

Early Childhood Transition: Best Practice



March 2025

Young children served by SoonerStart are potentially eligible for special education services through their local education agencies (LEAs) beginning at age three. SoonerStart supports this transition by sending an LEA notification for all children served between 27-33 months old and scheduling a transition planning conference (TPC). LEAs are invited to TPCs with parent consent.

What are the requirements for early childhood transition?

All children referred from SoonerStart are considered LEA referrals once the LEA receives notification. LEAs must offer an initial evaluation, and (if eligible) an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed and in place on or before the child's third birthday.

- LEAs will provide families of all SoonerStart referrals a Written Notice to Parents documenting the LEA's proposal to consider the child's eligibility for special education services, the parents' acceptance or decline of the evaluation, as well as a copy of the procedural safeguards. In order to meet child find obligations, Written Notice must occur regardless of the notification timeline. This action may occur before or at a TPC, by mail, or electronically.
- LEAs must initiate contact with all SoonerStart referrals (unless contact with the family has already been arranged through SoonerStart). Each LEA will participate in TPCs arranged by SoonerStart.
- Children with summer birthdays must have an initial evaluation completed and IEP (if eligible) in place by their third birthday. The IEP meeting will be held prior to or on the child's third birthday. Depending on the child's unique needs, the IEP services start date, as well as the goals/objectives date may begin later (e.g. August).
- Parents may choose to decline or revoke consent for a special education evaluation or (if eligible) special education services at any time. This decision must be documented in a Written Notice provided to the parent and include procedural safeguards.
- When transitioning from SoonerStart, an IEP Team must consider the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) content and must invite the SoonerStart resource coordinator if the parent requests it.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) federal regulations supersede any state or local policy and/or rules. Lack of formal enrollment documentation (e.g., birth certificate, vaccination record, or district's enrollment paperwork) does not excuse the LEA's obligation to fulfill child find, eligibility, and IEP timeline requirements.



What are the early childhood transition timelines?

- 1. Children referred and deemed “potentially eligible” by SoonerStart more than 90 days prior to third birthday:**
 - a. The LEA attends the TPC arranged by SoonerStart, and the LEA process proceeds per policy and procedure for Part C transitions.
 - b. Eligibility and IEP (if eligible) must be in place by the child’s third birthday.
- 2. Children referred and deemed “potentially eligible” by SoonerStart 90 days or less prior to third birthday:**
 - a. Referrals in this time frame are considered late referrals. SoonerStart provides transition notification as soon as possible to the LEA for children who are determined potentially eligible for Part B.
 - b. Transition Planning Conferences are not required. SoonerStart may, with parent approval, combine a TPC with the initial IFSP meeting.
 - c. Eligibility and IEP (if eligible) should be in place by third birthday.
- 3. SoonerStart does not accept referrals less than 45 days before third birthday:**
 - a. Child find timelines (45 school days) will be used, not the SoonerStart transition timeline (by third birthday).
 - b. LEA begins eligibility process when a referral is received, even if the child is not yet three years old. The 45-day timeline begins with a signed parent consent.

What if...

- **Parents do not respond to LEA?** LEAs must initiate contact with all SoonerStart referrals. If contact is unsuccessful, LEAs will document this contact and offer to evaluate in a Written Notice mailed to the family's last known address along with a copy of procedural safeguards.
- **Parents lack enrollment documents?** IDEA regulations supersede state and local policies and/or rules. Formal enrollment documentation is not a requirement for child find activities and **does not** excuse delayed transition timelines. Districts will use the [pre-enrollment process](#) to enter the student into EdPlan in order to complete eligibility and initial IEP.
- **Parents want an evaluation after initially declining transition?** An LEA would have documented the family’s declined the LEA’s initial offer to determine eligibility by child’s third birthday with a Written Notice and procedural safeguards. If prior to the child’s third birthday, a parent later requests transition, this documentation will help demonstrate district’s attempts to provide a timely transition.