

EARLY CHILDHOOD MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR TRANSITION BETWEEN

Northwest Indiana First Steps
(11045 Broadway Ste.F, Crown Point, IN 46307)

AND

South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative
(602 First Street., LaPorte, IN 46360)

AND

Community Organization of Social Concerns (COSC) Head Start
(251 Medical Plaza, Michigan City, IN 46350)

INTRODUCTION:

This agreement is developed in response to requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), the federal early intervention/special education legislation and Title 511 Article #7, Indiana's state special education laws. The agencies participating in this agreement are working cooperatively to provide coordinated services to young children and their families and to insure the implementation of federal and state law and regulation.

This agreement serves the period of 1 June 2009 to 31 May 2011.

PARTIES AND THIS AGREEMENT:

This joint statement of agreement is between Northwest Indiana First Steps (NWI First Steps), COSC Head Start and South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative, which will be referred to as agencies. The agreement affects the staff of the signatory agencies, as well as the local early intervention providers.

NWI First Steps is the lead agency for implementing the Early Intervention System for Infants and Toddlers, age birth through two years, and their families in accordance with IDEIA, Part C. NWI First Steps covers Lake, LaPorte, Jasper, Newton and Porter Counties.

COSC Head Start services young children, ages three to five, and makes available at least ten percent of their enrollment opportunities to children with disabilities. COSC Head Start serves all of LaPorte County.

South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative is the lead agency for children with disabilities from age three to five years, in accordance with IDEIA, Part B and Article #7. South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative includes LaPorte Community School Corporation, New Prairie United School Corporation, Metro School District of New Durham, CASS Township School (Wanatah), Dewey Township (LaCrosse), Prairie Township, South Central Community School Corporation

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this joint agreement is to promote cooperation in the development of a coordinated, interagency system of services for young children with special needs from birth through five years and their families. The content is designed to specify the roles and responsibilities of the participating agencies related to services required and to provide guidance for their implementation. This agreement provides a policy framework for cooperative efforts and seeks to clarify issues related to these efforts.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THIS AGREEMENT:

- The best interest of children are served when parents and service providers work in partnership.
- Agencies will strive to provide services with typically developing peers.
- Inter-agency collaboration and non-duplication of services are encouraged.

SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGENCIES FOR TRANSITION:

Transition planning from Part C (First Steps) to Part B (Early Childhood Special Education) occurs prior to the child's third birthday to enable the child to experience a smooth and effective transition. The NWI First Steps Service Coordinator initiates the transition planning process, bringing together public agencies and the family to plan a

process that maximizes continuity and minimizes disruptions in services. [IAC 1-17-74] NWI First Steps provides families with formal written information about the transition process and parental rights. The state developed transition packet will be utilized throughout the transition process as appropriate. Any changes to these roles and responsibilities will be reviewed annually in order to comply with state and federal guidelines.

This agreement further clarifies procedures and responsibilities of the participating agencies in the transition of children with disabilities between First Steps, Early Childhood Special Education, and Head Start.

I. Transition Information:

A. Transmission of information from Part C Agencies to Part B Special Education Agencies.

1. NWI First Steps Intake / Service Coordinator, representing the child and family enrolled in Early Intervention System for Infant and Toddlers will discuss the electronic transmission of Child Find data (child's name, date of birth, parent contact and school district information) with the parents during procedural safeguards at Intake and before the child reaches 18 months of age.

First Steps will send electronic Child Find data (child's name, date of birth, parent contact and school district information) on any child 18 months of age or older in the system to the public school of record twice a year, generally in April and October.

2. At least (6) months prior to the child's third birthday and after gaining a written release from the parents, First Steps Service Coordinator shall transmit the following information to South LaPorte County Special Education:
 - a. The most recent Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP); and
 - b. The most recent evaluation reports from any appropriate sources, including any additional information deemed necessary for eligibility determination.
3. In the case that a child is enrolled in the First Steps program after the age of thirty-four (34) months of age, the First Steps Intake Coordinator will serve as the Service Coordinator and will make the referral to South LaPorte County Special Education after gaining a written release from the parents. The following information will be forwarded to South LaPorte County Special Education:
 - a. The most recent Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP); and
 - b. The most recent evaluation reports from any appropriate sources, including any additional information deemed necessary for eligibility determination
4. Head Start will refer to South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative for formal evaluation of a child whose residence is within the corporation's boundaries serviced by the Cooperative and who has been identified as possibly having a disability through screening or developmental assessment conducted by Head Start. The Head Start Disabilities Coordinator will refer a child to South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative as soon as the need is evident.
5. Head Start will maintain record of the number of children referred from First Steps to Head Start and will provide the Service Coordinator with documentation of when the child was accepted into the program.
6. Pursuant to the Part C (IDEIA), NWI First Steps representatives shall follow all required procedures in transmitting information regarding children who may be eligible for services from South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative.

II. Transition Conference

The NWI First Steps Service Coordinator shall convene, with the approval of the parents, a Transition Conference between themselves, the family, South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative, and any other resources of the parents' choice at least ninety (90) days before the child's third birthday (if the child is likely to be Part B eligible). In the case that the child may not be eligible for Part B services at age three, First Steps Service Coordinators will make reasonable efforts to include providers of appropriate services within the community, such as Head Start, a community preschool or childcare.

- A. The purpose of the Transition Conference is to review the child's program options through the remainder of the school year and up to the child's third birthday. This meeting may coincide with the IFSP review meeting held every six months. The transition meeting must be held at least ninety (90) days prior to the child's third birthday. Service Coordinator will use State developed transition packets for the child Transition Plan.
- B. South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative representative will attend the conference with the parental consent. The local Head Start representative will make every effort to attend transition meetings to which they are invited. NWI First Steps Service Coordinators will encourage parental consent for Part B agency participation in the Transition Conference and will send notice to all who are to attend.
- C. At the Transition Conference a transition plan, including evaluations, and time line will be established. The State developed transition plan will be utilized.
- D. Head Start will support and encourage transition planning for young children with disabilities into the overall disabilities service plan.
- E. In order to meet the 90 day guideline for the conference, the South LaPorte County Special Education cooperative agrees to following time table for children whose third birthday falls during the summer months:

<i>Child's birthday is in:</i>	<i>Transition Meeting will be completed by:</i>
June	February – March
July	March – April
August	March – April – May
September	April – May – June
October	May – June
November	June

The meeting may be held prior to the designated month.
- F. If it is ascertained at the Transition Conference, or at a later time, that additional evaluative data are necessary to establish eligibility for special education, the South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative shall make arrangements to conduct the appropriate evaluations.
- G. Records will be reviewed annually to ensure the percentage of children with a smooth transition by their third birthday steadily increase until reaching and maintaining 100%. The records that will be used for this review will include DOE records as well as First Steps records.

III. Evaluation

- A. The South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative shall be responsible for reviewing the evaluation data, including medical records, transmitted from NWI First Steps to determine if sufficient assessment and evaluation data exists in order to determine the eligibility of a particular child for Early Childhood Special Education services. The South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative shall utilize this information whenever appropriate to avoid unnecessary reassessments and delays in services.
- B. South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative shall be responsible for obtaining parent permission to test as well as obtaining evaluation data, if necessary, including;
 1. A developmental and basic health history, including vision and hearing screening.
 2. A systematic observation of the child in a daily routine setting or other appropriate setting by an appropriate professional.
 3. Appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures that measure differences between expected level of development and current level of functioning. When norm-referenced instruments do not accurately reflect a student's performance because of the severity of the delay, other instruments or procedures shall be considered.
 4. Information from parents and other caregivers.
- C. After the age of three (3), NWI First Steps will defer to South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative for the evaluation and Case Conference to happen within fifty (50) instructional days

from the receipt of parent consent.

IV. CASE CONFERENCE:

- A. Prior to the child's third birthday, the South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative will convene a Case Conference Committee to discuss the results of the evaluation and determine eligibility for special education and related services. The First Steps Coordinator will be invited to all Case Conferences at the request of the parent. Service Coordinators will make every effort to attend Case Conference meetings to which they are invited.
- B. Upon establishing eligibility, the case conference committee shall:
 1. Develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with the concurrence of the family, South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative, and members of the case conference committee to ensure that on the child's third birthday the IEP meets the requirements specified by Article 7 of the Indiana Education Rules.
 2. Cooperative development of the IEP is encouraged to ensure the child receives services that will meet his/her individual needs.
 3. Develop an IEP that provides services in the least restrictive environment.
- C. If the parent expresses interest in applying for Head Start services or Head Start is a placement option for the child, Head Start personnel shall make every effort to attend the Case Conference meeting to which they are invited.
- D. A Head Start Representative shall participate in the development of the IEP for all students enrolled in Head Start who are eligible for Early Childhood Education Services.

V. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- A. NWI First Steps will complete all evaluations in determining eligibility for First Steps services and will provide services up to the child's third birthday.
- B. South LaPorte Special Education Cooperative will complete all evaluations in determining eligibility for special education services and will provide services on or before the child's third birthday.
- C. Head Start defers all referrals for child studies to South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative. Head Start will provide speech and language services only when the parent chooses not to access South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative as the local education agency.

VI. JOINT RULES OF AGENCIES IN SYSTEM COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION:

- A. To avoid duplication of services, NWI First Steps will share all evaluations, subject to parental approval, to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition to Early Childhood Services by the child's third birthday.
- B. To avoid duplication of services, parents may choose to access speech and language services from Head Start, with consultation from South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative.
- C. In adhering to the principle of least restrictive environment, in an effort to provide students with disabilities interaction with non-handicapped peers, the Case Conference Committee shall consider the various placement options with Head Start based on the child's needs. Such placement options may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - General Head Start setting, Special Education teacher to consult with Head Start staff;
 - General Head Start setting, Special Education teacher to provide Resource Services at Head Start classroom site;
 - Partial day services: General Head Start setting on designated days, with Special Education Classroom setting on designated days;
 - Full-day services: General Head Start setting half days, with Special Education Classroom setting partial days.

NON-ELIGIBLE CHILDREN:

If the South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative case conference determines that the child is not eligible for Part B special education and related services, the First Steps Service Coordinator will refer the child to existing community resources, childcare providers and service providers to ensure that appropriate and/or necessary services continue for the child.

DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT:

In an effort to ensure that this agreement remains effective and current Northwest Indiana First Steps, South LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative and COSC Head Start will participate in an annual review of this agreement. In the event that any revisions are needed all parties involved will revise and reauthorize this agreement.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

All identified conflicts will be discussed honestly and openly with all interested parties at the local level. Should the identified issues not be resolved the issue may be brought to each involved parties supervisory level position. If a satisfactory result is still not achieved the issue will be directed to state and/or federal organization for direction.

Clara Mann
Director Northwest Indiana First Steps

Date

Paula Nichols
Director S.LaPorte County Special Education Cooperative

Date

Earnestine Bernard
Director COSC Head Start Child Development

Date