

TRANSITIONS AT AGE 3: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER EARLY INTERVENTION?



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

If your child has been getting early intervention services, you may wonder what happens when they turn 3 years old. Turning 3 is a big change! The **Early Connections team** is here to help you understand what comes next and support you through this transition.

Ages 0 to 3: Early Intervention Services (Early Start)

From birth until age 3, the early intervention system supports babies and toddlers with their development. Your child may have had services at home, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or child development services.

In California, Regional Centers run Early Start (early intervention). Early Start services end when your child turns 3. What comes after age 3?



Ages 3 to 5: Early Childhood Education

Special Education (Through the School District)

Most children who had early intervention services will be able to get free special education services when they turn 3. To learn more:

- Your Regional Center Service Coordinator will help connect you to your local school district.
- Contact your neighborhood elementary school and ask for information about special education preschool programs.

The school district may do an evaluation to learn about your child's strengths and needs. After that, the school team will meet with you to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The IEP is an important legal document. It explains:

- Your child's learning goals
- The type of classroom they will be in
- Any services the school will provide

Parents are an important part of the IEP team.

Your voice matters.

Head Start Preschool

Another preschool option is Head Start. Head Start programs have special education services for children with special needs.

What do you need to enroll in Head Start?

- It depends how much money a family makes (income).
- In some cases, children whose families have more income may also be able to enroll. They have to have a developmental delay or disability.

Family Empowerment Centers

Family Empowerment Centers help families who have a child with a with developmental delay. These Centers are usually run by other parents.

They can:

- Share helpful resources
- Connect you with other families for support
- Help you understand your rights and options

Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow LA has a phone line and website that help families find local resources in Los Angeles. If you feel stuck or you are not sure where to go, Help Me Grow can be a big help.

Developmental Disabilities Services (Regional Center)

If your child has a diagnosis such as autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability, they may be able to get ongoing services through the Regional Center.

In California, Regional Centers support people with developmental disabilities throughout their lives. These services help children grow and become as independent as possible (do things themselves).

If your child is already in Early Start:

- The Regional Center will review your child's needs before age 3.
- They will decide if your child can still get services after age 3.

Some children get Provisional Eligibility. This means:

- The Regional Center will continue services until your child turns 5.
- Before age 5, they will evaluate your child again to see if they can get lifelong services.





TIPS FOR PARENTS

The move from early intervention to preschool services can feel confusing. Remember:

- You can ask questions.
- You are in charge.
- You know your child best.

Here are ways to help get the best support for your child.

1. Ask Your Service Coordinator for Help

If your child was in Early Start, you have a Service Coordinator. They can:

- Explain how to move from Early Start to school services.
- Help you understand what your child may qualify for after age 3.
- Answer any questions you have if something is unclear.

2. Learn Who is Working With Your Child

- Ask for names and contact information (email address and phone number) for everyone who works with your child.
- Ask what type of service or evaluation they provide.
- Keep this information in a safe place.

3. Keep Copies of Reports

Ask therapists and evaluators for copies of your child's reports. Your child will have:

- Reports that show progress at the end of Early Start.
- New evaluations to decide what services they qualify for next.

Save these reports. You can also share them with your child's doctors.

4. Special Education and the IEP Meeting

You are an important part of the IEP. Make sure to:

- Attend the IEP meeting.
- Bring a friend or family member if you'd like.
- Ask to reschedule if the meeting time doesn't work.
- Know that all services are voluntary. You can say no to any service.
- Take time to review the IEP before signing it. You don't have to sign it at the meeting.

When reading the IEP, please note:

- Make sure you write down your concerns.
- You may agree with some parts and not others.
- There is space to write your concerns in the document.



Preparing Your Child for School

Children with special needs can get free school services starting at age 3. School is important because young children's brains grow very fast. School helps children:

- Learn new skills
- Play
- Build friendships

Here are ways to help your child get ready:

- Talk about school in a positive way.
- Look at pictures of school together.
- Read books about starting school.
- Practice being away from your child for short periods of time while they stay with trusted adults. For example, you could go to the store or take a walk, while your child stays with an adult they know.
- Create a special goodbye routine (such as a hug, high five, or handshake).
- Visit the school if possible.
- Walk on the playground and look at classrooms and toys.
- Practice group skills like taking turns and asking for help.
- Go to group activities, such as library story time.

Things to Remember if Your Child Has a Medical Condition

If a child has a medical condition or has been very sick, it is common for them to have developmental delays. This is because their body's focus is to heal. Do not worry if your child is not meeting all developmental milestones. Milestones are things most children do at certain ages (like talking in sentences, learning to read, or climbing stairs). Children who are sick or recovering may reach milestones later. They will learn at their own pace. If you are worried:

- Talk with your child's doctor.
- Make sure services move at a pace that works for your child.
- Resources like the ones in this handout can help your child learn.

Health and School Attendance

If your child gets sick often, you may worry about exposure (being around) other children at school.

- Talk with your child's doctor about what is safe.
- If the doctor says to wait, ask them when school may be safe to go back to during future visits.
- Ask the school district what services your child can get outside of school if they need it.

Readiness for School

You may wonder if your child is ready for school. Preschools for children with developmental delays are ready to help. Please note that:

- Teachers have special training.
- Children don't need to be toilet trained.
- Teachers will help children learn at a pace that works for them.
- You can list nursing care or medicine needs in the IEP.
- The school will give the support your child needs so they can be safe and learn.



Where can I find online resources for more support?



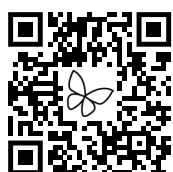
Disability Rights California

Source: *Disability Rights California*
Resources about your legal rights if your child has a disability or needs special education help
<https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/>



Family Empowerment Centers

Source: *California Department of Education*
Parent-to-parent support and resources
<https://www.californiafamilyempowermentcenters.org/>



Head Start

Source: *Head Start*
Find a Head Start preschool near you
<https://headstart.gov/center-locator/embedded?redirect=eclkc>



Help Me Grow LA

Call **833-903-3971** or visit the website for resources.
publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/helpmegrow/



Milestones Moments Tracker

The CDC has an app to help you track your child's milestones from ages 2 months to 5 years.
<https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones-app/>



Early Childhood Special Education

Source: *CALESCCE*
Parent tools and resources for special education
<https://calecse.org/parent-resources>



Source: *LAUSD*

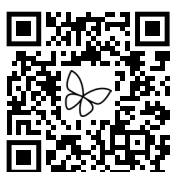
To get information about how to apply for early childhood special education
<https://eced.lausd.org/>

Ask at your local elementary school. In Los Angeles Unified School District, call **844-EARLYED (844-327-5933)**



Regional Center

Source: *Department of Developmental Services*
Information about the Regional Center for age 3+
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/individuals-and-families/new-information-packet/>



Source: *Department of Developmental Services*
To find the Regional Center closest to you, enter your address in this look-up tool
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/lookup-rccs-by-county/>



STEIN TIKUN OLAM EARLY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL LOS ANGELES

4650 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027 • CHLA.org

Scan the QR code on the left for more resources from CHLA experts.