

# Transition



**A Booklet to Help Children  
and Families Transition from  
Early Steps at Age Three to  
Other Community Programs**

Revised 2015

This publication is produced through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) Resource and Information Center (BRIC), Division of Public Schools, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and is available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pub-home.asp>. For information on available resources, contact the BRIC.

BRIC website: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp>

Email: [BRIC@fldoe.org](mailto:BRIC@fldoe.org)

Telephone: 850-245-0475

Fax: 850-245-0953



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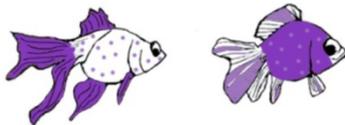
## Purpose

This booklet is designed to assist families who have young children with disabilities and special needs move from one agency or program to another. Moving from program to program is called *transition*.

Families and agencies or programs working with families have frequently asked Florida's Transition Project staff for a booklet that provides an overview of what takes place when a child turns three years old and leaves Early Steps to attend other community programs.

This booklet includes questions family members have asked about transition. It also includes descriptions of many statewide programs that may be available in your own community.

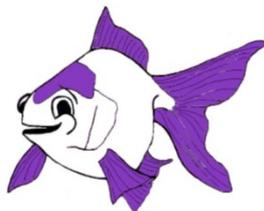
Visit Florida's Transition Project website at <http://www.floridatransitionproject.com> to download a copy of this booklet and other resources.



## Questions and Answers

**Q: Why does my child have to leave Early Steps (transition) by his or her third birthday?**

**A:** According to federal law — IDEA 2004, Part C — after age 36 months, your child is no longer eligible for Early Steps. Your child may not qualify for the same services from the school district that he or she received in Early Steps because of different eligibility requirements; however, you will be part of a team that makes decisions for your child. Your child may be eligible for a school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities under IDEA, Part B, or for other early learning services in your community.



**Q: What are the steps in the transition process?**

**A:** The following information will help you plan for your child's transition.

- Your service coordinator will discuss transition throughout the time your child receives services with Early Steps.
- Not fewer than 90 days prior to your child's third birthday, Early Steps must notify the Department of Education and the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities that your child is potentially eligible for services. This information helps the school district plan for services for your child; however, you will have the option to opt-out of having notification information shared at that time.
- Early Steps must hold a transition conference by the time your child is two years and nine months of age if your child is potentially eligible for school district

services. Early Steps will make a reasonable effort to hold a transition conference if your child is *not* potentially eligible for school district services.



**Q: What role(s) can a family member play in the transition process?**

**A:** Family members may:

- Participate in scheduled meetings
- Make decisions about what you want for your child and share it at the meeting
- Take your child to appointments for vision and hearing screenings, developmental evaluations and physical examinations
- Provide required documents for enrollment, such as proof of residency, birth certificate, immunization record and physical examination record
- Give written permission/consent for exchange of information between agencies or programs
- Visit community programs you are considering for your child

**Q: What can I do to make sure the transition process is working for my child?**

**A:** You can ask questions such as:

- What is the next step in the process?
- Who will contact me after the transition conference?

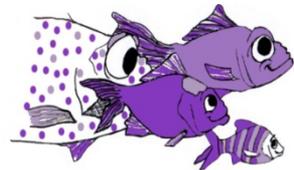


- In addition, you can contact your service coordinator or local Early Steps office if a timeline isn't being met.

**Q: Who participates in the transition conference?**

**A:** Required transition conference participants include you and your service coordinator. The service coordinator is required to invite the school district representative to the conference, with your approval, if your child is potentially eligible for the Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities. With your approval, other participants who may be invited include representatives from the program where your child is currently being served. You may also ask your service coordinator to invite a representative from the following agencies or programs:

- Early Steps service providers
- Head Start
- Community child care
- Children's Medical Services
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Other individuals or agency representatives of your family's choice (e.g., Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care [PPEC])



**Q: What happens at the transition conference?**

**A:** At the transition conference, the Early Steps service coordinator will facilitate discussion of:

- Services available from the local school district
- How and when evaluations and eligibility determination will occur
- Other agencies and community providers that may assist your child and family
- Existing child/family information
- Family concerns regarding transition
- Strategies to address identified concerns
- Activities that need to be completed before your child moves into the new setting
- Persons involved in completing identified activities written on the IFSP
- Timeframes for when each activity should be completed
- Need for scheduling visits to program sites



**Q: What happens after the transition conference?**

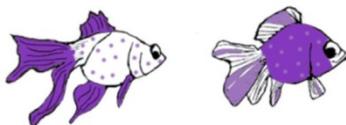
**A:** The activities written on the transition plan (Form I of the IFSP) will be completed by the individuals listed. For example, your service coordinator may arrange for your family to visit a program or school.

**Q: What are some other questions I should ask as my child transitions?**

**A:** Once you know the program for which your child is eligible, you might want to ask questions such as the following:



- What kind of forms or paperwork will I need to complete?
- What kind of educational plan will be written for my child?
- If my child is eligible for any program, will my child and I have an opportunity to visit the classroom, program or school?
- How many teachers and aides will be in the classroom?
- How many children will be in the classroom?
- Will my child participate with children who do not have a disability?
- How long is the school day or class, and what is the daily routine of the program?
- In what way will accommodations (such as special nutrition) be made to help my child learn?
- What kinds of skills will my child need to have to participate?



**Q: What program options do I have for my child after his or her third birthday?**

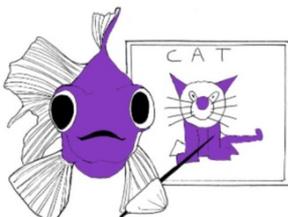
**A:** There may be many programs in your community that can meet your child's needs, such as:



- Public and private child care centers/preschools or a variety of school readiness settings
- Family child care homes
- A school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities
- Other programs available in your community

These programs may include new policies, procedures and rules for both your child and your family. They may also involve differences in eligibility. For instance, your child may not qualify for the same services from the school district that he or she received in Early Steps because of different eligibility requirements or ways of providing special education and related services.

In addition, there may be different staff, schedules and expectations for both you and your child. Finding out about these differences in advance and asking questions about how they will affect your child and family will help you and your child with your transition experience.



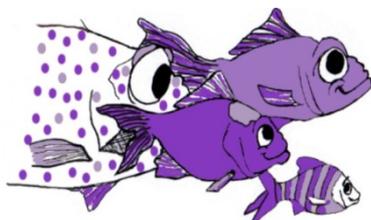
**Q: What is the process for accessing school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities services?**

**A:** The school district process is as follows:

- Your child is evaluated to determine if he or she is eligible.
- You will be invited to attend a meeting to review evaluation information.
- For eligible children, an individual educational plan (IEP) is written and must be implemented by your child's third birthday. You must be invited to the IEP meeting, and you may request that the school district invite others, including the Early Steps service coordinator, a representative from the program where your child has been receiving services or any additional persons you would like to have participate.
- Services will begin as written in the IEP.

**Q: How can I find information about other programs available in my community for children with disabilities and special health care needs?**

**A:** Your service coordinator or family resource specialist can assist you with current resources, available programs and information.



## Programs that May Be Available in Your Community

The programs described on the following pages may be available to provide services in your community once your child has turned three years old.

### **Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)**

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities assists people who have developmental disabilities and their families or guardians. *Developmental disability* is a broad term that refers to a variety of conditions that interfere with a person's ability to function in everyday activities. Developmental disabilities include spina bifida, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome and intellectual disability. In addition, the APD serves children who are four and five years of age and are at high risk of a developmental disability.



APD administers the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services (DD/HCBS) waiver, the Family and Supported Living (FSL) waiver and the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program. Services within these programs are subject to the availability of funding and may include consumable medical supplies and respite care. For further information, families should contact the local APD area office.

<http://apd.myflorida.com>

### **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

#### ***Child Care Services Program Office***

This office is responsible for the administration of child care licensing and training statewide. The program ensures that children are well cared for in a safe, healthy, positive and educational environment by trained, qualified child care staff. Currently, the program regulates licensed child care facilities, licensed family day

care homes and licensed large family child care homes. In addition, the Child Care Services Program office administers the regulation of family day care homes not required to be licensed.

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/>

## **Department of Education (DOE)**

### ***Division of Blind Services, Blind Babies and Children and Families Program***

#### *Blind Babies Program*

The Blind Babies Program promotes early development of life skills and places emphasis on the development and use of functional vision skills or use of all other senses in order to minimize developmental delays. The program is designed to help children with visual impairments progress through the normal stages of development. Early intervention services offered through the Blind Babies Program are delivered by non-profit community rehabilitation providers whenever possible, through contracts funded by the Blind Babies Grant.

#### *Children and Families Program*

This program provides services for children from birth to 21 years of age who have a diagnosed bilateral visual impairment that will affect the child's ability to learn or to function independently in the home or school. Successful outcomes enable children to transition from preschool to school or other appropriate community programs.

### ***Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities***

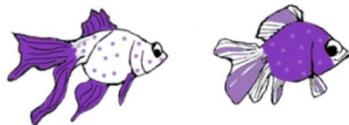
Specially designed instruction and related services for prekindergarten children, three through five years of age, with disabilities are part of the exceptional student education program offered through Florida's local school districts. Once a



child is determined to be eligible, an IEP must be developed and implemented.

If the child is transitioning from Early Steps, the IEP must be written and implemented by the child's third birthday.

<http://www.fldoe.org>



### **Office of Early Learning (OEL)**

The Office of Early Learning is responsible for administering the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R), School Readiness (sometimes referred to as child care assistance) and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Programs. OEL is dedicated to ensuring the accessibility, affordability and quality of early learning services for Florida's children and families.

<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>

#### *Child Care Resource and Referral Network*

The state CCR&R Network is dedicated to helping families find out how to identify quality child care and early education programs and how to locate a provider that meets the needs of each family. Local CCR&R specialists can generate referrals to child care providers and other service providers in your community that may meet the needs of your family. The CCR&R Network can provide you with information on state or federally funded early learning programs such as School Readiness, Early Head Start, Head Start and Even Start. Your local CCR&R can also provide you with creative financial assistance options and community resources that may ease your financial burden.

#### *The School Readiness Program*

The School Readiness program offers qualified parents financial assistance for child care through a variety of services. Child care services include extended-day, extended-year and school-age care to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient.

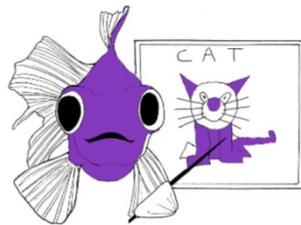
The School Readiness program takes into account the level of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of your child; involves parents as their child's first teacher; prepares children to become ready for school; and provides parents with information on child development and other topics of interest. By assuming the majority of the family's child care expenses, the School Readiness program offers financial assistance to eligible families if:

- Your family is participating in the welfare transition program
- You are a migrant farm worker with children
- You are a teen parent
- Your family is served by the Family Safety Program Office of DCF
- Your children need child care to minimize the risk of further abuse, neglect or abandonment
- You have children with disabilities or special needs
- You have children from birth to four years of age who are at risk of future school failure and who are served at home through home visitor programs and intensive parent education programs
- Your family's income does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines

### *VPK Education Program*

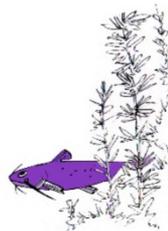
The VPK Education Program is designed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and lay the foundation for their educational success. VPK is free for all of Florida's four-year-olds born on or before September 1 of each year. The VPK program's quality standards include:

- Qualified instructors
- Strong emphasis on early literacy skills
- Age-appropriate curricula
- Manageable class sizes



Giving parents a wide selection of choices is a priority, so both private and public providers participate. VPK providers may set their own schedules to provide the required hours for either program:

- School Year Program—540 teaching hours; class sizes of 20 or fewer students; instructors must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (now referred to as the Birth to Five Florida Child Care Professional Credential)
- Summer Program—300 teaching hours; class sizes of 12 or fewer students; instructors must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a specified area
- Specialized Instructional Services (SIS)—A non-traditional VPK program for children with disabilities who have a current IEP. SIS services are delivered by providers approved by the Florida Department of Education and likely delivered in a non-classroom setting.



[http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/voluntary\\_pre\\_k.aspx](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/voluntary_pre_k.aspx)

## **Early Head Start/Head Start**

Head Start is a group of federally funded child development programs for children from birth to mandatory school age. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children from birth to age three; Head Start serves children from three to five years old; and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start serves children from six weeks old to school age.

Of the participating families, 90 percent must have incomes at or below the national poverty guidelines. Head Start is also mandated to provide at least 10 percent of its enrollment to children with disabilities. The full range of services provided to all children participating in the Head Start program includes:

- High-quality early childhood education in inclusive settings
- Health services—including medical, dental and mental health—and nutrition counseling
- Family services and parent engagement activities

<http://www.floridaheadstart.org>

## **Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)**

Nineteen FDLRS centers throughout the state provide free screening for children who might not be keeping pace developmentally with other children their age in walking, talking, hearing, seeing, understanding or behaving. FDLRS may help provide evaluations for individual children who are nearing three years of age, are leaving Early Steps and who might enter school system programs for children with disabilities.

<http://www.fdlrs.org>

## **Florida Medicaid**

Florida Medicaid is the medical assistance program that provides access to health care for low income families and individuals. Children may be eligible for programs such as Child Health Check-UP, which includes a physical exam, immunizations (shots), vision and hearing checks and other tests and services.

### *Florida Kidcare*

Kidcare is a children's health insurance program for children birth to 19 years who meet income and eligibility requirements. Children may be enrolled in Medikids, Healthy Kids or Children's Medical Services Network if they do not qualify for Medicaid.

<http://www.floridakidcare.org>

## **Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB)/Parent Infant Program – Deaf/Hard of Hearing**

FSDB offers a statewide program for Florida families who have children birth to 5 years with a documented hearing loss or bilateral vision loss, with services provided in the family's natural environment and daily routines. Emphasis is on language development, communication options, understanding hearing aids, cochlear implants, literacy, child development and transition into a school system.

<http://www.fsdb.k12.fl.us>

# Resources

## Family Support Systems

Children and their families/caregivers have several options for receiving parent-to-parent support during the transition process. Listed below are some supports for families:

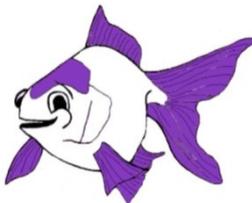
### *Family Resource Specialists (FRS)*

Family Resource Specialists are individuals employed by the local Early Steps offices to assist families with all areas of early intervention, including transition.

<http://www.EarlyStepsDirectory.com>

### *Local Support Networks*

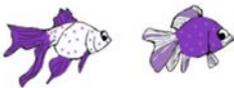
Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), Central Florida Parent Center, Family Network on Disabilities (FND), Parent to Parent of Miami and others are available to provide assistance, support and information regarding transition.



## Family Transition Checklist

In addition to your questions and concerns, consider bringing the following to your meetings:

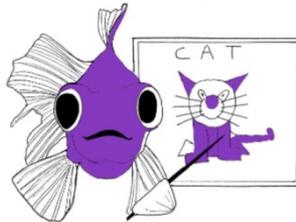
- A certified copy of your child's birth certificate
- A current copy of reports for any therapy/ developmental evaluations, vision and hearing screenings, etc.
- A current copy of the individualized family support plan
- Your child's physical exam forms, including immunization forms, current within one year
- Your most recent utility bill, as proof of your residence
- The names, addresses and phone numbers of emergency contacts
- Signed, written permission/consent for exchange of information between agencies
- The name, address and phone number of your child's physician and dentist



## Alphabet Soup of Acronyms

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>APD</b>	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
<b>AHCA</b>	Agency for Health Care Administration
<b>ASD</b>	Autism Spectrum Disorders
<b>AWI</b>	Agency for Workforce Innovation
<b>BEESS</b>	Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
<b>CARD</b>	Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
<b>CMS</b>	Children’s Medical Services
<b>DBS</b>	Division of Blind Services
<b>DCF</b>	Department of Children and Families
<b>DD</b>	Developmentally Delayed
<b>DOE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DOH</b>	Department of Health
<b>ES</b>	Early Steps
<b>ESE</b>	Exceptional Student Education
<b>FAPE</b>	Free Appropriate Public Education
<b>FCC</b>	Family Care Councils
<b>FDLRS</b>	Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System
<b>FICCIT</b>	Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers
<b>FND</b>	Family Network on Disabilities
<b>FRS</b>	Family Resource Specialist
<b>FSDB</b>	Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>IEP</b>	Individual Educational Plan
<b>IFSP</b>	Individualized Family Support Plan
<b>LEA</b>	Local Educational Agency
<b>LRE</b>	Least Restrictive Environment
<b>NAEYC</b>	National Association for the Education of Young Children
<b>NECTAC</b>	National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center—now Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center
<b>NICHCY</b>	National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

<b>OEL</b>	Office of Early Learning
<b>OSEP</b>	Office of Special Education Programs (U.S. Department of Education)
<b>PPEC</b>	Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care
<b>R&amp;R</b>	Resource and Referral
<b>SC</b>	Service Coordinator
<b>SSA</b>	Social Security Administration
<b>SSI</b>	Supplemental Security Income
<b>TANF</b>	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
<b>VPK</b>	Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program
<b>VPK/SIS</b>	VPK Special Instructional Services
<b>WIC</b>	Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program



## Websites

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

<http://apd.myflorida.com>

Americans with Disabilities Act

<http://www.ada.gov/>

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

CARD Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities

<http://florida-card.org>

Central Florida Parent Center

<http://centralfloridaparentcenter.org/>

Council for Exceptional Children, Division for  
Early Childhood

<http://www.dec-sped.org>



Division of Blind Services

<http://dbs.myflorida.com>

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.ectacenter.org>

Early Steps

<http://www.EarlyStepsDirectory.com>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary & Early Childhood Education

<http://eric.ed.gov/>

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.

<http://www.fndfl.org>

Florida Department of Education

<http://www.fldoe.org>

Florida Department of Children and Families

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/>

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System

<http://www.fdlrs.org>

Florida's Head Start State Collaboration Office

<http://www.floridaheadstart.org>

Florida Kidcare

<http://floridakidcare.org>

Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

<http://www.fsdb.k12.fl.us/>

Florida's Transition Project for Infants, Young Children and Their Families

<http://www.floridatransitionproject.com>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<http://www.naeyc.org>

Parent to Parent of Miami

<http://www.ptopmiami.org>

State of Florida

<http://www.myflorida.com>

Technical Assistance and Training System

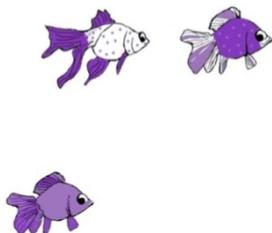
<http://www.tats.ucf.edu>

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

[http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/voluntary\\_pre\\_k.aspx](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/voluntary_pre_k.aspx)

Zero to Three/National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

<http://www.zerotothree.org>



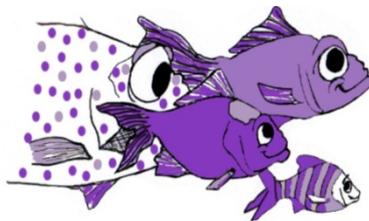
## Tips to Help with Transition

The following tips may help you and your child prepare for transition:

- Complete a helpful information sheet about your child, such as “Getting to Know Me + My Family,” which can be found on the website at <http://www.floridatransitionproject.com>.

This form can help the staff at your child’s new setting learn all about your child.

- Talk about the new setting in positive ways with your child and other family members.
- Contact the teacher in the new setting and arrange to meet to discuss daily routines, schedules, curriculum and any medical needs your child may have while participating in the program.
- Ask questions about such topics as your child riding on a school bus, playground participation, the amount of services to be provided, how therapies will be provided and nap time rules.
- If possible, visit the new setting to talk with the teacher and see the room.
- Talk with your child about the things that are the same and the things that are different about the current program and the new one.
- Involve your child in group experiences, such as the story hour at your local library.



## Books to Read to Your Child

The books listed below are about going to school or starting something new. These and other books may be found in your community library or bookstore.

*Bernard Goes to School*, by Joan Elizabeth Goodman

*Billy and the Big New School*, by Laurence Anholt

*Busy at Day Care*, by Patricia DeMuth

*Emily's First Day of School*, by Fran Schiller

*First Day Jitters*, by Julie Danneberg

*Froggy Goes to School*, by Jonathan London

*Hello School*, by Dee Lillegard

*I'll Go To School If...*, by Bo Flood

*Little Cliff's First Day at School*, by Clifton L. Taulbert

*Little Monster Goes to School*, by Alison Inches

*Moses Goes to School*, by Isaac Millman

*Off to School, Baby Duck!* by Amy Hest

*Special People, Special Ways*, by Arlene Maguire

*Susan Laughs*, by Jeanne Willis

*Timothy Goes to School*, by Rosemary Wells

*Vera's First Day of School*, by Vera Rosenberry



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## Notes

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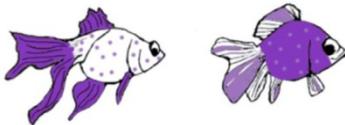
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<http://www.floridatransitionproject.com/>



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Pam Stewart, Commissioner  
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