

Family Guidebook III



Transition Planning **Second Edition**



This guidebook and others are available at www.eicolorado.org

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The Early Intervention (EI) Colorado program has developed a series of family guidebooks to guide you through the EI system. This guidebook describes the transition planning process. It is the third in the series of family guidebooks for parents and caregivers. Other materials can be downloaded from the EI Colorado website (www.eicolorado.org) or you can request a pre-printed copy from the Community Centered Board (CCB) that serves your area of residence.

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Introduction

The EI Colorado program serves eligible children from birth through two years of age. Eventually, all families end their partnership with EI Colorado. Many families and their children move on to other community programs. Moving from one program to another is often referred to as a transition. By law, your involvement with the EI Colorado program must end no later than your child's third birthday.

New people will enter your life as you plan to move beyond the EI Colorado program. Before your child reaches the age of three, you and your service coordinator need to plan for the move from the EI Colorado program to other programs your family may choose to participate in.

Transition is different for every family. There are several ways your child may make the transition from the EI Colorado program to the next step in his or her growth and learning:

- Your child may leave the EI Colorado program before age three.
- Your child may be eligible for preschool special education services through your local school district at age three.
- Your child may transition to other available supports in your community at age three.

Your child's service coordinator will assist you and your child as you move to the next place or setting smoothly and at the right time.

This guidebook has been created to help prepare you for your child's transition from EI Colorado and will:

- Introduce you to the transition process;
- Describe the transition conference; and
- Provide ideas and resources that can help you during the transition process.

Since you know your child's and family's needs better than anyone else, you and your family are an important part of each step of the process.

An Overview of the Transition Process

As early as your child's second birthday...

- Your service coordinator will begin to discuss potential transition options.

Between the ages of 2 years 3 months and 2 years 9 months...

- If your child has not met all of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes and is demonstrating a developmental delay in the areas of thinking, moving, communicating, relating to others, or seeing or hearing, he or she is considered potentially eligible for preschool special education services and his or her information will be shared with the school district unless you have chosen to opt out of this notification.
- An IFSP meeting will be held to develop a Transition Plan to outline steps and services to ensure a smooth transition out of the EI Colorado program. Your service coordinator will work with you to make sure that people you would like to attend the meeting are included.
- With your approval a transition conference will be held.
- With your consent, your child's current IFSP and evaluation information will be sent to the school district.

By your child's third birthday...

- If your child is potentially eligible your school district will evaluate your child to determine whether your child is eligible for preschool special education services.
- If your child is eligible for preschool special education services, you will work with your school district to develop a plan to meet your child's needs.
- If your child is not eligible for preschool special education services, your service coordinator will help you find other resources and opportunities for young children in your community.

No later than your child's third birthday...

- Your child will transition out of the EI Colorado program.

Planning Ahead: The Transition Process

Transitions are natural events for all of us, and you will continue to support your child through many types of life transitions. When a toddler enrolled in the El Colorado program approaches three years of age, several steps will take place that will help create a smooth transition into other supportive opportunities. These steps are what we mean when we refer to the transition process.

Your service coordinator and other service providers will help you learn about options that will be available when your child turns three. Some of those options might include:

- School district preschool programs, which could include special education services, or the Colorado Preschool program;
- Home or center-based early care and education centers;
- Community preschools, or other toddler programs;
- Faith-based preschools;
- Head Start and Early Head Start; and
- Recreation programs.

Transition Planning

Beginning Your Child's Transition Plan

At or around your child's second birthday, your service coordinator will begin to discuss the transition process with you. Between the time your child turns two years three months and two years nine months, an IFSP meeting will be held during which you and other members of your IFSP team will develop the Transition Plan as a part of your child's IFSP. Be sure that everyone you wish to be invited, such as your child care provider(s), service provider(s) or a relative(s) or friend(s), is included. The Transition Plan will document the steps and services to support a smooth transition when your child reaches three years of age.

The Transition Plan is a part of your child's IFSP and is developed with your input. This plan may be updated over time and will include a description of transition steps and services the IFSP team, including you, determines necessary to support a smooth transition for your child.



Credit: Young Family

These include:

- How your child and family will exit from the El Colorado program;
- How you will be informed of, and included in, the transition process, including a review of your child's program options from the third birthday through the end of the school year;
- Procedures to prepare your child for changes in service delivery and strategies to help your child adjust to, and function in, a new setting; and
- Any transition services and other activities that the IFSP team identifies as needed by your child or family to support the transition.

It helps if you begin transition planning early so that you have enough time to explore options for your child and family, determine the best placement for your child, and put in place other supports that will make the transition easier.

Involving Your Child's Doctor in the Transition Process.

Doctors are interested, and want to be involved, in the transition planning process. However, busy schedules can keep them from taking an active role. Attending a scheduled meeting is not the only way your child's doctor can participate as a member of the IFSP team. Input can be provided by phone or report as well.

Talk to your child's doctor to learn how he or she would like to provide input into your child's Transition Plan. Also, talk to your service coordinator to make sure a current consent to share information form is on file in your child's EI record. This will allow the EI Colorado program and your child's physician to discuss and share information that might help to ensure a smooth and meaningful transition process.



During the year before your child turns three, it will be helpful for you to:

- Think of three or four goals you might have for your child in the next year.
- Discuss your questions and concerns about your child's transition with your service coordinator.
- Reflect on ways you would like to update your IFSP.
- Consider visiting the various program options in your community as a part of making your decisions.
- If you are considering preschool special education services, take time to learn about this program. Details are found in Appendix A of this guidebook.

Notifying the School District if Your Child May be Potentially Eligible for Preschool Special Education Services

At the IFSP meeting closest to your child's second birthday, your IFSP team will discuss whether your child may be potentially eligible for preschool special education services. If the team agrees that he or she is potentially eligible, your service coordinator will talk to you about sending basic information about your child to the school district. Sharing this information will begin the transition process from the EI Colorado program to potential preschool special education services. At this time, the option for you to not have your child's information sent to the school district will be given to you and if you choose to opt out of this notification, your signature will be required. If you decide not to have your child's information sent to the school district, they will not be able to determine if your child is eligible for preschool special education services. You can change your decision to opt out of notification at any time by notifying your service coordinator in writing.

The Transition Conference

With your consent, a transition conference will be arranged by your service coordinator. This meeting must occur between the time your child is two years three months and two years nine months.

This meeting will help to identify all possible transition options for your child and prepare you for his or her transition from the EI Colorado program.

A transition conference meeting can **never** be held without a parent or legal guardian in attendance. Other people who must be included in your transition conference meeting are:

- Your service coordinator; and
- If your child may be eligible for preschool special education services, a representative from your school district.

If your child may be eligible for preschool special education services and the representative from the school district is unable to attend, your service coordinator will still conduct the transition conference as scheduled, unless you prefer to reschedule the meeting.

Your transition conference may be scheduled to occur at the same time as the IFSP meeting in which the Transition Plan will be developed. If this is the case, in addition to a representative from the school district, all of the required participants for the IFSP meeting must attend.

If someone is unable to attend that you feel is **vital** to a successful transition conference for your child, you can ask your service coordinator to reschedule the meeting to a time that works for that person's schedule.

During the transition conference, you will continue to develop a plan to prepare your child for new experiences. Focus on ways to help your child experience success. Ask as many questions as you have, or can think of, and feel free to write some down before the meeting. During the transition conference, the representative from the school district will discuss any services that your child will receive if he or she is eligible for preschool special education services.

The plan will include steps and timelines to help you and your child transition to a new setting or program. If needed evaluations are not completed by the time of your transition conference, then the necessary steps and timelines to complete the evaluations will be documented in your Transition Plan. Be sure you receive contact information for people attending your child's transition conference so that you can call with any questions you have after the meeting.

Preparing Your Child for a Smooth Transition

Here are some ways you can help your child during the transition process:

- Learn about what will be the same and what will be different in your child's daily experiences.
- Identify what strengths your child has that you think will be important to consider when your child transitions to another setting and share those with the people who will be involved.

Helpful Activity

With your EI service provider, think about how the strengths of your child will help him or her when he or she moves on to a new setting. For example, if your child is very outgoing, those skills will help him or her with getting used to a new place and meeting new people. If your child is shy, but loves to sing, including musical activities could help him or her move to the next setting or program. Focus on what your child likes and does well as you plan.

- Identify areas where your child may need additional support and share your ideas for what might help your child to succeed.

Skills that are important to transition have a lot to do with your child's unique personality:

- How easily your child warms up to new people, places, and things.
- How easily your child adapts to change, including shifting from one activity or setting to another.
- How sensitive your child is to sights, sounds, and other sensory input.
- Your child's general mood (happy, sad).
- Whether your child is easy going or gets frustrated easily.
- Your child's activity level (very busy, or not).
- How persistent your child is at getting what he or she wants, or avoiding tasks and activities they don't like.
- Your child's attention to different activities, people, and places.

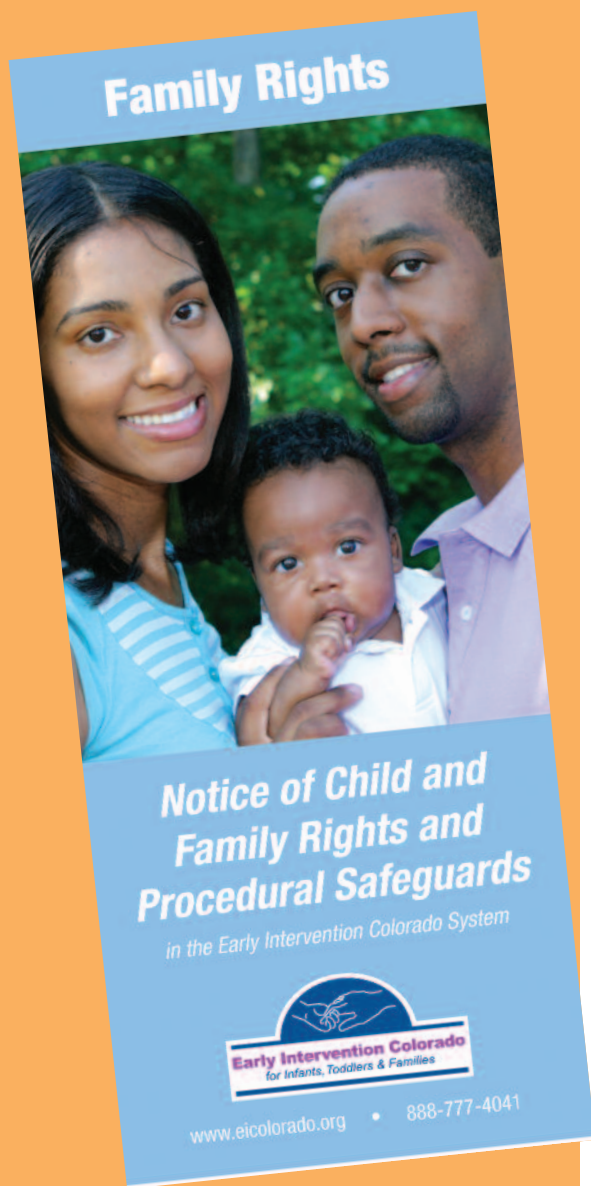
In addition, your child's transition will be influenced by his or her developmental abilities or skills. Think about these areas and share what you see as your child's strengths and areas of need with your service coordinator as a part of the transition planning process:

- **Communication skills:** How does your child understand and use words, signs, and/or pictures or other means to communicate?
- **Social skills:** How does your child interact and get along with others; how comfortable is your child in larger groups of children?
- **Self-care skills:** How does your child take care of his or her own daily living needs, such as eating, toileting, washing, and dressing?



Your Family Rights.

Child and family rights are described in the brochure *Family Rights: Notice of Child and Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards in the Early Intervention Colorado System*. Your family will receive a copy of this brochure multiple times during your involvement with the EI Colorado program. If you do not have a copy, contact your service coordinator. You can view and download a copy of the brochure at www.eicolorado.org.



- **Motor skills:** How can your child get around the classroom, playground, etc.; how well can your child use his or her hands to do things?
- **Learning skills:** How easily does your child learn; does your child learn by watching others, trying things on his or her own, listening to directions, etc.?

Considering some of your child's characteristics outlined above can help you identify areas where additional support may be needed. These may include:

- Being in a group social setting with children of different ages;
- Using a new form of transportation such as a van or bus;
- Getting used to new friends, new teachers, or a new building;
- Taking a nap in a new place;
- Being away from home for a longer period of time or for more days each week;
- Doing more things independently; and
- Being separated from you.

Any ideas you have about these areas of change can be included in your Transition Plan so that the process is as smooth as possible.

Preparing Your Family for a Smooth Transition

When your child moves from the EI Colorado program, there will also be some changes for you and your family. The transition period is the perfect opportunity to ask questions and get information about how the new program or setting will be different from what you and your child have experienced up until now. Remember, you are leaving the EI Colorado program because your child has achieved a milestone.

You may have mixed feelings about your child's transition, and feel both anxious and hopeful. You may have questions, such as: "Will my child fit in?", or "Will my child be able to do what everyone else is doing?" These are questions that you should talk about with your service coordinator, EI providers, and others that are helping you and your child during the transition process. While it is not uncommon for change to be a challenge, it is helpful to remember that this is a normal and exciting part of childhood. Take time to celebrate this next step in your child's journey!

Before the Transition...

Parents, other family members, and service providers can all help to prepare young children for the change that is coming. To prepare your child for transition:

- Begin early.
- If possible, visit the new program with your child.
- Talk about the new setting in positive ways.
- Encourage your child to participate in experiences that will help him or her prepare for the new setting.
- Teach your child specific skills and routines that will be useful in the new program.
- Communicate and share information between programs in advance (See Appendix B for a list).

Where to Get More Information

The best source for additional information about anything in this guidebook is your service coordinator. For more details about topics covered in this booklet visit the El Colorado website: www.eicolorado.org.

You may also contact the state El Colorado office by calling 303-866-7263 or 1-888-777-4041. The state office is located at the Colorado Department of Human Services.

Other Helpful Resources

ARC of Colorado provides advocacy services for people with developmental disabilities and their families:

- 303-864-9334 or 1-800-333-7690
- www.thearcofco.org

Autism Society of Colorado provides information, support and education for families who have a child diagnosed with autism.

- 720-214-0794 or 877-COLOASD
- www.autismcolorado.org

Colorado Department of Education Early Childhood Initiatives collectively work together to prevent the achievement gap and promote student success by ensuring that all of Colorado's youngest children are physically, emotionally, socially, and academically ready for school. This initiative includes programs such as Child Find, Colorado Preschool program, and preschool special education services.

- www.cde.state.co.us/early



Credit: Phipps Family

Questions to Keep in Mind When Visiting an Early Childhood Classroom.

- Are the children happy?
- Are the children interacting with teachers, using classroom materials, and playing with other children?
- Would this be a safe, comfortable place for my child?
- How many children are in this classroom each day? How many adults?
- What is the toileting policy?
- Does the preschool allow and encourage full participation by children with different personalities, backgrounds, and abilities?
- Will my child receive the support needed to be successful in this preschool?
- How are families involved?
- Is the room set up so that all children can play and explore?
- How are the staff trained and supervised?
- Will my child like it here?
- Can I picture my child in this classroom?
- What is the discipline policy?
- How do teachers let parent(s) know about child progress and activities? How often does this occur?
- What is the schedule for the day?
- Are there quiet areas for children who may need a break?

Colorado Head Start Association supports the work of Head Start programs and their partners with information sharing and advocacy, within the context of the early childhood system in Colorado.

- www.coloheadstart.org

El Grupo Vida is a network of Spanish speaking families who have children with disabilities or special needs.

- 303-904-6073 or info@elgrupovida.org
- www.elgrupovida.org

Empower Colorado offers support, education, advocacy and resources to families with children and youth who have social, emotional or mental health challenges.

- 1-866-213-4631 or info@empowercolorado.org
- www.empowercolorado.org

Family Voices of Colorado is an organization that helps families navigate their health insurance plans.

- 1-800-881-8272
- www.familyvoicesco.org



Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs (HCP) provides information, referral to services, and support to help families who have children with special health needs get what they need and grow to be their healthiest, as well as reach the full potential of their independence.

- www.HCPColorado.org

Parent to Parent of Colorado provides parent-to-parent connections to support families on the journey of parenting a child with special needs.

- 1-877-472-7201 or mail@p2p-co.org
- www.p2p-co.org

PEAK Parent Center provides information, support, workshops, and technical assistance for parents of children with disabilities and to professionals who work with children with disabilities. Family advocates are available to assist families with the IFSP or IEP processes. PEAK Parent Center disseminates many printed materials including a monthly calendar of activities around the state.

- 1-800-284-0251 or info@peakparent.org
- www.peakparent.org

Qualistar Early Learning works with child care providers, parents, and communities to improve the quality of early childhood education in Colorado.

- 303-339-6800
- www.qualistar.org

Disability Law Colorado protects and promotes the rights of people, including children, with disabilities and older people through direct legal representation, advocacy, education, and legal analysis. Questions are answered and limited advice provided free of charge.

- 303-722-0300 or 1-800-288-1376
- www.disabilitylawco.org

Names and Contact Information

Name and Title	Address	Phone Number/Email
<i>Service Coordinator:</i>		<i>Phone:</i>
		<i>Email:</i>
<i>School District Contact Person:</i>		<i>Phone:</i>
		<i>Email:</i>
<i>Community Programs:</i>		<i>Phone:</i>
		<i>Email:</i>
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Appendix A: A Comparison of EI (Part C of IDEA) and Preschool Special Education Services (Part B of IDEA)

The following “side-by-side comparison” is intended to assist families and others in understanding the similarities, as well as some of the differences, between the EI services offered through the EI Colorado program and preschool special education services.

	Early Intervention Colorado	Preschool Special Education
Governing Federal Laws	Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)	Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)
Ages Served	Birth through age 2	3–5 year-olds
Goal of the Program	Supports the family to meet the developmental needs of their child with a delay or disability.	Focuses on the child’s educational needs.
Evaluation	A multidisciplinary team completes a developmental evaluation of all five areas of development (adaptive, cognitive, communication, physical (including vision and hearing) and social emotional development).	Appropriately licensed professionals review current information about the child and conduct a comprehensive evaluation by using a variety of tools and strategies in order to determine if the child is eligible for preschool special education.
Eligibility	A child must have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a significant delay in development OR demonstrate a significant level of developmental delay in one or more areas of development.	A child is found eligible based on the determination of a disability or condition, which prevents the child from receiving reasonable benefit from general education without additional supports.
Family Involvement	Parent(s) must be involved in the development of the IFSP and are members of the IFSP team.	Parent(s) must be members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team which includes the evaluation and eligibility determination processes, as well as making decisions about the education of their child.
Service Coordination	Each eligible infant or toddler and their family is provided a service coordinator who coordinates services and assists the family throughout their involvement in the EI system.	Although service coordination is not required under special education law, a case manager is assigned to each child with an IEP.
Type of Plan	An IFSP documents the family’s desired outcomes for their child, as well as the supports and services to be provided. IFSPs are reviewed at least every six months with the family, service coordinator, and EI provider(s) and rewritten annually.	An IEP documents the child’s educational goals, services and placement; the IEP also describes how progress will be measured. IEPs are revised periodically, but not less than annually.

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	Early Intervention Colorado	Preschool Special Education
Governing Federal Laws	Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)	Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)
Services	The EI Colorado program provides EI services to support the family's ability to help their child learn and develop; all services are coordinated through the local CCB.	Special education is an educational service that is instructional in nature. Related services (for example OT, PT, transportation) are provided when they are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from the special education; all services listed in an IEP are the responsibility of the local school district.
Delivery of Services	Natural Environments EI services are provided in places where infants and toddlers without disabilities participate, such as the child's home, child care setting or in other areas in the community). The family and child's normal routines of the day are used as natural opportunities for learning.	Least Restrictive Environments (LRE) To the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities and/or special learning needs are educated with children who are nondisabled. Special classes, schooling, or other removal of the child from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
Costs of Services	EI services included in a child's IFSP are provided at no cost to families. See <i>A Family Guide: Funding EI Services</i> for more information.	Special education and related services are provided at no cost to the child and within a "Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)."
Recipient of Services	Recipients of supports and services may be the infant/toddler and/or the child's family.	Special education and related services are provided to the child or on behalf of the child.
Procedural Safeguards and Dispute Resolution	Described in <i>Notice of Child and Family Rights and Procedural Safeguards in the EI Colorado System</i> . A copy of the brochure is available from your service coordinator or by going to www.eicolorado.org .	Described in <i>Parent and Child Rights in Special Education: Procedural Safeguards Notice</i> . A copy of this document will be provided to families by the local administrative unit prior to the evaluation to determine eligibility for preschool special education services or can be obtained by going to http://www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/2011proceduralsafeguards .
Transition	An IFSP meeting is held to develop a Transition Plan for every child between the time the child turns two years three months and two years nine months. The local school district will be notified if the child is potentially eligible for preschool special education services, unless the parent opts out of this notification. A transition conference is held for each child at least 90 days before the child's third birthday, and as early as nine months before the child's third birthday. The transition conference will include a representative from the child's school district.	Prior to the child's third birthday an evaluation will be completed to determine if the child is eligible for preschool special education services. If the child is determined eligible for preschool special education services, an IEP will be developed by the child's third birthday.

Appendix B: **Documents and Information**

The documents and information listed below are intended to help prepare you for your child's transition. It is a good idea to keep this information in one place. This may seem difficult, but once you begin to develop the habit, you will save time in trying to find documents or needed information. It is a good idea to keep this information in a notebook or binder.

- A copy of your child's most recent IFSP.
- Developmental evaluations or assessment information.
- Name and contact information of your child's Primary Care Physician as well as any other doctor/therapists your child currently sees.
- Immunization records.
- If your child has any allergies, copies of a notice to give to service providers.
- List of medications, dosage and frequency for your child, if applicable.
- A copy of identification such as social security card, passport or birth certificate.
- Information about programs and resources in your community.
- A recent photograph of your child and/or family.
- A summary of information about your child, such as words or signs your child uses, activities your child enjoys, likes and dislikes, ways to soothe and calm your child. Think about including information about your hopes and vision for your child—think about the future as well as today's needs.
- Any other information about your child you are often asked for.





Early Intervention Colorado
for Infants, Toddlers & Families

For more information, call

1-888-777-4041

or visit

www.eicolorado.org



COLORADO
Department of Human Services