

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Perspectives on Planning Transition

Rous, B., Myers, C.T., & Stricklin, S.B. (2007). Strategies for supporting transitions of young children with special needs and their families. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 30(1), 1-18.

BOTTOM LINE

Practitioners, administrators, faculty, researchers, and families reported the strategies they recommend for successful transition. The two most important strategies are interagency collaboration and effective transition practices.

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ACTION STEPS

When your child turns 2 years old, ask his early intervention staff to tell you how they prepare parents to be partners in planning for transition. Here are some questions to ask:

- How do you typically prepare families to plan before the transition conference, to participate during the conference, and to follow-up after the conference?
- What state and local policies do we need to follow? Please let me have a copy of them or tell me where I can find a copy.
- Is there a transition planning specialist? Please give me the person's name and tell me what her or his role is.
- What other agencies are involved in transition? Please identify them and the key contact person in each agency.
- Will you have interagency meetings about transition within the next year? Are the meetings open to families? Please tell me when and where they are, and what I may expect if I attend.
- In what ways do your services match up with the services provided by my child's next agency or school? Please give me some examples of how you and I can plan to continue my child's services.
- How can I be an effective partner before and during my child's transition planning meeting? Please tell me what things other families have done to be effective.
- How can I learn about preschool programs my child might attend? Please tell me how other parents have learned about preschool programs.
- How can all of us work together to make transition successful? Please tell me what other parents did to be good partners.
- Is there information about my child's disability that I should read so that I can be an effective transition partner? Please share the information with me.
- In what other ways might I learn about transition and being a good partner? Please tell me about community or neighborhood resources, as well as parent support groups.

The researchers involved in this study are associated with the [National Center for Early Childhood Transition](http://www.ncect.org) (www.ncect.org). Their website is rich with relevant resources.

KEY FINDINGS

Practitioners, administrators, faculty, researchers, and families identified two major strategies for effective transition: interagency collaboration and effective practices.

- Interagency collaboration means having a supportive infrastructure, good relationships and communication, and continuity and alignment of services.
 - ◆ *A supportive infrastructure* has written materials and forms to guide the transition process; has transition policies at the state and local levels; has people responsible for transition planning; and has support from administration.
 - ◆ *Relationships and communication* refers to relationships among agencies (participation in meetings, dialogue between agency staff), and cross-program communication and collaboration (discussion among agencies about broad transition issues).
 - ◆ *Continuity and alignment* refers to the relationship between the sending program and the receiving program. Using developmentally appropriate practices, having realistic expectations, and connecting program guidelines and curricular expectations are key.
- Effective transition practices involve the child, family, staff, program, and community. There are four categories of practices: preparing families and children for transition, visiting programs, participating in instructional activities, and using community resources.
 - ◆ To prepare for transition, the family should meet the agency's staff and learn about different classrooms and programs. Likewise, the agency should share information with families and provide workshops for parents to explain their rights.
 - ◆ The family, the child, and the staff should visit programs the child might attend.
 - ◆ The agency should conduct home visits and formal orientation events for children and families, and should design opportunities to prepare the child for a new setting (for example, learning to ride a school bus).

METHOD

- Focus group sessions with 43 individuals (practitioners, administrators, trainers/faculty/researchers, and families) representing 18 states, occurred at national or state conferences.
- No information about the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics of the participants was collected.
- Five questions guided the focus group sessions, and participants received these questions in advance.
- Researchers recorded the focus group sessions and transcribed verbatim.
- Researchers used thorough procedures to code data and ensure its credibility.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Hanson, M.J., Beckman, P.J., Horn, E., Marquart, J., Sandall, S.R., Greig D., & Brennan, E. (2000). Entering preschool: Family and professional experiences in this transition process. *Journal of Early Intervention, 23*(4), 279-293.

Lovett, D.L., & Haring, K.A. (2003). Family perceptions of transitions in early intervention. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 38*(4), 370-377.

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