



Transitioning from First Steps

As your child approaches their 3rd birthday, the transition from First Steps to the school system takes place. If the child is eligible for services, the school system is responsible for providing those services on the child's 3rd birthday. The transition from First Steps to the school system can be an overwhelming time for parents. It may be helpful to understand the process and know what to expect.

When the child is 30 months old:

When your child is 30 months old and if s/he is receiving First Steps services, communication with the school system is initiated. Documentation is sent from the school system. It includes:

- Demographic information. This information is transmitted from the SPOE (System Point of Entry). No parent permission is required.
- With parental consent, First Steps documentation, such as the IFSP, eligibility form, assessments, PHS, etc., are sent to the school system. This information is sent to involve and prepare the school system for a transition meeting.

270-90 days prior to 3rd birthday:

A mandated transition meeting must be held between 270 and 90 days before the child's 3rd birthday. The service coordinator is responsible for arranging and facilitating this meeting and a school system representative should be present. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss future service options and matters related to the transition. During this meeting, a written plan for transition is developed, which outlines the steps that the family, current early intervention team, early childhood special education staff and/or other community service providers will follow in order to ensure a seamless and smooth transition from First Steps.

The role of the service coordinators and providers at the transition meeting includes:

- Actively participate in the development of the transition plan
- Discuss family priorities and concerns with regards to transition expectations
- Provide present levels of development and be prepared to share the most recent quarterly report to the school system representative, with parental consent
- Make recommendations to help achieve transition outcomes stated by the family
- Be knowledgeable of local resources

The written plan must include:

1. Desired outcomes
2. Identified service providers
3. An outline regarding transfer of information
4. Timelines with dates of anticipated conclusion of early intervention services and commencement of subsequent activities
5. With concurrence of the family, a statement of the family's priorities, concerns, and resources related to transition expectations.

By the child's third birthday, if the child may be eligible for early childhood special education, the public school district must complete the evaluation, convene the Case Conference Committee (CCC)

meeting to determine eligibility, develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and implement the IEP.

What to expect from the school system:

When your child transitions into the school system, the goals and therapy may look very different from those in First Steps. While in First Steps, your child's goals were likely centered on developmental milestones, therapies were one-on-one, and sessions lasted approximately an hour.

Now that your child will be receiving services from the school system, the services become educationally based. Goals and therapies are now focused on what will make your child's educational experience the most successful. Therapies and services are typically give in minutes per month and can be broken up in various minute blocks. These minutes can be used while your child receives therapy in a large or small group, one-on-one, in and/or out of the classroom, and these minutes can also include planning/paperwork time for the therapist/teacher.

It is advisable that parents become familiar with Article 7 and IDEA, which are the state and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines that ensure children with disabilities receive the appropriate education and services.

Other supports/therapy:

Because services are very different in the school system, parents often seek out private therapy for their child. Private therapy gives your child the benefit of having one-on-one treatment with minimal distractions. Therapy may be paid for by private insurance, Medicaid, Children's Special Health Care Services, and/or self-pay. To find a therapeutic center in your area, you can talk to other parents, your doctors, First Steps therapists or service coordinators, or a Family Voices Indiana specialist.

In addition to traditional therapies, there are several alternative options, such as hippotherapy (therapy on a horse), aquatic therapy, music therapy, ABA, and conductive education. Insurance may not cover these therapies or may offer limited insurance benefits for alternative therapies. That said, parents are encouraged to pursue insurance coverage for these programs. If insurance denies payment, parents have the right to appeal the decision. Parents may also opt to pay out of pocket, apply for grants, or do personal fundraising in order to cover the costs of these therapies. Family Voices Indiana can help families understand their insurance coverage and find financial resources to use to cover therapies.

Where to go to for help:

Transitioning from First Steps may be stressful for parents. Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek support. The following websites have helpful information that can guide you through the transition.

www.fvindiana.org

www.wrightslaw.com

www.insource.org