

Transition Supports: Strategic Implementation Plan, 2020-2023

Introduction

Transition supports, while considered important for all children transitioning into kindergarten, are especially critical for two groups of children and families. The first group is children with special needs when they move from the Department of Health Early Intervention Section (Part C) to the Department of Education Special Education Preschool (Part B). There is a significant cultural shift between the family support-oriented services of DOH Early Intervention and the child/education-oriented services of the DOE Special Education Preschool. The second critical group is made up of children and families experiencing unstable housing as they transition into kindergarten at age five. Transition to the school structure and community can be difficult for children and families under stress, and at the same time it can be an important stabilizing force for children, especially when the school community has a deep awareness and understanding of the challenges facing these children and families.

Needs Assessment Summary on Transition Supports, 2008 and 2016

The summary can be found at: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pre-2019-Needs-Assessment-Summary-for-Transition-Supports-SIP.pdf>

Transition from Part C to Part B Services. The most current needs assessment on transition supports for children with special needs when they move from DOH Early Intervention Section (Part C) to DOE Special Education Preschool (Part B) is from 2008. Mandated by the Hawai'i State Legislature to examine the feasibility of expanding Hawai'i's Early Intervention Section to continue services for children ages three to five, the assessment includes a survey to help identify strengths and weaknesses in the transition of all children into DOE preschool special education programs. Although its results are not representative of the entire state, survey respondents do represent one-third of the 1,300 preschool special education students at that time.

Overall, respondents who transition their children into special education programs feel some initial apprehension, but are later satisfied with and feel positive about their child's transition experience. Prior to the transition, 30% of the parents preferred that their child remain in Early Intervention services. The report suggests this apprehension stems from parents not fully understanding the benefits of the transition and requiring more information to ease their concerns. After the transition occurred, 16% of the parents continued to prefer Early Intervention services.

The primary transition supports for families are a Transition Conference and a DOE Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. The survey indicates that parents have a positive view of both activities. Eighty-one percent report attending and finding the Transition Conference helpful. Eighty-six percent report attending an IEP meeting and feeling that their family's ideas were heard. Parents of children with autism, however, report lower rates of satisfaction with the transition supports. Other valuable transition supports include visiting the preschool in advance of the transition, receiving an explanation of the DOE evaluation report, and being welcomed by the DOE staff.

Transition to Kindergarten for Children and Families. An Early Childhood Action Strategy study in 2016 examines kindergarten transition by surveying 755 parents of kindergarteners in DOE public schools on the islands of O‘ahu (24%) and Hawai‘i (76%). The findings are not generalizable and should be considered with caution. Slightly more than half of the parents report previous experience transitioning to kindergarten with an older child.

Respondents identify all of the types of early care and education they utilized prior to transition to kindergarten. Seventy percent of the children attend a center-based program prior to entering kindergarten; 3% attend regulated home-based care; and 2% attend a family-child interaction learning program. In addition, 38% of parents stay at home with their child for a period of time and 7% utilize family/friend/neighbor care. Overall, parents believe their child experienced a successful transition; there is, however, no information on the factors parents consider in making their assessment. There is also no information on the children whose parents indicate they did not adjust well in the transition.

Survey respondents indicate the availability of transition supports. Ninety percent feel they have the necessary information and resources to prepare their child and family for kindergarten, and nearly as many said they attended a transition orientation where they could learn about the transition process and their child’s upcoming kindergarten experience.

- 83% were aware that they could register early for kindergarten
- 87% knew what to expect and what materials were needed to register
- 96% found the registration process easy to understand
- 88% had a clear understanding of their child’s kindergarten schedule

Parents’ greatest concerns about the transition into kindergarten were about their child’s social experiences.

- 41% were concerned about their child making friends
- 23% were concerned about their child adjusting to new people, surroundings, school size, etc.
- 14% were concerned about their child’s experience separating from family and friends

There is no existing information on the experience of children and families experiencing unstable housing relative to their transition into kindergarten.

Outstanding Questions about Transition Supports. The opportunity to deepen current knowledge on transition supports is significant. The work group members spoke to concerns about the overall quantity, quality, and timeliness of available needs assessment information. They identified several overarching questions about transitions:

- What transition supports are children and families receiving? Do they find them valuable and why?
- What are the barriers children and families experience in making transitions and what kinds of support would better address these barriers?

- How do families and early childhood professionals define a “successful” transition and an “unsuccessful” transition, and to what extent do their definitions align?
 - What are the characteristics of children who experience a successful transition?
 - What are the characteristics of children who do not experience a successful transition?
 - How is success or lack of success documented?

The Transition Supports Work Group identified these outstanding questions about children and families transitioning from Part C to Part B:

- When children and families do not transition from Part C to Part B:
 - If the child is eligible to transition, why did the family choose not to do so?
 - Whether due to ineligibility or opting not to transition, what happens to the children and families who don’t transition?
- When children and families do transition from Part C to Part B:
 - What access to communications and information about transitions supports do families have?
 - What are the reasons a family declines support in the transition?
 - How many families decline support during the transition?
 - What are the transition outcomes, including:
 - How does the child perceive preschool?
 - Does the child feel successful in preschool?
 - What are the third grade reading and additional educational outcomes for these children?

The work group did not identify any additional needs assessment questions relative to children and families with unstable housing relative to transition supports.

Hawai’i PDG Birth to Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment 2020

The complete report can be found at: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hawaii-Early-Childhood-Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-and-Using-Risk-and-Reach-Data-supplement-to-ICFs-comprehensive-NA.pdf>

The needs assessment review of existing data for children transitioning from Part C to Part B indicates that Hawai’i has been generally successful in meeting benchmarks for children with special needs and services associated with transitions, generally within recommended timeframes.

- 100% of children eligible for Part B were referred by Part C prior to age three, and 95% had an IEP developed and implemented on time.
- 94% of toddlers with special needs exited Part C with timely and completed transition plans.
- 54% of parents indicate that their child’s school facilitated parental involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with special needs.
- There is a general perception among families that the mainstream kindergarten is not well-suited for children with special needs.

The DOE developed the Special Education Compliance Action Table database specifically to monitor compliance of Hawai'i's System of General Supervision and Support.

However, stakeholder interviews and family focus group data suggest a less positive picture of transition supports statewide. Leaders in early childhood indicate that systems around transitions are ad hoc and fluid, with the burden placed on families to request support and transfer information to new providers or teachers.

In the more general transition to kindergarten, parents express a desire for:

- More guidance throughout the transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten
- Explicit information on typical challenges children and families encounter in the transition
- Information on the major variations between prekindergarten and kindergarten class philosophies and approaches
- More communication between families and schools during the transitional period
- Advance introduction to the kindergarten teacher
- Clearer transition protocols for children transitioning from play-based prekindergarten settings to the academic settings of kindergarten

No additional needs assessment information regarding children and families experiencing unstable housing as they transition to kindergarten was secured in this study.

The Hawai'i PDG Birth to Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment 2020 report provides three recommendations:

1. Provide transition support information to families at multiple points in time, starting with family planning and continuing throughout pregnancy and early childhood, and include information on developmental milestones, health, parenting, etc.
2. Develop portfolios of children's work to bring to kindergarten.
3. Reintroduce universal kindergarten entry assessment.

Transition Supports: Strategic Implementation Plan, 2020-2023

Key Priority for Collective Action

Drawn from the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024, italics refer to the Building Block (1-5), Key Strategy (A-D), and Priority (i-viii):

Engage in planning and coordination among entities that serve children as they progress from birth through age eight (and transition to the next level or setting) to ensure all children appropriately receive the services and resources they need for optimal growth and development. *(BB3, vii)*

Coordinate support and advocate for aligned and seamless transition practices between programs and services for: 1) children, age three, transitioning from Department of Health Early Intervention Section (Part C) to Department of Education Special Education Preschool (Part B), and 2) children experiencing unstable housing as they transition into kindergarten at age five. *(BB5, vii, modified)*

Objective 1: Understand and establish intra- and interagency positions and practices that encourage strong collaborative engagement among all partners, including families, and high utilization of available transition supports.		
Champions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Department of Education, Office of Student Support Services, Special Education Section, Homeless Concerns Office, and Migrant Education ✓ Department of Health, Early Intervention Section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy, Team 6 School Readiness for Successful Transitions – Early Childhood Community Teams Subcommittee ✓ Executive Office on Early Learning ✓ Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, P-3 Initiatives 	
Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Engage in an interagency assessment of transition needs for a) children transitioning from Department of Health (DOH) Early Intervention Section to Department of Education (DOE) Special Education Preschool, and b) children/families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing as they transition into kindergarten, and generate an assessment report for agency leaders and staff on current processes, strengths, barriers, and recommendations (e.g., cross-walk eligibility differences for DOH Early Intervention Section and DOE Special Education services).</p> <p>1.1 Convene an interagency group to engage in an assessment of transition needs from a family-centric perspective.</p> <p>1.2 Develop and utilize commonly agreed definitions, standards, and indicators of success for transitions that include interagency and family perspectives, and collect relevant data to support improvements.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency Assessment Team is convened: May 2020 • Assessment initiated: October 2020 • Definitions established: 2021 • Assessment completed: 2022 • Working on recommendations: 2023 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies and their knowledge • INPEACE, Keiki Steps to Transition • Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert research team to do the assessment (e.g., WICHE) • Parent representation (Part B, Part C, Homeless, Unstable Housing) • Coordination support • Work time allocation • Convening space statewide • Funding: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common definitions, standards, practices, agreements, and indicators for successful transition are established. • Interagency assessment completed. • Assessment report has been distributed to agency leaders and other interested parties, including recommendations for action. • Action taken by agencies, or others as appropriate, in response to recommendations has begun. • Written agreements for data-sharing are developed, as necessary. • Agency staff report strong, collaborative intra- and interagency relationships used to support successful transitions.

<p>1.2.1 Research and evaluate national models on transitions and how to measure success.</p> <p>1.2.2 Establish commonly agreed-upon definitions, practices, and indicators for "successful" and "unsuccessful" transitions for a) children transitioning from Early Intervention to Special Education Preschool, b) children experiencing homelessness or unstable housing transitioning to kindergarten, and c) prekindergarten children in all settings transitioning to kindergarten.</p> <p>1.2.3 Engage in regular data collection and reporting on indicators.</p> <p>1.2.4 Identify continuous improvement opportunities and act on them.</p> <p>1.3 Engage in the assessment.</p> <p>1.3.1 Identify opportunities beyond minimum requirements to better meet family needs for transition supports (e.g., DOE working on family engagement; addendum to Form 14 to support children with particular health needs).</p> <p>1.3.2 Generate a report on the assessment results and recommendations for action.</p> <p>1.4 Disseminate assessment report, broadly, providing venues to review the document and discuss implementation implications.</p> <p>1.5 Take action on the assessment report recommendations.</p> <p>1.5.1 If reflected in the assessment report recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a state-level Transition Supports Team (e.g., Transition Supports Coordinator, School Culture Specialist, Parent Support Specialist). - Develop alternative ways to share transition information with parents (e.g., STEPS/Community Team materials). - Revise or establish formal and informal information-sharing agreements between agencies, and also with child-serving settings, to assure timely and coordinated service delivery. <i>(BB1, v, modified)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Independent research team to do the assessment o Independent facilitator to support agency/group meetings o Interisland travel o Resources to support parent representation o Personnel for ongoing data collection and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term. Agencies and families have data on the rate of successful transitions. • Long-term. Parents report being engaged and well-informed about their child's specific needs related to transition, including knowing how best to support their child, and feeling able to make decisions about transition alternatives.
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<p>1.5.2 Engage in ongoing data collection, analysis, and reporting on the success of transitions.</p>		
<p>2. Integrate Department of Human Services' Med-QUEST Health and Functional Assessment into the Transition Supports process to ensure the appropriate health- and medical-related services are made available and/or maintained for children receiving Medicaid benefits, regardless of parental decisions on transition options.</p>	<p>When: Ongoing</p> <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Human Services, Med-QUEST <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Plan Representative (Service or Care Coordinator) • Primary Care Physician • Service providers that help the child successfully meet age-appropriate activities of daily living • Service Plans and Health and Functional Assessments • Parental consent for the release of documents and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible children are receiving the medically necessary services they require, regardless of familial decisions on transition options.
<p>3. In the context of the assessment report, and to optimize transitions to kindergarten for all, engage community service and early care and education providers in all settings in addressing the needs of families and children transitioning into kindergarten.</p> <p>3.1 Engage with ECAS Team 6 School Readiness for Successful Transitions' ongoing efforts.</p> <p>3.2 Hold regular meetings to increase dialogue, share resources and data, and build relationships with agencies and family representatives.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive engagement of providers: 2022 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None noted <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and facilitation support, including personnel as needed • Work-time allocation • Parent representation (Part B, Part C, Homeless, Unstable Housing, Pre-K) • Resources to support parent participation • Convening space statewide • Statewide representation and support for interisland travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers are aware of transition supports. • Providers are coaching families effectively on transitions.

Objective 2: Develop family-friendly culture of engagement that enhances family knowledge about transitions and builds trusted relationships in support of the best possible child development.

Champions:

- ✓ Department of Education, Office of Student Support Services, Special Education Section, Homeless Concerns Office, and Migrant Education
- ✓ Department of Health, Early Intervention Section
- ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 1 Healthy & Welcomed Births; Team 2 Safe & Nurturing Families; Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services – Child Homelessness Action Team Subcommittee; and, Team 5 High Quality Programs & Services – Family Partnership Guidelines Subcommittee
- ✓ Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, P-3 Initiatives

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Update existing Transition Toolkit for providers.</p> <p>1.1 Distribute the Transition Toolkit broadly.</p> <p>1.2 Provide training on the Transition Toolkit.</p> <p>1.3 Engage in ongoing data collection, analysis, and reporting on the usage, effectiveness, and impact of the Transition Toolkit.</p>	<p>When: Ongoing</p> <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDG B-5 grant to update Transition Toolkit • Partnerships with providers <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training materials and venues • Trainers able to address transition content across agencies and audiences • Sustainability plan to maintain Toolkit and trainings • Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for implementation and sustaining efforts ○ Research and reporting ○ Interisland travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers are using the Transition Toolkit and are reporting it is effective for working with families. • Parents report being engaged and well-informed about their child's specific needs related to transition, including knowing how best to support their child, and feeling able to make decisions about transition alternatives.
<p>2. Establish a school-based and program-based culture of safety and support for families and children with housing needs by ensuring appropriate staff are well-trained on vital information and best practices (e.g., McKinney-Vento Act, trauma-informed care).</p> <p>2.1 Deliver related professional development to all Department of Education kindergarten educators and school staff.</p> <p>2.2 Deliver related professional development to program personnel working with families and children with housing needs.</p>	<p>When: 2020 and ongoing</p> <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health's support of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience (ACER) Train the Trainer Cohort • Head Start modules on working with children and families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing • McKinney-Vento Act materials and school liaisons • Poverty Simulation training by Department of Education – Leeward District • Promising Minds Initiative's communities of practice • Material for ACER Train the Trainer program <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education's commitment to get related professional development to the appropriate educators and staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development offerings have incorporated safety and support for families and children with housing needs. • Transition supports training attendees report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased confidence working with families and children with housing needs, and ○ Being better equipped to respond to families and children with housing needs. • Transition Supports training attendees demonstrate working effectively with families and children with housing needs. • Families report their school-based environment is supportive of their needs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More trained trainers • Funding to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Train more trainers ○ Provide training on all islands 	
<p>3. Families with housing needs and children heading into kindergarten are identified and connected to transition supports and housing services.</p> <p>3.1 Outreach to families initiated six months prior to registration deadline (e.g., Wai‘anae model).</p> <p>3.1.1 Navigation services are provided for housing, family services, and health services, as needed.</p> <p>3.1.2 Assistance is made available for securing the documents necessary for kindergarten registration.</p> <p>3.2 Summer transition programs are expanded statewide for children requiring support in basic behavioral, social, and/or academic skills expected in kindergarten.</p> <p>3.2.1 Look at best practice models (e.g., Keiki Steps to Kindergarten).</p> <p>3.2.2 Ideally, transportation support provided as needed.</p> <p>3.3 Children are provided necessary school supplies and uniforms so they are school-ready before the first day of the new school year.</p>	<p>When: To be determined in collaboration with the Department of Education</p> <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for some existing services <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for expansion of services • Summer transition programs are incorporated into the budgets of all school principals • Transportation alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are registered on time for kindergarten. • Outreach, Keiki Steps to Kindergarten, and mini-transition services are delivered at transitional housing locations and shelters. • Children have the necessary supplies and uniforms to start school.

Note on Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements

All actions within this Strategic Implementation Plan seem consistent with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Currently, there are no identified regulatory barriers that impact the implementation of this plan.

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