

EARLY HEAD START NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER





Transition Strategies:

Continuity and Change in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers



Early Head Start
Program Strategies



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

Transition Strategies: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers

Early Head Start Program Strategies

This document was developed by the Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) @ ZERO TO THREE in collaboration with the Head Start Bureau. The contents of this paper are not intended to be an interpretation of policy.

Prepared for the Head Start Bureau,
under contract #105-98-2055,
by the Early Head Start National Resource Center @ZERO TO THREE.
U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
Head Start Bureau

Transition Strategies: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers

Early Head Start Program Strategies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Creating a Network of Support: The Transition Into and Out of Early Head Start

When Does Transition Planning Begin?

Does a Child in Early Head Start Automatically Qualify for Head Start?

How Long Can a 3-Year-Old Child Stay in Early Head Start?

Are Children Who Turn 3 After The Date Set to Determine Compulsory School Age

Attendance Eligible For Preschool Head Start?

What Are “Transition Classrooms”?

1

Balancing Continuity and Change: Transitions Within an Early Head Start Program.

Services to Pregnant Women

Transitions to New Settings

Staffing Changes

Supporting Staff Members as They Support Families

The Key to Continuity: The Family

The Family Partnership Agreement Process

Appendix A

“Program Voices” Contact Information

Appendix B

Additional Resources



Transition Strategies: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers

Early Head Start Program Strategies

Understanding the Effect of Transitions on Infants and Toddlers

Tommy, 8 months old, is beginning his day in the Early Head Start center-based program. He cries and reaches for his father as he is placed in the arms of his Early Head Start teacher.

2

Ruby, 20 months old, has a new home visitor coming to her house this week. She keeps asking for “ba ba,” her previous home visitor, Barbara. Her mom has told her that Barbara isn’t coming anymore, but she is worried that Ruby is going to be upset when the new home visitor shows up.

Travis, 3 years old, is leaving the Early Head Start program and entering a Head Start classroom. He is looking forward to his new class but wants to know why Miss Shelly, his Early Head Start teacher, and his friends cannot come with him.

In each of these scenarios, the children and their families are experiencing a transition. Transitions occur at many levels, big and small, obvious or subtle. The obvious transitions such as entering or leaving a program or changing from one program option to another necessarily require planning and preparation. Other transitions such as developmental changes or moving from one activity to another in the course of a day also require thoughtful

attention, but they can be overlooked because we may not immediately identify them as transitions. Still, in all cases, transitions are about change, a passage from one experience, stage, or activity to another, and thus, all demand careful consideration.

The issue of transitions, whether they are big or small, is a particularly sensitive one for infants and toddlers because of the developmental characteristics that are pronounced during this age period. Infants and toddlers have a limited framework for understanding change and fewer resources to deal with stress than older children or adults have. Thus, consistency and continuity play a particularly important role in helping children successfully manage transitions.



We have Early Head Start, Head Start, and child care all working together as one child development program despite different funding sources. Memoranda of Understanding between the agencies spell out how we work together and we have systems for smooth transitions from one program to another. For example, children who have been in Early Head Start are prioritized on the waiting list for Head Start. —

Mississippi Band of Choctaw EHS

Young children are developing relationships with parents and teachers as well as learning to trust or distrust the world around them through predictable routines and experiences. They thrive on routines that teach them what to expect and how to make sense of their world. They are then able to turn their attention to mastering that world through their play and interactions with others—reaching out to grasp toys, learning how to roll across the floor to get to that shiny red ball, or pulling up to stand by mommy’s leg. If life experiences are particularly chaotic in the early years, children can become anxious, they can have difficulty learning to regulate their behavior and emotions, and their learning and development in all areas may be thwarted.

A unique feature of Early Head Start is the opportunity to provide services to expectant families before the birth of their baby. This opportunity also presents a unique chal-

lenge because programs must plan for the infant’s transition into an appropriate program option after birth. Early Head Start programs are to consider how they will simultaneously provide services to pregnant women while ensuring that space will be available for the infants in the child development program option that best meets family needs.

Children and families living in poverty are especially vulnerable because of the stressors that can be associated with poverty, for example unsteady employment, inconsistent health care, unstable housing arrangements, and daily challenges such as lack of food and inadequate public transportation. Programs that support low-income families are to strive for predicable, stable, and consistent services to help buffer these challenges. Staff turnover or other programmatic changes can be enormously stressful. Either too much change or changes that are sudden or chaotic can overwhelm and adversely affect children and families. To prevent this stress, we pay careful attention to how children and families experience transitions as a part of their Early Head Start experience.

This paper examines 3 types of transitions:

1. The transition into Early Head Start
2. The transition from Early Head Start into Head Start or another community-based program
3. Transitions within the Early Head Start program, which might include a child moving from one program option to another, adjusting to staff turnover, or moving from one classroom to the next



In addition, the paper incorporates quotes (see “Program Voices” boxes) from various programs who share their transition strategies. Addresses for these programs are listed in the appendix that follows this paper.

Most often, the transition into or out of Early Head Start is what comes to mind when considering transition planning [CFR 1304.41(c)]. A common example of a transition of this nature occurs when a child in Early Head Start reaches the age of 3 years and enters a preschool Head Start or community child-care program. Yet, the transitions that happen to children and families while they are enrolled in a program also require thoughtful planning and preparation. Some changes can be anticipated, for example, the move from one program option to another, whereas others may be unexpected, as when a beloved staff member departs. In both cases, children and families benefit most when they have a strong partnership with program staff members and when the responses from these staff members are individualized for specific child and family needs and circumstances.

It is important to keep in mind that the transitions that are the easiest to anticipate and influence are the transitions that happen during daily activities, for example, moving from one activity to another within the daily schedule. These transitions, while not the focus of this paper, provide valuable learning experiences and help prepare children and families for the bigger transitions they will face. These daily experiences provide ongoing opportunities to help children develop coping skills such as flexibility, patience, and confidence. If program staff members approach all transitions as an opportunity for growth, then they will be giving children and families a strong foundation on which to develop the skills that are necessary for weathering the inevitable changes that happen throughout life.

PROGRAM VOICES

Each family in the program is given a *Transition Guide* to highlight the importance of transitions and help plan for them. The following is an excerpt from the introduction to the guide: “What is transition? Transition is any kind of a change in routine for children or families. Examples of transitions include: going from dinner to taking a bath, moving from free-play to clean up, a change in child care, etc. Transition is also the process of moving from one location to another, such as when you and your child transition from Early Head Start to the next appropriate placement. Examples of next appropriate placements include Head Start Center-Based Programs, Head Start Home-Based Programs, center or family daycare, nursery school, relative care, special education settings, or other settings selected by parents. Sometimes transitions can be difficult. Attachments to home visitors, specialists, and families are hard to let go of. So it becomes very important for all of us to prepare for this change.”—

Litchfield County EHS

Creating a Network of Support: The Transition Into and Out of Early Head Start

“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 Act preschool program, or other child care settings. These procedures must include:

- *Coordinating with the schools or other agencies to ensure that individual Early Head Start or Head Start children’s relevant records are transferred to the school or next placement in which a child will enroll or from earlier placements to Early Head Start or Head Start;*
- *Outreach to encourage communication between Early Head Start or Head Start staff and their counter parts in the schools and other child care settings including principals, teachers, social workers and health staff to facilitate continuity of programming;*

- *Initiating meetings involving Head Start teachers and parents and kindergarten or elementary school teachers to discuss the developmental progress and abilities of individual children; and*
- *Initiating joint transition-related training for Early Head Start or Head Start staff and school or other child development staff.” [45 CFR 1304.41(c)(1-3)]*

The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* above describe an ongoing, systematic, and comprehensive approach to transition planning. A successful transition between Early Head Start and other community services benefits not only children and their families but also the programs and the community.

- The benefits to children include individualized services that reflect an understanding of the child’s unique characteristics, strengths, and challenges. Under these circumstances, children experience less anxiety and adapt to a new setting with less emotional upheaval and distress.
- All family members experience a greater sense of control and less turmoil when things go well for the children. Effective transition practices give families experience in identifying their goals, advocating for their needs, and finding resources.
- The benefits to programs include fewer crises to manage and greater job satisfaction for staff members. A successful transition out of the program leaves a positive, lasting impression in the hearts and minds of the families who have been supported in the program and through the transition. It is, in a way, the culmination of the growth that the children and families have experienced in the program.
- Communities benefit because transition practices strengthen community connections. A cohesive network of support that is responsive to community needs creates an environment that nourishes all its members.



A number of questions are commonly asked about the transition out of Early Head Start at age 3. These questions are addressed in the following sections.

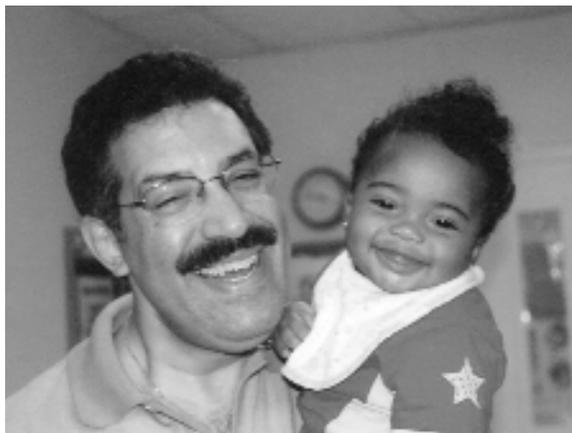
When Does Transition Planning Begin?

“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. 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 or children care services in the community. As appropriate, a child may remain in Early Head Start, following his or her third birthday, for additional months until he or she can transition into Head Start or another program.” [45 CFR 1304.41(c)(2)]

6

The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* above reveal that transition planning for exiting the Early Head Start program must begin at least 6 months before a child’s third birthday. However, in practice, transition planning is an ongoing process and the transition out of the program will build on the transitions that the child has experienced while he or she has been enrolled in the program.

An effective transition out of the Early Head Start program is individualized for each child and family. As



PROGRAM VOICES

Preparing families for the transition out of the program begins at the time of enrollment. We encourage families to set goals around the transition by the time the child is 2 years of age. This helps families actively begin planning for the transition and allows for ongoing monitoring of transition planning. The formal transition process begins 6 months before the child’s third birthday and we use a detailed checklist to ensure that we follow each step of the process in a timely manner. —

Missoula EHS

described above, some of the factors that will influence the transition process and must be taken into consideration including the child’s health status and developmental level, the progress of the child and family while in the Early Head Start program, the family’s current and changing circumstances, and the availability of Head Start and other community services

Does a Child in Early Head Start Automatically Qualify for Head Start?

“The family income must be verified by the Head Start program before determining that a child is eligible to participate in the program” 45 CFR 1305.4(c)

When a child leaves Early Head Start and enters Head Start, the family’s income must be reassessed to determine whether the family meets income eligibility requirements for Head Start. If the family of a child leaving Early Head Start no longer meets the income eligibility criteria for Head Start, the Early Head Start program would then assist the family in finding a suitable preschool placement if that is what the child needs. Another possibility is that the child could be enrolled in

Head Start as part of the enrollment that Head Start programs can offer to families who are above the federal poverty guidelines but who meet other eligibility and selection criteria:

“Up to ten percent of the children who are enrolled may be children from families that exceed the low-income guidelines but who meet criteria the program has established for selecting such children and who would benefit from Head Start services” 45 CFR 1305.4(b).

Local programs develop their selection criteria based on their community assessment and approved by their Policy Council:

“The Early Head Start and Head Start grantee and delegate agency must use information from the Community Assessment to: ...set criteria that define the types of children and families who will be given priority for recruitment and selection.” 45 CFR 1305.3(C)(6).

“Policy Councils and Policy Committees must work in partnership with key management staff and the governing body to develop review, and approve or disapprove the...criteria for defining recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR part 1305.” 45 CFR 1304.50(d)(1)(vii).

How Long Can a 3-Year-Old Child Stay in Early Head Start?

“As appropriate, a child may remain in Early Head Start, following his or her third birthday, for additional months until he or she can transition into Head Start or another program.” 45 CFR 1304.41 (c)(2)

“To be eligible for Head Start services, a child must be at least three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school in the community in which the Head Start program is located, except in cases where the Head Start program’s approved grant provides specific authority to serve younger children.” 45 CFR 1305.4(a)

A child might be best served by remaining in Early Head Start past his or her third birthday if no appropriate

Head Start or other community child development program is available at that time. Although no set time frame is stated for how long a child can remain in Early Head Start, the intent of the legislation is to serve children until they are age 3. Programs are to work with families and preschool settings to determine what is appropriate for each child given the community and family circumstances.

Are Children Who Turn 3 After The Date Set to Determine Compulsory School Age Attendance Eligible for Preschool Head Start?

Each Head Start program operated in a community shall be permitted to provide more than 1 year of Head Start services to eligible children (age 3 to compulsory school attendance) in the State. Each Head Start program operated in a community shall be permitted to recruit and accept application for enrollment of children throughout the year. Head Start Act, Section 645(c)

An agency which operates both an Early Head Start program and a Head Start program must ensure, whenever possible, that children and families receive services until the child reaches the age of mandatory school attendance. Head Start Act, Section 645 A(b)(7)

To be eligible for Head Start services, a child must be at least three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school in the community in which the Head Start program is located, except in cases where the Head Start program’s approved grant provides specific authority to serve younger children. 45 CFR 1305.4(a)

Section 645(c) of the Head Start Act does not prohibit enrolling children in preschool Head Start who do not meet the compulsory school age requirement for their state, and Section 645A(b)(7) supports continued preschool Head Start services for Early Head Start children. Thus, the guiding principle is that Head Start preschool grantees may serve children “as of their third birthday” under the following circumstances:

- 1) Specific authority to serve younger children is written into the grantee's approved grant from the Regional Office, as required by the *Head Start Program Performance Standard* 45 CFR 1305.4(a);
- 2) The Early Head Start and Head Start program determine, through careful and comprehensive transition planning, that this option best meets the child's needs;
- 3) The Head Start program can offer a developmentally appropriate environment for the child;
- 4) The child meets the Head Start program's eligibility and selection criteria; and
- 5) The Head Start grantee has an approved process for selecting and enrolling children as of his or her third birthday.

In some situations, a child might enter a suitable child care program for a year until there is a developmentally appropriate placement in the Head Start program. Alternatively, if Early Head Start can offer an appropriate environment that meets the child's and family's needs, then the child may remain in Early Head Start until he or she could transition into a Head Start or other community preschool program. It is also important to remember that the Head Start Act [Section 654(c)] permits recruitment and enrollment of children throughout the year.

Children with disabilities are similarly eligible for preschool Head Start programs as of their third birthday under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. Under IDEA, the child with a disability who requires special education services is entitled to a free and appropriate public education no later than that child's third birthday. For these children, their eligibility for public school

education begins by their third birthday, regardless of the date set for compulsory school attendance. The child's enrollment in Head Start would also have to meet the program's selection and enrollment criteria and there must be an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicating that Head Start, with such supports as necessary from the local education agency special education and related service providers, would be an appropriate placement.

What Are Transition Classrooms?

Some Early Head Start programs have met the challenge of providing developmentally appropriate services to 3-year-olds by creating "transition classrooms." Head Start grantees that offer services to children from birth to 5 can have Early Head Start and Head Start children in the same classroom if they:

(a) Obtain regional office approval on a grantee by grantee basis. This must be done through the program's Federal Project Officer.

(b) Follow the appropriate regulations for group size, child-and-teacher ratio, and teacher qualifications – when 3-year-olds who are enrolled in Early Head Start are in a class with Head Start children, the ratio of children to teachers must be 4:1, with a maximum group size of eight children and two qualified teachers as required by the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* [45 CFR 1304.52(g)(4)].

(c) Maintain separate funding accounts, when applicable

Ultimately, effective transitions from one program to another help children grow and adapt. A natural extension of the work we do with children and families while they are enrolled in an Early Head Start program is to set goals, find resources, support healthy growth and development, and encourage children and families to keep reaching for what comes next, not only during the rapidly changing first 3 years but also as they look toward the future.



Balancing Continuity and Change: Transitions Within an Early Head Start Program

This section will explore the variety of transitions that children and families experience while they are enrolled in a program. At the heart of transitions at the programmatic level is the balance between the importance of continuity for infants and toddlers and the inevitable changes that happen within a comprehensive child development program. As discussed earlier, predictable routines and consistent caregiving are paramount at this developmental stage when children are first forming trust, security, and concepts of self and other.



Services to Pregnant Women

One of the earliest programmatic transitions that a family may experience is the change from receiving Early Head Start services as an expectant family to enrolling their child into the appropriate program option following the birth of the baby. Program leaders are to plan from the time that the program is initially funded how they will simultaneously provide services to pregnant women while ensuring that the program has space available for the infants after birth. Staff members also begin planning with the expectant family at the time of enrollment to determine the appropriate program option for the child. The time frame to enroll the infant in the selected program option depends on family needs. State child-care regulations may determine the earliest age at which a child can enter center-based care. Children can transition into a home-based option and begin program services when the family and program determine that it is appropriate. (See Information Memorandum ACYF-IM-HS-02-04 for more information on services to pregnant women in Early Head Start, which is available on the Internet at http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/im02/im02_04a.htm.)

PROGRAM VOICES

A case manager delivers services to pregnant women in their homes. The visits are all about planning for the birth, using tools like the family partnership agreement, a birth plan, and a baby care plan. This allows us to be preparing for the transition to home- or center-based care throughout the pregnancy. Following delivery, the same case manager will provide home visits for the family until the child enters the center-based program, or if the child is home-based, they will move into the home-based program with the same case manager as their home visitor.—

Missoula EHS

Transitions to New Settings

“Grantee and delegate agencies’ program of services for infants and toddlers must encourage the development of secure relationships in out-of-home care settings for infants and toddlers by having a limited number of consistent teachers over an extended period of time.”

[45 CFR 1304.21(b)(1)(i)].

Children and their families can receive Early Head Start services in a variety of settings while they are enrolled in the program. Some of the transitions that involve a change of environment include moving from one program option to another or moving from one classroom to the next.



Many Early Head Start programs offer several program options, recognizing the changing and diverse needs of children and families during the course of their enrollment. It is not unusual for children to move from one program option to another. For example, families of very young infants might choose home-based services until the parents return to work full-time and need child care. In another example, a child may be in center-based care, but the family is going through a crisis that warrants the additional support of home visits for a period of time. Some of the challenging tasks families have to negotiate during these changes are building relationships with new people and making significant changes in routines. In fact, a change of program options for a family can feel like an entirely new program to the child and family and requires the same kind of attention to planning and individualizing that staff members would give a transition to a new program.

In some center-based programs, children are grouped according to age or developmental level whereas, in others, children are combined in mixed-age groups.

Children grouped by age will likely change teachers and classrooms several times over the course of their

PROGRAM VOICES

10

We offer home-based services and community-based child care. The children in the community child-care programs also receive home visits. We contract with child-care providers to offer a variety of child-care arrangements to families, depending on their needs. To facilitate a smooth transition from one program option to another, the same home visitor stays with the family if they change program options. We are also working with our child-care partners to use mixed-age groupings in the center so that children can stay with the same teacher from birth to age 3 and from age 3 to 5.—

Project Eagle EHS

We strive for continuity of care in our centers by having the same group of children stay with the same teacher from birth to age 3. The children and teachers together move to a different classroom as the children age so that the only change is the setting. —

Mississippi Band of Choctaw EHS

enrollment. These changes should be minimized to as few as possible for infants and toddlers. It is important to recognize that a child who is moving from one classroom to another will experience multiple losses: a place he or she has come to know and trust; a teacher he or she depends on and adores; children he or she has befriended; and routines that help him or her feel secure and competent.

These transitions should be handled with great care. Think of ways to foster continuity, for example, arranging visits to the new classroom so the children and families can become familiar with the teacher and setting; ensuring that the former teacher shares information with the new teacher about the children's interests and preferences; and following similar routines in the new setting as children adjust to their surroundings.



Staffing Changes

Staff turnover is stressful for programs, families, and children. Young children often become emotionally attached to their teachers and experience a loss when they leave. It is hard to prepare very young children for these changes because only in a limited way can

they understand why a beloved teacher is there one day and gone the next. Teachers can make these transitions easier by making something concrete with which to mark their leaving, for example, a photo of the staff member and child together for the child to keep. The departing staff member also can help by transitioning the new teacher into the group over a period of time. Parents play an equally important role in helping children adjust

to the new teacher by spending time with their children in the classroom when the new teacher begins, being positive about the new person, and demonstrating their confidence in the new person's skills.

If the departure of a staff member is sudden and unexpected, for example due to an accident or illness, children and families may experience even greater turmoil. It is important to keep routines – such as the day and time of home visits, or the classroom schedule – as similar as possible to minimize the amount of change at one time. Open communication between staff members and families is critical and children and families will need time to build trust with new staff members and adjust to the changes.

Frequent staff turnover is especially problematic. Under these circumstances, children are unable to develop the kind of close, trusting relationships that they need to feel secure and confident. Programs that are experiencing high turnover need to look carefully at the reasons for the turnover and take extra precautions to help families adjust to the ongoing changes. When a program is under stress, that stress is easily felt by the children and families. Times of stress within programs are important times to

pay particular attention to management systems that are in place (or should be put in place) to help deal with the problem swiftly and effectively.

Early childhood programs, like the young children and families they serve, go through stages of development and periods of more or less upheaval. Even positive changes such as the growth of a program or a child moving to a program option that better meets family needs can bring stress to staff members and families alike. However, if program leaders have strong and effective systems—planning, communication, and self-assessment, to name a few—the stress can be the positive kind that motivates and inspires.

Supporting the Staff Members Who Support Families

Staff members also react to the transitions that families go through. Sometimes, remaining objective in the midst of change challenges us both personally and professionally. For example, staff members can struggle to “let go” of

families with whom they have worked closely and to whom they must now say good-bye. Staff members who are experiencing a transition such as a staff turnover can have difficulty supporting families. During these times, staff members need to have access to supportive supervision where they have the opportunity to discuss their reactions and concerns and work collaboratively to address them. Emotions are often heightened for both staff members and families, and being aware of professional boundaries is especially important. These issues are excellent topics for staff training through case presentations, team meetings, or workshops.



PROGRAM VOICES

It can be so hard on staff members when families leave the program. They become so close to their families and really need to grieve that loss. We try to wait for about a month after a family leaves before assigning a new family to that staff member so they can mourn the loss of the family that left. They really need that time before they are emotionally ready to bond with a new family. The thing that is really challenging in Early Head Start is that families are transitioning in and out of the program all year so staff members are constantly facing these losses.—

Missoula EHS

The Key to Continuity: The Family

Ideally, the love and support of a child's family is the one sure thing that children can count on in the midst of all transitions, big and small. The research literature that explores how infants and toddlers develop strong, positive relationships with their parents describes the parent as a "secure base" that children need to return to over and over as they venture away to test their new skills and their effect on the world around them. The family is the key to continuity if they can be counted on to provide that safe and secure base to which a child can always return for comfort and care. For that reason, we must do all we can to empower families to be involved, make decisions, and advocate for their children. We must also recognize when families are unable to do so, and take particular care to support children and families to overcome those barriers.

All that we do to partner with families and involve them in their child's education, health, and early development supports our goal of strengthening the parent-child relationship. Strong, supportive, trusting relationships between parents and children are the best buffer for the challenges children face as they grow and are a primary component of planning effective transition services in Early Head Start.



13

PROGRAM VOICES

We involve parents in all aspects of our transition services, recognizing that they are the most important person for their child. We strongly believe in the importance of attachment and continuity of care. This is reflected in how we communicate with parents on a daily basis about their children, as well as in the systems we have developed for transitioning children into and out of Early Head Start.—

AWARE, Inc. Early Head Start



The Family Partnership Agreement Process

The family partnership agreement process [45 CFR 1304.40(a)(1-5)] is one of the ways staff members can plan for transitions with families. This process refers to the set of opportunities that programs provide to help families set individualized goals (for resources on the family partnership agreement process, see Appendix B). As staff members support families through the family partnership agreement process, they have ongoing opportunities to assess where families are and where they would like to be as well as to plan and prepare for transitions as families move toward their goals.

When staff members are working with families around the issue of transitions it is especially useful to address the emotional aspects of the change as well as the practical considerations related to the transition. Help families to name the feelings they may be experiencing and to know that experiencing a wide range of conflicting emotions—fear, excitement, sadness— can be perfectly normal. Often, a grieving period accompanies life changes, even when the change is positive. If particularly strong or confusing feelings arise, then making a referral for additional support from a mental health therapist is appropriate. In fact, transitions can evoke painful memories or unresolved grief over past losses. If handled well, the opportunity to work through these issues in the context of the present transition can lead to enormous personal growth and healing.

In Conclusion

A toddler, taking his or her first steps away and learning to master the surrounding world needs to return to his or her parents over and over again for the support and comfort that sustains the child to move out into the world and master still more new challenges. Likewise, our job as program leaders and staff members is to help create a “secure base” in our programs and our communities where families can find a consistent and stable source of support as they guide their young children through life’s early transitions.



PROGRAM VOICES

The following are some of the items that can be included in the family partnership agreement as transition goals:

Investigate the options within the community; visit the new setting; select the setting that is most appropriate for your child; write down and share with the center your family routines and most common words used by your child to express his or her needs; allow plenty of opportunities for your child to practice new and emerging independence skills; be sure that your child is up to date on physical and dental exams; and apply for child-care assistance.—

Litchfield Early Head Start

Appendix A

"PROGRAM VOICES" CONTACT INFORMATION

The Early Head Start National Resource Center gratefully acknowledges the following programs who contributed to this publication by sharing their transition strategies. Contact information is provided if you would like to learn more about their approach to transitions.

AWARE, Inc., Early Head Start
237 E. Mercury Street
Butte, MT 59701
406-782-0455

Litchfield County Early Head Start, Education Connection
355 Goshen Road
P.O. Box 909
Litchfield, CT 06759
860-567-0863

Missoula Early Head Start
2121 39th Street
Missoula, MT 59802
406-251-9410

Mississippi Band of Choctaw
P.O. Box 6010 Choctaw Branch
Philadelphia, MS 39350
601-650-1722

Project Eagle Early Head Start
Tower II, Suite 900
4th and State Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101
913-281-2648



15



Appendix B

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR TRANSITION PLANNING

Head Start Training Guides

Effective Transition Practices: Facilitating Continuity - 2000

http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/effective_transitions/EffectiveTransition.pdf (6MB)

Infant and Toddler Transitions - 1999

http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/infant-toddler_transitions/infant_and_toddler_transitions.pdf (2 MB)

Planning for Transitions - 1997

http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/Planning_Transitions/Planning_for_Transitions.pdf (1 MB)

Publications and On-line Resources

Transitions: Parents are Key - 2000

<http://www.bmcc.edu/Headstart/Trngds/Transitions/>
(Bay Mills Community College)

Early Head Start Program Strategies:

The Family Partnership Agreement Process

<http://www.ehsnrc.org/pdffiles/mpsfamily.pdf>

Foreman, S. (2000). *Saying "goodbye" isn't always easy:*

Transitioning into kindergarten.

Children and Families, 14(3), 56-59.

Lally, J.R. (1995). *The impact of child care policies and practices on infant/toddler identity formation.*

Young Children, 51(1), 58-67.

Lally, J.R., Torres, Y.L., & Phelps, P. C. (1994). *Caring for infants and toddlers in groups: Necessary considerations for emotional, social, and cognitive development.*

Zero to Three, 14(5), 1-8.

McCracken, J. B. (1995). *So many goodbyes: Ways to ease the transitions between home and groups for young children.*

Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Raikes, H. (1996). *A secure base for babies: Applying attachment concepts to the infant care setting.*

Young Children, 51(5), 59-67.



EARLY HEAD START NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER