

# Early Start: The Transition At Age Three



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by  
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# Goals for Tonight's Presentation

1. Review Early Start eligibility criteria
2. Share information about children in the Early Start transition process
3. Describe the process for determining Lanterman eligibility for children in Early Start prior to age three
4. Discuss RCOC's goals, strategies and challenges regarding families' experiences during the Early Start transition process

# Relevant Guiding Principles

- Early Intervention and Prevention
  - Prevention and early intervention services, supports and public awareness activities are designed and implemented to prevent the onset of a disability and/or to improve developmental outcomes
  - Persons served are provided with services and supports in a family-focused and collaborative fashion
- Family Supports
  - Families are informed advocates for their loved ones
  - Services and supports for families recognize, facilitate and build on family strengths, natural supports and existing community resources

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C

Federal program under Office of Special  
Education Programs (OSEP)



Monitored by California's  
Department of Developmental Services (DDS)



Provided by Regional Centers  
and called Early Start

# Early Start Eligibility Criteria

Services for children from birth to age three

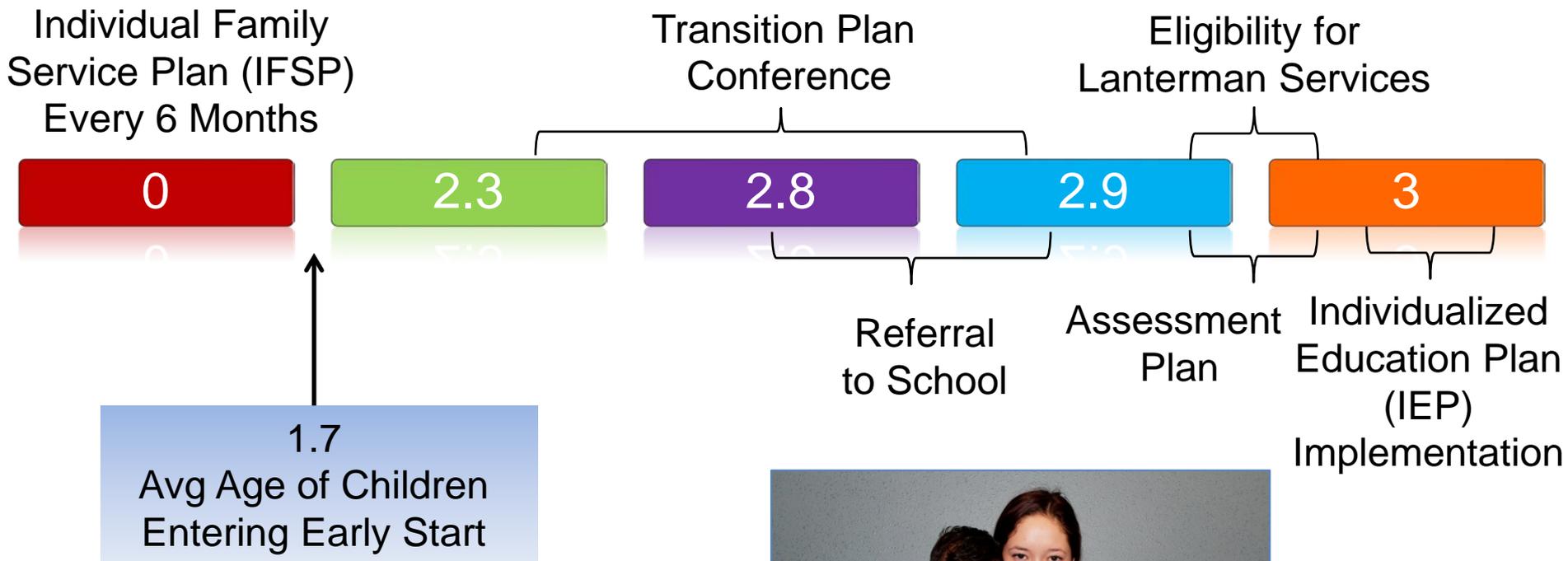
- Developmental delays
- High risk or 'at risk'
- Established risk
- Solely low incidence (served by school districts)

Average age of children when families/legal guardians request Early Start services is 1.7 years

# Services and Supports

- Assistive Technology
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Audiology
- Health Services, Nursing Service & Medical Services (only for diagnostic and evaluation purposes)
- Nutrition Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Psychological Services
- Service Coordination
- Family Training
- Special Instruction
- Behavior Therapy
- Interpreter
- Translator
- Transportation
- Vision Services
- Other Services

# Beginning the Transition from Early Start to School



# Information about Children in the Transition Process



**2976** Children in Early Start

**168** Average number of children turning three each month

**21** Average number and percentage of children eligible for Lanterman services at age three each month  
**13%**

# What Happens in the Months Prior to Children Turning Age Three?

- Prior to age three when Early Start services must end, eligibility for Lanterman services is determined
- Contact with the school district begins
- Service Coordinators submit child's case for review by RCOC's Health Resources Group at around age 2.9
- Psychologist and Physician review various documents and look to Service Coordinators for valuable input
- Transdisciplinary Assessment and/or other observations by the Psychologist and Physician occur as needed within the existing time constraints

# Lanterman Eligibility Requirements

- **Developmental Disability**
  - Originate before age 18
  - Be likely to continue indefinitely
  - Constitute a substantial disability for the individual

*and*

- **Substantial Disability**

A condition which results in major impairment of cognitive and/or social functioning, which requires interdisciplinary planning and coordination of special or generic services to assist the individual in achieving maximum potential

# Developmental Disability Defined

- A disability that is due to autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, an intellectual disability,  
  
*or*
- Disabling conditions found to be closely related to an intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with an intellectual disability (5<sup>th</sup> category)

# Areas of Substantial Disability

The existence of significant functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity, as appropriate to the person's age:

Receptive and expressive language

Learning

Self-care

Mobility

Self-direction

*Capacity for independent living (6+ years)*

*Economic self-sufficiency (18+ years)*

# Areas Reviewed for Children Transitioning from Early Start

Receptive and  
expressive language

Comprehension and expression of  
verbal and/or nonverbal communication

Learning

Ability to acquire and apply knowledge  
or skills to new situations

Self-care

Ability to acquire and perform basic  
self-care skills

Mobility

Independent ambulation

Self-direction

Ability to make and apply personal and  
social judgments and decisions

# When Early Start Services End

- If child is eligible for Lanterman services
  - Early Start Service Coordinator informs the family, explains the child's eligibility status and discusses what happens next
  - On-going Service Coordinator is assigned
  - Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting scheduled with the family to determine service needs

On average, 21 of 168 children exiting Early Start are eligible each month (13%)

# When Early Start Services End

- If child is not eligible for Lanterman services
  - Early Start Service Coordinator informs the family and discusses school services and other possible generic resources
  - Family is encouraged to re-apply for services if new information is available and/or if the child is not making the expected progress

On average, 19 families/month do reapply (age range from 3 to 19 years)

- 75% are eligible – average age is 5
- 25% are still ineligible – average age is 3

# Early Start Transition Goals and Challenges

**Goal:** Families are informed about their child's transition out of Early Start

**Challenges Faced:** overwhelmed, new terminology, too much all at once

**Way to Overcome Challenges:**  
family-friendly workshops and materials,  
referrals to Family Resource Center and  
generic resources, information provided in  
multiple formats



# Goals and Challenges

(cont'd)

**Goal:** Timely transition of children from Early Start to school

**Challenges Faced:** late Early Start referrals, summer birthdays, extended breaks

**Way to Overcome Challenges:**

RCOC, school and Early Start provider collaboration, educate about regional center eligibility, Service Coordinator support at transition conference and through ongoing information sharing

# Goals and Challenges

(cont'd)

**Goal:** Comprehensive and timely determination of Lanterman eligibility

**Challenges Faced:** late Early Start referrals, lack of information, tight timelines

**Way to Overcome Challenges:** Service Coordinators share valuable input, assist families records requests, discuss Lanterman services at transition IFSP

# Goals and Challenges

(cont'd)

**Goal:** Support families throughout a successful transition

**Challenges Faced:** overwhelmed, child delayed but not eligible for regional center, knowing who to call

**Way to Overcome Challenges:** inform and support families throughout process, explain eligibility decision, allay fears by reviewing school and other services, refer to Family Resource Center

# Summary

- Early Start services make a significant impact in the lives of families with children birth to age three
- Transitioning out of Early Start services at age three can be anxiety-provoking for families
- RCOC is committed to supporting families and their children through successful and timely transition from Early Start to school



# Questions?

