parent will visit and observe those settings. The benefits and challenges of each setting will be discussed and the team will make a decision," said Shelby. "Sometimes what's best is clear initially, but sometimes that isn't true. Again, having a team helps make sure all of the important components like ability of the program to provide appropriate accommodations, logistics for the family such as location and hours, and teacher expertise with a child with that need are considered—just to name a few."

"So, once the placement has been determined and written permission has been obtained from the parent, the child will begin to receive services based on the IEP. These services are provided throughout the regular academic school year. Services might include OT, PT, speech, or a behavioral consultant. Just like the First Steps IFSP, the IEP will be reviewed regularly. Each year, or sooner if necessary, the team will come together to review the child's progress toward accomplishing the IEP goals. If changes need to be made, they are made during the IEP review meeting," said Shelby.

She continued, "One thing we didn't talk about was the difference in when services are provided for Part C and Part B. In First Steps, services are year-round but in Part B, services are usually only provided during the school year. There are times when a child may receive services during school breaks or the summer. This is called 'extended school year' or ESY. To decide if a child needs the ESY, the team looks at whether the child would lose key skills that would not be easily regained after a break in services. Losing skills is called 'regression' and gaining them back is called 'recoupment.' ESY services are provided only if the team decides that these are necessary. But, even if the school district offers ESY services, the family can choose to take advantage of them or not."

"So even though Part B is more of a child-centered model, parents are still an integral part of the team and involved in the IEP discussions," said Beth.

"Yes, parents and school district personnel work together to make the best decisions possible for the child; however a difference is that in Part B when the IEP team and parent disagree and cannot come to an agreement, the school district makes the final decision and provides notice to the parents," explained Shelby. "Let's talk about another way the programs are similar. Both Part B and C of IDEA have sections that address transition. The law related to transition is brief, but good transitions take time and a lot of teamwork. It's not just about providing support and information to families. Collaboration is key; there is a lot of time, energy, and collaboration that goes into the planning for a child's transition out of First Steps, and then again when a child transitions out of ECSE. Understanding the process and the similarities and differences between the Part C and Part B programs is extremely important when trying to support families in their decision-making and answer their questions. In the blink of an eye, their precious, little baby has grown up. In the midst of celebrating their child's 3rd birthday, First Steps families are also attempting to understand and cope with the changes ahead," said Shelby.

Beth was quiet as she thought about the new information. "Oh, here comes the waiter. I said I'd treat so I'll take the check."

Shelby glanced at her watch. "You don't have to do that but I appreciate it and I have to run to a transition meeting! We aren't quite finished, though. There are some exceptions to the timelines and things like summer birthdays to consider. Let's meet for a walk at the lake tomorrow at 10:00. Does that work?"

Beth nodded as she picked up the check. "See you then."

### **Differences Between Part C and Part B of IDEA: Transition from First Steps to ECSE**

This video explains the differences between Parts B and C of IDEA including the areas of eligibility criteria, referral, program focus, purpose of evaluation and assessment, intervention plans, service availability, types of services provided, location of services and parental rights.

## **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Think about the following questions as you reflect on the information in this section of the course:

1. As Beth noted concerning the evaluation team, "That's a pretty big group." What strategies might you use to prevent families from feeling intimidated? How might you help families feel at ease and part of the team?
2. As the child moves from Part C to Part B, how do you think parents' goals might change?
3. What do you feel are the most significant differences between Part C and Part B? How do you think those differences will affect the family?

## Module 4 Tab 4: Timelines and Exceptions

The key to an effective and smooth transition is to ensure that there are no gaps in the delivery of special education services as children turn 3. The transfer of responsibility from one program to another should cause as little disruption as possible in the lives of the children and their families.

When directory information is received at the school district, ECSE evaluation timelines begins. The ECSE evaluation process is divided into the following components:

- 30 calendar days from referral to determine if a disability is suspected and provide parent with a notice of action either refusing the referral because there is no reason to suspect a disability or consent to evaluate and proceed with the referral;
- 60 calendar days from notice of action/consent to complete evaluation and determine eligibility;
- 30 calendar days from eligibility determination to development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

This timeline is followed even when the referral is received by ECSE well before the child's third birthday. However, school districts are not required to conduct evaluations during summer break or other school breaks unless they do so for other children in the district. If a child is referred to First Steps 90 days or more prior to the child's third birthday and determined eligible for First Steps and found eligible for ECSE, then the IEP must be developed by the child's third birthday. When following the 30-60-30 timeline, there may be instances where IEPs are developed before the child's third birthday, to be implemented on the child's third birthday.

### What Does the IDEA Say?

School districts receiving referrals for children from First Steps are required to determine if an evaluation for ECSE is needed, conduct that evaluation as appropriate and, if the child is found to be eligible for special education under Part B of IDEA, develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) by the child's third birthday. There are three exceptions to having an IEP developed by the child's third birthday:

- A referral to First Steps that is less than 90 days before the child's third birthday;
- The parent refuses to provide consent for an initial ECSE evaluation;
- The parent initially "opts out" of the First Steps notification to the school district and subsequently changes their mind (otherwise known as "opt out reversal") less than 90 days before child's third birthday.

Children who turn 3 and enroll in the local school district for the remainder of the school year must be considered for extended school year (ESY) services as required by Part B of IDEA.

This means the child must qualify for extended school year services based upon the local school district's extended school year policy. There is a chance that the First Steps child will not qualify and, therefore, will not receive any IEP services during the summer. Should the family choose to

move on to the school for ECSE services and the child does not qualify for ESY services, the family cannot return to First Steps for summer services.

If a child is referred to First Steps between 135 and 90 days before age three, the Service Coordinator should immediately, with the parent's written consent, refer the child to the local school district and inform them of the parent's desire for an eligibility determination.

### **Children with Summer Third Birthdays**

For a child who has a third birthday of April 1 through August 15, summer third birthday services may be delivered to the family in order to avoid a gap in services between First Steps and ECSE. Summer third birthday services are only available if the child is eligible for ECSE, or in the process of eligibility determination for ECSE, before age three.

If the parent chooses to pursue ECSE services, the parent has two choices: (1) transition to ECSE on the child's third birthday, or (2) continue First Steps services until school starts in the fall following the child's third birthday.

(1) If the parent chooses ECSE services, the child will transition to the school district on the child's third birthday and receive a Free Appropriate Education (FAPE) through an IEP. Children who receive services through an IEP are considered Extended School Year (ESY). Parents who choose ECSE services after age three cannot later choose to return to First Steps once consent is obtained for ECSE services and the child has turned three.

(2) If the parent chooses First Steps services, the Service Coordinator obtains written parental consent documenting the parents' decision to continue in First Steps and a Summer Third Birthday IFSP meeting has to be held before the child's third birthday. The Summer Third Birthday IFSP must include an educational component that promotes school readiness and incorporates pre-literacy, language and numeracy skills. Summer third birthday services are delivered in accordance with the Summer Third Birthday IFSP until the day before school starts in the fall following the child's third birthday. However, if the child is determined ineligible for ECSE or if the parent is no longer pursuing ECSE, then summer third birthday services end upon the Service Coordinator confirming the information.

Parents who choose for their child to continue in First Steps after age three have the right, at any time, for their child to participate in ECSE instead of First Steps. However, a child cannot participate in First Steps and ECSE at the same time.

Facilitating this referral promptly can increase the likelihood that the school district will be able to complete the evaluation process by the child's third birthday or at least minimize the delay in cases where the child was almost 3 when referred to First Steps. The initial IFSP meeting will

also serve as the transition plan and conference with ECSE. Additional actions will depend on the amount of time between the referral and the third birthday and the preference of the family.

## **BETH'S STORY**

Beth was waiting when Shelby arrived. "Finally, the sun is out! It feels good to be exercising again, although I'm sad about this being our last meeting."

"I meant what I told you the other day," said Shelby. "We can continue to meet after you start providing services. I'm sure more questions will come up and it will be good to talk about them. As I said before, it might be good to have a Service Coordinator join us. I still sometimes have questions about how I should handle something with a family so I'd really like to talk through some of the challenges. But, today let's focus on the timelines and exceptions within the transition process. Luckily, the path around the lake is flat so I won't have to talk and climb hills at the same time," said Shelby with a smile.

"Sounds good," replied Beth. "Last time I think we stopped at the 3rd birthday."

"That sounds right to me, too," said Shelby. "I've explained what happens from the transition meeting to the child receiving Part B services. It can seem like a very long process because a lot needs to happen and important decisions need to be made. Everyone has to work together to keep the process moving smoothly."

"Now this might get tricky with all of the dates and timelines so I will try to go slow," said Shelby.

"When the Service Coordinator sends directory information to the folks at the district, this starts the referral for early childhood special education services. Remember when we talked about this a few days ago?"

Beth nodded.

"Ok," replied Shelby. "So the date the district gets the complete directory information (i.e., child's name, birth date, parent's name and address and phone number), begins the district's 30 day timeline to conduct a review of existing data."

The total time between when the parents give permission to the district to evaluate their child and eligibility determination is allowed to take up to 60 calendar days. This includes the time needed to collect records, conduct any additional evaluations, and hold necessary meetings to determine eligibility. We discussed this yesterday," said Shelby. "After eligibility determination the district has 30 days to develop an Individualized Education Program, or IEP."

"Luckily, First Steps personnel and school district personnel frequently work together, which helps make the transition process run smoothly. The goals for both groups of people are for the transition to be a positive experience for the family, and that the child's IEP goals, services, and placement are what is best for the child."

Shelby took a deep breath. "That seems pretty straightforward, but then you have the exceptions."

Beth laughed, then spoke. "It seems like there would have to be exceptions since the school district under Part B works so much differently from First Steps under Part C. For one thing, schools are usually closed for a couple of weeks in the winter and there's usually a spring break. Oh, and in the summer not everyone goes to school. If a child turned 3 just after school ended that child may end up without services for the whole summer. That could really be a problem for both the child and the family."

"Right," said Shelby. "So the law had to address what happens if the child's birthday takes place during those times—and you provided a good lead-in to the 'summer birthday exception,'" laughed Shelby. "I was going to talk about that. For children turning three April 1 through August 15 and who are eligible for ECSE or whose eligibility is in process, the parents have a choice. Their child can transition to ECSE on the child's third birthday or continue in First Steps after age three until the day before school starts in the fall. Some families choose to go to the school setting as soon as possible and others decide to wait."

"Let me make sure I understand," said Beth. "So, in most circumstances the school district has to have the IEP ready to go by the child's 3rd birthday and the IEP is implemented then. But, if a child turns 3 during or near the summer, the IEP is still developed, but the parents can decide whether to continue with First Steps until the fall or start services with the school district. Right?"

"Yes, the law gives a fair amount of flexibility and parent choice for that," responded Shelby.

Shelby smiled and continued. "The other sort of exception, or process that's a bit different from how things usually go, is if children are referred to First Steps when they are older than 2 years 9 months of age. The transition plan meeting is supposed to happen no later than 90 days before the child turns 3 but, if the child is just referred at that time, clearly that transition meeting can't happen on time."

"Right. I hadn't thought about that. So, what happens when the referral to First Steps is so late?" asked Beth.

Shelby explained, "If First Steps gets a late referral, with parent consent of course, the Service Coordinator immediately refers the child to the local school district and informs them the parent wants to find out if the child qualifies for ECSE. Informing the school promptly can increase the likelihood that the school district will be able to complete the evaluation process by the child's 3rd birthday or at least minimize the delay. The initial IFSP meeting will also serve as the transition meeting too."

Shelby glanced over to see if Beth was following. Beth smiled and nodded.

Shelby went on. "Additional actions will depend on the amount of time between the referral and the 3rd birthday and the preference of the family. The Service Coordinator should tell the family that First Steps addresses early intervention services for children until their 3rd birthday and

about the Part B timelines, including the 60-day timeline allowed for completing the evaluation and the 30-day timeline allowed for developing an IEP. Sometimes doing two evaluations, one for the school district and one for First Steps, may seem like too much, particularly since the eligibility requirements for the two programs are different.”

Beth thought for a moment and slowed her pace. "I think I'm confused.”

"I agree that the timelines can be confusing. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center has a handout about late referrals, requirements and timelines. I'll send you the link,” said Shelby.

"But, the main point is that if the child is referred to First Steps during the time that most children are already going through the transition process, the family needs to decide if it wants to determine eligibility for both First Steps and the school district or just the school district.”

"Yes, determining eligibility for two programs with different requirements would probably require a lot of testing, particularly if different evaluations are needed.” responded Beth.

"Right,” said Shelby, "and for that reason, some parents may decide that they don't see a need to complete the evaluation for First Steps if they could only participate for a very short period of time. In those cases, the family may choose to just let First Steps assist with the referral to the local school district. In other cases, there may be ample time for First Steps to complete the evaluation and provide services prior to the child's third birthday, and the family may choose this option.”

"OK, let me be sure I understand this,” Beth said. "Another extenuating circumstance that can affect how things go is if the child isn't already in First Steps and gets referred within 90 days of the 3rd birthday. The parents may choose not to go through eligibility determination for First Steps and just have First Steps help with the ECSE referral. Can you give me some examples of when different situations might occur?” asked Beth.

"Sure. For example, there might be a child with Down syndrome who is moving to Missouri when he's 32 months old. If he was already receiving services through another state's Part C program, has a current IFSP, and the previous Service Coordinator has communicated with the Missouri System Point of Entry ahead of time and sent all of the current paperwork, developing the new IFSP could be pretty easy and not require a lot of time so the child could get close to 4 months of service. On the other hand, if the child has a delay or challenging behavior but does not have a diagnosis, or particularly if no one has evaluated this child, the parents might decide that having to go through two eligibility processes at the same time would be too stressful and opt to just be evaluated by the school district. There are lots of different situations and we just want to make sure that parents have all of the information so they can make the decision that best suits their family,” replied Shelby.

"Late referrals also affect some of the other rules,” continued Shelby. "If the child is referred to First Steps less than 90 days before the child's 3rd birthday, then the school district is not required to have an IEP in place by the 3rd birthday. But if the referral to First Steps occurs 90

days or more before the child's third birthday, then the IEP must be in place by the third birthday."

Beth paused and smiled at Shelby. "I know I'll be checking my binder frequently on this timeline information. There sure is a lot to keep track of! But I guess what seems most important to me is that just like in the rest of the program, our role is to support families and help them make informed decisions for their child and for themselves."

Shelby smiled back. "You're right," she said. "This whole model, from the initial contacts with the family until the child has transitioned out and is participating in another program, is about teamwork. We team with families and use a family-centered model, but we also team with other First Steps providers. For transition, we team with school districts and community providers to support families and children."

"Well, here we are back at the cars. I'm sad to be leaving. Thanks so much for spending so much time with me. I understand so much more than I did at the beginning. But, like you said the other day, after I become a provider we can still meet to talk. I'll take you up on that!" said Beth as she walked to her car.

"You are very welcome and I do hope we continue to meet and talk about our practice. Thanks for the walk. I have an IFSP meeting at 1:00 so I need to scoot. See you soon," said Shelby as she waved goodbye.

## **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Think about the following questions as you reflect on the information in this section of the course:

1. What are some obstacles that could interfere with meeting the timeline requirement for the IEP process? How can you avoid those obstacles?
2. There are some exceptions to the IEP process when transitioning from Part C to Part B: the child turns 3 shortly before or during the summer and/or the child is referred to First Steps 135 days before age three. Why do you think it is important for families that our program has exceptions in place?

## Module 4 Tab 5: Resources

All documents, videos and supplemental materials that are linked in the module can be accessed under the Resources tab. The links to these resources were not included in this transcript.

### Module 4 Documents.

1. Comparison of the IEP and IFSP
2. First Steps Referral to ECSE Documentation Form
3. Key Features of IDEA Part B and Part C
4. Late Referrals to Part C
5. Opt Out Form
6. Parent Transition Handbook
7. Part B and Part C State Plans
8. Part B Eligibility
9. Part B Standards and Indicators
10. Part C Eligibility
11. Parental Rights Statement
12. Release of Information
13. Transition from First Steps to ECSE Presentation

### Module 4 Videos.

1. Differences Between Part C and Part B of IDEA: Transition from First Steps to ECSE
2. Steps to Success – Transition at Age 3

### Module 4 Supplemental Resources.

1. Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center – Transition
2. Eligibility Policies for Part B of IDEA
3. First Steps Practice Manual Chapter 10: Transition from First Steps