

Transition at Age Three During the COVID-19 Crisis

While services before the age of three are written into an Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP), children ages three and older receive special education and related services through the implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If your child was already on an IFSP, there is a transition process to move to an IEP. This process typically begins at least three months before your child's third birthday. An evaluation will need to be completed to see if your child will qualify for an IEP or if they can be exited from receiving services. If they do qualify, the team will create an IEP to provide services going forward.

What happens to this process when schools are only doing distance learning during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- **It is possible that when the switch was made to distance learning, including the implementation of special education services, that you were already nearing the completion of the transition process.** In this case, the IFSP team must decide if they have enough information to determine if your child is eligible for special education and related services. If the team decides there is enough information, they can make that determination and move forward with creating the IEP. If they find that your child does not qualify, you have the right to agree or disagree with that decision.
- **If you and your child were in the early or middle stages of the transition process, the team will have to decide if it is possible to gather the rest of the needed information at this time.** If the team believes that they can complete the evaluation through video-observations or teleconferencing, then they should do so. The team can also decide that the information needs to be completed through direct contact when the distance learning period ends. In this case, the IFSP team should continue serving your child and family according to the IFSP even after your child's third birthday. Once the mandated period for distance learning is over, then the evaluation should be completed, eligibility determined, and, if your child is eligible, the IEP written.
- **If the three-month window begins during the distance learning period, the team will have to discuss if it makes sense to begin the process at this time.** The IFSP team should continue to serve your child and family under the current IFSP even after your child turns three. The team will need to do the evaluation later and, depending on the results of the evaluation, then take steps to either transition your child to IEP services or exit your child from service. Once the mandate is over, the school has 30 school days to complete the evaluation and schedule a meeting to write the IEP. The 30-school-day timeline begins once you have given permission for the evaluation to take place.

In all of these cases, it is important to remember that you are a vital part of the team. If you do not agree at any time, you have the right to disagree. In many cases, the stay-at-home order has changed what "home" looks like. Even if the school has the ability to complete parts of an evaluation remotely, you have the right to decide whether the current situation in your home (for example, adults working from home, other children distance learning) allows the team to get a true picture of your child's strengths, weaknesses, and needs.

- For information regarding the transition process under normal circumstances please access PACER's "Early Childhood Transition Guidebook" at: [PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-a40.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-a40.pdf)
- You can also watch an archived presentation on the transition from Part C to Part B at: [PACER.org/livestream/?wksp=69372A6C-8AFA-4D87-A234-799818005F4F](https://www.pacer.org/livestream/?wksp=69372A6C-8AFA-4D87-A234-799818005F4F)
- For information on how to disagree with a team decision, please see the following handout, "Know Your

Parental Rights: The Meaning and Importance of Prior Written Notice and Parent Consent”:
[PACER.org/parent/php/php-c232.pdf](https://pacer.org/parent/php/php-c232.pdf)

For additional information, contact PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or PACER@PACER.org.