

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) FOR THE IFSP EXTENSION

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY JANUARY 2010

What is the IFSP Extension?

The Maryland State Department of Education, with support and funding from the Office of Special Education Programs, has afforded all local jurisdictions the opportunity to develop a comprehensive early intervention system (birth to age 5 years) for children and their families. During the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, the Anne Arundel County Public Schools will be piloting a program to give families of transitioning three year olds, the choice of pursuing preschool special education and related services through an Individualized Family Service Plan or an Individualized Education Program.

What services are available to children and families under an IFSP Extension versus an IEP?

Under both an IFSP Extension and an IEP: Children can receive services designed to meet their developmental needs. Such services can include special education, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, psychological work and social work. These services are delivered in either community-based or school-based settings.

Under the IFSP extension: Families also receive service coordination which is designed to help extend concepts introduced in school to daily life at home. Additionally as required, resource linkages will be aligned based on need. IFSP extension services are delivered on a year-round basis.

Under an IEP: The focus of intervention is on educational readiness and foundational development. The service coordination component is not provided and services during the summer are provided only when children meet the criteria for Extended School Year (ESY) programming.

Who is eligible for the IFSP extension?

*Children currently enrolled in the local Infants and Toddlers Program, with a third birthday of February 1, 2010 or later, **and** who are found eligible for preschool special education and related services will have the opportunity to continue services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or move to an Individualized Education Program (IEP).*

What are the eligibility criteria for preschool special education and related services?

Eligibility for preschool special education services is based upon one of the following categories:

- *Children who demonstrate at least a 25% delay in one or more identified developmental areas (i.e., cognition, communication, social/emotional, adaptive, fine motor or gross motor skills)*
- *Children who demonstrate atypical development or behavior in one of the aforementioned developmental areas*
- *Children diagnosed with a physical or mental condition with high probability of developmental delay*

Who decides whether a child determined eligible for preschool special education and related services will continue with the IFSP or move to an IEP?

Through an IEP/IFSP meeting the family will be provided with information regarding the IFSP Extension. It is then the choice of the family whether to continue services through an IFSP or move to an IEP.

If a family chooses to move to an IEP for service delivery, can the family ever choose to go back to service delivery through an IFSP?

*Once a family chooses to have preschool special education services delivered through an IEP for their child, the family **may not** return to the IFSP service delivery model.*

What is the transition process from ITP and then IFSP Extension to Kindergarten?

Ninety days prior to the child's 3^d birthday, the Infants and Toddlers Service Provider will have a transition planning meeting with the family. This meeting will outline time lines and paperwork criteria for the family. The ITP Service Provider will conduct updated assessments in all areas of development to determine eligibility for preschool special education and related services. The family, ITP service provider, and a Child Find representative will discuss the assessment results and determine eligibility at this meeting (i.e., IEP Eligibility Determination Meeting). If the team determines the child is eligible for preschool special education and related services, the team will develop an IFSP or IEP, depending upon the family's choice. Families are also afforded the opportunity to attend evening meetings regarding the transition process from Infants and Toddlers to the IFSP Extension.

IFSP Extension to Pre-Kindergarten

If a family chooses to enroll their child in the Anne Arundel County Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten program, preschool special education services would then be delivered through an Individualized Education Program. The school IEP team determines eligibility based on evaluation information and then develops the initial IEP.

IFSP Extension to Kindergarten

Ninety days prior to a child's entrance into kindergarten, the IFSP Extension team (i.e., school team) will meet to update levels of development and determine continued eligibility for preschool special education services. Following testing, an eligibility meeting is held with the school team and family to review the evaluation results. If the child is determined eligible for preschool special education and related services and an educational impact is present, the school team and parent will develop an Individualized Education Program for the child.

Will an Infants and Toddlers Staff Member continue to provide services for a child under the IFSP Extension?

*While the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will continue to be the document under which services will be delivered, an ITP staff member will **no longer** provide direct service to the child and family. A new service provider (e.g., ECI teacher, school or community based therapist) will provide direct services for the child and family.*

Will the receiving school team or provider be included in the transition process?

After a decision has been made about what services the child and family will need after the age of three, any receiving school team member or service provider may choose to accompany the Infants and Toddlers Service Provider on a home visit to meet the family. If a home visit is not possible, the receiving school team members or provider may contact the Infants and Toddlers Service Provider at any time to address questions or concerns. In addition, receiving schools (e.g., ECI sites and Special Centers) will continue to hold transition meetings for families and team members.

What is the model for continuous, year-round services?

During the summer months, the home visitation component of the IFSP will be stressed to enhance the classroom to school connection as well as to provide parent training and support that may not otherwise occur regularly during the school year. Those children requiring more intensive services than home-based will be afforded the opportunity to participate in more intensive programs for a period during the summer months as well.

Who will deliver summer services for the IFSP Extension?

It should be noted that children may not have the same service provider during the summer months as during the school year and that a service provider may change during summer months to allow for staff vacations and absence.

Who will maintain IFSP records and data entry?

The Administrative Manual for the IFSP Extension will delineate paperwork and data entry requirements while the IFSP document remains on paper. As of April 1, 2010, the state will implement the new on-line IFSP which will enhance maintenance of IFSP records and data entry requirements. The impact and any changes are currently unknown.

What documentation requirements for visits, meetings, sessions, phone calls?

Documentation for home visits will continue to occur on session feedback forms/teacher observation which will be provided to staff members, if they do not already have them. Any visits, meetings, or phone calls, may also be recorded on case management/contact logs, which will be supplied to service coordinators, teachers and therapists.

What are the evaluation and review criteria for the IFSP?

By law, progress on IFSP outcomes MUST be reviewed with the family every six months. While formal assessment is NOT required for a six month review, a meeting must be held with the service coordinator, service provider and parent to discuss progress on IFSP Outcomes. Annual reviews of IFSPs are also required for all children. At this time, it would be appropriate for service providers and/or service coordinators to formally update all developmental areas prior to writing a new IFSP and appropriate outcomes. Appropriate assessment tools will be outlined, discussed and provided to service providers and/or service coordinators. Present levels of development are required for data entry once during the child's 3 to Kindergarten Age bracket and then upon Exit from the IFSP Extension, whether for dismissal or transition.

What are the meeting requirements for the IFSP?

The IFSP team meeting process requires the parent, service provider and/or service coordinator to be present for meetings. It is not necessary for every team member to be present at the time of the meeting, unless the IFSP team deems this appropriate. All annual reviews of IFSPs should be signed by the Administrative Designee prior to the meeting date.

Service coordination is an important component of the IFSP Extension. What is service coordination?

Service coordination is the systemic process for identifying, locating and coordinating informal supports and formal services across agencies, departments and the community. It provides families with community resources related to development, social or family issues. The goal of service coordination is an integrated delivery system that is responsive to the needs of the families. Under the IFSP Extension, families and children will also be assigned service coordinators to assist with the connection of the daily routine and educational component of the IFSP. The service coordinator may be the child's existing service provider or another individual who will assist the family. Service coordination will occur based upon the needs of the family.

What activities constitute service coordination?

Any contact with the parent/caregiver/guardian of a child constitutes service coordination. This may take the form of phone calls, e-mails, home visits, parent conferences, classroom visitation by the parent or brief discussions following therapy sessions. For example, service coordination may be a teacher making a call or home visit to families to assist with generalization of skills being introduced into the classroom. The service provider and parent determine how strategies used in the classroom can be extended to the home setting. Service coordination should occur, at the least, on a monthly basis with the family.

Service coordination procedures should be documented on a case management log and placed in the child's blue working folder.

What if a family requires intensive service coordination efforts?

For families needing intensive coordination activities, the service provider may consider a referral to the IFSP Extension Service Coordination Specialist when there are multiple departments or organizations involved or the family has complex and unmet needs. If at any time, a service provider (i.e., ECI teacher, school or community based therapist or teacher) feels a family requires intensive service coordination efforts, he or she should contact Sue Powell, the Service Coordination Specialist, for further guidance. She can be reached at 410-766-6662 or by e-mail at SEPowell@aacps.org

Is service coordination an MA "billable" service for all students?

*As has been done under the IEP system, service providers and/or coordinators will continue to bill for monthly service coordination and therapy services for **Medical Assistance eligible children only**. A system to distribute MA funds to the schools will be forthcoming.*

Where will the early intervention folder/records remain?

Each child's blue early intervention folder and any records pertaining to the child will be housed where the child is receiving preschool special education services.

Will any information collected during the child's time in the IFSP Extension become part of the child's permanent school record?

A child's blue early intervention folder is an IFSP Extension record and not a school record. The only information to be contained in the school record while the child is receiving services under an IFSP after age 3 is the Part B eligibility information. The Part B information generated at the IEP eligibility meeting should be contained in the early intervention record with the parent permission. When the child leaves the IFSP Extension prior to or at kindergarten age, parent permission is required to share information, generated while the child had an IFSP prior to age 3 and after age 3.

Whom should I contact for additional information?

Any parent or service provider with questions about the IFSP Extension should contact Cynthia Wacker, Program Manager at 443-510-4617 by telephone; she can also be contacted by e-mail at CPWacker@aacps.org. As noted above, Sue Powell is the Outreach Specialist and she can be contacted at either 410-766-6662 or at SEPowell@aacps.org.