

Entering The Special Education System From Early Intervention

1. Referral

- EI makes a referral to the school system by the time your child is 2 years 6 months.
- The referral is in writing.

2. Notice

- School acknowledges, in writing, receipt of referral within 5 days.
- They include in package the parents' rights during process.
- They also include a consent form for evaluations. School requires written consent from parent/s for evaluation(s) they will do.
- You should request all evaluations you feel necessary for your child. (Education, OT, PT, Speech, Psychological, Nurse).
- Pre-assessment meeting is an option if you want to discuss the evaluations before hand.

3. Evaluation

- The evaluations must be completed by the school within 30 school working days after written permission from you. (30 days does not count weekend days or holidays).
- Its purpose is to determine eligibility, child's strengths & needs, plus any recommended services if appropriate.
- **You need to request a copy of all their evaluation reports if you want them.** Ask for copies of all the evaluation reports so you can review them before you get to the IEP meeting. By law, the school needs to give them to you no later than 2 days before the meeting, but only if you request them.

4. Team IEP Meeting

- *Bring* your copies of the evaluation reports and questions to the meeting.
- *IEP Team includes* – parents, evaluators, education team facilitator (ETF), EI staff person, other professionals (you want) (outside PT, Dr, etc), family and friends.
- *Recommendation* is for both parents to be there if possible, do not bring children, and bring a friend or someone that can give you support during the meeting or keep you focused on questions that you might have – so you don't forget.
- *Purpose* – to review results of evaluations, look at child's strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Discuss if an IEP is appropriate. If an IEP is appropriate, discussion will be on:(1) what therapies or services will be needed: PT, OT, Speech, education, etc., (2) how often will the therapies

take place in a week, (3) where will the therapies take place (home or school), (4) where should the child be placed –should the child be placed in district in an inclusion class, standard class, sub-separate class or out of district (and if so where), (5) will the child need transportation or any adaptive equipment (6) will summer services be needed.

- *Discuss* whether you will also need an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for your child. (This might be needed if your child needs tube feedings, medications, breathers, or other health related services during the school day)
- *Do not sign an IEP at the meeting* – the IEP should not already be written at this point. This is the meeting to discuss everything and for the evaluators to go off and write the IEP based on feedback from all of those present at the meeting including all of your comments and goals you have for your child. You will have time after the IEP has been written to make any additional comments and ask for changes if necessary before you accept it.

5. The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

- The IEP should be received 45 school working days after the initial written consent & 10 days after the Team IEP meeting.
- Carefully review the IEP.
- If you have questions, call the school to talk to the appropriate team member. (EFT, educator or specific therapist).
- Check 1 of 3 options (accept IEP, reject part of the IEP, reject all of the IEP).

Note: **Never reject all of the IEP** Let the school/therapist get started with the parts that you agree on as soon as your child turns 3.

- You also need to accept or decline the placement of your child.
- **Sign the signature pages** (keep a copy for your records with the IEP) **& you must return signed pages within 30 days after you receive them.**
- Services begin when the child turns 3.

Planning for a Few Specific Transition Scenarios

EI operates 12 months out of the year so they can do evaluations and bring children in at any time.

The school system only operates for 10 months out of the year so there are times evaluations cannot be done and times when they cannot bring a child into a program exactly at 3 years old.

Scenarios:

1. Birthdays falling between July to September
 - The evaluation process must be completed by June so services are ready to begin by third birthday or when school starts in fall.
2. Birthdays falling between April to June
 - Adding a new student to an existing group at school in the spring can be challenging.
 - It is not always good idea to move a child from one program to another for just 1-2 months .

Potential Solutions:

1. Children can enter school program at 2.9 years
 - This is helpful for children with late spring Birthday (they could start at the school in February).
 - Children with an October birthday could begin in September.

(IEP Team negotiates with EI who pays for services until 3rd birthday).
2. Child stays in EI after 3rd Birthday, with an IEP
 - Helpful for children with late spring Birthdays.

(School system pays for continued EI services until end of School Year)
3. Missing some services
 - This is a possibility. Sometimes it is nice to give the kids a break, so missing services over the summer might be ok. You as a parent will need to decide what is best for your child.