

Transitioning from Birth To Three to Special Education: Be Aware

(Diane Willcutts; added 2013)

Parents attending their first Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting to transition their child from Birth to Three to the school district may be in for an unpleasant surprise.

Birth to Three providers are told by the State of Connecticut that they may not make recommendations for goals, services, or placement unless this is requested by the school district. This can be a big problem for families, who are understandably looking for Birth to Three staff to provide meaningful input for the PPT to consider. Birth to Three staff know the child well, and yet they are silenced by the state's Birth to Three agency.

The written information on transition from Connecticut's Birth to Three system states: "Unless requested by the LEA (the Local Education Agency or school district), It is not the role of early intervention personnel to recommend or approve decisions on issues such as proposed special education goals, personnel, placement or services, including the location, type, frequency, or intensity of services, personnel, or to make other recommendations."

This means that the parents are not treated equally, as according to the state, it is only upon school district request that the Birth to Three provider is permitted to make recommendations. Arguably, this is in violation of IDEA, the federal law governing special education. Some might think this doesn't matter, that the District would always ask for Birth to Three staff's recommendations; but this often does not happen. Worse, some school districts discourage Birth to Three input.

Whether the above policy is a violation of IDEA or not, it is important that families take this into consideration prior to the first PPT with the school District. To ensure the PPT is able to consider all relevant information, families may want to do either or both of the following:

1. Obtain written recommendations from other providers, such as the child's developmental pediatrician or private evaluators.
2. Well in advance of the child's third birthday, families could ask the school district to do its own evaluation to assess the child in all areas of suspected disability.
 - a. Keep in mind that, from the date of written parent consent, the District has 45 school days to conduct the evaluation.
 - b. If the family disagrees with the District evaluation, they have a right to request a district-paid independent educational evaluation from a qualified evaluator of their choice. It may take months for this to happen, so it's important to request the initial evaluation be done well in advance of the child's third birthday.

For your reference, Connecticut Birth to Three's full document on transition is here:
www.birth23.org/providers/CurrentProcedures/transition.doc