



Early Intervention Transition Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Even though every family is unique, parents have some “Frequently Asked Question” when their child is transitioning out of Early Intervention which Early Start in California.

Here are a few.

1. *Is Alta California Regional Center “kicking us out”?*

Early Intervention from Alta California Regional Center (ACRC) is provided to infants/toddlers 0-3 years old who have developmental delay in one or more areas, have an established risk condition or are considered to be high risk.

ACRC is legally required to transition three-year olds to the school district at 30-33 months of age for assessment for Special Education. At that time, ACRC is also required to assess if the child will be eligible to receive ACRC services after age 3.

For your child to be eligible for ACRC services after age 3, they must have either 1) intellectual disability, 2) cerebral palsy, 3) epilepsy, 4) autism, or 5) “other handicapping condition found to be closely related to intellectual disability...”. And substantially handicapping conditions in 3 areas of 1) self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction.

As of July 1, 2021, if a child who is 3-4 years old is not otherwise eligible for regional center services, the child shall be provisionally (temporarily until approved) eligible for regional center services if the child has a disability that is not solely physical...and has significant functional limitations in a least two of the following areas...1) self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction. WIC 4512.(2)(A).

Ask your child’s service coordinator for more information.

2. *Do I have to have my child assessed for Special Education?*

ACRC is required to make a referral to the school district at 33 months when a child is enrolled in the Early Start (Early Intervention) program.

A parent is not required to agree to the assessments offered by the school district. If your child is assessed for Special Education services, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be written by your child’s third birthday.

3. *Is the school district “cutting our services”?*

Early Intervention (0-3 years) is *developmentally* based and designed to “enhance the growth and development of a child...” Special Education services (3-22 years) are *educationally* based and designed to provide the child with a “Free and Appropriate Public Education” (FAPE). The two models for services are different, so you can expect there to be changes in type of services, frequency and/or duration when your child turns three.

Because a preschool setting is very language-rich and gives children an opportunity to learn social skill and “pre-academics”, preschoolers may not need as many minutes of individual services that they did before entering preschool.

4. *If they are different, how can I tell if my child is getting appropriate services?*

The effectiveness of services (i.e., speech therapy) is measured by progress on goals – not the number of minutes of service. The IEP page, “Offer of FAPE, Educational Settings”, identifies the frequency of progress reports. Parents are encouraged to know what your child’s goals are, when to expect reports and monitor progress. If there is insufficient progress, parents can request an IEP meeting to discuss their concerns with the team.

5. *How else are Early Intervention and Special Education different?*

Early Intervention is provided in the home or other “natural environments”. An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) identifies the services that will be provided and expected outcomes. It includes what the family needs to parent a child with a developmental delay. The IFSP is updated every six months.

Special Education is provided in a school setting (individually or group). An Individual Education Plan (IEP) states the goals and services that address the student’s areas needed to access the school curriculum. It is updated yearly. It is written by an IEP team, of which the parent is a participating member.

6. *Does my child have to be toilet trained to attend a public school?*

No. If your child is not toilet trained and will be attending public school, the team might want to consider adding a toilet training goal to the IEP.

7. *Can my child receive Special Education while also receiving Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?*

Yes, although some preschoolers may not have the stamina for both. The decision to choose either or both rests with the parents. In California, where ABA is paid for by health insurance, it is not typically offered through the IEP.

8. *Which is best – ABA or Special Education? Can my child have both?*

There is no “best”. Parents can make their own decision about what is right for their child. Some things to think about are:

- Is your three-year-old able to handle the schedule of both?
- If you drop or decrease ABA in favor of Special Education, will you have to start at the bottom of the ABA waiting list if you change your mind and want to restore ABA?
- If parents choose, Special Education can be added at a later date. A letter requesting Special Education assessments will need to be sent to the school district’s Special Education director.

9. *Can my child receive transportation to Special Education preschool?*

Transportation can be a “related service” for your child. Discuss it with the members of the IEP team – including the expected duration of the ride.

10. How can my child get a 1:1 aide?

Whether a 1:1 aide is necessary for your child to access the curriculum is a decision for the IEP team (you are a member!), based on your child's unique needs.

Before the meeting, think about what you expect a 1:1 aide to do for your child and why. Write it down and share it with the team.

11. Can my child receive Special Education if she doesn't speak English?

Your child must be assessed for Special Education and services be provided in your child's native language.

12. Can my child receive Special Education services in a private preschool?

Generally, only if public preschool options are not available. Discuss this with the IEP team.

13. Can my child receive Special Education services even if I don't want to send her to school?

That depends on the services for which she is eligible. For example, speech therapy could be available on a public-school site. You would be responsible for transporting your child there for services.

14. Is my only choice to send my child to a "Special Education" preschool classroom?

No, your child is entitled to be placed in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE), which may be provided in a general education classroom. Because not every school district has general education (public) preschool, LRE for preschool might vary by school district. Talk with the IEP team about what LRE is available in your school district.

15. How can I learn more?

ACRC has a Special Education Specialist who can answer your questions about Special Education services at three years old and beyond. Ask your child's Service Coordinator for a referral.