



PIERCE COUNTY

BIRTH TO 3



Parent Handbook



A Guide to Birth to 3 Program Services for You and Your Child



Mission Statement

The Birth to 3 Program is committed to children under the age of 3 with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. We value the family's primary relationship with their child and work in partnership with the family. We work to enhance the child's development and support the family's knowledge, skills, and abilities as they interact with, and raise their child.

About Your Parent Handbook



Welcome to the Birth to 3 Program!Page 4

An introduction to the Birth to 3 Program that briefly describes the key steps in the program and answers these questions:

- What is the purpose of the Parent Handbook?
- Why is early intervention important?
- What are the goals of early intervention?
- What are the guiding principles of the Birth to 3 Program?
- What other resources may be helpful for my family?



First Steps:

Getting Started in the Birth to 3 ProgramPage 9

Information about what happens in the beginning of your relationship with the Birth to 3 Program, and answers to these questions:

- What happens after my child is referred to the Birth to 3 Program?
- What is a Family Service Coordinator?
- How will I know if my child can benefit from enrollment in Birth to 3 Program?
- What will happen during my child's initial evaluation?
- How will I know if my child is eligible?
- Who is eligible to receive services from the Birth to 3 Program?



Next Steps:

Birth to 3 Program Services and Supports.....Page 13

Information about how you will plan and receive early intervention services for your child and family, and answers to these questions:

- What is an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?
- Who will be involved in developing our family's IFSP?
- What does my signature on the IFSP mean?
- What happens after the IFSP is written?
- What if I want to make changes to the IFSP?
- What services are available to my child and family?
- How will services be paid for?
- What if our family wants services that are not listed on the IFSP?
- How and where are early intervention services provided?
- Why are natural environments important?
- What can I expect from a home visit?



Future Steps: Leaving the Birth to 3 Program Page 18

Information to help you plan for when your child will no longer be enrolled in the Birth to 3 Program, and answers to these questions:

- How long will my child and family participate in the Birth to 3 Program?
- What is transition planning?
- What services are available after leaving the Birth to 3 Program?
- When should transition planning begin?



Your Family's RightsPage 21

Information about rights your child and family have while involved with the Birth to 3 Program.

Welcome to Birth to 3!

Every family wants their child to grow and learn to their fullest potential. Having concerns about your child's development may be a new experience for you as a family and this can seem overwhelming. There will be new people to meet, new words and terms to understand, but you are not alone. It's important to remember that there are supports in place to help this be a positive experience for your child and family.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal education law that helps to reinforce the importance of early development and learning in young children. Part C of IDEA ensures that early intervention services and supports are available for infants and toddlers, birth to age three, with disabilities and their families. In Wisconsin, the Part C system of IDEA is called the Birth to 3 Program. The Birth to 3 Program is a system of coordinated supports for families to help you meet the developmental needs of your child. The lead agency for the Birth to 3 Program is the Department of Health Services.

Why is Early Intervention Important?

The first 3 years of life lay an important foundation for the health and development of all children. Starting intervention services early improves a child's ability to develop and learn. It may also prevent or decrease the need for special help later. It is the goal of early intervention in Wisconsin to open a window of opportunity for families to help their children with special needs develop to their full potential.

What is the Purpose of the Parent Handbook?

The purpose of this handbook is to help you understand the role and philosophy of the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program and the key steps you may take while in the program. This handbook will give you general information about your child and family rights under the Birth to 3 Program. The information for your official notice of rights is found in the *Birth to 3 Program Notice of Child and Family Rights*. Your Family Service Coordinator will provide you with a copy of these rights.

The phrase "children with special needs" is used in this handbook to refer to children who have developmental delays or who have an established condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay. The words "parents" and "families" are used to mean anyone who is in charge of the care and well-being of a child. These can be biological or adoptive parents, guardians, single parents, grandparents, surrogate parents, foster parents, or other family members.

What are the Goals of Early Intervention?

Early Intervention services intend to support parents in their efforts to enhance the development of young children with special needs. Each family is different, just as no two children are the same. Therefore, your goals for participating in Early Intervention will be determined by your needs, interests, and personal circumstances. The Birth to 3 Program will be your partner in working toward goals/outcomes you set for your child and family.

What are the Guiding Principles of the Birth to 3 Program?

Guiding principles outline what we believe to be important. They provide the framework for our decision-making. The Governor's appointed Interagency Coordinating Council adopted the following guidelines in December 1988 and they continue to be relevant to this day.

- Children's optimal development depends on their being viewed first as children and second as children with a problem or disability.
- Children's greatest resource is their family.
- Parents are partners in any activity that serves their children.
- Just as children are best supported within the context of family, the family is best supported within the context of the community.
- Professionals are most effective when they can work as a team member with parents and others.
- Collaboration is the best way to provide comprehensive services.
- Early intervention enhances the development of children.



What other resources may be helpful for my family?



Family Resource Center –St. Croix Valley

The Family Resource Center St. Croix Valley's services are based on the Parents as Teachers model. Parents as Teachers is a nationally recognized research- and evidence-based curriculum that operates with the mission to provide the information, support, and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life.

Some programs provided by the Family Resource Center –St. Croix Valley include:

- Play and Learn groups
- "Baby and Me" classes
- Hospital and Home visits
- Screenings
- Parent Education
- Resource Networks
- Teen Parent Program

All programs are free to any family with children from birth to age six in Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix Counties. For more information about participating in any program, call (715) 684-4440. Website: www.frcscv.org

Head Start

The Head Start program provides child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school.

Director: Sharon Glessing
Phone: 800-352-6283 or 715-986-2020

Katie Beckett

The Katie Beckett Program is a special eligibility process that allows certain children who are residents of Wisconsin with long-term disabilities or complex medical needs, living at home with their families, to obtain a Wisconsin Medicaid card.

Children who are not eligible for other Medicaid programs because the income or assets of their parents are too high, may be eligible for Medicaid through the Katie Beckett Program.

Program Consultant for Pierce County:
Naomi Silver, New Horizon's North
(715) 685-4559

Family Support Program & Children's Long Term Support Waiver(s):

The Family Support Program & CLTS waiver(s) provides individual services and supports to families that include a child with severe disabilities. The Program recognizes that meeting the needs of children who have severe disabilities may place hardships on a family's emotional, physical and financial resources.

The Program & Waiver offer:

- Information and help in finding services and maximizing community resources;
- Limited funding to buy needed services and goods that can't be bought through other sources;
- Help in linking families with other families to strengthen natural supports.

Contact your county's Family Support Coordinator & CLTS coordinator:
Pierce County: (715) 273-6766

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Promoting quality care for children and youth with special health care needs in Wisconsin.

Program Goal: To assure that children and youth with special health care needs are:

- identified early
- receive high quality coordinated care
- their families receive the supports they need

The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program collaborates with national, state, and community-based partners to link children to appropriate services, close service gaps, reduce duplication, and develop policies to better serve families.

Western Regional Office: 1-800-400-3678

Wisconsin First Step For Children with Special Needs

First Step is an information and referral service that assists Wisconsin families who have young children with special needs. First Step can help locate a variety of services for children and families including, early intervention services, financial assistance, support groups, child care/respice, home health care, educational and therapy providers, medical resources, evaluation, advocacy, transportation, assistive technology devices and services.

1-800 642-STEP (7837) VOICE/TTY
24 hours a day/7 days a week
www.mch-hotlines.org

Supplemental Security Income in Wisconsin

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a monthly cash benefit paid by the federal Social Security Administration (SSA) and state Department of Health Services (DHS) to people in financial need who are blind or disabled and residents of Wisconsin.

Eau Claire office: 1-866-815-2924

Rice Lake office: 1-715-234-7586

National Toll-Free: 1-800-772-1213

TTY: 1-800-325-0778

WI Women, Children, and Infants (WIC)

The purpose of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is to promote and maintain the health and well-being of nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children.

WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition and breastfeeding information, and referral to other health and nutrition services. WIC promotes and supports breastfeeding.

Pierce County: (715) 273-6758

United Way 2-1-1

2-1-1 provides free and confidential information and referral. 2-1-1 can give information on food, housing, employment, healthcare, counseling and more.

Dial 2-1-1 on your phone or go to their website: www.211unitedway.org

The Birth to 3 Program Step-by-Step

Steps your family may take while in the Birth to 3 Program

First Steps: Getting Started

1. Referral

- Anyone with concerns about a child may refer them to the Birth to 3 Program.
- Referrals may be made by telephone, fax, in writing, or in person to a local Birth-3 program.
- When the referral is received, a Service Coordinator will be assigned to assist your family.

2. Initial Contact

- During initial contact with a Birth-3 staff member, you'll be asked about your child, his/her development, & medical history*

*These 1st meetings will help us learn your concerns & priorities as a family, your child's current strengths, areas needing improvement, as well as successes or challenges you may encounter during daily routines.

Next Steps: Services

3. Evaluation & Assessment

- In order to determine if your child will benefit from the Birth to 3 Program, evaluations/assessments will be completed. The information gathered will show us your child's strengths and any areas of development that might benefit from early intervention services.

4. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

- Once your child is determined to be eligible for the Birth to 3 Program, a Service Coordinator will guide the development of an IFSP.
- Development of the initial IFSP must occur within forty-five (45) days of the referral

5. Delivery of Services

- Your child will receive the services outlined in the IFSP.
- Services listed in the IFSP should begin no later than 30 days after the IFSP is developed and signed by the family.

6. IFSP Reviews

- As the needs of your child & family change, supports and services may also need to change.
- The IFSP will be reviewed at least every six months to make sure it still fits the priorities & needs of your child and family.
- A review of the IFSP can be done at any time.

Future Steps: Leaving the Program

7. Transition

- Children transition out of the Birth to 3 Program when they are no longer eligible for the program, when they move, or when they turn 3 years old.
- Transition plans are outlined in the IFSP.

Parents may choose to proceed at their own pace, stop eligibility determination, or withdraw from the program at any time.



First Steps: Getting Started in the Birth to 3 Program

What happens after my child is referred to the Birth to 3 Program?

When your child is referred to the Birth to 3 Program, an Early Intervention Service Coordinator (EISC) will be assigned to your family. Your EISC will start by giving you information about the program, explaining your child's and family's rights, including the right to Individualized Family Service Plan development within forty-five (45) calendar days from referral to the Birth to 3 Program, if your child is eligible for services.

Your Early Intervention Service Coordinator will talk with you about your concerns and priorities for your child. In addition, she will ask you about the resources and supports that you currently have available to your family.

During initial contact with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator, you will be asked about your child and his or her development, daily routines, and medical history. You will also be asked for written consent for the Birth to 3 Program to request pertinent information about your child from her doctor and others involved in her life.



What is an Early Intervention Service Coordinator (EISC)?

Your Early Intervention Service Coordinator is your main contact in the Birth to 3 Program. Federal and state laws require that children and families served by the Birth to 3 Program have an Early Intervention Service Coordinator

Your Early Intervention Service Coordinator can help you:

- Understand your rights under the Birth to 3 Program.
- Decide about your child's needs, your choices for supports and services, and explaining ways of getting those services.
- Find supports & services as outlined in your family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and assure the provision and quality of those services.
- Find answers to questions you have about your child.
- Talk with other specialists involved with your child and family.
- Decide what supports and information you want, how much you want, and how you want to receive them.
- Plan when things need to get done and decide who should do them.
- Plan for changes in services by talking about options, visiting new programs, and making plans to prepare everyone for the change. This includes planning for services when your child reaches age 3.
- Settle any disagreements with your early intervention team about things, such as eligibility for services and types of services.

How will I know if my child could benefit from enrollment in the Birth to 3 Program?

In order to determine whether your child is eligible for, and would benefit from, Birth to 3 supports and services, evaluations and assessments need to be completed. The information gathered will show us your child's current strengths as well as areas that may present challenges for your child and family. In addition to helping determine eligibility, the initial evaluation and assessment process helps to gather important information needed to plan and implement appropriate supports and services for your child and family.

If you are not sure if you have concerns about your child's development at the time of referral, Birth to 3 staff will talk with you about your child's development and about your child's successes or challenges during daily routines. This discussion can help guide your decision about proceeding with an initial evaluation to determine eligibility. Birth to 3 staff may also complete a developmental screening to provide you with a clearer picture of your child's development.

What will happen during my child's initial evaluation?

The initial Birth to 3 Program evaluation is individualized for each child and family. A developmental specialist, according to your child's needs, completes the evaluation. The number and types of specialists involved in the evaluation depend on your child's unique characteristics, needs, and your family's concerns. However, at least two people from different specialty areas must be a part of the evaluation team. The team will also review, with your consent, available information about your child

such as medical records or previous evaluations. Your child's development will be assessed in several ways, including observation, parent interview, and evaluations from qualified developmental professionals. Your Family Coordinator will help schedule the initial evaluation and will answer any questions you may have. Evaluation can be done in a variety of places and ways. It will most likely involve talking with you about your child, learning about your child by watching him or her play, and working with your child. Because you know your child best, you will play an important role in the evaluation process. Your Family Service Coordinator is responsible for making sure that your preferences and concerns guide the evaluation process.

It is important to tell your Family Service Coordinator or other Birth to 3 staff about your child. For example, tell the staff if your child is shy around new people, has a favorite activity, or is not feeling well. The staff will use this information to make your child feel more comfortable or reschedule for another time. During the evaluation, the staff will only see your child for a short period of time. Your child may not do something that he or she usually does. If this happens, tell the staff what your child does with you or others that is different from what he or she did during the evaluation.



Evaluations are not tests that a child passes or fails. They are a way of letting you know what your child does well and where he or she may need help. Information from evaluations can help you choose the best types of supports and services for your child and family.



The Initial Birth to 3 Program Evaluation/Assessment will consider:

- Your family's concerns, resources, priorities, and routines.
- Your family's perceptions of your child's abilities and needs related to participation in everyday routines and activities.
- Your child's medical history and current health status.
- Your child's cognitive development (thinking and learning skills).
- Your child's physical development (moving, seeing, and hearing abilities).
- Your child's communication development (understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words).
- Your child's social-emotional development (responding to and developing relationships with other people).
- Your child's adaptive development (learning to take care of oneself, like feeding and dressing).

How will I know if my child is eligible?

After the evaluations are complete and any existing and relevant records are reviewed, an eligibility determination meeting is held. You have the right to invite other people to participate in this meeting to discuss whether your child meets the eligibility criteria for the Birth to 3 Program. If you choose, this meeting can occur immediately after initial evaluations are completed. You can also choose to have this meeting at the same time that you begin the development of the plan to map out the activities and supports you want if your child is eligible. If your child is not eligible, or if you choose not to enroll in the Birth to 3 Program, other resources may be offered and discussed during this time. Sometimes eligibility determination may need to be delayed if the information provided or obtained is not adequate for determining eligibility.

Who is eligible to receive services from the Birth to 3 Program?

Your child and family may receive Birth to 3 Program supports and services if your child is younger than age 3 and your child meets criteria for one of the two eligibility categories described below.

Category I - Developmental Delay

The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program considers a child to have a developmental delay if he or she shows a delay of 25%, or 1.3 Standard Deviations below the mean in one or more of the following areas:

- **Cognitive Development**-thinking and learning skills
- **Physical Development**-moving, seeing, hearing and health
- **Communication Development**-understanding and using sounds, gestures, and words
- **Social-Emotional Development**-responding to and developing relationships with people
- **Adaptive Development**-taking care of oneself when doing things like feeding or dressing

The stages that infants and toddlers go through are made up of different skills, such as walking and talking. These skills, or developmental milestones, usually happen by certain ages. Most children develop skills in a predictable order. They crawl before they walk, and they point before they use words to tell you what they want. However, it is important to remember that every child develops in his or her own style and at his or her own pace.

Category II -Diagnosed Conditions

A child is considered to have a diagnosed condition if the child has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. Examples include but are not limited to: certain genetic disorders, neurological disorders, severe prematurity, vision impairment, hearing loss or autism.

Note: The above descriptions are summaries and not complete definitions of the eligibility categories. You can get more information by asking your Early Intervention Service Coordinator.



Next Steps:

Birth to 3 Program Services and Supports

Starting a new program or service can be confusing at first, until you understand how it works and what you should expect. Once you know that your child is eligible for early intervention services and you have decided to participate in the Birth to 3 Program, the next step is to develop a plan with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator to address your child's and family's needs. This planning process will result in a written document called an Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP.

What is an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)?

The IFSP is your family's written plan for the Birth to 3 Program. It describes how you and your early intervention team will work together to address the needs identified for your child and family. The IFSP is based on information from your child's evaluation and from the concerns, resources, and priorities that you identified. Like a road map or travel itinerary, the IFSP shows where you are going (child and family outcomes or goals), how and when you might get there (services and projected time lines), and who will be going with you for support (service providers, family, friends and/or other community supports). The initial IFSP meeting can take place immediately following eligibility determination, or at another time that is convenient for you and the IFSP team (within 45 days of the initial referral).

Who will be involved in developing our family's IFSP?

You and your IFSP team will work together to develop your plan and to agree on any services and supports that will best meet the needs of your child and fit in with your family's routines. The people who must be involved are:

- you (one or both parents, guardians, foster or surrogate parents)
- your Service Coordinator
- members of your evaluation team
- as appropriate, the providers of early intervention services for you and your child
- other family members (if you choose)
- an advocate or person outside of the family (if you choose)

What does my signature on the IFSP mean?

You and your IFSP team will sign the plan. Your signature on the IFSP shows your participation, understanding, and consent to implement the plan. Should you disagree with all or part of the IFSP, you have the right to share your concerns and ask for changes. You may accept or decline any or all services suggested to you. You may also stop a service at any time.

What happens after the IFSP is written?

The required Birth to 3 Program services outlined on the IFSP should begin within the projected time as determined by the IFSP (no later 30 days of signing the initial IFSP or IFSP review). Your Early Intervention Service Coordinator will continue to work with you and the community providers to ensure that your child's needs are being met and that you are satisfied with all services being received.

What if I want to make changes to the IFSP?

The IFSP is a document designed to change as the needs of your child and family change. Every six months the IFSP team, which includes your family, must review the plan and make any needed updates or changes. Additionally, you or any member of the IFSP team can request the team to meet to consider changes to the IFSP by notifying your Family Service Coordinator.

What services are available to my child and family?

In Wisconsin, appropriate early intervention services are determined through the IFSP process. The IFSP team will decide the specific early intervention supports and services necessary to meet the unique needs of your child and family as identified through goals or outcomes on the IFSP. Federal regulations define early intervention services as services designed to meet the developmental needs of each eligible child and the needs of the family related to enhancing their child's development. Ask your Early Intervention Service Coordinator for more information regarding these services.

Other Services

Other services may be listed on your IFSP, but are not required by law to be provided by the Birth to 3 Program. Your Early Intervention Service Coordinator may help you locate and access these services. Examples of other services that are sometimes suggested are:

- Child care
- Well-child care or other medical care
- Genetic counseling
- WIC Program (Women, Infants, and Children)

How will services be paid for?

In Wisconsin, Birth to 3 services must be provided at no cost to your family. However, Wisconsin's system of payment for the Birth to 3 Program includes the use of public insurance (Medicaid/Forward Health) and private insurance (such as United Healthcare, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and others) for reimbursement of Birth to 3 services.

The county employs and contracts with community agencies to provide the required services listed on your family's IFSP. The county uses a Parental Cost Share System to determine what portion of the charges your family will be responsible for paying and what portion will be paid for by the Birth to 3 Program. The Parental Cost Share System takes into consideration your family size and net family income.

With your permission, the county staff and its contracted providers will bill your insurance company for required services. You are not obligated to give permission for billing your insurance company. Services are not affected if you choose to disallow billing.

If you have questions about your Parental Cost Share talk to your Early Intervention Service Coordinator.

What if our family wants services that are not listed on the IFSP?

The required early intervention services that are listed on your family's IFSP are those services agreed upon by the team and determined as needed to assist your child and family in achieving established IFSP outcomes or goals. The role of these early intervention services and service providers is to coach and support your family to enhance the development of your child.

The early intervention system values the importance of the role of the primary medical provider and other medical specialists in the lives of families. If you receive a recommendation from a medical professional, the IFSP team will be convened to discuss the recommendations.

There may be times when you would like additional services for your child and family that do not fit under the definition of early intervention services or are not agreed upon as needed by the IFSP team. In this case, the Birth to 3 Program would not have any responsibility for providing or funding these services. These additional services can be listed in the "Other Services" section of the IFSP if you request. It is valuable to list all the services being received by your child so the IFSP can serve as a comprehensive picture of your child's services.

You have the right to disagree with IFSP team decisions regarding these and all matters. Please talk with your Early Intervention Service Coordinator about your rights to written prior notice, mediation, and Impartial Hearing.

How and where are early intervention services provided?

There are many ways to support your child's development. The therapists, teachers, or other early intervention specialists will work directly with your child to help him or her learn and practice new skills. They will also coach your family and, if appropriate, other people such as child care staff on ways to help your child learn and develop during his or her daily activities and routines. This way your child has the benefit of getting the help he or she needs every day rather than just when the "specialist" is working with your child.

Services can be provided in different places. Children can be at home with their families or with other care providers when they receive services. Places in your community where your child can receive services might be a child care program, a playgroup, a park, or the library. All of these places are called natural environments. The Federal Law defines natural environments as "settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities."



Why are natural environments important?

When early intervention services are embedded into your family's routines and activities, your child will have more opportunities throughout the day to practice and learn new skills and will be more likely to achieve desired outcomes. Federal law requires that to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. Therefore, services are to be provided in natural environments unless the IFSP team determines that your child's needs cannot be met there. In choosing services, it is important to think about those natural environments where your child learns best. When deciding about the location of services, you and your IFSP team should consider all of the natural environments in your community.

The concept of "natural environment" is not just about a location or place. When and how early intervention services are provided is also important.

Receiving early intervention in natural environments for your child means...



- Early intervention services are provided in a setting where your child and family normally spend your time, or would spend your time if your child did not have a disability or developmental delay.
- Using community resources as opportunities for your child's learning and activities such as local parks, public libraries, stores, friends' or relatives' homes, child care programs, churches and other places of worship, restaurants, playgrounds, nature trails, museums, or community events.
- Focusing on IFSP outcomes that are functional – related to your child's participation in your family's everyday routines and activities.
- Identifying ways to weave early intervention strategies and services into the context of your family's routines and activities.
- Using familiar materials naturally available in your home and community to implement intervention strategies.
- Early intervention providers assist you in providing your child with opportunities to practice skills throughout his or her daily life.

What can I expect during a home visit?

Home visits are family-centered, using a primary coach approach to teaming. What does this mean? You might have expected home visits to focus only on your child, but your Early Interventionist's focus is on the adults in the child's life. This is because children learn from the interactions and opportunities that occur in everyday life. You are your child's most influential teacher and you have the opportunity to work with your child throughout the day, every day. We will provide information and support you need to make the most of your "teachable moments" with your child. This way, your child receives quality intervention all day, not just during a home visit.

When participating in daily routines, children use all areas of development together to learn and develop. Because of this, early intervention uses a primary service provider model. In this model, the team chooses one interventionist to collaborate with you on a one-to-one basis. While the primary service provider might have expertise in one area of development, such as speech and language, he or she also has knowledge and experience promoting learning across all areas of development. That way, both you and your child work with one professional, instead of juggling many, and you can focus on one set of recommended strategies that addresses all areas of development. The primary service provider does not work alone. There is a team of professionals from other disciplines with expertise in specific areas of development to assist when needed.



Future Steps: Leaving the Birth to 3 Program

How long will my child and family participate in the Birth to 3 Program?

The Birth to 3 Program serves eligible children from birth until their third birthday. Some children meet or achieve all of the goals on their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and graduate from the Birth to 3 Program before age three. Transition plans are required by law for children moving from early intervention beyond the Birth to 3 Program at age three. For children who graduate and leave the Birth to 3 Program before age three, the IFSP team will help you determine your future steps through a transition planning process.

Transitions are natural events for all of us. Remember your first day of school or moving to a new home? What about the day you brought your new baby home? Successful transitions require planning ahead and working with others who can help.

What is transition planning?

Your family may be content with the supports and services you and your child receive through the Birth to 3 Program. As your child approaches age three, it may be hard to think about a change or transition. Transition planning is an ongoing process and happens in many different ways, such as through informal discussion and scheduled meetings. Your Family Service Coordinator will guide you through the transition planning process and will facilitate the development of a written Transition Plan to be included in your family's IFSP.

Transition planning activities include:

- Discussion and information gathering about options for future placement, services, and supports in your community;
- Help in preparing you and your child for changes in services; and
- Providing information about your child (such as evaluation and assessment reports, and IFSPs), with your written consent, to other service providers.

What services are available after leaving the Birth to 3 Program?

Each community in Wisconsin is unique in the types of supports and services that may be available for children over the age of three.

Your Family Service Coordinator will help you find options available in your community.

Some of these options may include

- Friends with young children
- Family Resource Center
- Playgroups
- Private child care centers or preschools
- Head Start
- Library story hours
- Community recreation programs
- Private therapy services
- Children & Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

School District Services

For children who meet the eligibility requirements, the public schools offer Early Childhood Program services for three- to six-year-olds with special needs. The services offered by the Early Childhood Program may vary depending on the individual needs of your child.

If your child is potentially eligible for school district services, the Birth to 3 Program is required to send limited information (your child's name, date of birth, and date of enrollment in early intervention, along with your family's name, address, and phone number) to public school personnel responsible for child find when your child turns 2 years, 3 months of age. In addition, when children are determined potentially eligible for school district services the Birth to 3 Program will work with you to make a referral to determine if your child might be eligible for services through the school district. Only the local school system can determine eligibility for Early Childhood Program services.

When should transition planning begin?

From age two to age three, there are important times when certain activities should happen so your child's services and supports are not disrupted. Through the transition planning process, you and your Family Service Coordinator will develop ways to make sure that your child's needs are being met and that the transition will be successful.

AGE 24 - 30 Months (2 to 2 ½ years of age) (Transition Plan)

Sometime between the ages of 24 and 30 months, you and your service coordinator will begin working on a transition plan. Because transition happens over time, you and your IFSP team will discuss and project several activities that will be completed before your child turns 3. This could include referrals, evaluations, and assessments, as well as transition meetings or conferences. The transition plan could include learning more about services in your community such as Head Start, school district services, child care, or any other services your family is interested in.

AGE 27 Months (2 years, 3 months) (LEA notification)

When your child turns the age of 2 years, 3 months (27 months) the Birth to 3 Program is required to send notification to the local school district. This is a process called LEA (Local Education Agency) Notification. Limited information is sent to the public school personnel. This process is important because it gives the local school district information about children that might be eligible for their services. You may decide to opt-out of this notification anytime before the age of 2 years, 3 months by contacting your Family Service Coordinator and signing an opt-out form. If your child has entered Birth to 3 after the age of 2 years, 3 months you will be given 10 days to consider whether or not you would like to opt-out. Opting out means that no information is shared with the school district and no referral will be made.

AGE 27 - 33 Months (Transition Planning Conference & Referral)

If the Birth to 3 Program has determined that your child is potentially eligible for school district services a Transition Planning Conference (TPC) will be arranged. This meeting can be held as early as 9 months prior to your child's birthday, but no later than 3 months (90 days) before your child's third birthday. A TPC is generally held with you, your Family Service Coordinator and a representative from the local school district. Representatives from other community agencies may attend if they wish. At this meeting, you may share information about your family's concerns and priorities to plan for the upcoming transition and you will learn about how the process will proceed.

A formal referral for school district services is completed at the time of the Transition Planning Conference (no later than 90 days before your child turns three). Once a referral is made the school district will begin the evaluation process and determine if your child meets their eligibility criteria.

AGE 33-36 Months (2 years, 9 months to 3 years of age)

The school district will develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to be implemented on your child's third birthday. Your Family Service Coordinator may participate in the IEP development process and will continue to assist your family to ensure a smooth transition from the Birth to 3 Program. If you are considering other community supports and services, your FSC will continue to help your family explore the resources needed for your family to be successful after leaving the Birth to 3 Program. At age three, your child will age out of the Birth to 3 Program and is no longer eligible to receive Birth to 3 Program supports and services.

Your Family's Rights

Under the Birth to 3 Program, you have rights:

How the Law Works for You:

In 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-457, which added Part H (now called Part C) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part C is a national program established to assist each state in establishing a statewide system of services for children with developmental delays from birth to 3 years of age, and their families.

In Wisconsin, the Department of Health Services is the lead agency for the Birth to 3 Program and has developed regulations that guide the implementation of Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program. These regulations are called Chapter HS90, Wisconsin Administrative Code. Birth to 3 Programs are provided by every county in Wisconsin.

Built into the Birth to 3 Program, through Part C and state regulations, are specific rights and procedural safeguards for children and families. These are your legal assurances that the Birth to 3 Program will follow specific procedures and that the IFSP will be developed and implemented in a voluntary, non-discriminatory manner, respecting your view and preferences about the services your child and family receive. The following are highlights from the *Procedural Safeguards* that define your rights in the early intervention process.

Informed Consent

This is the most basic of your family's rights. It ensures that you understand all information related to early intervention activities and that you voluntarily give your written permission before any services begins. Before you sign the consent form, the following things should be explained to you: the purpose of each service, the manner in which the service will be provided, the cost to you (if any), and possible consequences of not consenting to evaluation, assessment or proposed services. Your written consent for your child's evaluation or assessment will continue to remain in effect until revoked by you or until your child is no longer receiving early intervention services.

Prior Written Notice

You must be given notice before a public agency or service provider proposes, provides, changes, or refuses an early intervention activity. Notice must be provided in the language or alternative form of communication you usually use, unless this is clearly not feasible. Written notice of meetings will be provided to you enough in advance to allow you to make needed arrangements to attend.



Participation in the Evaluation, Development of the IFSP:

You must be involved and consulted in the evaluation and assessment process. You will be invited to participate in the evaluation team meetings that determine your child's eligibility.

IFSP meetings will not take place without you or your designee. Written notice will be provided early enough to ensure parent and other appropriate persons' attendance at the meeting. You may bring other family members, friends, or advisors to the IFSP meeting. You will be asked to sign the IFSP or another form to indicate consent for services.

Review and Confidentiality of Records

When you ask to review your child's early intervention records, the records will be made available without unnecessary delay but not later than 15 working days from your request. If you ask for a copy of a record, one copy will be supplied free of charge. The county agency is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of your child's and family's early intervention record.

Resolving Concerns, Exercising Options

There may be a time when you believe that early intervention requirements are not being met or when you disagree with decisions made about your child's early intervention program. If this happens, it is important that you share your concerns with your service coordinator, appropriate early intervention professionals who are members of your team, or the administrator of your child's program. If you are unable to resolve your concerns informally, the following options are available.

Birth to 3 Program Complaint

If you feel that the local or state Birth to 3 Program has violated a federal or state law, you may file a written complaint with the Department of Health. These are not complaints about services for an individual child, but are used when you believe the local or state program is not meeting an early intervention program requirement. You should write your concerns to DHS at this address:

**Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program
Department of Health Services
Division of Long Term Care
P.O. Box 7851
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851**

Please include a statement describing the complaint and the fact upon which the complaint is based. After receiving your complaint, a Birth to 3 staff member will investigate it. You will be notified within 60 days about what action, if any, will be taken.

Disputes about Your Child's Early Intervention Services

If there is an occasion when you disagree with the county Birth to 3 agency about your child's early intervention services, this is called a dispute. There may be disputes about decisions made regarding evaluation for eligibility, assessment results, services, or payment of services for your child. Two primary options are available to you to try to find a resolution to the dispute. You can try these options alone or together.

Mediation

One of these options is mediation. Mediation is a process in which a neutral and impartial third party, a mediator, helps people resolve disputes in a private setting. The mediator focuses discussions on the disputes and circumstances that have separated the parents and county. The mediator does not impose a decision, but rather helps the parties identify issues, generate options, and create their own solutions. Either a parent or a county administrative agency, or both, may request mediation by sending a written request to the Birth to 3 Mediation System using a Request for Mediation form found at www.b3wisconsin.org.

The request should include a brief description of the dispute and identify both parties. If an agreement is reached, the agreement is put into written form and signed by the parties. The implementation of the agreement is the responsibility of both parties. The results of mediation cannot be used in the hearing process without the consent of both parties. Mediation does not delay or deny your right for an impartial hearing. The cost of mediation is covered by the state Birth to 3 Program.

Impartial Hearing

You may request an Impartial Hearing, a formal process for settling disputes. The hearing takes place before an impartial decision-maker to resolve a dispute between you and the county agency or service provider. You should send a Request for Impartial Hearing to the Birth to 3 Program Coordinator at the Department of Health Services. Alternatively, you may write a letter requesting a hearing. The Department of Health Services will appoint the impartial decision-maker. The Impartial Hearing will be completed and a decision made within 45 days of your request. You, the county, and any witnesses will present evidence. You are entitled to have an attorney and advisor present. The hearing is provided at no cost to you, except for any professionals that you hire to represent you. If you are not happy with the decision from the Impartial Hearing, you may bring a civil action in State or Federal Court.

Your Rights during the Conflict Resolution Process:

Services will be provided during the dispute resolution process, if you agree. Your child will continue to receive the services provided before the dispute was filed. If the dispute involves initial services, your child will receive any services that are not in dispute. Confidentiality will be maintained during the resolution process. Information will not be disclosed without your written consent. Only people who have a legitimate need for information related to your dispute will have access to information related to your child.

Surrogate Parent Assignment

The county administrative agency will determine whether a surrogate parent is needed to represent the interests of a child. The county administrative agency will appoint a person to act as a surrogate parent when the child's parent cannot be identified or located or when the child is under the legal custody or guardianship of the state or county child welfare agency. The surrogate parent may represent a child in all matters related to the evaluation and assessment of the child, the development of the IFSP, the provision of early intervention services, and the exercise of procedural safeguards.

References:

Department of Health and Human Services. *The Birth to 3 Program Parent Handbook: A Guide to Birth to 3 Program Services for You and Your Child*. Raleigh, NC: Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Women's and Children's Health Section, Early Intervention Branch, 2007.

Families are the Foundation of Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program-A guidebook for families in Wisconsin's early intervention program.

Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments (February 2008) *Seven key principles: Looks like / doesn't look like*. OSEP TA Community of Practice- Part C Settings.