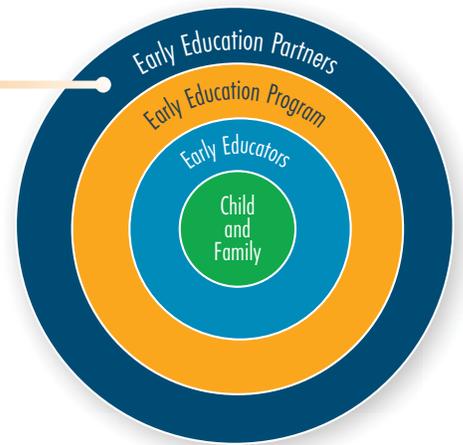


# SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS: Working with Early Education Partners



## Partnering to Create Continuity

Children experience many transitions in their young lives. They move from home to infant and toddler care, to preschool, and on to kindergarten. With each new setting comes a new environment, routines, activities, and people, as well as different expectations. When early education programs, schools, and community organizations collaborate, they can create continuity across these systems.

Continuity makes transitions smooth and promotes a sense of belonging for both children and their families. Continuity requires strong leadership and collaboration between both the sending and the receiving programs.



Program leaders are the cornerstone of successful transition. They ensure success by creating a culture of collaboration among families, staff, early education partners, schools, and community stakeholders. Committed, engaged leaders serve as role models for families, staff, and partners. They strive to develop mutual understanding, ongoing communication, and trusting relationships—all necessary components of successful collaboration among partners.

### Program leaders may ask:

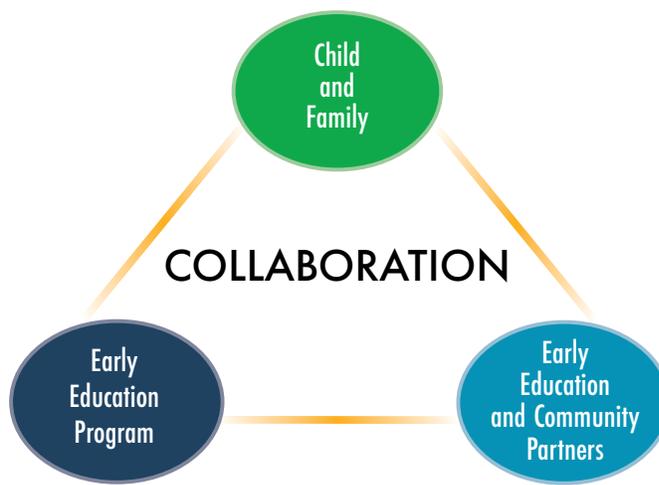
- What kinds of policies and practices foster collaboration with early education partners?
- How can programs and schools align their systems to enhance transition services?
- How can community organizations, agencies, and businesses support transition?

This brief provides guidance to program leaders on collaborating with early education partners, schools, and community stakeholders to enhance transition services for children and their families. It offers suggestions on developing policies and practices to support external partnerships. Information on internal policies and practices for partnering with families and supporting staff can be found in the companion brief *Supporting Transitions: Program Policies and Practices*.

### Who are your partners?

Early education partners in this brief include:

- Sending and receiving programs—the early care and education programs that children attend before entering your program and the programs they transition to when leaving your program (e.g., Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, and elementary schools)
- Agencies providing support services to children and families (e.g., early intervention, special education, social services, health services, and mental health services)
- Community organizations, agencies, and businesses in the community that have a vested interest in young children and families (e.g., cultural organizations, service organizations, museums, libraries, and recreation programs—see [Appendix A: Leveraging Community Resources to Support Children and Families with Unique Needs and Backgrounds as They Transition](#))



### Research on collaborative approaches to transition has found that:

- Ongoing communication between the sending and receiving early education programs strengthens relationships. It also leads to programs sharing consistent information with families. This has a positive impact on children's early school success
- Communication between preschool and kindergarten teachers about curriculum, expectations for kindergarten, and individual children helps teachers prepare incoming kindergartners socially, emotionally, and academically
- Providing preschool children with learning activities similar to those they will experience in kindergarten correlates with more rapid social and emotional adjustment and increased academic performance in kindergarten

While most research on transition focuses on transition to kindergarten, collaborative transition practices can benefit children throughout early childhood and across all settings.

# Collaborating with Early Education Programs and Schools

Establishing transition policies on how you will collaborate with other early education programs, schools, and community services helps provide continuity for children and families as they move into and out of your program. As a leader, your role is to ensure that your transition policies address a collaborative approach not only within your program, but also with early education partners, schools, and community services outside your program (see [Appendix B: Building Bridges](#)).

Developing successful partnerships is a process that takes time—especially when partners are from different systems. Policies can be a springboard to more formal collaboration with other early education partners. For example, they can lead to formal agreements and memoranda of understanding.

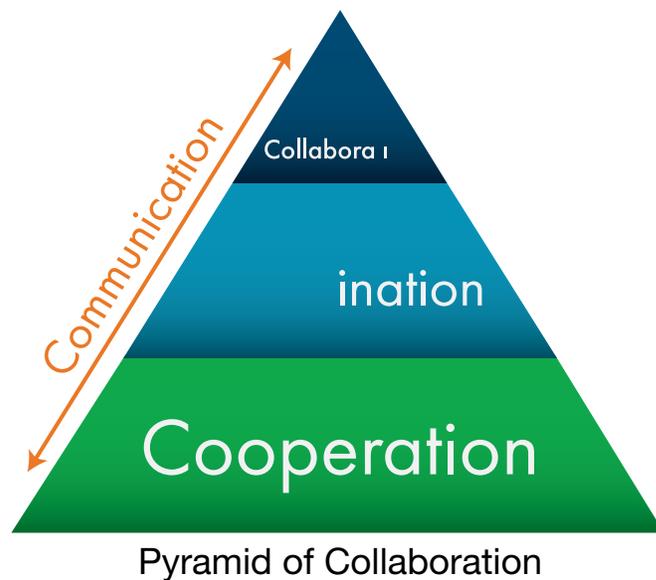
Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) require programs to collaborate with families and other organizations in providing transition services. Collaboration can mean different things to different people. Let's take a closer look at what collaboration with external partners looks like.

The [Pyramid of Collaboration](#) illustrates three levels of collaboration that are important to use in transition policies: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. These help a program work with external partners toward a common vision of transition based on shared values. Ongoing communication is essential at all levels. Use the principles of the pyramid to promote understanding of the different levels of collaboration and guide policy development.

**Cooperation** occurs when a program informally communicates with external partners to share information that relates to their common interest in supporting transition. These might be short-term or one-time exchanges. When programs cooperate, each maintains full authority over its own operations, and no mandates are placed on another partner.

## Cooperative practices may include:

- Sharing information on program regulations, child outcomes, curriculum models, and assessment processes
- Offering samples of the individualized transition-planning forms you use when a child transitions into and out of your program
- Distributing recruitment and enrollment information to families and other programs
- Inviting early education and school staff to open houses and other public events
- Providing program information, such as website and social media addresses



**Coordination** occurs when a program co-plans and coordinates transition-related activities with other programs. Programs may share resources but have no binding fiscal obligations.

**Coordinated practices may include:**

- Holding joint staff meetings and professional development opportunities on topics such as how alignment promotes continuity for children and families
- Providing release time for teachers to visit each other's programs
- Co-hosting child and family transition events and experiences, such as visitation days, open houses, and joint home visits
- Establishing a formal protocol for transfer of children's records

**What is continuity and why is it important during transition?**

Continuity is consistency in children's learning experiences and expectations among early education settings. It is achieved through mutual understanding and alignment of the curricula, teaching strategies, environments, and learning expectations between the settings that precede and follow a transition.

Continuity across settings supports and sustains children's learning across developmental domains. What children learn across domains in one setting is built upon in later settings. Research indicates that when there is continuity between programs, children are more likely to retain what they learned and experience less "fade out" later in their schooling.

**Collaboration** occurs when a program works together with other programs toward a common vision based on shared values. Programs may share fiscal and even legal responsibilities (e.g., special education and related services). Often, programs formalize their partnerships with written agreements or memoranda of understanding. It is important to regularly review these agreements to keep them current.

**Collaborative practices may include:**

- Aligning early learning outcomes, curricula, and assessment between programs
- Developing interagency agreements that address services for children with disabilities, including transition services, with early intervention and local education agencies
- Establishing cross-program systems that support children and families with unique needs, such as families who do not speak English, are recent immigrants, are experiencing homelessness, or are foster families
- Organizing and co-sponsoring large events for families, staff, and the community (see the ECLKC resource, [\*Transition to Kindergarten: Transition and Alignment Summit Guide\*](#))
- Collaborating at district and state levels on transition initiatives (see in this brief, [\*What Is the Status of Transition Services in Your State? Collaboration at District and State Levels\*](#))

## Summary of Transition Services in the 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)

The HSPPS are the mandatory regulations that all Head Start grantees must follow. [Part 1302 Subpart G—Transition Services](#) specifically addresses transition services requirements for grantees. A summary of Subpart G and additional transition-related standards are listed below.

### §1302.15(b)(3) Transition of homeless children and children in foster care

- Make efforts to transition a child who is homeless or in foster care to a program in a different service area if a family or child moves.

### §1302.17(b)(3) Transition of children with persistent and serious challenging behaviors

- After a program has explored all possible options, and it is determined that their program is not the appropriate placement for a child, the program must work to facilitate transition to a more appropriate placement.

### §1302.53 Community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood and education programs

- Establish ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations to promote a coordinated systems of comprehensive early childhood services.

### §1302.61(c)(2) Plan and implement transition services for children with disabilities

- Collaborate with parents and local agencies responsible for implementing IDEA Part B services for children birth to age three and local education agencies for children age three to five.

### §1302.63 (b) Coordination and collaboration with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA.

- Develop interagency agreements for services for eligible children, including transition services as children move from services provided under Part C of IDEA to services provided under Part B of IDEA and from preschool to kindergarten.

### §1302.70 Transition from Early Head Start

- Collaborate with parents and Head Start to support successful transition of children and families out of Early Head Start.

### §1302.71 Transitions from Head Start to kindergarten

- Collaborate with parents, local education agencies, and kindergarten teachers to support children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten.

### §1302.72 Transitions between programs

- Support effective transition to Early Head Start, Head Start, other early education programs, pre-kindergartens, and kindergartens.

### §1302.82(b) Family partnerships services for enrolled pregnant women

- Engage and support pregnant women and other relevant family members, such as fathers, in planning an infant's transition to program enrollment.

# Las Cruces Head Start Looks at Alignment Between Early Education Programs

Las Cruces Head Start is a large grantee that operates Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, Early Head Start, and State Child Care programs. Children and families transition into and out of the program or from one program option to another within the program (e.g., home-based, family child care, and center-based) as children grow, families move, and family incomes change. Let's see how Las Cruces Head Start addresses continuity and alignment between programs . . .

Knowing how important continuity is for smooth transitions and children's school success, the Las Cruces Head Start transition team held a meeting to discuss alignment of child outcomes, assessment, curricula, and family engagement among programs. Members of the team included families, staff at various levels within the program, staff from other local early education programs, school district teachers and administrators, and early intervention and special education teachers.

Each early education program and the school district gave a short presentation to the whole group on their program's child outcome requirements, curriculum, and assessment instruments. Next, the participants broke into smaller roundtable discussions to go more in depth on these topics, compare approaches and instruments, and brainstorm ideas on increasing alignment and continuity among programs.

Las Cruces teachers Jada and Alex joined the preschool curriculum discussion. The teachers began by comparing each program's curriculum goals in the language and literacy domain. Most of these curricula included language and literacy experiences that followed a developmental continuum, such as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) and the state's early learning guidelines. They discussed how the language and literacy activities in these curricula supported or did not support children's school readiness. For instance, the curriculum used by a wrap-around child care program that many Las Cruces preschool children attended did not include print and alphabet knowledge activities. Jada and Alex offered examples of activities they use in their classroom to promote writing skills, such as providing writing materials for children to make lists and create their own books.

Claudia, Las Cruces' program director, invited Carlos and Reyna Sanchez to the family engagement roundtable. They were very involved parents and had much to share. They talked about ways they had participated in Head Start. During the discussion, they learned that the opportunities for family engagement were different in many other programs, but they happily discovered that all the other programs welcomed family volunteers. Some also had parent boards or site councils where families could learn about the program and share ideas and concerns. Most of the programs involved the families of children who transitioned into their program, but not all programs involved families when children transitioned out.

At the end of the day, someone from each group shared what their table had discussed and the ideas they came up with for increasing alignment among programs. After groups shared, the large group developed an action plan with the recommendation that some of the ideas be added to existing written agreements among agencies.

The leaders discussed ways their programs could work toward alignment. They agreed to share assessment instruments and processes they use and to establish a formal protocol for the transfer of children's records. They planned some next steps, including continuing the discussion and having similar meetings with teachers, home visitors, and child care providers.

## What's happening here?

- Las Cruces Head Start transition team held a meeting to discuss alignment of child outcomes, assessment, curricula, and family engagement among local programs.
- Speakers from each program and the school district shared their program's requirements, instruments, and processes.
- In-depth roundtable discussions were held on each topic.
- Table groups reported on their discussions and ideas for increasing alignment.
- An action plan was developed with the recommendation that some of the ideas be added to existing written agreements between programs.

## Promoting Continuity Through Alignment

Collaborating on transition can be challenging because there may be significant differences among systems. Child outcomes, assessment instruments and processes, curricula, environments, and family engagement often differ greatly. Each early education or school program may follow different regulations and enrollment requirements. Even the goals of the programs may be different.

To increase continuity for children and families, leaders need to work toward alignment across programs when possible. Alignment means that child outcomes, assessment instruments and processes, curricula, and family engagement are coordinated to promote continuity in children's learning as they move from one program to the next. The purpose of alignment is to ensure that the expectations and activities in the current setting create the foundation for learning in the next setting.

Successful alignment must involve coordination between the sending and receiving programs throughout early childhood. The very first step in alignment occurs when programs for pregnant mothers enroll their infants into Early Head Start or child care (see [HSPPS 1302.82\(b\)](#) for guidance). Ideally, infant programs align

with toddler programs, which then align with preschool programs; preschool, in turn, is aligned with kindergarten. Alignment includes ensuring continuity in children's learning when they move from one program option to another within Head Start (i.e., family child care, home-based, or center-based) and across settings (i.e., Early Head Start, Head Start, other infant/toddler and preschool settings, and kindergarten).



## Early Learning Outcomes

Early learning outcomes are the skills and concepts children are expected to learn by a certain age. Different states and programs use various names for early learning outcomes (e.g., early learning standards, early learning guidelines, or child outcomes).

Head Start's ELOF describes the learning and development expectations for children from birth to age five across five domains of learning and development. Its goals outline children's learning sequences and provide a roadmap for continuity across age levels.

When sending and receiving programs are able to align their expectations of children, such as the ELOF with kindergarten standards, they build continuity across settings. Such alignment allows children to naturally progress from what they learn in one setting to what will be expected of them in the next and from one age group to the next.

To align child outcomes between your program and other early education programs and schools:

- Share and compare the child outcomes in the ELOF with your state's learning standards or guidelines for infants and toddlers, preschool, and kindergarten
- Identify learning goals that may exist in one program but not the other, such as goals for children who are dual language learners
- Discuss how child outcomes are used to guide assessment and curricula in your programs
- Contact your state's Head Start Collaboration Office to learn whether your state has an initiative to align child outcomes (sometimes called standards) with curriculum and assessment (see [National Standards Crosswalk Tool](#))

## Child Assessment

Child assessment is used to measure children's development and whether they are progressing as expected. When the assessment processes of the sending and receiving programs are aligned, and programs share information (with written consent) on individual children, early educators know where individual children's current skills are in relation to what will be expected from them. Note that programs do not need to use the same assessment instrument to be aligned. Early educators can use the assessment data to individualize curriculum and teaching practices and to support each child's unique strengths and needs to provide continuity in their learning.

To align assessment, meet with your sending and receiving early education partners to:

- Share and compare your assessment instruments and processes
- Discuss how assessment data are collected, analyzed, and used to inform program planning (e.g., policies, program self-assessment, and professional development)
- Agree on what assessment information will be shared between your programs and how it will be shared (including obtaining written consent from families and ensuring confidentiality)
- Discuss how to include families in assessing their own child's progress and what information will be shared with their child's new program or kindergarten



## Curriculum

Each curriculum provides learning goals, experiences and activities, and teaching practices in key areas of children's development. The alignment of curricula between sending and receiving programs provides a continuum of learning experiences across settings (e.g., infant and toddler programs to preschool programs to kindergarten).

Meet with your counterparts in the sending and receiving programs or schools to:

- Share and compare your curricula and arrange for early education staff to do the same
- Discuss how your curriculum addresses each of the ELOF essential domains
- Discuss how the curricula build on each other and support children at different age levels along the developmental continuum (e.g., learning experiences that support children's development of emerging mathematical thinking in infant and toddler years provide a foundation for children's math abilities during preschool years, and similarly, mathematical learning experiences during preschool years set the foundation for kindergarten)
- Identify overlaps in your curricula and discuss how they can be used to reinforce and expand children's learning
- Consider any gaps that each program can fill in to create continuity, such as both programs agreeing to use some of the same developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate educational materials
- Hold joint professional development and in-service training on common curriculum topics, such as arranging the learning environment and guiding children's behavior
- Discuss how families participate in curriculum planning and individualize learning experiences for their own children

## Family Engagement

Family engagement is essential for children's success. It is built on mutual respect and shared roles between families and educators and reinforces families' strengths and aspirations. At the program level, families and educators develop positive relationships and work toward goals that families choose for themselves and their children.

When programs work together to align their family engagement strategies across early learning systems families benefit and continuity is enhanced. They are able to advocate for their child's learning and development as their children transition to new learning environments (see the companion brief *Supporting Transitions: Early Educators Partnering with Families*).

### To explore and align family engagement strategies with other early education programs and schools:

- Share how you can partner together with families as they transition into and out of your program. For example, discuss how you can
  - > coordinate opportunities for families to connect with other families in the new early education program and school
  - > encourage families to become involved in advocacy and leadership opportunities in the new setting
  - > co-plan and coordinate program visitations, family nights, and other transition activities
- Commit to fully engaging families in their children's transition processes by
  - > finding ways to use individual family information (with written permission) to support each family's transition process
  - > providing opportunities for families to discuss, with teachers, their child's strengths and challenges



## What Is the Status of Transition Services in Your State, Territory, or Tribe?

Many states have introduced services to help early education program leaders, school administrators, and stakeholders work together to support children and families as they move from early education programs to kindergarten and beyond. These services provide community-, program-, and child-level strategies. Their goal is to promote continuity for children as they move from one system to the next.

Learn about and use ideas from these innovative strategies to provide continuity for children and families in your program. Examples of strategies used include:

- Holding city, county, and/or statewide events to share resources that encourage collaboration
- Developing a community-wide electronic enrollment process for all early education programs so families will only need to complete one set of registration forms even if applying to more than one program
- Creating a local school readiness campaign to raise public awareness about the importance of transition
- Making sure families register their children on time and feel welcome in their new setting

State transition initiatives have shown increased understanding of the role transition plays in children's school success. To find out more about your state's, territory's, or tribe's efforts to provide transition services, contact your [Head Start Collaboration Office](#).

# Las Cruces Head Start Collaborates to Host a Transition Summit

Let's see how early education programs, schools, and stakeholder organizations collaborated to improve transition services in their community . . .

Las Cruces Head Start's transition team assessed its current services and developed an improvement plan. Members of the team included current and past families, staff at various levels, staff from other early education programs, school district teachers and administrators, and early intervention and special education teachers. Transition team members represented the cultures and languages of enrolled families.

In addition to the core team members, they invited representatives from community stakeholders, such as the library, children's museum, local colleges, pediatric association, foster care services, homeless shelters, and the local Office of Refugee Resettlement.

One action step included in the improvement plan was to collaborate to co-sponsor a Transition Summit. Participants included families, early education and kindergarten teachers, program leaders and school administrators, service agencies, and community stakeholders. They used the [Transition Summit Planning](#) resource from the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center and other resources to help plan a two-day summit. Some session topics included:

- Establishing Core Values for Transition Practices
- Family-Program Partnerships for Successful Transition
- How Separation Impacts Children's Social Emotional Development
- IDEA and Transition Requirements for Young Children with Disabilities
- Innovative Transition Projects: What Is Happening in Our State and Across Our Nation?
- Nurturing Responsive Transition for Infants and Toddlers
- Family Voices: Our Transition Stories

The most popular session was a panel discussion titled "Transition Is Everybody's Business: How Community Partners Can Support Transition Efforts." In this session:

- A children's librarian talked about special story times she holds during the summer, when she reads books on going to child care, preschool, and kindergarten
- A pediatrician shared a pamphlet she reviews with families who are taking their infants to out-of-home care for the first time
- A children's museum director showed slides of an exhibit set up like a classroom where children can "play school"
- A migrant farm workers' organization shared bilingual pamphlets on relevant parenting topics, such as "How to Spend Quality Time with Your Children When You Work Dawn to Dusk"

The summit was a huge success. Participants left with personal action plans to use what they learned.

## What's happening here?

- The transition team met with members from early education programs, schools, and the community, assessed Las Cruces Head Start's transition services, and developed an improvement plan.
- The transition team planned and co-sponsored a Transition Summit.
- Families participated as planners, presenters, and attendees.
- A wide range of topics applicable to families, early educators, early education partners, school administrators, and community leaders was presented.
- A panel discussion featuring community partners showed the benefit of community involvement.
- Participants wrote action plans on how they will use what they learned at the summit.

## Developing Partnerships with Outside Agencies and Community Stakeholders

For children with disabilities, health, mental health, and other unique needs, it is important to involve organizations that provide other relevant services to the child and family in the transition process. Children and families benefit when service agencies, organizations, and community stakeholders support transition efforts. These organizations often have information and resources that can be leveraged to improve the quality of your transition services or to support children and families with unique needs.

### Related Services and Specialized Resources

Related services can include health, mental health, early intervention, special education, nutrition, and social services. When programs partner with organizations that provide these services to children and families, it increases the chances that services will not be interrupted as children transition and that similar services will continue after transition. For example, when Early Head Start children with disabilities transition to Head Start at age three, they also transition from early intervention services to special education. By partnering with early intervention, special education, and Head Start, the Early Head Start program can work on the continuation of services.

Community organizations and agencies can also provide specialized resources and support for children and families with unique needs and backgrounds, such as children in foster placements,

families experiencing homelessness, and families seeking refuge. For example, the Office of Refugee Resettlement can provide information useful to refugee families and organizations working with them. For a more detailed list of organizations, see [Appendix A: Leveraging Community Resources to Support Children and Families with Unique Needs and Backgrounds as They Transition.](#)

*Children and families benefit when other agencies, organizations, and community stakeholders support transition efforts.*

## Community Stakeholders

Children and families also benefit when programs develop transition partnerships with organizations that provide community services to children and families, such as libraries, museums, recreation centers, colleges, health clinics, and pediatricians. Libraries and museums can create displays, or offer puppet shows and story hours about going to child care or school. Recreation centers can offer physical fitness and special recreation classes for targeted age groups. Colleges can offer children's dance, art, and other classes to help them gain skills and confidence. Health clinics and pediatricians can hand out enrollment information and talk with families about the impact transitions can have on their child and family.

Stakeholders from the broader community can also provide valuable support for transition. These may include faith-based organizations, cultural organizations, chambers of commerce,

local businesses, television and radio stations, newspapers, and service organizations. Partnering with stakeholders can assist in strengthening continuity for children and their families. They can provide access to services for programs and families, promote awareness of the importance of transition, fund transition events, and include Head Start and other early education programs in local plans. Reaching out to partner with community stakeholders also educates the community on the importance of transition and its role in the continuity of children's learning.

*Partnering with stakeholders can assist in strengthening continuity for children and their families.*

## Putting It All Together

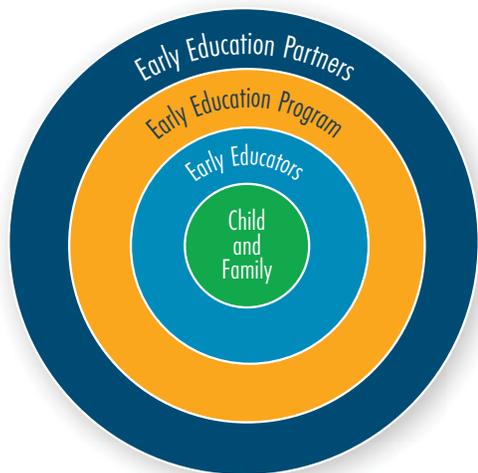
Smooth transitions depend on collaboration among all partners involved in the process, including families. When early education programs, early education partners, schools, and community stakeholders collaborate on transition, continuity is increased across these systems. Leaders play an important role by establishing policies and practices that promote cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

A key way to provide continuity is to align learning expectations, assessment instruments and processes, and curricula to support children's learning as they move from one program to the next. Aligned systems allow children to build on what they have learned and be prepared for what they will be learning next. This helps increase the likelihood that the social, emotional, and academic gains children made in preschool, for example, will continue to build after elementary school entry.

Children and families benefit when early education programs and schools collaborate with community stakeholders. Transition partnerships may include organizations that provide additional services to children, such as special education and health services. Stakeholder organizations, community services, and businesses can help support early childhood transitions become a collaborative, community-wide effort.

# Where to Learn More

## Transition Briefs in This Series



## SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS:

Using Child Development as a Guide

Early Educators Partnering with Families

Program Policies and Practices

Working with Early Education Partners

## Resources

Collaboration and Coordination of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C Programs

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/ed-hhs-miechv-partc-guidance.pdf>

*DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education*

<http://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>

ELOF Implementation Tool Kit

[URL forthcoming](#)

Get Ready for Kindergarten! Activity Calendar for Teachers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/transition-calendar.pdf>

Get Ready for Kindergarten! Activity Calendar for Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/transition-calendar-family.pdf>

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework 2015

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/elof>

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework: Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness, From Prenatal to Age 8

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/pfce-interactive-framework>

Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302 Subpart E—Family and Community Engagement

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-e-family-and-community-engagement-program-services>

Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302 Subpart F—Additional Services for Children with Disabilities

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-f-additional-services-children-disabilities>

## Resources (continued)

Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302 Subpart G—Transition Services

[https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-g-transition-services?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-g-transition-services?language_content_entity=en)

National Program Standards Crosswalk Tool

<https://qrisguide.acf.hhs.gov/crosswalk/>

Transition to Kindergarten Summit Presentations

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/transitions/article/transition-kindergarten>

Transition to Kindergarten: Transition and Alignment Summit Guide

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/transition-summit-guide.pdf>

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# Leveraging Community Resources to Support Children and Families with Unique Needs and Backgrounds as They Transition

Transition activities that involve children and engage families as they move from one early education program to the next are strongly linked to children's positive adjustment to and success in their new learning setting. These activities include experiences such as kindergarten visits, training for families on the transition process and its impact on their child and family, family support groups, and home activities for families to do with their children.

According to Rous, Hallam, McCormick, and Cox (2010), "Studies show children and families from non-dominant cultures as well as low-income backgrounds may be particularly vulnerable during [transition]" (p. 18). Some families and children may benefit from additional support, services, and resources as they transition. These specialized resources may not be readily available from the sending or receiving programs. Special knowledge or skills may be required, language or cultural barriers may exist, and reaching families may be a challenge.

Involving community stakeholders on your transition team to address such factors benefits children, families, and programs. These stakeholders often have information and resources that can be leveraged to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of your transition services. As you form your transition team, or seek resources for children and families, consider involving the following types of organizations.

## Children with IFSPs, IEPs, 504 Health Plans, or serious and persistent challenging behaviors

- Early Intervention (IDEA Part C)
- Special Education (IDEA Part B)
- Related services providers, such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, and augmented technology experts
- Mental health clinics and professionals

## Children who are dual language learners and families who speak languages other than English

- Cultural organizations
- Language clubs and schools
- Local affiliates of the American Sign Language Teachers Association
- Local chapters of the National Association of the Deaf

## Children in foster families

- Local affiliate of the National Foster Care Coalition
- State and county child welfare and social service agencies
- Child protective services agencies

## Families experiencing homelessness

- Local homeless shelters and service providers
- Local Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office
- Food and clothing banks
- Community Action Agencies
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) offices

## Migrant and seasonal families

- Migrant Health Centers
- Migrant and Seasonal Head Start
- Local school district Office of Migrant Education

## Newcomer, immigrant, and refugee families

- Cultural organizations
- Local and State Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Refugee family sponsors, such as faith-based and community organizations

## Pregnant mothers in Early Head Start

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Obstetricians, pediatricians, and medical clinics
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
- Minor parent programs at school districts

# Building Bridges

Early education programs often have opportunities to engage with community partners to create a circle of care for the children and families they serve. Community partnerships can build networks, leverage the expertise of many different partners, and allow for the provision of necessary services to smooth transitions as children and families move into and out of early education settings within your community.

You may be well on your way to having a full circle of partners as you work to support children and families. Or, you may just be getting started. In either case, this resource will help you assess how far along you are in developing partnerships with community stakeholders.

## Activity: Partnering to Promote Successful Transition

For this activity, think of the primary goal of partnering as **providing children and families with the continuity and support they need to transition smoothly between settings.**

### Part 1: Levels of Partnership

Consider the three levels of partnership that can exist between programs shown in the diagram below.

**Level 1: Cooperation** (building relationships, getting to know one another, and sharing information)

- *Example:* networking and informally meeting to learn about each other's programs

**Level 2: Coordination** (implementing projects and activities together)

- *Example:* planning and co-hosting an information meeting for families

**Level 3: Collaboration** (sharing of resources to meet mutual goals)

- *Example:* aligning early learning outcomes, curricula, assessment between programs



## Part 2: Supporting Children and Families

Think about your hopes and dreams for supporting children and families as they transition into and out of your setting and about how current or future partners might help you achieve smooth transitions. As you think about these partners, consider the definitions of **early education partners** discussed in the brief. Write your ideas in the table below.

<b>Your Hopes and Dreams for Children and Families</b>	<b>To fulfill this hope/dream, what resources do you need that other organizations in your community might have?</b>	<b>Name a few organizations that might be able to help.</b>	<b>What level of partnership are you at with each organization (coordinating, cooperating, or collaborating)?</b>
When children come INTO our program, we hope they . . .			
When families come INTO our program, we hope they . . .			
When children transition OUT OF our program, we hope they . . .			
When families transition OUT OF our program, we hope they . . .			

What do your responses tell you about the types of partners you have? What about the types of partners you need to add? What might you need to do to strengthen existing partnerships or establish new ones as you work toward providing children and families with the continuity and support they need to transition smoothly between settings?