

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION (ECI) TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION (ECSE) TRANSITION QUICK GUIDE

Updated July 29, 2026

Introduction

This quick guide is designed for local educational agency (LEA) staff and provides a concise overview of key steps along with essential resources to support effective early childhood transition practices.

If you ever have a question, concern, comment, suggestion, or find a broken link within this document, please email the TEA Division of Special Education Programs at sped@tea.texas.gov



Note: Throughout this document, when the term “parent” or “parents” is used, the term includes the definition aligned to 34 CFR § 300.30. That definition includes biological or adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian, an individual acting in the place of a biological parent with whom the child lives or is legally responsible for the child’s welfare, or a surrogate parent as defined in 34 CFR § 300.519. Please see the [Texas Legal Framework Glossary](#) for a full glossary of special education terms

Purpose of Early Childhood Transition

Early childhood transition is the process by which an eligible child with a disability transitions from receiving early childhood intervention (ECI) services under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C](#), to receiving early childhood special education (ECSE) services under [IDEA Part B](#) if found eligible.



This transition process requires timely and effective coordination and collaboration between LEA and ECI staff. The primary goal is to ensure that children and their families experience a smooth transition from ECI services.

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provided clarification on early childhood transition requirements through its [March 17, 2023, Policy Letter to Nix](#) and expanded upon that guidance in the 2023 [Early Childhood Transition Questions and Answers](#) document.

Readers are encouraged to reference OSEP’s document for more detailed information on federal early childhood transition requirements, timelines, and agency responsibilities under IDEA.

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Overview

ECI and ECSE are connected systems that support young children with disabilities, but they operate under different laws, agencies, eligibility criteria, service models, and plans. Review the table below for a quick overview of ECI and ECSE.

ECI		ECSE
IDEA Part C	Federal Law	IDEA Part B
TAC, Title 26, Part 1, Chapter 350	Texas Administrative Code (TAC)	TAC, Title 19, Part 2, Chapter 89, Subchapter AA
Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)	Agency	Texas Education Agency (TEA)
Birth to 36 months	Age	3 through 5 years old (not enrolled in kindergarten)*
Medically diagnosed condition Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired Developmental delay	Eligibility	Meet one of the 13 disability categories defined by IDEA By reason thereof, require special education and related services to receive a FAPE
Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)	Plan/Program	Individualized Education Program (IEP)
Where the child lives, learns, and plays	Location of Services	Within general education classrooms, special education classrooms, community-based programs, or a combination of settings**
Sliding-scale fees (evaluation and service coordination provided at no cost)	Cost	No cost

* Children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) or have a visual impairment (VI) are entitled to a FAPE from birth.

** May "include the alternative placements listed in the definition of special education under 34 CFR §300.39 (instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions); and (2) make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement." 34 CFR § 300.115(b)

Best Practices for LEA Staff

- ✓ Build relationships with ECI providers BEFORE referrals occur
- ✓ Treat families as partners, not participants
- ✓ Learn from ECI data to support transition process
- ✓ Maintain clear communication with families and ECI



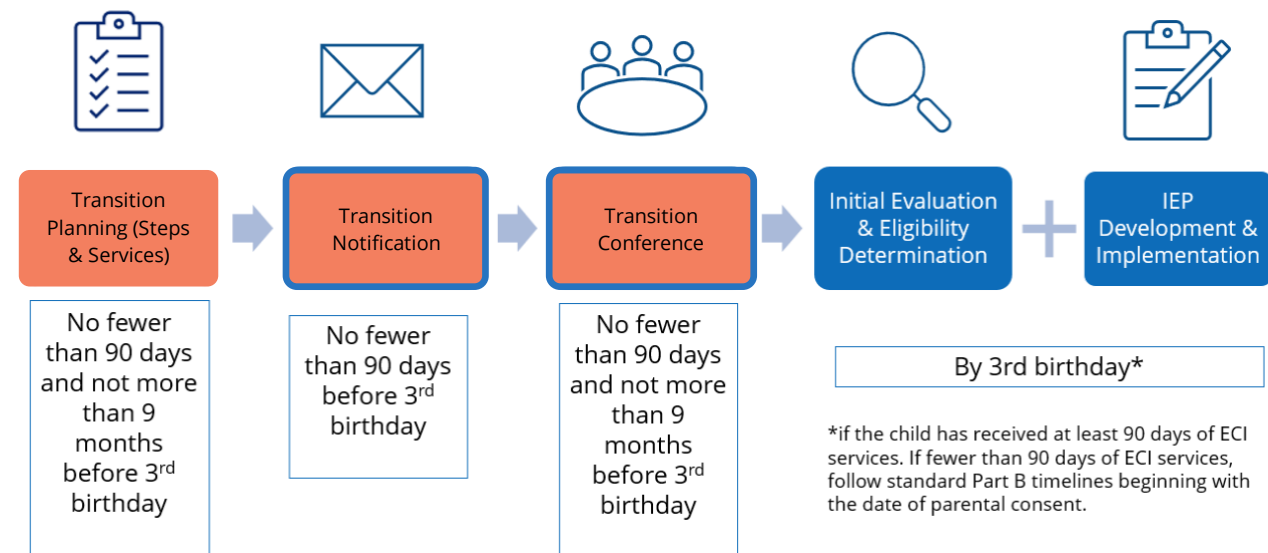
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Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The [HHSC and TEA MOU](#) defines the roles and responsibilities between each agency within state and federal mandates. It coordinates an effective system of procedures between HHSC and TEA which guides and supports transition services for families of children with disabilities who are approaching age 3.

Key Steps and Requirements



For a detailed list of early childhood transition-related responsibilities, see [IDEA Part C to Part B Transition Responsibilities in Texas](#).

Late Referrals to ECI

- For children with **at least 90 days** of ECI services, the LEA completes evaluation, determines eligibility, and finalizes all IEP processes by the child's 3rd birthday.
- For children with **fewer than 90 days of ECI services**, the LEA follows standard [Special Education Initial Referral Timeline](#) beginning with the date of parental consent.
- For children referred to ECI **fewer than 45 days before the child's 3rd birthday**, ECI must, with parental consent, refer the child directly to the LEA as soon as possible.
- As a best practice, the LEA should make every attempt to ensure the child has an IEP in place by his or her 3rd birthday.

For more information on early childhood transition planning and ensuring timely and compliant transitions for children exiting ECI, see [IDEA Part C to Part B Flowchart Based on Federal and State Regulatory Requirements](#).

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State Performance Plan Indicator (SPPI) 12 – Early Childhood Transition

Timely evaluations, eligibility determination, and IEP implementation are critical to SPPI 12 outcomes. SPPI 12 measures the percentage of children referred by ECI prior to age 3 who are found eligible for ECSE and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their 3rd birthday.

The data source for SPPI 12 is the Special Education Data System (SPEDS) Summer submission in the Texas Student Data System (TSDS). LEAs submit student-level data for children who have an IEP developed and implemented by their 3rd birthday during the annual collection period.

For more information regarding data collection and reporting, see [Early Childhood Transition | SPPI 12](#) and the [Special Education Data System \(SPEDS\) Summer Submission Guidance](#) document.

Additional Resources

Educator Supports	Federal & State Guidance	Parent Supports
• Texas SPED Support • IDEA Part C to Part B Flowchart Based on Federal and State Regulatory Requirements • IDEA Part C to Part B Transition Responsibilities in Texas • Special Education Full and Individual Initial Evaluation (FIIIE) Timeline and FAQ • Special Education Initial Referral Timeline	• 2023 Early Childhood Transition Questions and Answers • Code of Federal Regulations • Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center • DaSy Center: The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems • Texas Administrative Code • POLICY LETTER: March 17, 2023, to Nix	• SPEDTex • A Parent's Guide to ECI and ECSE • Beyond ECI: Next Steps for Your Child • Notice of Procedural Safeguards • Overview of Special Education for Parents • Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process • When You Have Concerns: A Parent's Guide to Special Education Referrals for Children Ages 3-5
Citations	• 34 CFR § 300.39 • 34 CFR §300.101(b)(1) • 34 CFR § 300.115(b) • 34 CFR §300.124	• 34 CFR §303.209(d) • 19 TAC §89.1011 • 19 TAC §89.1191 • 26 TAC §350.3