

Case Study #3:

Jacob began receiving early intervention services in the home at age 2, after he was verified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In January, shortly after services began, both his parents, Mark and Trudy, began working full time, so Jacob was enrolled in the toddler classroom at a community childcare center. Also in January, prior to Jacob's entry into the childcare center, his IFSP team completed a transition plan to assist the family and Jacob to carry out steps and activities to make the transition successful and to note the additional location of services (which now includes the childcare center). Changes in routine are very difficult for Jacob and his parents. So, together with the teachers at the center and Jacob's early intervention team, everyone worked hard to get him to his current status where he is participating in the toddler activities without an adult shadowing him closely. Trudy and Mark also value the services they receive in their home to help them with Jacob's goals for mealtime and bedtime.

Jacob will turn 3 in October. During the services coordinator's visit in March, Trudy and Mark stated that they while they are interested in the school district's preschool, they do not want Jacob to start until the following September, right before he turns 4 years of age. They want him to continue attending the childcare program up until that time.

Jacob's periodic IFSP is due in May. What needs to happen next, i.e. when should the transition plan be updated, and what about a transition conference, is it needed? Who should be involved and what will their responsibilities be? What kinds of activities and information should the services coordinator be preparing or using to make sure that the family can take a central and active role in the transition process? What information is she required to provide to the family?

Possible responses for case study #3:

The transition plan should be updated as appropriate and as soon as new steps/activities are identified and/or completed. The transition conference is required and must be held no later than 90 days prior to Jacob turning 3 (which is in October), regardless of when he actually transitions into preschool. The transition conference could be part of the periodic IFSP in May, or, it could be held in the summer (but no later than July, even though Jacob's parents do not want him to begin preschool in the fall). Because Jacob's birthday is in October, his family can decide that he remain on an IFSP and continue to have a services coordinator for another year, or, they can choose to move to an IEP after August 31st.

In order to help the family make this decision, the services coordinator is required to give them information about and discuss the differences between: an IFSP and an IEP, Part C and Part B services, continuous and extended year services, and the eligibility timelines for services coordination. It may be helpful for a services provider or someone from the district to be part of this discussion. In particular, this could be someone who can speak to how services provided as part of implementing an IEP would be based on needs specified in the IEP and according to the services page, just like an IFSP and regardless of whether the services are designated as Part C or Part B. The school district will also need to explain the continuum of options available for Jacob when he turns 3.

The transition conference itself must include the following: the family, the services coordinator, the LEA/district case manager, the services providers who provide early intervention services, the receiving program (if appropriate), and any other agencies or professionals who may be involved and would have information that would impact the transition process, including steps and activities that will or may be needed. Since the family has indicated that they do not want Jacob to begin preschool for another year, it would not be necessary for preschool program staff to attend, nor additional services providers unless they are different from those services providers who were part of the IFSP team. Possible resources to share with the family might include the IFSP web, and/or a blank IEP document, and anything else to help highlight the differences.

Throughout the IFSP process, beginning with verification, the services coordinator and the rest of the IFSP team should provide supports and services that promote family choice and decision making and builds the family's capacity. Doing so should ensure that at the point of transition, the family feels prepared for changes and have developed skills allowing them to take on the central role in directing what happens for their child and family.