

EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 5

Does a child from an Early Head Start program automatically qualify for Head Start at the age of three?

Response:

The child does not automatically qualify for a preschool Head Start program. The family's income must be redetermined before enrollment into preschool Head Start. If the family no longer meets the income eligibility for Head Start, one of two things can happen.

- 1) The child can be enrolled as over-income if this meets the local program's selection and enrollment criteria. Head Start programs are allowed to offer 10% of their enrollment to children whose families are above the federal poverty guideline.
- 2) As part of the transition planning for and with the family, Early Head Start is responsible for helping to find an appropriate non-Head Start preschool placement if that is what is needed.

Considerations:

- The Performance Standards cite that the transition planning should begin 6 months prior to the child's third birthday. Since children and families often experience transitions from one program option to another throughout their participation in Early Head Start, transition planning can begin even earlier and be an ongoing process that is integrated into the family partnership plans.

Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:

- **1305.7(c)** When a child moves from a program serving infants and toddlers to a Head Start program serving children age three and older, the family income must be re-verified. If one agency operates both an Early Head Start and a Head Start program, and the parents wish to enroll their child who has been enrolled in the agency's Early Head Start program, the agency must ensure, whenever possible, that the child receives Head Start services until enrolled in school.
- **1304.41(c)(1)** Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain procedures to support successful transitions for enrolled children and families from previous child care programs into Early Head Start or Head Start and from Head Start into elementary school, a Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education preschool program, or other child care settings.

- **1304.41(c)(2)** To ensure the most appropriate placement and services following participation in Early Head Start, transition planning must be undertaken for each child and family *at least six months prior* to the child's third birthday.

Resources:

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community: Planning for Transitions

http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/Planning_Transitions/index.htm

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community: Bringing Families on Board

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community: Accessing Services through Community Linkages

“Anticipating Transition Issues in EHS: Developing a Thoughtful Approach” from Region X Head Start News, Spring 2001 ([attached](#))

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The Tip Sheet is not a regulatory document. Its intent is to provide a basis for dialogue, clarification, and problem solving among the Head Start Bureau, Regional Offices, T & TA consultants, and grantees.

Anticipating Transition Issues in EHS: Developing a Thoughtful Approach

Developed by the Region X Early Head Start Workgroup: Julianne Crevatin, Region X ACF/Head Start Branch; Terry Elofson, Region X Senior Early Childhood Associate for the ZERO TO THREE National Resource Center; Mary Foltz, Region X Quality Center; Leslie Keller, Region X Quality Center and Quality Center for Disability Services; and Polly Taylor, Region X Quality Center for Disability Services for the Region X Head Start News. Spring 2001

In the Head Start Performance Standards we read: 1304:41(C)(2) To ensure the most appropriate placement and services following participation in Early Head Start, transition planning must be taken for each child and family at least six months prior to the child's third birthday. The process must take into account; the child's health status and developmental level, progress made by the child and family while in Early Head Start, current and changing family circumstances, and the availability of Head Start and other child development service in the community. As appropriate, a child may remain in Early Head Start, following their third birthday, for additional months until he or she can transition into Head Start or another program.

Perfectly Clear?

Transition planning is a complex process that needs to be individualized for each child, family, program, and community. To assist staff and families with transition processes, your program needs to assess its current capacity for transition planning. Program-wide dialogues with staff and parent will help with the process of developing policies and procedures that contribute and support well-conceptualized transitions for children and families. Here are some guiding questions to help you and your program develop a thoughtful and developmental approach to transitions to other programs and settings.

Family Partnerships

Throughout transition planning it is important to maintain a true partnership with the family. How does your program balance the importance of providing relationship-focused services with meeting procedural requirements?

When and how is your program beginning the transition process with the family?

What services, placements, or supports does the family want for their child after the Early Head Start program? How will this be articulated in the Family Partnership Plan?

How does your program help the family explore available options for a "good fit" with the child's developmental and individualized needs?

How do you prepare the children, families and staff for separation from the Early Head Start program?

Systems Planning

Community Assessment...

Does your community assessment indicate the available resources, centers, and providers of early childhood education, early intervention and family support services in each of your service areas?

Do the receiving programs have a waiting list?

What is the capacity of receiving programs to support families with complex issues? How can your program support that capacity?

Are you fostering communication with potential community partners to ensure smooth transitions?

Self-Assessment...

What capabilities does your program have for serving three-year-old children?

If you are a birth to five program, how does staff from Head Start and Early Head Start work together to integrate and coordinate goals, services and curriculum with families who have a child in both Early Head Start and Head Start? How are you working towards providing seamless services for all of the Early Head Start/Head Start families in your program?

What assessment strategies do you use to assure that your program options and services meet the needs of families?

Program Options...

If you are a birth to five program, how are you serving and adapting to the needs of young three-year-olds, regarding such issues as class size, ratio, curriculum, diaper changing, staffing patterns, continuity of care, and facilities?

If you are a stand-alone Early Head Start program, does your local Head Start program serve three-year-olds? Are you familiar with their eligibility criteria? How are you working with your local Head Start program to ensure smooth transitions? How do you partner with them regarding adapting to the needs of three-year-olds (class size, ration, curriculum, etc)?

Program Governance Planning...

Has your policy council developed a philosophy and policies for serving three-year-olds?

Does your program have clear policies regarding the age at which children must transition from Early Head Start? Do your program's eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance policies clearly address three-year-olds? Do your ERSEA policies reflect and support your program's philosophy regarding continuity, duration and intensity of services.

If you are a birth to five program, do you have a clear policy and process for redetermining eligibility for three-year-olds?

Human Resources Planning...

How are you building the capacity of your resource, referral or service coordination team to respond to transition issues? Who leads the transition process for each family? Who is responsible for keeping track of the timelines in the process?

How does communication and record-keeping take place throughout the transition planning process?

What kind of training and supervisory support might you provide to best support staff's capacity in the transition process?

How do you help staff prepare for their own reactions to transitions of children and families?

Conclusion

We have listed some questions for you to consider as you develop and strengthen your program's approach to transition planning for children, families and your communities. The process is not easy; it requires open dialogue, thoughtful planning, commitment, and time. The number of questions included may seem daunting or overwhelming. But we have tried to "tease out" some of the challenging aspects of facilitating successful, individualized transitions for children and families leaving Early Head Start. We encourage you to take an honest look at the strengths and weakness of your program's current transition policies, practice and goals. What is working? What are the challenges? Are all the key players involved in the self-assessment and planning processes? Once you consider your current transition practices, you will then be best prepared to modify or develop your policies and procedures so that they will contribute to and support well-conceptualized transitions for children and families as they move beyond their Early Head Start experience.