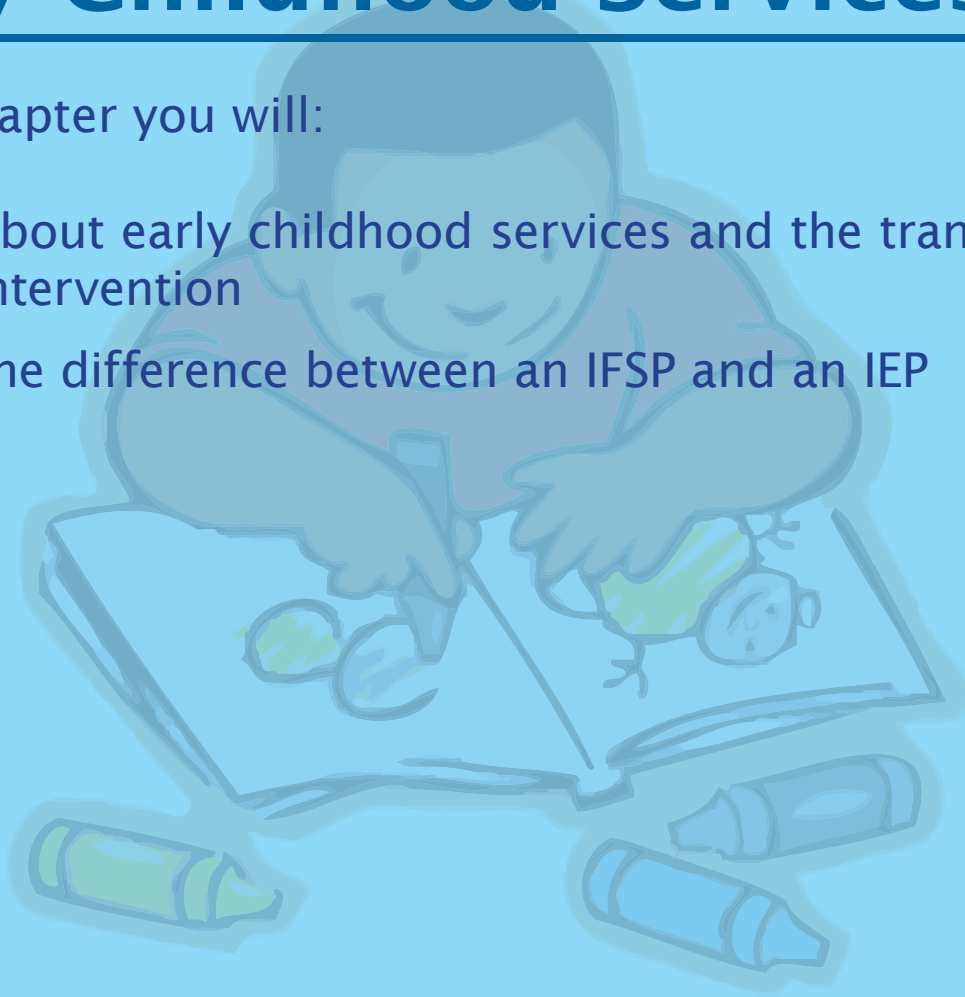


Chapter 14:

Early Childhood Services

In this chapter you will:

- learn about early childhood services and the transition from early intervention
- learn the difference between an IFSP and an IEP



Early Childhood Special Education Services

The school district is required to provide a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities who are age 3 through 21. Parents of preschool children who need, or are thought to need, special education and related services have the same rights as other school-age children. Special education and related services must begin on the child's third (3rd) birthday for children served in an early intervention program or for those children referred for an evaluation 60 school days before their third birthday and found eligible. If the child's third birthday occurs during the summer, the IEP team will determine when the school district's services to the child will begin.

There is no automatic eligibility for Early Childhood Special Education Services. Parents, school personnel, and others should work together to determine if the child is eligible to receive special education services.

Transition from Early Intervention

All children in Early Intervention (EI) services are entitled to a smooth and effective transition by their 3rd birthday. The transition process begins when the child is 2 years 6 months of age. Transition begins this early because it gives parents and early intervention, school and other early childhood professionals time to meet, share information and plan.

When the child is 2 years 6 months of age, the EI service coordinator will ask the parent to sign consent so a referral packet can be sent to your local education agency (LEA). The service coordinator should be notified if the parents want the child's information sent to other preschool programs in the community. The child's referral packet will be sent after the parents sign for consent. Without the consent, the service coordinator will not be able to send the packet and the child's transition process will be delayed. If the parents have concerns or questions about sharing information, they may want to discuss those concerns with a parent liaison or service coordinator.

Parents may want to start the transition process before the child is 2 years 6 months. The reason for starting the transition process early may include factors such as:

- concerns about having more time to plan;
- concerns about what will happen if their child turns 3 during the summer;
- concerns about a child's complex medical needs.

If parents would like to start transition earlier, they should speak with their service coordinator as soon as possible.

When the child is 2 years 9 months of age, the service coordinator will hold a Transition Planning Conference that will include parents, the service coordinator and a school district representative. Parents may want to invite other professionals, family members, or representatives from community programs. The Transition Planning Conference is an opportunity for the parents to learn about the school district and for the school district representative to learn about the child. It is not a meeting for making decisions about eligibility, services or determining where the child might go to school.

The school district or special education cooperative representative will contact the parents about participating in a Domain Review after the Transition Planning Conference. The purpose of a Domain Review is to figure out if additional information is needed before the IEP team can determine if the child is eligible for Early Childhood Special Education services. The domain form is used to keep track of the Domain Review. This form can be filled out at a meeting the parents attend with other IEP team members. It may also be filled out by the child's IEP team, and one team member may then review the form with the parent. The domain form is also called the Identification of Needed Assessments form.

Even though the parents and the child received services through Early Intervention, there is no automatic eligibility for Early Childhood Special Education services. Parents will be involved in helping the school district or special

Important Reminder

If it is determined that a child is eligible for early childhood special education service, the IEP or IFSP for the child must be in place on or before the child's third birthday. Consideration for early childhood services should typically begin by the time the child reaches age 2½.

Worth a Look

Please refer to Chapter 3, “Referral” for a fuller discussion about evaluation procedures.

Worth a Look

For more information about early childhood special education, ISBE offers a booklet entitled, **When I’m 3, where will I be?** A copy of this booklet can be found at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/transition_workbook.pdf.

education cooperative gather needed information to help determine if the child is eligible.

It is very helpful for parents to share information about the child with other IEP team members. Parents know what the child has learned, what the child likes and dislikes, and they understand how the child likes to play.

The evaluation procedures for special education that would be used for an elementary or high school-aged child would also apply to preschool children suspected of having a disability which will adversely affect educational performance. *The IEP or IFSP must be developed and services must be in effect beginning on the child’s 3rd birthday.* The type, amount and location of special education services provided must be based on the child’s needs. The law requires that preschoolers receive their services together with children without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate.

The child’s special education and related services can be delivered in a variety of different settings. Some of those settings could be community preschool or child care programs, park district preschools or programs, Head Start, state-funded Pre-Kindergarten or Preschool for All programs, or an early childhood special education program provided by the school district. (See the ISBE booklet, “When I’m 3, where will I be?” located at http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/transition_workbook.pdf.)

IFSP/IEP

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) may be used for a preschool child who is transitioning from early intervention and is found eligible to receive special education services. If an IFSP is used, it must meet all the content requirements of an IEP and must be developed during a meeting in which the required participants are in attendance. In using the IFSP, the local school district must provide a detailed explanation of the differences between an IFSP and an IEP and obtain informed, written consent from the parent for the use of the IFSP.