**Working Together: A Framework for Effective Transitions from Part C to Part B**

**Transcript**

**Slide 1 - Working Together: A Framework for Effective Transitions from Part C to Part** **B**

Hello. My name is Sarah Moore and I am a Monitoring Consultant with the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Thank you for joining us today.

Hello. My name is Dawn Hendricks. I am the Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Education. I too welcome you to this webinar.

This webinar is titled, Working Together: A Framework for Effective Transitions from Part C to Part B. It is designed to support local agencies, including Infant and Toddler Connections and Local Education Agencies. The Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services produced this training and technical assistance webinar following an intensive collaborative process.

Both the VDOE and VDBHDS share responsibility for ensuring that the process for transition from Early Intervention to local educational agency (LEA) services adheres to regulatory requirements and that transitions from Early Intervention to Early Childhood Special Education are timely and smooth. Not only does the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act require it, but it is also important for our families and children to receive the services they need. For transitions to be timely and smooth, Early Intervention Programs and Local Education Agencies must work together and collaborate effectively. This webinar is designed to support EI and LEAs in the transition process and to provide a framework to ensure effective transitions.

**Slide 2**

This webinar is designed for you to think about your own process and procedures for transition. How do you communicate and share knowledge and information between Part C and Part B agencies to make sure the process goes smoothly?

It is recommended for a representative or representatives from both agencies to view this webinar together and to answer the questions together. We have developed a Presentation Guide to take you through the framework for effective transitions. Throughout the webinar, there will be opportunities for you to pause and to discuss your current procedures and identify strengths as well as areas for improvement.

**Slide 3 – Presentation Guide**

The Presentation Guide will take you through the framework for effective transitions. Please make sure you have a copy accessible as you go through the Webinar. In the Webinar, we will discuss elements of the transition process and will then provide Recommended Practices for each element. Each time we go through Recommended Practices, be sure to consider what you do and do not have in place. Whenever you see a stop sign at the bottom of the slide, pause the presentation, take out your Presentation Guide and use it to guide discussion and document responses together.

**Slide 4 – Getting Started What Makes**

Let’s get started with the basics – who is involved, what is going well and what needs improvement? Take out your Presentation Guide and answer these questions.

•What persons and agencies need to be included in the transition process?

•What is going well with the transition process?

•What is in need of improvement?

Discuss your responses. Once you have done so, resume the Webinar.

**Slide 5 – Agency Collaboration**

For the transition to be smooth and timely, it requires effort from both agencies. It is important to have a positive working relationship. While this is important, it is sometimes easier said than done. Agencies will need to work at having a good relationship and will need to take proactive steps. This involves having protocols in place for communication. Communication is key to planning effective transitions and is also key for problem solving when the transition does not run smoothly.

**Slide 6 – Agency Collaboration Recommended Practices**

Recommended Practices for Agency Collaboration include:

•Create and maintain positive working relationships between Early Intervention and LEA personnel.

•Assign a single contact person at each agency to support transition activities.

•Have multiple ways to contact the person such as email AND phone. Determine the best way to contact the person over the summer months.

•Meet annually to discuss the transition process and identify any areas in need of improvement.

**Slide 7 – Agency Collaboration Recommended Practices**

•In the event there is staff turnover, notify the other agency and let him/her know who the new person is, provide contact information, and set a time to meet one another.

•Inform the other agency of key regulations and procedures that impact the transition process.

•Pause the presentation and use your Presentation Guide to discuss recommended practices and document responses.

**Slide 8 – Update and Use your Interagency Agreement**

The DBHDS and DOE have a state level Interagency Agreement that outlines the responsibilities of each agency. The *Virginia Interagency Memorandum of Agreement among the Agencies Involved in Implementation of Part C of IDEA* documents the understandings and commitments of participating agencies in the Virginia statutory requirements related to Part C. The *Virginia Interagency Memorandum of Agreement* outlines the transition agreement between the DBHDS and DOE.

Each locality is to also have an Interagency Agreement. The local Interagency Agreement is to outline the responsibilities of the local Infant and Toddler Connection and Local Education Agency. Since local ITCs and LEAs must work together to develop understandings and procedures to ensure smooth and timely transitions, local interagency agreements that specify roles and responsibilities for accomplishing the transition planning and activities required under Part C and Part B of IDEA are required. It is critical for ITCs and LEAs to be aware of these local interagency agreements and to consider the effectiveness of such agreements and modify as needed.

**Slide 9 – Interagency Agreement**

At the local level, it is important to be familiar with your Interagency Agreement. More importantly, it is critical that it reflects the responsibilities of each locality and procedures that will ensure successful transition outcomes for children and families. Each locality can work together to make the document their own and to make sure it reflects the specific steps needed. While some information contained in the local interagency agreements will be the same for all, it is important to individualize your agreement to make sure it works for your agencies.

At this time, if you are not familiar with the Virginia Interagency Agreement, review it so you have a better understanding of the responsibilities of each agency. Additionally, locate your Interagency Agreement. You will be reviewing it to determine if it is accurate or if it is in need of updating. If it is not up to date or does not reflect all of the responsibilities and procedures, work together to update it based upon the recommended practices shared in this presentation.

**Slide 10 - Interagency Agreement Recommended Practices**

It is recommended that the decisions documented in the interagency agreement be developed through an interagency approach with representatives from both EI and LEA programs. Working collaboratively to establish the agreement provides agencies with the opportunity to identify what is working and what changes are needed to improve practices and procedures. Areas to be covered in the interagency agreement are listed on this slide.

* Develop an agreement through an interagency approach with representatives from EI and LEA programs. This provides the opportunity to identify what is working and what changes are needed to improve practices and procedures. This may include but is not limited to:
  + clear definition of roles and responsibilities for transition;
  + definition of EI & LEA timelines;
  + procedures for notification/referral, including late referrals;
  + procedures to coordinate the exchange of information between agencies;
  + procedures for children whose third birthdays occur during school breaks;
  + procedures for invitation to the Transition Conference, including timing and location; and
  + responsibilities for attending the Transition Conference.

**Slide 11 - Interagency Agreement Recommended Practices**

* Review and update the interagency agreement at a minimum, every other year.
* Change interagency procedures if they are no longer effective. Changes are negotiated between the parties involved.

The Interagency Agreement should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. We recommend at a minimum, every other year. Information in the interagency agreement should be changed when procedures are no longer effective with collaboration from all parties involved.

**Slide 12 - Discuss your Interagency Agreement**

You see a stop sign at the bottom of this slide. Let’s pause now to discuss your interagency agreement, any items that need to be updated, and the process for reviewing and updating the document now and in the future. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide. Resume the presentation when you are ready.

**Slide 13 - Prepare Families for the Transition**

Families must be prepared for the transition. When a child enters EI, discussions regarding transition begin. A child may only receive EI services up through the age of two. It is important for families to consider the opportunities for their child beyond EI. This requires families to be educated on the transition process. Additionally, they must be educated on Part B services so they can make an informed decision whether to continue with EI until age 3 or have their child transition at age 2.

**Slide 14 - When can a child transition?**

Although children are eligible for EI under Part C of IDEA until their third birthday, Virginia Code allows for children who turn 2 by September 30 and meet Part B eligibility requirements to receive ECSE services. It’s important to know that a referral from EI can happen at either of these times – at age 2 by September 30th or by the child’s third birthday. If a child is potentially eligible for Part B, service coordinators talk with families to determine when they would like their child to transition. If the family declines a referral to Part B when the child turns two, this is documented and if the child is still potentially eligible a referral is offered at a later date based upon the child’s third birthday.

**Slide 15 Potentially Eligible**

The eligibility criteria of early intervention and early childhood special education are very different. Some children served by EI will not be referred to Part B. It is required for EI to refer any child who is “potentially eligible” for special education and related services unless a family opts out.

Let’s take a minute to explain what is meant by “potentially eligible for Part B.” EI defines this as any child expected to still need services as they exit EI. The child’s IFSP team determines whether the child is potentially eligible for Part B. When to transition is a decision the family will make. It is a difficult decision. Early Interventionists will ensure families are aware of regulations and requirements regarding the transition and educate them on the steps.

As noted on the previous slide, Part B is required to serve a child who is eligible and age 2 before September 30. Some LEAs may serve children who turn 2 after September 30. This is called rolling admission. It is important for EI to know whether an LEA offers rolling admission.

**Slide 16 - Prepare for the Transition Recommended Practices**

Review the list of recommended practices listed.

* Inform families that EI serves infants and toddlers birth to age three and ECSE serves children ages two through five.
* Explain to the family that transition is a process and not a single event.
* Provide families with transition information in a variety of ways—for example, in writing, through discussion, with trainings, videos, and/or brochures. Document in the child’s record how the information was provided.
* Explain to the family differences in eligibility criteria between EI and ECSE.

**Slide 17 - Prepare for the Transition Recommended Practices**

* Part B, educate Part C on criteria for eligibility for special education and related services.
* Part B, let Part C know if you offer rolling admission for children who turn 2 after September 30 or if you make changes to your policy or practice.

You will see a stop sign on this slide. Let’s pause now to review the recommended practices and discuss how families are prepared within your systems. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide. Resume the presentation when you are ready.

**Slide 18 - Identify all Potential Transition Options**

We just discussed that EI is to refer all children to Part B who are expected to still need services as they exit EI. That means, some children will not be referred to the LEA. Additionally, some who are referred, will not meet the criteria and be found eligible for special education and related services. It is important to ensure all potential transition options are identified and families are aware of all opportunities.

**Slide 19 - Identify all Potential Transition Options Recommended Practices**

Both agencies can work to make sure families are informed about transition options and community-wide activities and events. In Part C, these options may be discussed on an ongoing basis as transition is discussed and planned. For Part B, there may be valuable opportunities for families in the community. If a child is not found eligible for special education, it will be helpful to provide community resources, activities, and events. This slide lists Recommended Practices for identifying all Potential Transition Options.

* Research and maintain current information regarding various program and service options available for children at age three and their families.
* Create a mechanism for sharing information about community-wide activities and events with each other and with families.
* Compile and maintain an up-to-date list of community resources with contacts, eligibility requirements, and enrollment procedures to provide to families.

At the bottom of the slide there is a stop sign. Let’s pause now to review the recommended practices and discuss how potential transition options in your community. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 20 - Part B Service Delivery**

When a child is referred to Part B and is found eligible, the team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child. The IEP will describe the child’s present level of performance, outline goals and objectives, services the child will receive, and the placement. Federal and State Regulations both state that Part B has a responsibility to provide a continuum of placements for children with an IEP and decisions regarding placement and service delivery models are to be individualized.

**Slide 21 - Educational Environments**

The placement for a child may include the following:

•Regular Early Childhood Program, such as the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, or a community-based preschool classroom

•Separate Class

•Separate School

•Residential Program

•Home

•Service Provider Location, such as a speech therapist’s office

There may be some variance in the placement options offered by school divisions. Also, because decisions have to be made on the child’s needs, which may include taking into consideration the child’s age, placement decisions will be individualized.

Information regarding special education services should be as accurate as possible when discussed with families and care must be taken to ensure families are aware of the continuum and need to make individual decisions. Assumptions should not be made regarding the placement and services a child will receive when entering Part B.

**Slide 22 - Part B Service Delivery Recommended Practices**

Some of these recommendations overlap with other steps in our transition framework. We felt it was worth repeating due to their importance and ensuring families are well informed.

* Part C, explain to the family the option to transition to Part B at age two or three.
* Explain to the family differences in eligibility criteria between EI and ECSE.
* Suggest families attend a Transition Conference prior to notification/referral so families can learn more about the services offered by the LEA and make an informed decision whether to refer and when. (Part C cannot require the conference prior to notification.)
* Part B, educate Part C on the services and placements offered in the LEA. In the event something changes, be sure to let Part C know. This not only informs Part C of the change, but is also an opportunity to educate Part C on the factors considered when determining placement options.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 23 - Transition Conference**

The Transition Conference is a critical component of the transition planning process. The Transition Conference is designed to help parents better understand the programs and services that may be available for their child. The transition conference is for parents to learn more about the services provided by the LEA and how eligibility is determined. While this is a meeting provided by Part C that is considered to be an IFSP meeting, it is required that someone from the LEA attend. This can include any LEA representative who is knowledgeable about services available in Early Childhood Special Education programs. Only a person from the LEA can really speak effectively about the program provided for children in ECSE and can answer specific questions a parent might have. It is helpful for the LEA to have materials to provide the parents that describe the program as well as the steps of eligibility.

**Slide 24 - Transition Conference Recommended Practices**

With so many children transitioning from C to B annually, it sometimes can be overwhelming to schedule the transition conference. There are many things that Part C and B can do to make this easier and manageable.

* Encourage families to invite persons of their choice, such as other family members or a family resource center parent, to attend their transition conference.
* In the event that the family declines the transition conference, document the family’s preference in the IFSP and notify the LEA.
* Work with the LEA to establish a range of dates and times or to designate a specific day of the month (e.g., third Tuesday) for the transition conference.
* Establish time slots for the transition conference prior to extended breaks in the LEA program (e.g., summer months).
* Bring all necessary documents including consent forms to the meeting in case they are needed.

**Slide 25 - Transition Conference Recommended Practices**

* Determine participant roles and responsibilities for sharing transition information.
* Explain all components of referral and evaluation.
* Part B, provide written material on LEA services, assessment procedures, and Part B Eligibility criteria. Create locally developed transition materials and update them as necessary.
* Provide families with useful websites, brochures, and other resources.
* Part B, do not treat the Transition Conference as a school based team meeting to determine whether the child should be evaluated.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 26 - Notifications/Referrals**

In the case of a child who is suspected of having a disability and will soon reach the age of eligibility for preschool services under Part B, Part C is to provide notification to the LEA where the child resides. This is known as a referral and is done by transmitting each child’s name, parent’s name(s), address, phone number and birth date to the child’s LEA of residence.

**Slide 27 – Notification**

Notification from Part C constitutes a referral. Receipt of the referral begins the 65 day timeline to determine eligibility for special education and related services. Referrals are sent throughout the year, including during summer months. Many LEA administrators are 10 or 11 month employees and have time off during the summer. The LEA is to still accept referrals and should develop a plan to make sure this happens. We will talk more about this later. As noted previously, Part C refers all potentially eligible children unless the family “opts out”. All children enrolled in Part C are considered potentially eligible unless there is a clear expectation that they will no longer require services by the time they reach age 3.

**Slide 28 - Don’t Forget!**

In accordance with EI regulations, notification must be sent at least 90 days before the anticipated date of transition. The Virginia Interagency Agreement between DBHDS and DOE further specifies timelines that ensure notification and referral happen early enough for the school system to complete their steps within their required timelines and allow the child to start school on time. Under that agreement, notification and referral must be made no later than April 1st in a given year or at least 6 months prior to the child’s third birthday in order to ensure the child can begin services at the start of the school year in which they turn two or on their third birthday, respectively. As mentioned, other dates can be established in a local interagency agreement as long as the timelines are not shorter than those outlined in the regulations or the state agreement. For example, some school divisions may wish to consider the April 1st timeline. School divisions that start in August and end in May, may wish to receive referrals in February or by March 1st to complete the eligibility process before releasing for summer due to 10 month employee schedules.

**Slide 29 - Notification Considerations**

If families agree to notification, notification must be sent 90 days prior to the anticipated date of transition. We have already discussed that our state interagency agreement lists April 1st for 2 year olds and six months before the third birthday as the target dates for notification, unless otherwise specified in the local interagency agreement. Notification can be sent after these target dates for a variety of reasons. Families may originally opt out and later change their minds. A notification may also be sent after the interagency target date if a child is referred to Part C after April 1st or 6 months before the third birthday.

Under these same circumstances, notification to the LEA may be sent less than 90 days before the anticipated date of transition*.* When a notification is sent later than the target date, it is important for Part C to let Part B know the reason. Both parties are required to report data to the state and to the Office of Special Education Programs or OSEP regarding meeting the designated transition timelines. OSEP provides allowances when a referral to Part C is less than 90 days from the anticipated date of transition or the parent changes their mind. Of course, sometimes, despite our best efforts and intentions, human error does occur. While the goal is to work to having all children who transition meet the designated timelines, if the late referral is due to poor communication between Part C and Part B, a faulty fax machine, or any other such reason, Part C and B must discuss the issue and determine how to resolve it so that all future transitions are timely and smooth.

**Slide 30 - Notification/Referral Recommended Practices**

The next two slides show recommended practices for notification and referral. As we have already stated, some school divisions may wish to review the interagency agreement for the April 1st timeline. School divisions that start in August and end in May should consider a date of February or March 1st to complete the eligibility process before releasing for summer due to 10 month employee schedules.

* Part C, educate Part B on regulations and procedures regarding notification/referral requirements, including what is meant by “potentially eligible.”
* Identify the LEA contact(s) for Part B notification/referral.
* Identify the EI contact who is responsible for sending the notification/referral.
* Establish a process of communication between the sending and receiving agencies regarding the notification/referral. Ensure that the process is in writing (in the local agreement).
* Include documentation of the notification/referral in the child’s record.

**Slide 31** - **Notification/Referral Recommended Practices**

* Have a process in place to ensure a referral is sent and received in a manner that is secure and timely.
* As part of the process, the LEA is to confirm receipt of notification.
* For each child referred, identify the EI service coordinator.
* Part B maintain contact with the EI service coordinator throughout the notification/referral process.
* Notify LEA if the family changed their mind or if it was a late referral to EI.
* When there are a large number of children being referred to an LEA, consider an earlier timeline to send the notification/referral.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 32 – Late Referrals**

Children are referred to Part C at different times. If a child is referred to Part C between 45 and 90 days prior to the child being age eligible to receive services from Part B, with parental permission, the LEA and Part C may conduct the eligibility evaluations together. For children determined eligible for Part C (and the child is potentially eligible for Part B) notification to the LEA and VDOE must occur as soon as possible after the determination of eligibility.

For a child referred to Part C fewer than 45 days prior to the child’s third birthday, with parental consent, the local early intervention system refers the child to the LEA and VDOE. This is not considered notification from Part C. Part C is not required to conduct an evaluation, assessment or develop an initial IFSP or transition plan for such children. Part C may directly refer or have the family refer the child to the LEA.

Late referrals *to Part B* may also be a result of a family changing their mind or a child being referred to Part C less than 90 days from the anticipated date of transition. As discussed previously, it is a family’s choice to determine when to transition. A family may initially not want to transition the child, then change their mind. If this results in the notification being sent fewer than 90 days prior to the child being age eligible to receive services from Part B, this does not count against Part B as a late referral as previously discussed. The Office of Special Education Programs recognizes there are circumstances beyond the control of the agencies that may result in the transition timeline being missed.

**Slide 33 - Late Referrals Recommended Practices**

This slide shows recommended practices in regards to late referrals.

* Know the Regulations regarding what is / is not considered notification from Part C.
* Establish local procedures between EI and the LEA to respond to late referrals to Part C as part of the interagency agreement. Include processes to communicate between agencies quickly.
* Plan and conduct joint evaluations between Early Intervention and LEAs when feasible to do so.
* Part C, when there is a late referral, let the LEA know why it is late. If it is an exception provided by OSEP both agencies will then be aware. If the reason is due to human error, discuss the issue and determine how to resolve the issue immediately.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 34 – Summer**

Local Education Agencies are to accept referrals any time of the year. Summer months and breaks are considered the same as other months of the school year. It is important that LEAs understand the requirements for accepting and responding to initial referrals for all children that may occur during summer months or extended breaks. School divisions are often operating on a skeleton staff structure during the summer months. LEAs should determine who is responsible for accepting notifications/referrals and responding. It is helpful for EI and the LEA to discuss any changes to operations. Further, it may be helpful for EI and the LEA to discuss any changes they may need to implement to accommodate the summer schedule. For example, the Part B representative may provide a cell phone to be notified when a referral is sent or dates for transition conferences are altered.

**Slide 35 - Summer Recommended Practices**

This slide shows recommended practices regarding summer and school breaks.

* Work together to hold transition conferences and make referrals for children with summer birthdays prior to the date when the LEA begins an extended program break when possible.
* Establish time slots for meetings and transition conferences prior to extended breaks in the LEA program.
* Coordinate transition conferences and referral dates for children with summer birthdays.
* Work with the families of children who have summer birthdays to ensure that they can accommodate attendance at the meeting, working around potential summer or holiday travel.
* Part B, notify Part C of any changes to operations, including the person receiving and responding to the notification/referral over extended breaks.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 36 - Eligibility and IEP Development**

To determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services, a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child. No single measure is to be used as the sole criterion. The IFSP and assessment information gathered in EI may be used to help make a determination. Therefore, this information may be shared with the LEA with parental consent.

Going through the eligibility process can be overwhelming for the family. It is important for both EI and the LEA to communicate clearly with the family and to provide information related to the process.

**Slide 37 - Eligibility and IEP Development**

The final set of recommended practices cover eligibility and IEP development.

* Part C, with parental consent, provide assessment information and the IFSP to be considered during Eligibility and IEP development.
* Part B, communicate with the family throughout the assessment process to prepare them for the initial IEP meeting.
* Part C, stay in contact with LEA representative throughout the assessment process and offer assistance if needed.
* At family request, EI is invited to the Eligibility and IEP meetings.

Let’s pause now to review and discuss the recommended practices. Document your responses using the Presentation Guide.

**Slide 38 - Review and Revise Your Interagency Agreement**

Now that we have covered recommended practices for the transition process and you have completed your Presentation Guide, let’s re-visit your interagency agreement. Review your agreement and revise it as necessary to reflect any changes or updates resulting from your discussion. Remember to review your interagency agreement on a regular basis and revise it you make changes to your transition process.

**Slide 39 – Conclusion**

The goal of this presentation has been for you to review existing processes and develop practices to ensure successful transitions from Part C to Part B. In conclusion let’s review the key components for successful transitions:

* Establish and maintain a collaborative working relationship between agencies.
* Establish processes for each step of the transition process and document the process in your interagency agreement. Keep each agency informed of current regulations and staff and program changes.
* Review and update the interagency agreement on a regular basis.