Evidence-based Practices for Children Served
by Part C and Part B of IDEA 2004:
Transition Practices that Impact Child and Family Outcomes

By their sixth birthday, children with disabilities and their families may already have experienced four vertical transitions from one service delivery system to another including (1) hospital to home; (2) home to early intervention programs; (3) early intervention to preschool programs; and (4) preschool programs to kindergarten. Transitions are often stressful for children and families as they leave program staff with whom they have developed strong connections and move into programs with new staff and different methods of interacting with children and families. Transition success has frequently been measured by satisfaction with the overall transition process (Rous & Hallam, 2006; Rosenkoetter, Hains, & Fowler, 1994).

With the advent of the accountability movement, there has been a renewed interest in identifying measurable transition outcomes for children with disabilities and their families and implementing evidence-based transition practices that align with those outcomes (Harbin, Rous, Peeler, Schuster & McCormick, 2007). The Transition Conceptual Framework (Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick, & Jung, 2006) identifies interrelated child and family transition outcomes and illustrates the complexity of interaction among systems that impact transition outcomes for young children and their families. Child and family outcomes in this framework are divided into immediate, short-term and long-term outcomes. The long-term outcome for families is family engagement and involvement and for children is child success in school.

Concurrent to developing this framework, researchers from the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC) conducted a research project that included four sets of transition studies. The four sets of studies were

> *(1) analysis of existing research to identify evidence-based practices that support transition;*
> *(2) studies that involved the identification of how child, family, provider, and program factors impact a child's transition to school and school readiness;*
> *(3) studies that involved the identification of policies that impact the child's transition; and*
> *(4) studies that involved identifying strategies from the field that support a child's transition via focus groups (Rous & Myers, 2006, p.1).*

The studies identified 21 standard transition practices that positively impact child and family transition outcomes. The standard transition practices identified in this research project were grouped into four categories. The first three categories were related to the community interagency service system and the last category was related to child and family activities. Categories and standard transition practices within each category include:

Supportive Infrastructure to guide the transition process.
- Primary contact person for transition identified within each program or agency.
- Referral processes and timelines clearly specified.

- Enrollment processes and timelines clearly specified.
- Program eligibility processes and timelines clearly delineated.
- Staff and family members actively involved in the design of transition processes and systems.
- Families meaningfully participate as partners with staff in program- and community-wide transition planning efforts.
- Agencies develop formal mechanisms to minimize disruptions in services before, during, and after the transition of the child and family.

Continuity and Alignment between sending and receiving programs.
- Community- and program-wide transition activities and timelines identified.
- Conscious and transparent connections made between curricula and child expectations across programs/environments.
- Transition plans developed that include individual activities for each child and family.
- Children have opportunities to develop and practice skills they need to be successful in the next environment.

Communication and Relationships between agencies to help create a seamless system of transition.
- Methods in place to support staff-to-staff communication both within and across programs.
- Staff roles and responsibilities for transition activities clearly delineated.

Child and Family Preparation and/or Adjustment
- Staff follow-up on children after the transition to support their adjustment.
- Staff knows key information about a broad array of agencies and services available within the community.
- Individual child and family transition meetings conducted.
- Transition team members share appropriate information about each child making a transition.
- Families are aware of the importance of transition planning and have information they need to actively participate in transition planning with their child.
- Families' needs related to transition assessed and addressed.
- Families have information about and are linked with resources and services to help them meet their specific child and family needs.
- Families actively participate in gathering information about their child's growth and development (Rous & Myers, 2006)

Conclusions
Specific strategies or activities that support the research-based standard transition practices are individualized in type, intensity and number to meet the specific needs of children and families. Some of the specific strategies identified by focus groups as important to support the standard transition practices are:

- development of transition plans,
- interagency agreements,
- transition packets and handbooks;
- shared training opportunities across programs,
- program visitation by child and family,
- providing information about parental rights in IDEA, and
- facilitating family to family support groups (Rous & Myers, 2006).

References

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