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# Learning Guide 2.5 Transition-

# Voices from the Field

## **Objectives**

Identify practitioners’ and families’ strategies and considerations for transitions practices by including children’s individual goals and outcomes, looking at the importance of preparation for transition, and identifying the specific aspects of transitions from NICU to early intervention.

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| **Related Content:** [Module 2, Lesson 4 Voices from the Field](https://rpm.fpg.unc.edu/module-2-transition-plan/voices-field)  **Instructional Method:** Discussion and Discovery  **Level:** Intermediate  **Estimated Time Needed:** 20 minutes  **Learner Form:** Transcripts |

## **Description**

In this activity, learners will identify strategies and considerations that will help inform their practice for working with children and families from special populations. Learners will work together to create an email correspondence letter to send to the practitioner/family member.

## **Materials/Resources**

* Voices from the Field transcripts for Module 2 – Transitions

## **Facilitator Instructions**

1. Break learners into three groups (if the class is larger than 12 students, choose multiple groups to work on the same transcript). Provide each group a copy of one “Module 2: Voices from the Field” transcript.
2. Allow time for learners to discuss the points made by the practitioner or family member using the following guiding discussion questions:
   * What did this practitioner or family member say that resonated with any experiences you have had working with young children?
   * What have you learned about implementing transitions practices with specific populations?
   * How do you think these practitioner and family voices will help to inform your own practice?
3. Instruct learners to draft an email (individually or collectively) to the practitioner or family person describing how their insight will help inform their practice and asking two questions about how this practitioner or family member utilizes the DEC Recommended Practices for Transition to support the adjustment and positive outcomes of children and families.

## **Suggested Assessment**

None

## **Distance Learning Tips**

* Allow groups to respond to questions after listening and/or reading the transcript in online forums.
* Email drafts can be done individually.

Provide timely feedback.

**Caroline Gooden**

**Q1: Why is it important to include a child’s individual goals and outcomes for transition?**

Let's consider some of the reasons why it is important to include a child's individual goals and outcomes for transition on Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) or Individual Education Programs (IEPs). IFSPs and IEPs can better support children and families' needs during the transition to another program when intentional goals for the transition process are planned, written, and implemented by a team that includes families and professionals. A child's success in the next environment will be supported when individualized goals are developed, implemented, and monitored.

**Q2: What are the essential components of the transition process?**

Let's consider three important components of the transition process to support children, families, and programs.

First, it is critical that we develop and implement goals that support each child's development in preparation for transition. When individualized IFSP transition goals, steps, and supports are developed in collaboration with family and team members, a more effective transition for the child is supported. Individualized child transition goals specify the skills that are necessary for the child to be successful in the next environment. For example, goals that include increasing interactions with peers or independence in self-care skills will facilitate the child's success in the next setting.

Second, it is important that we facilitate and support family involvement in the transition process. Families are the primary caregivers for their children, know their strengths and needs thoroughly, and maintain the most consistent presence in their child's life.  Family participation is key to the development of individualized goals and the implementation of realistic transition activities. Involving families in every step of the transition process communicates respect for their values and for their knowledge of their child.  When IFSP goals include family priorities and needs, the implementation of an effective process for transition is supported.

The third important component of the transition process includes active involvement from staff of both the sending and receiving agencies or programs . We know that it is most effective to include staff who know the child's current strengths and needs, as well as staff who will be receiving the child in the next setting. Collaboration between sending and receiving staff needs to address alignment of curricula, communication, and infrastructure that support effective transitions.  Some examples of transition goals that address interagency collaboration include planning for on-site visits, cross-agency team meetings, and the designation of specific staff in each agency who facilitate the transition process for children and families.

To summarize and emphasize the importance of intentional transition planning, each one of these components is essential to effective transitions- individualized goals to support the child in the new setting, family involvement, and collaboration between the sending and receiving staff.  Successful transitions are a process that occurs over time and requires active involvement of each of these components.  If one of the three components is not addressed and included in planning the resulting transition may become a disconnected process that, at best, meets regulatory requirements, but that doesn't support individual child or their family to successfully progress from one program to the next.

**Christine Lindauer**

Christine Lindauer, mother of a 10-year-old with disabilities, discusses the importance of preparation for transition.

Preparation is key to any successful transition.  I've always found home visits, visits to the new program, and transition planning worksheets incredibly helpful.  But being completely honest, even with the best intentions on both sides, they often just don't happen.  Parents and child care providers alike are often incredibly busy and finding time to make these preparations are often just not given the priority they deserve.  A home visit is discussed and maybe even scheduled at the transition meeting, but only to be cancelled later.  The transition planning worksheets are provided, but not completed, or with insufficient detail - "What does your child like? Music, books".  Hmm, not very helpful.

I can't stress enough to make these visits happen.  Let's say you've had the transition meeting and planned for the visits.  But now, the transition is coming up soon and for whatever reasons, the visits didn't happen, and the transition worksheets are not completed.  So ask yourself what can you do right now?  Call the parent!  Can you schedule a visit immediately?  Interview the parent over the phone and ask questions from the transition planning worksheet.  Get creative.  Maybe a home visit isn't possible, so ask if you could meet somewhere else, a local playground perhaps.   Ask the parents if they have any home videos they could share.  The key is to communicate and share information any way you can.  You'll be starting off your relationship with the family with an open dialogue to not only help with the transition now, but with the child's care going forward.

**Cori Hill**

**Q1: What does transition entail?**

Transition is a lifelong process. We ALL experience transitions throughout our lives but even throughout our daily routines. Consider the transitions we make when moving from school to college, from college to career, or from career to retirement. All BIG changes.

How about smaller, more routines-based transitions? We transition from home to the events planned for the day. We might move from work, to lunch with a friend, to a work meeting, to the gym, and then home again. Each of those transitions requires us to plan and prepare.

**Q2: What aspects are specific to a family transitioning home from the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and into early intervention?**

The family's first transition was that most parents do not anticipate their newborn needing to spend time in the NICU. The family has to adjust their dreams of bringing their infant home shortly after birth. Now their days revolve around physicians and nurses, health vitals like blood pressure and heart rate, decisions, minimal sleep, fears and worries about their baby's well-being.

The infant's daily routines are surrounded by beeping machines, big people poking and prodding, trying to learn to eat and to wake up to the busy, chaotic world around her. Each of these activities includes transitions as the newborn attempts to regulate. And then, FINALLY, it is time to go home!

Families face the excitement and anxiety of caring for their infant for the first time completely by themselves. Can they do it? Who will help them? They learn about early intervention and a team of providers. They learn a whole new language of eligibility, IFSPs, and supports and services. They learn that things they thought they never could do, now become part of their daily lives.

**Q3: What can early interventionists do to support families as they plan and prepare to make this big transition?**

Here are some tips and strategies that may help to reduce the stress that families might experience:

First, if the early intervention program receives the referral from the NICU in enough time, a (temporary) service coordinator could visit the family in the hospital. This provides the opportunity to build connection and establish relationship early on with the family, by meeting them face-to-face and sharing initial information about the local early intervention program.

Consider how to support extended family and friends. For example, a family may have a close friend or relative who lives nearby to the family's home and, therefore, would be an integral part of the family's daily routines. The friend or relative may not have been able to travel during the NICU stay and may have been feeling anxious from afar. The infant's mother and early intervention practitioner could take pictures and videos of the various machines that would come home with the baby. The family member or friend would then have the opportunity to see and hear what life would look like and sound like when the infant arrives home.

Don't forget family pets. They, too, will feel the stress and anxiety of the changes in home life. Many animal experts recommend bringing home a blanket or clothing item that the baby has worn so the animal has the opportunity to smell the new scents. Again, if there will be medical equipment, recording the beeping and alarm sounds and playing that around the pet prior to the infant arriving home helps ease that auditory transition.

Finally, use good coaching questions to learn what the family most needs. Questions such as, "What would be most helpful to you as you get settled at home?" or "Since you've been home, what parts of the day have gone smoothly? What parts have been more challenging?" assist in gathering information about the family's needs and priorities. Early interventionists might be surprised to find out that what the mother may most need is time to take a shower. Together the mother and the provider can consider options such as asking a family member or neighbor to come over for thirty minutes to make this daily routine possible.

Without doubt, transition from the NICU to home and into the early intervention system is a big step. With planning, families are better prepared for the journey. They learn that this transition into early intervention will be an initial step toward building their confidence while they learn to support their child's development.