

When Your Child Turns Three: *Moving from an IFSP to an IEP or IIIP*

If your child is under the age of three and qualifies for early intervention services, you are probably familiar with the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). An IFSP is used to plan and document the supports and services provided to children from birth through age two and their families. Many parents like the IFSP process and would like to see it continue after their child's third birthday. In Minnesota, if your child qualifies for special education and also receives services from at least one additional public agency, you have the opportunity to continue to use a similar planning process called the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP, pronounced "triple-i-p").

Your child's IFSP team must address the transition to early childhood special education. Under the federal special education legislation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004), transition planning may begin as soon as nine months before the third birthday, and no less than 90 days before the third birthday. The transition planning meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss your planning options and determine which process and plan is the most appropriate based on your child's unique needs.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

When children turn three, schools begin using an Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and plan. The focus of an IEP is on the child and the special education and related services to be provided at school. Preschool programs are not required to assess family strengths and concerns, priorities and resources, or to include family goals.

The multidisciplinary IEP team will be made up of school personnel and the parent. An IEP manager will be assigned to coordinate school programming. While other agency representatives, such as a county social worker, may be invited to attend meetings and share information that may be helpful to the school team, the resulting plan will be a single-agency school plan specific to special education.

For most families, the IEP is appropriate to their child's needs and is the only educational planning option available when their child turns three. Some children, however, may require a consistent, coordinated effort across several

environments. Those with more complex needs may receive a variety of supports and services from the school and other public agencies. For example, a child who has a children's mental health case manager through the county may have behavioral needs that need to be addressed in the same way by in-home support workers and school personnel. If so, a coordinated interagency approach may be more appropriate and beneficial to the child and family. In such cases, the school district may offer, or the family may request, an Individual Interagency Intervention Plan.

When Your Child Receives Special Education and Services from at Least One Additional Public Agency: The Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) Option

In Minnesota, the Interagency Services for Children with Disabilities Act extends coordinated interagency planning to all children with disabilities who receive special education and service from at least one other public agency. The programs and services these agencies provide each require a written plan. Rather than meeting separately and writing separate plans, joint planning can occur that meets the requirements for each agency.

The multi-agency process and plan is the IIIP. Modeled after the IFSP process, the IIIP includes both school district and county services for which the child is eligible. It looks at the child's needs in all environments — home, school, and community. It may also consider services or information needed by the family in order to help the child develop and learn.

The IEP manager and the county worker may co-facilitate the IIIP meeting and share information with others on the team. However, there is no requirement for an assigned service coordinator.

If you would like to continue the interagency approach the IFSP provided, you may want to request to use the IIIP process to coordinate your child's school and county plans. The IIIP will replace the IEP and the county plan. All of the required parts of the IEP and the additional plan(s) will be addressed in the IIIP.

Learn More about Your Options

Regardless of which plan documents your child's program, your informed and active involvement in the process will likely be a major factor in its effectiveness. Research shows that parent involvement is often the key to a child's success in school and in life.

For more information about the IIIP, call PACER and request the following materials. PHP-c-83: *Minnesota's Individual Interagency Intervention Plan* and PHP-c-97: *Coordinating School and County Service Plans for Your Child Using the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) Process*. For additional information about the difference between an IFSP and an IEP, request PHP-c59: *What is the Difference Between an IFSP and an IEP?*

You may also discuss your questions and concerns with a parent advocate by contacting PACER Center. An advocate can help you explore your options, direct you to additional resources, and help you determine your next steps in the process.

Additional Resources

- For more information about the special education process, contact PACER for free, parent-friendly publications, or to speak with a parent-training advocate at 1-800-537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or 952-838-

9000. You'll find additional information at www.pacer.org and on the Family & Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE) Web site at www.fape.org.

- For more information about the Minnesota System of Interagency Coordination, visit the Minnesota Department of Education Web site at www.education.state.mn.us. Click on Learning Support, Special Education, Section Links: MN State Interagency Coord (MnSIC) to find the IIIP Guidebook & Forms, as well as additional training materials.