

# A Preschool Transition Handbook



**Tri-Counties Regional Center**  
Early Intervention Services

Dear Parents,

This handbook is a guide for you as you prepare your child with special needs for the transition from early intervention services to preschool services at three years of age. **Transition** is the move from one program to another.

This handbook was developed to assist families in understanding the agencies, laws, and steps in making the transition to preschool. Knowing what to expect will help make this a smooth process for your child and family. There are many professionals and experienced parents available to assist you and your child. This handbook will provide you with the resources available to help you.

This handbook provides answers for most of the questions that you may have. You can read the handbook from cover-to-cover or read individual sections. It is our hope that this handbook will make your child's transition to preschool an exciting milestone in your child's life.

With best wishes,

Early Start Service Coordinators



## Acknowledgements

This handbook is a modification of the handbook developed by the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc. in collaboration with parents, local education agency representatives, and infant/toddler service providers. We express our gratitude to Mimi Winer, Early Intervention Unit Supervisor at East Los Angeles Regional Center and Clifford Lum, Information Training Specialist. A special thanks to the parents and professionals for their hard work, effort, and commitment in reviewing this handbook and to the children who provided the delightful artwork!

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# Introduction to Transition

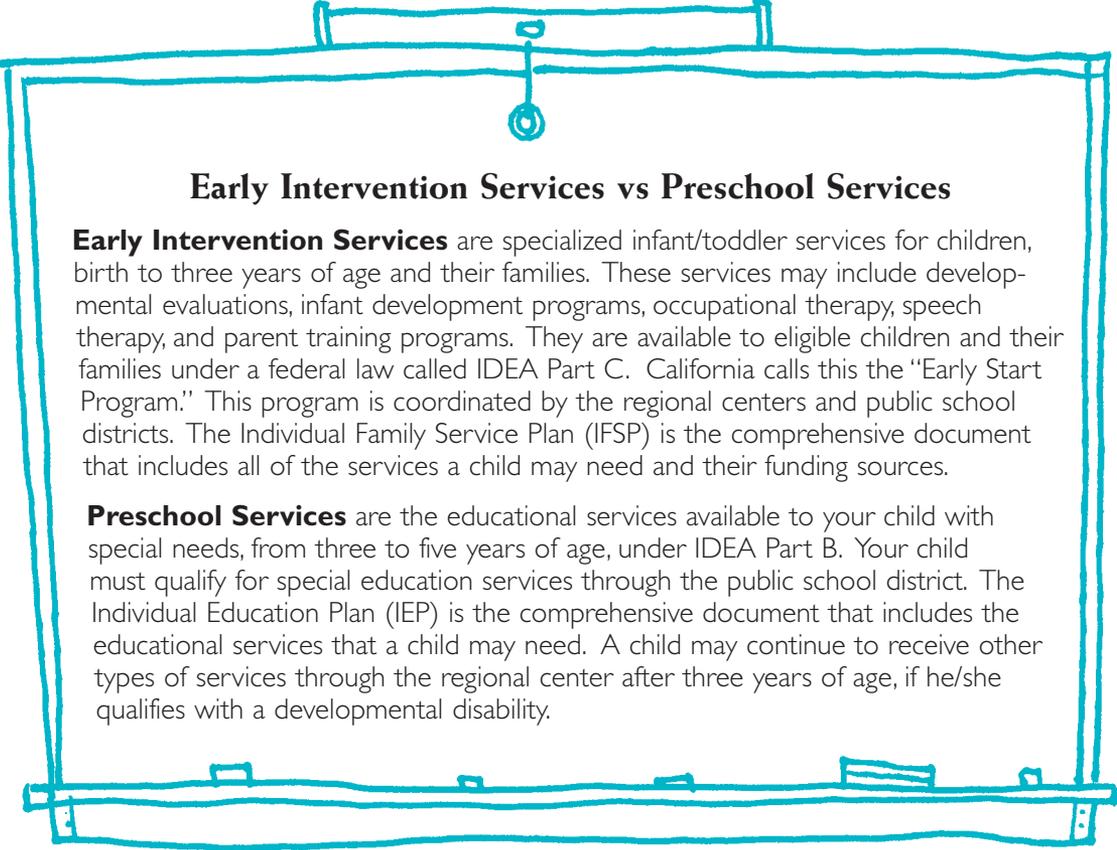
## What is Transition?

### Transition is change.

It is a time in life when a person experiences a change in physical location, relationships, or attitudes. This handbook will describe a special transition you and your child are about to go through: the transition from early intervention services to public preschool services. It involves moving from the services funded or coordinated by the regional center to services provided by the school district.

### Transition is a time of growth for families.

Most parents have concerns about sending a child off to school. This experience is shared by most families with young children. Starting school is a milestone in a child's life and should be looked at as a positive step of growth for you and your child. Most parents do worry about these changes.

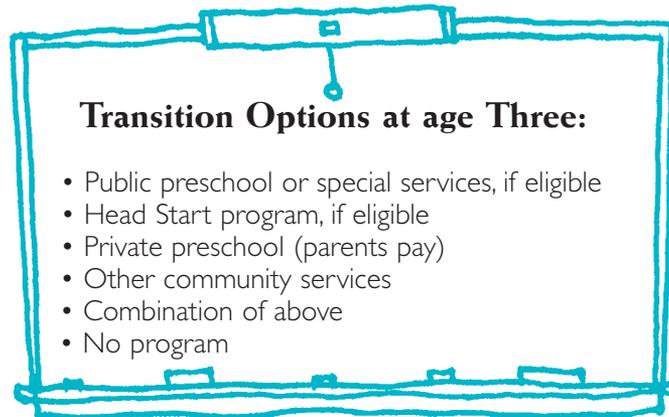


## Early Intervention Services vs Preschool Services

**Early Intervention Services** are specialized infant/toddler services for children, birth to three years of age and their families. These services may include developmental evaluations, infant development programs, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and parent training programs. They are available to eligible children and their families under a federal law called IDEA Part C. California calls this the "Early Start Program." This program is coordinated by the regional centers and public school districts. The Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) is the comprehensive document that includes all of the services a child may need and their funding sources.

**Preschool Services** are the educational services available to your child with special needs, from three to five years of age, under IDEA Part B. Your child must qualify for special education services through the public school district. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the comprehensive document that includes the educational services that a child may need. A child may continue to receive other types of services through the regional center after three years of age, if he/she qualifies with a developmental disability.

# Transition Process



## **Why does my child have to transition to new services?**

Early Intervention services, funded by the regional center under IDEA Part-C, do not continue past three years of age. At three years of age, your local public school district is responsible for preschool educational services for children who qualify for special education. California law does not allow the regional center to continue funding services when preschool services are available through other public funded agencies.

## **When do we begin?**

An introduction to transition begins at two years of age or at a later point if you are new to the regional center. Planning for transition begins at age two at your child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting. At that time, your service coordinator or infant teacher will begin to talk about transition to preschool services. This preparation time is needed to schedule a transition planning meeting, complete all necessary assessments, and allow you time to learn about the new system of services for your child and family.

## **Who may be involved?**

Your regional center service coordinator, the early intervention teacher or therapists who currently provide services to your child, public school representative(s) and an advocate (if invited by parents) may be involved in the transition process. You and the professionals make up the multidisciplinary multi-agency team that will work together to ensure a smooth transition for your child. Your local family resource center is also available to provide parent-to-parent support. You, the parent or guardian, are the most important member of the team. No decisions can be made without you.

# What will happen during the 6 month Transition Period?



## **Planning**

One month before your child is two years, six months of age, and with your written consent, the regional center service coordinator or County Office of Education service coordinator will send a referral packet with your child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), recent assessments, and early intervention reports to the local public school district.

Your service coordinator will update your child's medical and early intervention program information.

At two years, six months, your service coordinator will schedule a transition planning meeting with you, the early intervention service provider(s), the regional center, and a school district preschool representative. You may choose to invite other family members, friends, or individuals.

This meeting is to review your child's IFSP, as well as to discuss a written Transition Plan.

The Transition Planning meeting is your opportunity to ask for information, discuss your observations of your child's strengths and needs, and express your desires regarding preschool services.

## **Assessments**

The 2.6 Transition Planning meeting may include a discussion of whatever additional assessment information is necessary.

The regional center and the school district will try to share each other's assessments and information. The coordinators from each agency will share with you the results of the assessment(s), help you to understand what the results mean, and assist you in understanding what steps are taking place. You may request copies of your child's assessments.

Assessments may be done in your home, at the infant program, or you may be asked to bring your child to an office for assessments.

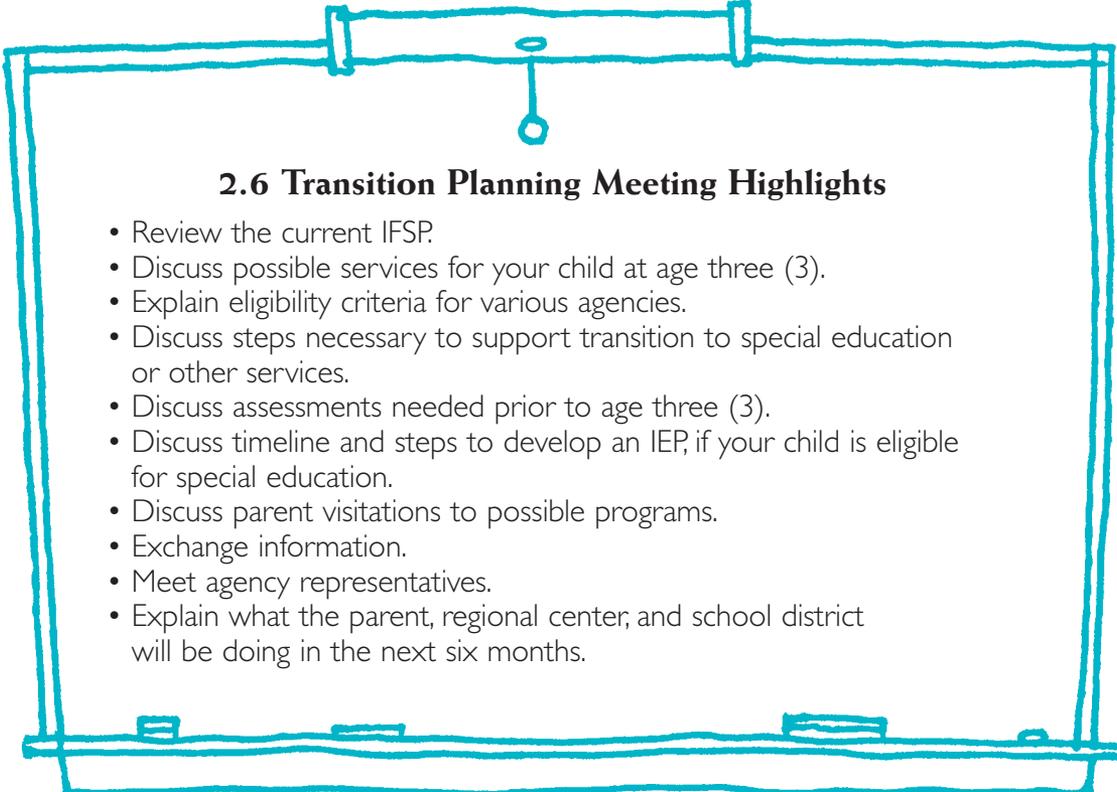
## ***The Transition Plan: Tips for Parents***

- *The Plan should be comprehensive.*
- *There should be no lag in services.*
- *Ask for as much information as you need.*
- *Your input is very important.*

## **Eligibility Meetings**

Once assessments are completed, eligibility for the different agencies can be determined. Eligibility for public school special education services, Head Start program, and continued regional center services are determined separately, since they are different agencies and have different rules about who may use their services.

At age three (3) years, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) review/Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting will be scheduled by the public school district to discuss eligibility and preschool service options.



### **2.6 Transition Planning Meeting Highlights**

- Review the current IFSP.
- Discuss possible services for your child at age three (3).
- Explain eligibility criteria for various agencies.
- Discuss steps necessary to support transition to special education or other services.
- Discuss assessments needed prior to age three (3).
- Discuss timeline and steps to develop an IEP, if your child is eligible for special education.
- Discuss parent visitations to possible programs.
- Exchange information.
- Meet agency representatives.
- Explain what the parent, regional center, and school district will be doing in the next six months.

# How should I prepare for Transition?

## **Think about your child's strengths and areas of concern to you.**

Identify what you think your child needs to learn in order to develop new skills and abilities. Write down your thoughts. Bring your questions, concerns and input with you to the Transition Planning meeting.

## **Organize your thoughts.**

How will a transition to a new setting fit into your life? What are your resources? Are there other family responsibilities and commitments? What are your preferences and priorities?

## **Schedule assessments when your child is at his/her best.**

Inform the person who will be doing the assessment about your child's daily schedule and his/her best time.

## **Follow up with assessments as scheduled.**

Delay in assessments may cause delays in starting preschool services. Know what assessments are needed, who will be doing them, and when they will be scheduled.

## **Consider Contacting Parent-to-Parent Support.**

Ask your service coordinator or infant teacher to assist you.

## **Gather information.**

Learn about program options available in your community. Know your rights and responsibilities.

## **Ask questions.**

Ask as many questions as you have! If something seems clear at the time of the meeting and later does not, call your service coordinator or infant teacher. He/she will be happy to answer your questions or find the person who can answer them.



# The Transition Plan: State of California Says...

The Transition Plan should contain the following information:

**Discussion with, and training of, parents** regarding the toddler's transition to special education (for a toddler with a disability who may be eligible for special education preschool services under IDEA Part B) or to other community support (for a child who will not need special education services after age three(3).)

**Planning steps to prepare the toddler** for changes in service delivery, including steps to help the child adjust to, and function in a new setting.

**The transmission of information** about the toddler to the local education agency or other appropriate service provider, with your consent.

**Identification of needed assessments** and timelines to determine regional center and special education eligibility and who will complete the assessments.

**A plan for a joint meeting** of the IEP/IFSP teams at age three (3) to review the outcomes of early intervention services and determine the eligibility and program plan for a child who may be eligible for special education, related services, and/or regional center services.

**Procedures which ensure that there is no lag in service** as the toddler turns three (3) years of age, if special education and related services are required as determined by the joint IEP/IFSP team.



# Regional Center Eligibility Process

## **Will my child be eligible for continued regional center services after age three (3)?**

An individual must have a developmental disability to be eligible for regional center services after three years of age. As defined by the Lanterman Act, developmental disabilities include mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and other conditions closely related to mental retardation or requiring similar treatment. These conditions must originate before 18 years of age, be expected to continue indefinitely, and constitute a substantial handicap. Conditions that are purely physical or medical in nature, or those that are temporary, are not included. Eligible conditions are described in more detail in the Lanterman Act.

## **How is eligibility determined?**

If your child has one of the developmental disabilities noted above, a definite diagnosis by the regional center multidisciplinary team may or may not have already been made. If your child has been receiving early intervention services as a high risk infant, continued regional center eligibility will need to be determined before age three (3). If you are not sure about your child's status, ask your service coordinator.

If your child's continued eligibility for regional center services needs to be decided, a developmental evaluation and/or other assessments may be required by the regional center. The various assessments and program reports will be discussed during the Transition Planning meeting. These assessments need to be done before your child's third birthday. Once these are completed, your service coordinator will discuss the results with you and send you copies, if requested.

Your service coordinator will meet with the multidisciplinary clinical team at the regional center to review updated program reports and assessment information. Your child's eligibility will be determined at this time.

**If your child is eligible** for continued regional center services, an annual review meeting will be scheduled to review the IFSP and to develop a person-centered plan to determine what services your child will need from the regional center for the next year. This meeting will take place during the month of your child's third birthday.

**If your child is not eligible**, your service coordinator will discuss recommendations and plans to complete the transition process. You will receive a written notice regarding closure of your child's case with the regional center. If you disagree with this decision, your service coordinator can inform you about the appeal process.



# Public School Eligibility Process

## What is Special Education?

Special education is an Individualized Education Program (IEP) designed to help children reach their full potential. It is provided for children three through 21 years (some school districts serve children from birth), who qualify according to laws and regulations outlined by the state and federal governments.

Children receive special education instruction and services according to their specific needs. Children are placed in special education programs only after resources at the regular education program have been considered and utilized when appropriate.

Special Education Preschool Programs are designed to promote a partnership of professionals and families to help meet each child's needs. Teachers and specialized service personnel participate in this team effort. In the Preschool Programs children are helped to develop language, socialization, motor and pre-academic readiness skills.

Special education students may be served in any of a variety of settings, depending upon needs, as determined by the IEP team, which includes school district professionals and yourself.

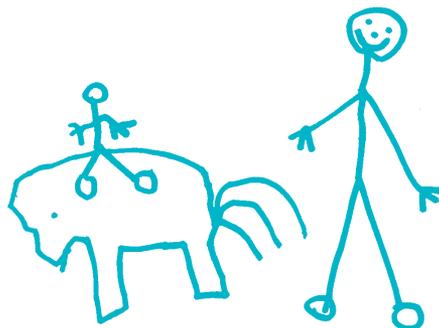
## Will my child be eligible for special education?

Program eligibility is determined by the IEP team. A child may be eligible when the assessment shows impairment to a degree that requires special education in one or more of the following areas:

- ✓ language development delay
- ✓ hearing and/or vision impairment
- ✓ orthopedic/other health impairment
- ✓ autistic-like behavior
- ✓ traumatic brain injury
- ✓ significantly below average intellectual ability
- ✓ learning problems
- ✓ articulation disorder
- ✓ serious emotional disturbance
- ✓ established medical disability

## How is eligibility determined?

Various assessments will be done to determine your child's strengths and needs. These assessments may include a psychological, health, speech, hearing, and/or language assessment. The assessments required by the school district will be discussed during the Transition Planning meeting. The results of the assessments and your child's eligibility for educational services will be determined at the IEP meeting with the school district.



# Preschool Services

Public School Special Education Preschool Services are available to eligible children from three to five year of age. Each school district may offer a variety of options for preschool settings and services. The range of available services are different in each school district. Examples of services include:

**District Early Intervention Programs** - parent participation program, one or two sessions per week.

**Designated Instruction and Services** - instruction and services that are necessary for the child to benefit educationally, in areas such as:

- Adaptive Physical Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language
- Vision Services

**Special Day Class Services** - services provided for children whose educational needs are such that they require special educational instruction for more than 50% of the school day. Some school districts may offer mixed classrooms for children with different types of disabilities or categorical classrooms for children who share similar disabilities.

**Home and hospital** - services for children who are too medically involved to attend a school program.

**Other Preschool Programs** - programs available to children, three through five years of age. There are many different types of preschool programs in the community. These include:

- State Preschool
- College Children's Centers
- Parks and Recreation Activity Programs
- Head Start
- Parent Participation Programs
- Church, Synagogue and Neighborhood Play Groups
- Private Preschools

Each of these community programs has something to offer preschool age children. Depending on your child's needs and strengths, there may be various options available for him/her. Many of these programs operate at a low cost or may have a sliding scale payment system. Parents are responsible for payment. Ask your service coordinator or infant teacher for assistance in obtaining information about services in your neighborhood.

# Visiting Preschool Programs

## **When do I visit the various preschool programs?**

At the Transition Planning meeting, the multidisciplinary team will discuss which types of preschool services may be available to your child. It is helpful to visit preschool programs before the IEP meeting, if possible. In this way you will be a more informed team member. These visits can be discussed at the two year, six months Transition Planning meeting.

## **Should I bring my child when I visit these programs?**

Your service coordinator and current infant program teachers may help you answer this question. This may be a good time to introduce your child to the idea of this new change and to see the various settings. If your child has difficulty with new environments, you may want to visit the programs by yourself and choose to revisit the most appropriate program at a later date with your child.

Visiting the various programs allows you to see the types of programs available in the school district that are potentially appropriate for your child. You may ask your service coordinator, current infant program teacher or therapist to accompany you on a school visit. You may also arrange to visit a program more than once, and you may want to see a program at different times during the day.



# Preschool Program Observation Checklist

## I. Children in the Program

How many children are there in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_

At what level of development are the children in the classroom (e.g. able to walk, talk, self-feed, self-toilet)? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments about children in the program: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Classroom Environment

What toys/equipment are available? \_\_\_\_\_

How is the classroom decorated? \_\_\_\_\_

How is the classroom arranged? \_\_\_\_\_

Space for activities? \_\_\_\_\_

Space for group work? \_\_\_\_\_

Can the children reach the toys? \_\_\_\_\_

Can the children move freely? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the play yard close? \_\_\_\_\_

Are the bathrooms close by? \_\_\_\_\_

Are bathrooms appropriate size? \_\_\_\_\_

What about a child in diapers? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments about classroom environment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### III. Classroom Activities

Preschool hours? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a typical day schedule? \_\_\_\_\_

Do the children play in structured groups?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are they encouraged to play independently?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Is the instruction individualized for the child's needs?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are planned activities appropriate for the child's needs?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a variety of learning activities?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are there opportunities for your child to play with non-disabled children?

Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Is a daily schedule posted?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are the children well supervised?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are computer(s) and other equipment offered?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

How does the teacher interact with the children? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the teacher seem responsive and comfortable?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are children given a chance to communicate their needs?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

What time-out procedures are used? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments about classroom activities: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **IV. School and Classroom Personnel**

Who is the administrator of the school or program? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the principal? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the role of the principal? \_\_\_\_\_

What related services are available? \_\_\_\_\_

How are they delivered (in class/resource room/other)? \_\_\_\_\_

How many teachers work in the class? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the teacher's background/ training/experience? \_\_\_\_\_

How many aides work in the class? \_\_\_\_\_

Do volunteers work in the class? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the staff have training for special needs, (e.g. medication, G-tube feedings)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there enough adults? \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments about school and classroom personnel: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **V. Family Involvement**

How are parents encouraged to be involved? \_\_\_\_\_

What do parents do when they visit? \_\_\_\_\_

Do parents assist with the class on a regular basis?  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

How does a teacher keep in contact with the parent? \_\_\_\_\_

Notebooks  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Phone calls  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Individual meetings  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Home visits  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments about the family involvement: \_\_\_\_\_

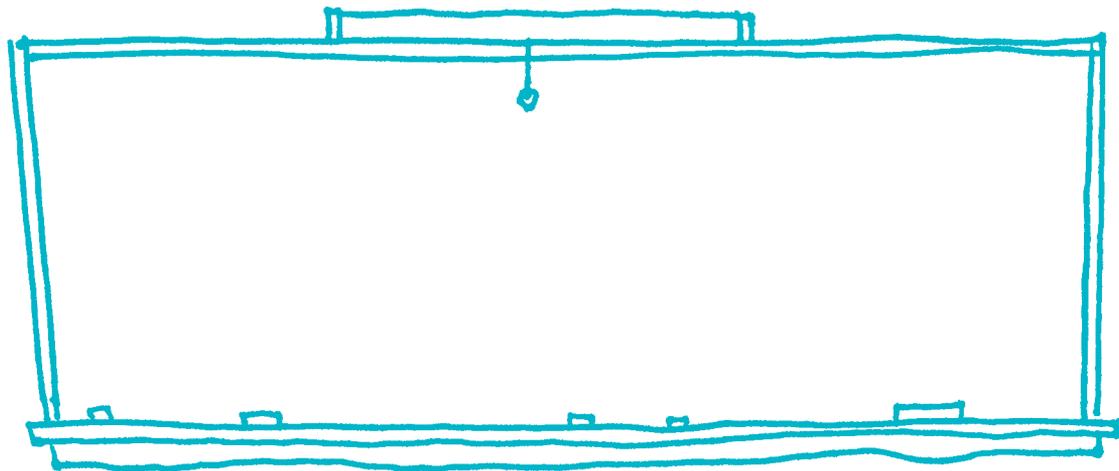
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Additional overall questions and comments regarding this school**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Public Special Education

## IEP Information

The following section provides a summary of information that is important to understand as you enter the public school system. References for complete information are provided in the appendix section.

### **What does the law say about public education?**

Children between the ages of three and twenty-one, who are eligible for special education, must receive an educational program especially designed to meet the child's unique learning needs. It must be free and appropriate. If there is no appropriate public school program available, a private school program must be provided at public school expense.

Your child has a right to receive education in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). Least restrictive environment is the environment which is as close as possible to regular education with non-handicapped peers. This may or may not be a regular classroom setting.

### **What is an Individual Education Program (IEP)?**

An IEP is a document which must be written for each child who receives special education and related services. Your child's IEP helps insure that special education program and services provided are appropriate to your child's learning needs, and that their appropriateness is evaluated regularly.

The IEP is a written plan of the services to be delivered by the school district. The IEP must be reviewed once a year. You or your child's teacher can request a review more frequently.

### **What is the IEP Team?**

The IEP team determines your child's eligibility for special education and develops the IEP at a meeting that must be held at a mutually convenient time and place for all participants. The IEP team must include:

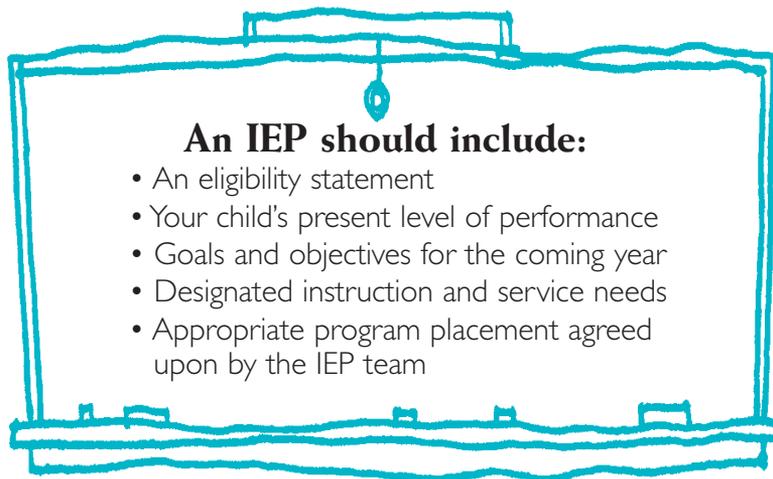
- You, the parent or guardian
- A representative of the school (usually an administrator) who is qualified to provide or supervise special education programs
- A special education teacher
- Other persons, as decided by the school and yourself (e.g. psychologist, speech specialist, child advocate, interpreter, friends of parents, regional center service coordinator)
- The person who has conducted the assessment of your child, or who understands the assessment procedure used with your child, is familiar with the results, and can explain the results to the team.

You may ask anyone you want to attend the IEP meeting with you, including your regional center service coordinator, family resource center representative, and/or an advocate. Due to the nature of the meeting, where there are a number of professionals discussing your child, it is recommended that you bring someone who can be a support to you. As soon as you know the date and time of the IEP, contact those persons who will be attending with you.

## What will happen at the IEP Meeting?

It is very important to attend the IEP meeting. However, it is your right if you choose not to attend, to give verbal permission for the meeting to go on without you.

At the meeting, the school district representatives review the assessment information, discuss eligibility, and explain the various services that are appropriate for your child. If your child is eligible for special education services, the IEP team will go on to develop the IEP. As a member of the team, your input is very important.



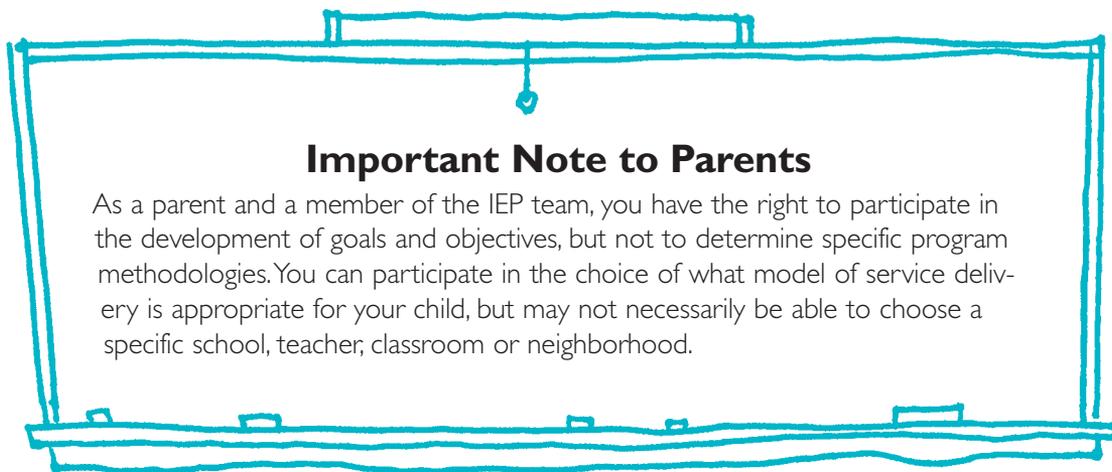
## What will be discussed at the IEP Meeting?

- **Introductions** — Members of the IEP team are introduced. If you do not understand why a school district representative needs to be present, BE SURE TO ASK!
- **Rights** — Your rights as a parent are explained.
- **Assessment Report** — The results of your child's assessments will be read, explained and discussed. If you do not agree with the assessments, this is the time to present your concerns. Give the team specific examples of what your child does and why you disagree with the assessments. If no agreement is reached at the meeting, you may obtain an independent assessment. You may or may not be reimbursed. You have the right to request and/or review copies of written assessments prior to the IEP meeting.
- **Eligibility** — Your child's eligibility to receive special education and related services is determined.
- **Goals and Objectives** — Your child's educational goals and objectives are developed. The goals should be realistic. Objectives should describe the steps that must be accomplished to reach your child's goal.
- **Appropriate School Services** — Special Education and related services appropriate for your child are identified.

- **Placement** — This is when the team discusses where the services for your child will be offered.
- **Questions** — You will be provided with time to get your questions and concerns answered.
- **Consent** — Once the IEP is completed, you will be asked to sign it along with all of the other team members.

**If you agree** with the IEP assessment(s), goals, objectives, placement, and services, you will sign to indicate your agreement.

**If you disagree** with any of the recommendations of the IEP team regarding assessment, placement or the services offered to your child, you may sign the IEP as a participant, indicating your wish to ask for a fair hearing. If you do not agree with the IEP and do not give consent, the team will discuss with you the next steps.



### **What happens after the IEP Meeting?**

Often preschool programs have special registration procedures. Ask what you need to do to register your child in preschool. Make sure you know when your child's services/program will begin.

### **How does my child get to school?**

Transportation options will be discussed at the IEP meeting.

### **How often is the IEP Reviewed?**

The IEP is reviewed at least annually. You may ask for an IEP meeting at any time.

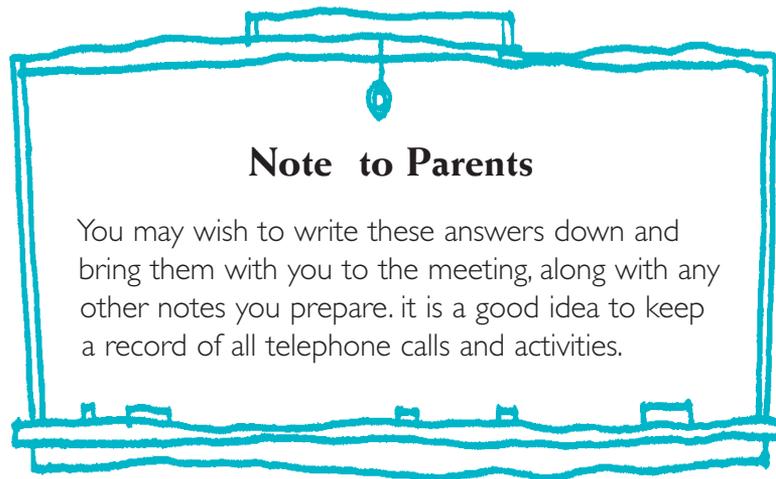
### **What if I do not like the preschool(s) offered to my child?**

If you disagree with any agency decision, it is important for you to understand the due process procedures. You must follow each step in a timely manner to reach a resolution. Contact your service coordinator for additional assistance and information.

# What can I do to prepare for the IEP Meeting?

As a parent, you are naturally “the best” advocate for your child. Your active participation is extremely important to best meet the needs of your child. The following list of questions will help you prepare for the IEP meeting:

- ✓ Have you reviewed your child's legal rights?
- ✓ Have you received a written copy of your child's assessment reports? Have these results been discussed with you?
- ✓ Have you found out about preschool education and related services provided by your district?
- ✓ Have you observed or visited possible preschool programs?
- ✓ Which preschool and related services are you requesting for your child?
- ✓ Why are these services important?
- ✓ What would you like your child to be learning over the next school year (think about appropriate goals)
- ✓ Have you signed and returned the written notification of IEP meeting? Did you include the names of people you want to invite?
- ✓ Have you reviewed the IEP procedures?
- ✓ Do you have any current medical information to bring to the IEP?
- ✓ Is there something specific that you want to remember to share at the IEP meeting?
- ✓ Have you written down questions you want to remember to ask the IEP team?
- ✓ Have you arranged for transportation to and childcare for the IEP?
- ✓ If appropriate, have arrangements been made to have an interpreter present at this meeting?



# How to help your child.

Children often take their cues from their parents. If you have a positive attitude, your child will be more likely to adapt and be comfortable with the change. The following tips may help you and your child prepare for and adjust to a new setting:

- **Prepare your child for leaving the current program.** Saying good-bye to friends and teachers is a natural part of the growing process. You can help make it a positive experience for your child. Talk to him/her about the changes ahead.
- **Visit your child's new program.** Call the new teacher and request a visit to allow your child to meet him/her and see the new setting. This will make the new setting familiar to him/her before actually beginning the new program.
- **Favorite items.** Allow your child to take a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, or any other special item to help him/her adjust to the new school setting. Transitional objects should be allowed by the new teacher and are very important for your child's emotional adjustment.
- **Every child reacts differently to changes.** It may take a few days to several weeks for your child to feel comfortable in his/her new program. If there are some real difficulties, try to figure out what may work best. Try to remember the things that have worked in the past for him/her and try to adapt those methods to this situation. Set up a meeting with the teacher to discuss your concerns.
- **Talk to the teacher.** Remember that many educators are parents. Even if they are not, most of them have a good understanding of the ups and downs you may be experiencing and may have some helpful suggestions. If you feel you are not getting the support or services you expect, speak with the teacher. Share your honest feelings and discuss the options that may be available to resolve your concerns. Offer assistance if you can. You can help the teacher to understand your child and family. Teachers will be more willing to work with you to solve an issue if your approach is calm and you appear to be looking for cooperative solutions to the problem.
- **Stay involved.** You are the primary protector of your child's interests and an essential member of the educational team. It is important to be an active participant in his/her education.
- **Praise your child.** Tell your child everyday how well he/she is doing in school.

## The first few months at the new school

For the first month or two in a new program, your child will be getting to know other children, teachers, and toys within the new classroom. You can help the staff get to know your child better by sharing information such as:

- **Special sitting and feeding positions**
- **Snacks your child likes to eat**
- **Any special diet your child is on**
- **Ways your child communicates**
- **Special equipment and how to use it**
- **Favorite activities**

# Your Rights and the Law

## Parent's rights and responsibilities

1. Parents have the right to information about their child and their child's program. They have the responsibility for seeking and maintaining this information.
2. Parents have the right to review their child's records. They have the responsibility for asking questions when they do not understand terms or reports.
3. Parents have the right to be full partners in their child's program. They have the responsibility for becoming and remaining active members of the team.
4. Parents have the right to stand up for their child to make sure he or she gets the services he or she needs. They have the responsibility for basing their actions on accurate information.
5. Parents have the right to make suggestions or recommendations about their child's program or services. They have the responsibility for doing so.
6. Parents have the right to a vision for their child's future. They have the responsibility for helping their child achieve it.

## Laws affecting Special Education

### PL 101-476 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In October 1990, Federal Public Law PL101-476, The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), amended the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142). IDEA guarantees four basic rights to all children with disabilities. In order to assure that these rights are received, this law also includes two protections:

#### Rights Under IDEA

##### Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Children with disabilities are entitled to a public education appropriate to their needs, at no cost to their families. Children 0-21 are entitled to a free appropriate public education dependent upon the school district in which the child resides.

##### Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Children with disabilities must be educated with students who do not have disabilities as much as possible and as close to home as possible.

##### Designated Instruction and Services (DIS)

Children with disabilities must be provided the related services they need in order to benefit from their educational program. Some examples are: occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling, deaf and hard of hearing services, vision services, adaptive physical education, etc.

##### Assessment

An assessment must be completed to determine the child's needs in all areas related to his or her suspected disabilities. This may be done only with the parent's informed consent.

## **Protections Under IDEA**

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

The IEP must be written at least annually for all children with disabilities. It is prepared by a team comprised of appropriate school district personnel and the parents.

### **Due Process**

Due process rights ensure that no changes can be made in a child's program without prior notice to the parents. Due process also provides a mechanism for the resolution of disagreements.

### **PL 93-112- The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504**

Section 504 guarantees that people with disabilities may not be discriminated against because of their disability. While IDEA protects children in the area of education, Section 504 protects those with disabilities for life and encompasses the right to vote, education, accessibility, employment, etc. Some children who are not covered by IDEA requirements are assured the right to a free and appropriate education under Section 504.

### **PL 99-457 - Part C**

Part C authorizes assistance to states to address the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities, and their families. The Part C program supports coordination across agencies and disciplines to ensure that comprehensive early intervention services are available on a statewide basis. These services are designed for children below the age of three who meet the state's eligibility criteria for developmental delay (and "at risk" if a state chooses to serve these children under Part C, which California does), and their families.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**

The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. Corresponding state law regarding special education can be found in the California Education Code, Part 30, Sections 56000 to 59300, and Title 3 regulations. Under California law, children with disabilities are eligible for education from birth to 21 years of age.



# Due Process/Fair Hearing

## For Regional Center (For Children Birth to Three)

You as a parent or guardian have the right to appeal any decision made by the regional center if you feel that the decision is illegal, discriminatory, or not in your child's best interest. You need to initiate your due process appeal within thirty (30) days. If you disagree with a regional center decision, you may ...

- Ask for a meeting with the supervisor or multidisciplinary team. This is optional but may resolve the problem without any further due process.
- Ask your service coordinator for the decision in writing and for the due process request form and procedure.
- Complete the due process request form and follow the procedure. Ask your service coordinator for assistance, if needed.
- Contact the Family Resource Center or other advocacy resources for assistance, as needed.

## For Public Schools

### Is a Fair Hearing Needed?

As a parent, you are a part of the IEP team. If you disagree with any of the recommendations of the Individual Education Planning Team regarding identification, evaluation, placement, or the provision of a free and appropriate public education for your child, you may wish to ask for a Fair Hearing. The intent of a Fair Hearing is to provide an objective forum. It allows for appropriate educational decision making when a disagreement occurs.

When considering a Fair Hearing, all attempts should be made by the Individual Education Planning Team to reach an acceptable resolution of the differences. This includes the utilization of the local "Solutions Panels." If such attempts have failed to solve the disagreements, then the Fair Hearing Process may be pursued by submitting a **written request** to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. A copy should be sent to your school district (public education agency). The request for a Fair Hearing should state the issue(s) upon which you are basing your appeal. Upon receipt of your request, the following two events must take place:

1. The Superintendent of Public Instruction will advise you and the public education agency of all your rights relating to procedural safeguards (the Fair Hearing process) including the right to waive the mediation conference.
2. Within three days after your school district receives your request for a Fair Hearing, they must advise you of free or low cost legal services available in your area.

**The basic Fair Hearing process consists of the informal conference at the local level, the mediation conference, and the hearing at the state level.** This procedure can be modified because you have the option to waive either the informal conference, the mediation conference, or both. There are strict timelines that must be followed by all parties involved, including the parent.

**If you want a mediation conference, the Superintendent has 15 days from the receipt of your request to hold the conference.** Many issues can be resolved at this stage. However, if the problem is not resolved, the mediator will list those issues upon which the state level hearing will be based.

**The Fair Hearing process should not last longer than 45 days unless either party requests a delay.** If satisfactory results are not brought about through the Fair Hearing process, you or the school district may choose to carry action into the courts.

**The public school Fair Hearing process is complicated.** You may wish to ask for help from your regional center service coordinator/ peer consultant, consumer rights advocate, family resource center or other advocacy resources.

## **When Should I File a Complaint?**

You may file a written complaint with the Department of Education which serves your area if you believe that your public educational agency has failed to comply with the procedural safeguards and mandates of the law, or when the educational program of your child is not being carried out as designated in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

## **Know Your Rights and Responsibilities for a Fair Hearing**

Become familiar with all of the rights and responsibilities of the Fair Hearing process. Your local district has the obligation to inform you of your legal rights. Parent advocacy groups and family resource centers can help you understand the fair hearing process and prepare you for the meeting that will be held.

Communicate with your school district. Although the issue or concern is usually between the school district and you, it is still important to communicate with district personnel. Information that you must communicate to the district includes:

- convenient dates
- locations for the hearing
- provisions for interpreters
- exchange of documents

## **Decide on Open Versus Closed Hearing**

A Fair Hearing may be either closed or open to the public. The type of hearing is entirely your decision. If a hearing is open to the public, confidentiality is waived. Careful thought should be given to the type of hearing you desire.



# Appendix A

## Sample Letter (Requesting a Report)

The following is an example of a letter from a parent/guardian requesting a copy of their child's assessment results. The letter is to be sent to the school district special education department where your child was assessed. Be sure you keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Today's Date

School District Name

Special Education Department

Address

City, State, and Zip Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On (date of evaluation), my child, (your child's full name) was assessed by (name of examiner or school district) to determine eligibility for preschool.

Please send me a copy of my child's assessment results so that I may review them before the IEP meeting.

Sincerely yours,

Your name

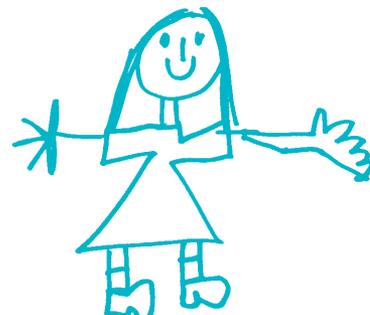
Your address

Your phone number

# Appendix B

## Common Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APE	Adaptive Physical Education
ARC	Association for Retarded Citizens
CAC	Community Advisory Committee
CCS	California Children Services
CDE	California Department of Education
CP	Cerebral Palsy
DCFS	Department of Child and Family Services
DD	Developmental Delays or Developmental Disability
DDS	Department of Developmental Services
DHH	Deaf/Hard of Hearing
DIS	Designated Instruction and Services
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FRC	Family Resource Center
HI	Hearing Impairment
ICC	Interagency Coordinating Council
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
IPP	Individual Program Plan
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LEA	Local Education Agency
LID	Low Incidence Disability .
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
LSD	Language or Speech Disorder



LSH	Language, Speech and Hearing Specialist (Speech Therapist)
MH	Persons with Multiple Disabilities
OH	Severe Orthopedic Impairment
OHI	Other Health Impairment
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
OT	Occupational Therapy
PL	Public Law (Federal)
PT	Physical Therapy
RIS	Requires Intensive Services
RLA	Responsible Local Agency
RSP	Resource Specialist Program
SB	Senate Bill
SC	Service Coordinator
SDC	Special Day Class
SDL	Severe Disorders of Language
SED	Serious Emotional Disturbance
SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area
SH	Students with Severe Disabilities
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SLDA	Speech/Language Delay-Aphasia
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TASK	Team of Advocates for Special Kids
TDD	Telecommunications Device for the Deaf
UCP	United Cerebral Palsy
VI	Visual Impairment



# Appendix C

## Glossary of Terms

**Adaptive Physical Education (APE)** - a service that assists children with motor activities such as balance and climbing.

**Advocate/Advocacy** - someone who takes actions to help someone else; also to take action on someone's behalf. Advocates may be family members, friends, regional center staff, independent evaluators or experts, legal representatives, or even the individuals themselves representing their own interests.

**Assessment** - testing and observation to identify the child's strengths, needs, and to monitor progress.

**Audiological Services** - services for evaluating and assisting children with hearing loss; provided by a licensed audiologist.

**Autism** - a developmental disability characterized by unusual communication, social interaction, and behaviors, starting before age three.

**Categorical Class** - a type of specialized class that serves children who share a common disability.

**Cerebral Palsy** - a non-progressive disorder characterized by impaired movement and posture occurring in the first two years of life, and resulting from damage to neurons in the brain. Cerebral palsy may affect only certain areas of the body; it may cause rigidity, spasticity, involuntary movement, low muscle tone, balance problems, or a combination of these.

**Cognitive Skills** - thinking skills, sometimes referred to as problem-solving skills.

**Community Advisory Council (CAC)** - a group of parents of children with special needs, students, members of the community, and special education professionals who advise the school district and school board about special education programs.

**Communicatively Handicapped\*** (CH) - a term used to describe children whose major disability is in the area of speech and language.

**Deaf Blind** - a disability characterized by impairment in both vision and hearing.

**Designated Instructional Services (DIS)** - instruction and services that are necessary for the child to benefit educationally, for example adaptive physical education (APE) or speech services.

**Developmental Disabilities** - according to the Lanterman Act, a disability which originates before an individual attains age 18, continues or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and constitutes a substantial disability for the individual. Under the law, developmental disabilities include mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and other conditions closely related to mental retardation or requiring similar treatment.

**Developmental Delay** - a term used to describe the development of children when they are not able to perform the skills that other children of the same age are able to perform.

**Due Process/Fair Hearing** - method or process for resolving disputes between the agency responsible for securing services (may be the Local Education Agency or the regional center) and families. Due process includes informal meetings, mediation, and fair hearing procedures.

**Epilepsy** - a seizure disorder characterized by recurrent sudden episodes of loss of consciousness or movement problems. Types of seizures include partial, grand mal, petit mal, and infantile spasms.

**Evaluation** - a way of collecting information about a child's strengths and needs; also called assessment.

**Extended School Year (ESY)** - a related service that provides an additional session to assist children in meeting the IEP goals.

**Fair Hearing** - a formal meeting held by an outside individual to resolve a disagreement about regional center services or a child's educational program.

**Family Resource Center (FRC)** - a center that is usually staffed by parents who have children with special needs. They provide information, training activities, and support to parents of children from birth to three years of age.

**Fine Motor Skills** - skills involving hand use or the use of small muscle groups (i.e. scribbling, bead work)

**Full Inclusion** - generally means placement in the regular classroom, essentially 100% of the time, with the use of supplemental aides and services as necessary. At this time, there are no federal or state statutes mandating the full inclusion of all students with disabilities. However, since 1977, federal law has required children with disabilities to be placed in a general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. Current law does not prohibit full inclusion of individual students. The ultimate decision for each student is made by the IEP Team.

**Goals** - a list of skills and/or behaviors that you, the teacher and your child will be aiming for over the next year. They are based upon your child's needs.

**Gross Motor Skills** - skills involving the use of large muscle groups for example walking or running.

**Head Start** - is a federally funded preschool program that serves children from low income families to meet the child's educational, social, health, nutritional, and emotional needs. (10% of the class is reserved for children with special needs).

**Hearing Impaired (HI)** - a term used to describe children whose main disability is in the area of hearing.

**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** - a written document that is developed between the family and the service coordinator from the regional center when your child is between birth and three years of age.

**Individualized Educational Program (IEP)** - a written document that states the child's current level of educational performance, specifies annual goals and objectives, and identifies the appropriate services needed to meet those goals.

**Informed Consent** - a parent's written permission to assess and/or receive a special education program.

**Inclusion** - the use and participation by individuals with disabilities and their families of the same community resources which are utilized by non-disabled peers.

**Integration** - children with and without disabilities participating in community activities together.

**Itinerant Teacher** - a special education teacher; with support from speech and language specialist services, who works in a variety of classrooms and at different sites. Most itinerant teachers work at a variety of sites.

**Language delay** - a lag or slowness in the development of a child's ability to use or to understand language.

**Learning Disability/Learning Handicap\*** (LD/LH) - a disability characterized by problems using language, remembering, concentrating, following instructions, reading, calculating or learning through listening or looking.

**Least Restrictive Environment** (LRE) - children with special needs being educated to the maximum extent appropriate) with children who are not disabled.

**Local Education Agency** (LEA) - usually the local school district.

**Mainstream** - children with special needs spend as much time in a general education classroom as the parent(s) and professionals agree is appropriate

**Mediation** - a meeting of parents and school district personnel aimed to reaching an agreement regarding the child's educational program. This is also a part of the fair hearing process with the regional center.

**Mental Retardation** - significantly below average intellectual functioning, occurring prior to 18 years of age, and associated with impairments in adaptive behaviors such as communication, self-care, health and safety, and independent living skills. Must not be determined by IQ scores alone.

**Multi-Agency Team** - a group of individuals representing various agencies who meet and discuss a child's assessments and appropriate services. The parent/legal guardian is a member of this team.

**Multidisciplinary** - a number of professionals from different disciplines (e.g., education, occupational therapy, nursing).

**Multidisciplinary Team** - under state law, refers to the involvement of two or more disciplines or professions, and the parent or guardian, in the provision of integrated and coordinated services, including evaluation, assessment, and IFSP development.

**Multi-Handicapped\*** (MH) - when a child has two or more disabilities.

**Objectives** - describe the steps to be accomplished to reach your child's goal(s). Serve as a guide for planning and carrying out learning activities.

**Occupational Therapy** (OT) - a related service provided by a licensed occupational therapist who assists children with fine motor activities and everyday tasks like eating, dressing and hand use.

**Orientation and Mobility** (O&M) - a related service provided by an orientation and mobility specialist who teaches children with visual impairments how to know their position in space and how to move safely from place to place.

**Orthopedically Handicapped\*** (OH)/ Orthopedic Impairment (OI) - a disability characterized by difficulty getting around without adaptive equipment, (e.g., wheelchair, braces, etc.).

**Physical Therapy** (PT) - a related service provided by a licensed physical therapist who assists children with gross motor activities such as rolling, sitting and walking.

**Parent Counseling/Parent Training-** support or educational services for parents to assist their understanding of the special learning needs of their child.

**Placement** - the actual service that occurs after the IEP is written to meet the child's special needs.

**Preschool** - classes or specialized services that serve children ages three-to- five-years-old.

**Program Specialist** - a professional working for a school district special education department who is knowledgeable about educational programs to meet a child's special needs and is responsible for making sure that children receive needed available services.

**Psychological Services** - services which provide a school psychologist for the purpose of educational assessment of the child and also provide support for children and parents.

**Receptive Language** - recognition and/or understanding of what is heard.

**Referral** - a recommendation for assessment to determine if a specialized service is needed and at what level.

**Related Services/Designated Instruction and Services** - a term referring to those support services children may need in order to benefit from their educational program.

**Resource Room** - a special educational classroom for children who are in a regular classroom for more than half the day.

**Reverse Mainstreaming** - when children without disabilities go to the special education classroom to play and learn with children with disabilities.

**Self-Contained Classroom** - a special educational classroom where children receive instruction in all developmental and academic areas.

**Self-help Skills** - a term relating to those skills associated with feeding, dressing and toileting.

**Service Coordinator** - as defined by law, the person responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), including securing services and supports, collecting and disseminating information, providing advocacy, and revising the plan if necessary. With training and support, a family member of the individual may serve as service coordinator.

**Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED)** - a disability characterized by behavior problems that prevent a child from learning or getting along with other people; the behavior must occur for a long period of time and be severe.

**Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA)** - each school district is either a SELPA or is a part of a SELPA. A SELPA is a combination of school districts and the county office of education, joined together to provide resources to meet the needs of students with special needs.

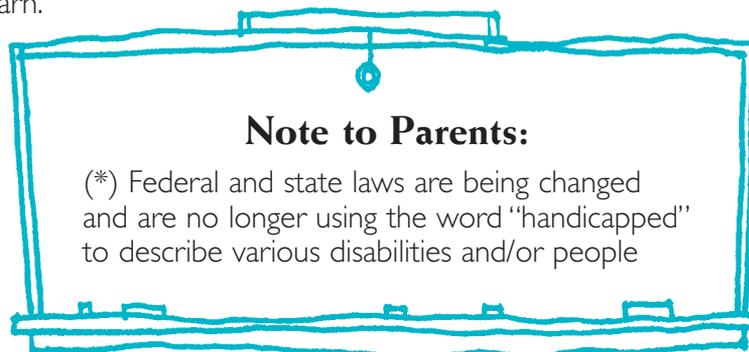
**Special Day Class (SDC)** - a classroom that is appropriate for children who would benefit from specialized services for over half of the school day.

**Special Education** - instruction that is adapted to teach children with special needs.

**Speech/Language Therapy** - related services provided by a remedial language and speech therapist or speech pathologist who helps children learn to communicate.

**Transition Plan** - a part of the IFSP which is done when a child is 2.6 years old. It is developed by you, your regional center service coordinator, public school personnel, and other members of your multi-agency team. It includes specific steps to help you and your child through the process.

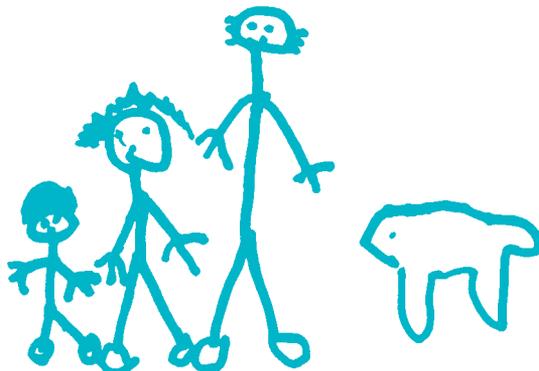
**Visual Handicap\* (VH)/Visual Impairment (VI)** - a disability characterized by a vision loss that affects a child's ability to learn.



# Appendix D

## References

- Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center: A Preschool Transition Handbook, Los Angeles, CA.  
Education of all Handicapped Children's Act 1975 (PL: 94-412)  
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



# Notes

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