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Turning Three Years Old – An FAQ

WarmLine consultants talk daily with parents of children who are approaching three years old and transitioning out of Early Intervention (EI) and moving into Special Education Services.

While every family is unique, we do get “Frequently Asked Questions/Statements”. Here are some of them. Please call us anytime with YOUR questions!

Transition Time Line:

When your child is 27-33 months, the lead agency (usually regional center) must:

- Notify you that your child will transition out of Early Start services at 3 years old,
 - Get your consent to share your child’s information with the school district,
 - Notify the school district that your child may be eligible for Special Education services,
 - Plan a transition conference (meeting) with you, the school district and the lead agency.
- At the transition conference, the school district will get your consent for needed assessments.

If your child is eligible for special education, Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be completed by the 3rd birthday.

1. *Do I have to have my child assessed for special education?*

No. It is your choice to assess (or not assess) your child for special education.

2. *The regional center/early intervention is “kicking us out”.*

Early Intervention services are provided to infants and toddlers 0-3 years old who have a developmental delay in one or more areas, have an established risk condition or are considered to be high risk for developmental delay.

For your child to be eligible for regional center services after age three, he or she 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...”.

For this reason, rather than being “kicked out” of regional center services, your child may not have an eligible condition to continue with the regional center.

3. *The school district is “cutting our services”.*

Early Intervention services (0-3 years) are developmentally based and designed to “enhance the growth and development of a child...and delivered through a partnership between families and professionals.”

Special education services (3-22 years) are educationally based and designed to provide the child with a “Free and Appropriate Public Education” (FAPE).

Because the two models for services are different, you can expect there to be changes in type of services, frequency and/or duration when your child turns three.

4. *How else are Early Intervention and special education different?*

Early Intervention services are provided individually in the home or other “natural environments”. An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) states the services that will be provided and expected outcomes. It is updated every 6 months.

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

5. *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, it might be helpful for the team to consider adding toilet training goals to the IEP.

6. *My child with autism receives Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) 20-30 hours a week. Can she still receive special education?*

Yes. However, some preschoolers may not have the stamina for both. The decision to choose either or both rests with the parents.

7. *Which is best – ABA or special education?*

That is a question that only parents can decide. Special education services can be added at a later date, but many ABA companies have waiting lists. Ask the provider if dropping ABA in favor of special education means you would have to start at the bottom of the waiting list if you change your mind.

8. *Will 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 – especially the expected duration of the ride.

9. *I want my child to have 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 (of which you are a member), based on your child’s individual needs.

10. *I don’t speak English and my child has not been exposed to English. How will he get special education services?*

Your child must be assessed for special education in his native language and services must be provided in his native language.

11. *I don’t want to send my child to a public preschool. Can he still receive special education services in a private preschool?*

Generally, not if there are public preschool options available.

12. *I don’t want to send my child to preschool. Can he still receive special education services?*

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

13. *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). Because not every school district has general education (public) preschool, LRE for preschool might vary by school district.