

## Easter Seals Ontario Parent Tips for Successful Transitions

Students and families face many transitions:

- When the child first starts school
- From grade to grade
- From elementary to senior elementary school
- From elementary to secondary
- From secondary to College / University / Work Force

Many students struggle with change and some parents struggle with “letting go” as their child grows up. Students with disabilities may also need:

- Accessibility
- Special equipment
- Health and personal care supports at school
- Special education programs and services

The following tips are to help parents prepare themselves, as well as their child, for transitions.

### Tip 1



#### **Know Your Child:**

- Make sure you understand your child’s disability
- Make sure you understand your child’s disability
- Know child’s strengths and needs
- Find out what supports and equipment your child will need
- Make sure reports and assessments are up to date
- Get new assessments if needed
- Think about and share your dreams for your child’s future

### Tip 2



#### **Recognize Your Feelings about Change and the Next Transition:**

- Consider how you feel about the upcoming change your child will face
- Identify any fears or concerns you may have
- Give yourself permission to feel sad or anxious when changes occur
- Identify your feelings about your child’s disability and how it may effect their education and their future
- Share your feelings and concerns with a family member or friend
- Look for support groups or organizations where you can meet other families facing the same challenges
- Seek professional help if you feel unable to cope

### Tip 3



#### Find Out About the School System:

- Find out how to register your child for school (elementary or secondary school)
- Attend any school information meetings or activities that will help prepare your child for starting school, such as Welcome to Kindergarten or Schools Cool.
- Contact school and arrange for a tour of the school or schools that you are considering for your child
- Learn about special education services and programs from the school board's Special Education Plan - This can be found at the school or on the school board's website
- Get a copy of the school board's Parent Guide from the Principal or the school board's website
- Ask your child's teacher about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and how it supports your child
- Find out about the Transition Plan component of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) from your child's teacher, the Principal or other school staff
- Use the internet to find out more about Individual Education Plans and the parent role in special education
- Ask school staff or therapists involved with your child about your role in transition planning and how they will help you

### Tip 4



#### Understand the Service System:

Many ministries and agencies are involved in providing services and supports to the children with disabilities, and their families, before school and at school.

- Find out about and understand the differences between Ministry programs and service organizations, so that you know what to expect - Programs may have different requirements, for example about participant age or diagnosis, and may offer different lengths and frequency of service
- Ask the therapists or service providers involved with your child about the different programs and rules
- Use the internet to find out about programs and services available for your child

### Tip 5



#### Maintain Records and Keep Notes:

- Keep your notes and records organized in a binder or filing system
- Keep copies of assessments and reports
- Keep copies of Report cards and Individual Education Plans, and the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) decisions, if applicable
- Keep notes from meetings or request copies of meeting notes
- Collect and keep business cards or a record of the people you have met or talked to about your child

## Tip 6



### Prepare for School Meetings:

- Make sure you understand the purpose of the meeting
- Find out who will be attending the meeting and why they will be there
- Take someone with you to the meeting who can help you by taking notes or speaking on your behalf
- Be prepared to share information about your child
- Make a list of questions to take with you to the meeting

## Tip 7



### Find Help in the Community:

- Ask therapists and other professionals involved with your child about strategies that might help with school transitions
- Attend workshops or meetings that provide transition information or support
- Contact community agencies that provide support to families of children with disabilities
- Connect with other families of a child with similar issues at support groups or through parent associations
- To find out about organizations that support children with disabilities, and their families, in your community you can check:
  - Phone book
  - Community directory
  - 211 phone service or website [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca)
  - School board website section on Special Education

## Tip 8



### Involve the Student:

As children grow they need to become more independent and be able to advocate for their own needs

- Ask your child what they want and offer age appropriate choices
- Talk to your child about the transition and ask for their opinion - It will help them feel more involved
- Talk about the new school/class and ask your child about their expectations and concerns
- Bring your child to meetings to see you advocate for them, and allow the child to ask questions or express their needs - This is how they will learn to advocate for themselves

**Helpful Websites:**

- **Easter Seals Ontario** at: [www.easterseals.org](http://www.easterseals.org)
  - Transitions from Starting School to Adulthood
  
- **Holland Bloorview Rehabilitation Hospital for Kids** at:  
<http://www.hollandbloorview.ca>
  - Growing Up Ready - Timetable and Skills for Growing Up Checklists
  - Door 2 Adulthood
  - Family Resource Centre
  
- **Ontario Ministry of Education** at  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>
  
- - Planning Entry to School A Resource Guide (2007)
  - Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)
  - The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide (2004)