

For more information about prevention and early intervention services in Florida, call the Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services.

## Florida's Central Directory

The Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services can provide information on a wide range of services available in local communities.

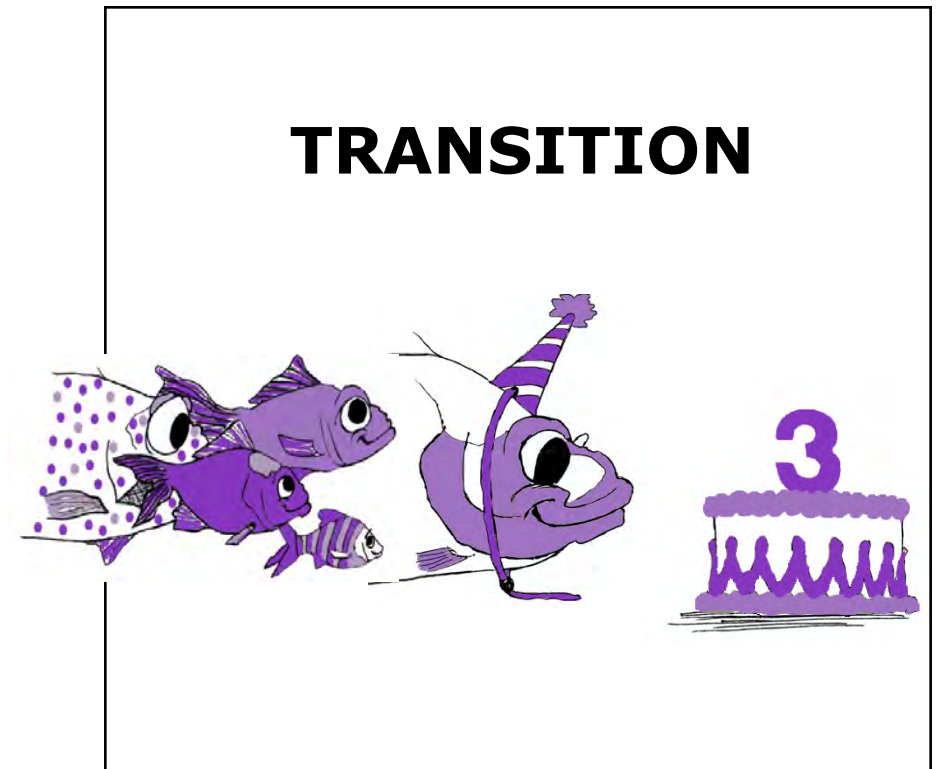
<http://www.centraldirectory.org>

**1-800-654-4440**



Florida Department of Education  
Gerard Robinson, Commissioner

311662



*A Booklet to Help Children and Families  
Transition from Early Steps at Age  
Three to Other Community Programs*

*Revised 2012*

This publication is produced through the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC), and is designed to assist school districts and state agencies that support educational programs, and parents in the provision of special programs. It is available online at

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pubxhome.asp>.

For information on available resources, contact the BRIC.

BRIC website:

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp>

Bureau website:

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

Email: BRIC@fldoe.org

Telephone: (850) 245-0475

Fax: (850) 245-0987



Booklet design and coloration  
by Bettianne S. Ford  
Artwork design by Michael Sudal

## Important Names and Numbers



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



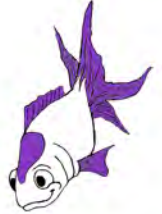
## Family Transition Checklist

In addition to your questions and concerns, consider bringing the following to your meetings:

- \_\_\_ **A certified copy of your child’s birth certificate**
  
- \_\_\_ A current copy of reports for any therapy/ developmental evaluations, vision and hearing screenings, etc.
  
- \_\_\_ A current copy of the individualized family support plan
  
- \_\_\_ **Your child’s physical exam forms,** including immunization forms, current within one year
  
- \_\_\_ Your most recent utility bill, as proof of your residence
  
- \_\_\_ The names, addresses, and phone numbers of emergency contacts
  
- \_\_\_ Signed, written permission/consent for exchange of information between agencies
  
- \_\_\_ The name, address, and phone number of **your child’s physician and dentist**

## Table of Contents

Purpose .....	2
Questions and Answers .....	3
Programs that May Be Available in Your Community.....	11
Resources.....	21
Alphabet Soup of Acronyms .....	22
Websites .....	24
Books to Read to Your Child.....	26
Tips to Help with Transition .....	27
Family Transition Checklist .....	28
Important Names and Numbers .....	29
Notes.....	29



*The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, provided funding to Florida’s Transition Project through the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) Project for development of this publication.*



## Purpose

This booklet is designed to assist families who have young children with disabilities and special needs move from one agency or program to another. Moving from program to program is called *transition*.

Families and agencies or programs working with **families have frequently asked Florida's** Transition Project staff for a booklet that provides an overview of what takes place when a child turns three years old and leaves Early Steps to attend other community programs.

This booklet includes questions family members have asked about transition. It also includes descriptions of many statewide programs that may be available in your own community.

The back cover of this booklet contains contact information for the Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services—**Florida's Central Directory**, which provides information about national, state, and local organizations and programs for families who have young children with disabilities and special needs.

Visit **Florida's Transition Project website** at <http://www.floridatransitionproject.com> to download a copy of this booklet and other resources.

## Tips to Help with Transition



The following tips may help you and your child prepare for transition:

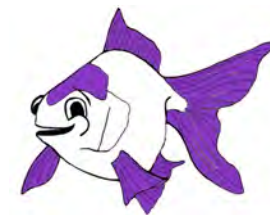
- Complete a helpful information sheet about **your child, such as "Getting to Know Me,"** which can be found on the website <http://www.floridatransitionproject.com>. This form **can help the staff at your child's new setting** learn all about your child.
- Talk about the new setting in positive ways with your child and other family members.
- Contact the teacher in the new setting and arrange to meet to discuss daily routines, schedules, curriculum, and any medical needs your child may have while participating in the program.
- Ask questions about such topics as your child riding on a school bus, playground participation, the amount of services to be provided, how therapies will be provided, and nap time rules.
- If possible, visit the new setting to talk with the teacher and see the room.
- Talk with your child about the things that are the same and the things that are different about the current program and the new one.
- Involve your child in group experiences, such as the story hour at your local library.



## Books to Read to Your Child

The books listed below are about going to school or starting something new. These and other books may be found in your community library or bookstore.

- ***Bernard Goes to School***, by Joan Elizabeth Goodman
- ***Billy and the Big New School***, by Laurence Anholt
- ***Busy at Day Care***, by Patricia DeMuth
- ***Emily's First Day of School***, by Fran Schiller
- ***First Day Jitters***, by Julie Danneberg
- ***Froggy Goes to School***, by Jonathan London
- ***Hello School***, by Dee Lillegard
- ***I'll Go To School If...***, by Bo Flood
- ***Little Cliff's First Day at School***, by Clifton L. Taulbert
- ***Little Monster Goes to School***, by Alison Inches
- ***Moses Goes to School***, by Isaac Millman
- ***Off to School, Baby Duck!*** by Amy Hest
- ***Special People, Special Ways***, by Arlene Maguire
- ***Susan Laughs***, by Jeanne Willis
- ***Timothy Goes to School***, by Rosemary Wells
- ***Vera's First Day of School***, by Vera Rosenberry



## Questions and Answers

**Q:** Why does my child have to leave Early Steps (transition) by his or her third birthday?

**A:** According to federal law — IDEA 2004, Part C — after age 36 months, your child is no longer eligible for Early Steps. Your child may not qualify for the same services from the school district that he or she received in Early Steps because of different eligibility requirements; however, you will be part of a team that makes decisions for your child. Your child may be eligible for a school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities under IDEA, Part B, or for other early learning services in your community.

**Q:** What are the steps in the transition process?

**A:** The following information will help you plan for your child's transition.

- Your service coordinator will discuss transition throughout the time your child receives services with Early Steps.



- Not fewer than 90 days prior to your **child's third birthday, Early Steps** must notify the Department of Education and the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities that your child is potentially eligible for services. This information helps the school district plan for services for your child; however, you will have the option to opt-out of having notification information shared at that time.
- Early Steps must hold a transition conference by the time your child is two years and nine months of age if your child is potentially eligible for school district services. Early Steps will make a reasonable effort to hold a transition conference if your child is **not** potentially eligible for school district services.

- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System  
<http://www.fdlrs.com>
- Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services  
<http://www.centraldirectory.org>
- Florida Kidcare  
<http://floridakidcare.org>
- **Florida's Transition Project for Infants, Young Children, and Their Families**  
<http://www.floridatransitionproject.com>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children  
<http://www.naeyc.org>
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities  
<http://www.nichcy.org>
- National Child Care Information Center  
<http://www.nccic.org>
- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center  
<http://www.nectac.org>
- Parent to Parent of Miami  
<http://www.ptopmiami.org>
- State of Florida  
<http://www.myflorida.com>
- Technical Assistance and Training System  
<http://www.tats.ucf.edu>
- Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program
  - <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>
  - <http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning>
- Zero to Three/National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families  
<http://www.zerotothree.org>



## Websites

- Agency for Persons with Disabilities  
<http://apd.myflorida.com>
- Americans with Disabilities Act  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.html>
- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>
- CARD Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities  
<http://florida-card.org>
- Center for Florida's Children  
<http://www.floridakids.com>
- Central Florida Parent Center  
<http://www.cflparents.org>
- Circle of Inclusion  
<http://www.circleofinclusion.org>
- Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood  
<http://www.dec-sped.org>
- Division of Blind Services  
<http://dbs.myflorida.com>
- Early Steps  
[http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early\\_steps/early\\_steps.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps/early_steps.html)
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary & Early Childhood Education  
<http://ericeece.org>
- Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.  
<http://www.fndfl.org>
- Florida Department of Education  
<http://www.fldoe.org>
- Florida Department of Children and Families  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us>

**Q:** What role(s) can a family member play in the transition process?

**A:** Family members may:

- Participate in scheduled meetings
- Make decisions about what you want for your child and share it at the meeting
- Take your child to appointments for vision and hearing screenings, developmental evaluations, and physical examinations
- Provide required documents for enrollment, such as proof of residency, birth certificate, immunization record, and physical examination record
- Give written permission/consent for exchange of information between agencies or programs
- Visit community programs you are considering for your child
- Ask questions



**Q:** What can I do to make sure the transition process is working for my child?

**A:** You can ask questions such as:

- What is the next step in the process?
- Who will contact me after the transition conference?

In addition, you can contact your service

coordinator or local Early Steps office if a **timeline isn't being met.**

**Q:** Who participates in the transition conference?

**A:** Required transition conference participants include you and your service coordinator. The service coordinator is required to invite the school district representative to the conference, with your consent, if your child is potentially eligible for the Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities. With your consent, other participants who may be invited include representatives from the program where your child is currently being served. You may also ask your service coordinator to invite a representative from the following agencies or programs:

- Early Steps service providers
- Head Start
- Community child care
- **Children's Medical Services**
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS)
- Other individuals or agency representatives **of your family's choice [e.g., Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care (PPEC)]**



- IEP** ..... Individual Educational Plan
- IFSP** ..... Individualized Family Support Plan
- LEA** ..... Local Educational Agency
- LRE** ..... Least Restrictive Environment
- NAEYC** .... National Association for the Education of Young Children
- NECTAC** .. National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
- NICHCY** .. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
- OSEP** ..... Office of Special Education Programs (U.S. Department of Education)
- PPEC** ..... Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care
- R&R** ..... Resource and Referral
- SC** ..... Service Coordinator
- SSA** ..... Social Security Administration
- SSI** ..... Supplemental Security Income
- TANF** ..... Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- VPK** ..... Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program
- WIC** ..... Women, Infants, and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program







## Alphabet Soup of Acronyms

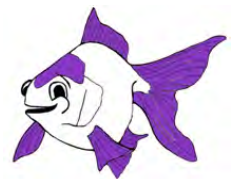
- ADA** ..... Americans with Disabilities Act  
**APD** ..... Agency for Persons with Disabilities  
**AHCA** ..... Agency for Health Care Administration  
**ASD** ..... Autism Spectrum Disorders  
**AWI** ..... Agency for Workforce Innovation  
**BEESS** ..... Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
**CARD** ..... Center for Autism and Related Disabilities  
**CMS** ..... Children’s Medical Services  
**DBS** ..... Division of Blind Services  
**DCF** ..... Department of Children and Families  
**DD** ..... Developmentally Delayed  
**DOE** ..... Department of Education  
**DOH** ..... Department of Health  
**ES** ..... Early Steps  
**ESE** ..... Exceptional Student Education  
**FAPE** ..... Free Appropriate Public Education  
**FCC** ..... Family Care Councils  
**FDLRS** ..... Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System  
**FICCIT** ... Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers  
**FND** ..... Family Network on Disabilities  
**FRS** ..... Family Resource Specialist  
**FSDB** ..... Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind  
**IDEA** ..... Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

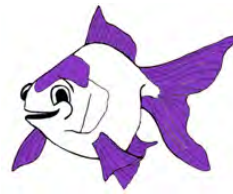
**Q:** What happens at the transition conference?

- A:** At the transition conference, the Early Steps service coordinator will facilitate discussion of:
- Services available from the local school district
  - How and when evaluations and eligibility determination will occur
  - Other agencies and community providers that may assist your child and family
  - Existing child/family information
  - Family concerns regarding transition
  - Strategies to address identified concerns
  - Activities that need to be completed before your child moves into the new setting
  - Persons involved in completing identified activities written on the IFSP
  - Timeframes for when each activity should be completed
  - Need for scheduling visits to program sites

**Q:** What happens after the transition conference?

- A:** The activities written on the transition plan (Form I of the IFSP) will be completed by the individuals listed. For example, your service coordinator may arrange for your family to visit a program or school.





## Resources

### Florida's Central Directory

Florida's Central Directory program provides information and referrals on disabilities and special health care needs for families, service coordinators, and other professionals who work with children with special needs. For more information, call the Central Directory at 1-800-654-4440.

<http://www.centraldirectory.org>

### Family Support Systems

Children and their families/caregivers have several options for receiving parent-to-parent support during the transition process. Listed below are some supports for families:

- **Family Resource Specialists (FRS)**

FRS are individuals employed by the local Early Steps offices to assist families with all areas of early intervention, including transition.

[http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early\\_steps/early\\_steps.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps/early_steps.html)

- **Local Support Networks**

Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), Central Florida Parent Center, Family Network on Disabilities (FND), Parent to Parent of Miami, and others are available to provide assistance, support, and information regarding transition.



**Q:** What are some other questions I should ask as my child transitions?

**A:** Once you know the program for which your child is eligible, you might want to ask questions such as the following:

- What kind of forms or paperwork will I need to complete?
- What kind of educational plan will be written for my child?
- If my child is eligible for any program, will my child and I have an opportunity to visit the classroom, program, or school?
- How many teachers and aides will be in the classroom?
- How many children will be in the classroom?
- Will my child participate with children who do not have a disability?
- How long is the school day or class, and what is the daily routine of the program?
- In what way will accommodations (such as special nutrition) be made to help my child learn?
- What kinds of skills will my child need to have to participate?

Professional Credential)

- o Summer Program—300 teaching hours; class sizes of 12 or fewer students; instructors must have a **minimum of a bachelor’s degree**
- o Specialized Instructional Services—A non-traditional VPK program for children with disabilities who have a current IEP. Specialized instructional services are delivered by providers approved by the Florida Department of Education and likely delivered in a non-classroom setting.

<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>

### **VPK Education Program Overview**

In 2004, the Florida Legislature enacted legislation to implement the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program in accordance with the State Constitution. This legislation currently assigns responsibilities for **the daily management of the program to Florida’s Office of Early Learning** (see page 16); licensing and credentialing to the Department of Children and Families (see page 12); and the creation of standards, curriculum, and accountability to the Department of Education, Just Read, Florida!/Office of Early Learning (see page 14). These agencies work together to provide leadership and support to the local early learning coalitions, school districts, and public and private providers to ensure the successful implementation of effective prekindergarten education **programs for Florida’s four-year-old children.**



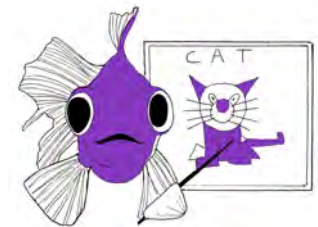
**Q:** What program options do I have for my child after his or her third birthday?

**A:** There may be many programs in your **community that can meet your child’s needs,** such as:

- Public and private child care centers/ preschools or a variety of school readiness settings
- Family child care homes
- A school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities
- Other programs available in your community

These programs may include new policies, procedures, and rules for both your child and your family. They may also involve differences in eligibility. For instance, your child may not qualify for the same services from the school district that he or she received in Early Steps because of different eligibility requirements or ways of providing special education and related services.

In addition, there may be different staff, schedules, and expectations for both you and your child. Finding out about these differences in advance and



asking questions about how they will affect your child and family will help you and your child with your transition experience.

**Q:** What is the process for accessing school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities services?

**A:** The school district process is as follows:

- Your child is evaluated to determine if he or she is eligible.
- You will be invited to attend a meeting to review evaluation information.
- For eligible children, an individual educational plan (IEP) is written and must **be implemented by your child's** third birthday. You must be invited to the IEP meeting and you may request that the school district invite others, including the Early Steps service coordinator, a representative from the program where your child has been receiving services, or any additional persons you would like to have participate.
- Services will begin as written in the IEP.



**Q:** How can I find information about other programs available in my community for children with disabilities and special health care needs?

years of age who are at risk of future school failure and who are served at home through home visitor programs and intensive parent education programs

- o **Your family's income does not exceed** 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines

• **VPK Education Program**

The VPK Education Program is designed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and lay the foundation for their educational success. VPK is free for **all of Florida's four-year-olds** born on or before September 1 of each year. The **VPK program's quality standards include:**

- o Qualified instructors
- o Strong emphasis on early literacy skills
- o Age-appropriate curricula
- o Manageable class sizes

Giving parents a wide selection of choices is a priority, so both private and public providers participate. VPK providers may set their own schedules to provide the required hours for either program:

- o School Year Program—540 teaching hours: class sizes of 20 or fewer students; instructors must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (now referred to as the Birth to Five Florida Child Care



child care through a variety of services. Child care services include extended-day, extended-year, and school-age care to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient.



The School Readiness program takes into account the level of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of your child; involves parents as their child's first teacher; prepares children to become ready for school; and provides parents with information on child development and other topics of interest. By assuming the majority **of the family's child care expenses, the** School Readiness program offers financial assistance to eligible families if:

- o Your family is participating in the welfare transition program
- o You are a migrant farm worker with children
- o You are a teen parent
- o Your family is served by the Family Safety Program Office of DCF
- o Your children need child care to minimize the risk of further abuse, neglect, or abandonment
- o You have children with disabilities or special needs
- o You have children from birth to four



**A:** In addition to asking your service coordinator for information, you may want to contact the Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services—**Florida's Central** Directory, listed on the back of this booklet.

## **Programs that May Be Available in Your Community**

The programs described on the following pages may be available to provide services in your community once your child has turned three years old.

### **Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)**

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities assists people who have developmental disabilities and their families or guardians. ***Developmental disability*** is a broad term that refers to a variety **of conditions that interfere with a person's** ability to function in everyday activities.

Developmental disabilities include spina bifida, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, and mental retardation. In addition, the APD serves children who are four and five years of age and are at high-risk of a developmental disability.

APD administers the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services (DD/HCBS) waiver, the Family and Supported Living



(FSL) waiver, and the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program. Services within these programs are subject to the availability of funding and may include consumable medical supplies and respite care. For further information, families should contact the local APD area office. <http://apd.myflorida.com>

**Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

- ***Child Care Services Program Office***

This office is responsible for the administration of child care licensing and training statewide. The program ensures that children are well cared for in a safe, healthy, positive, and educational environment by trained, qualified child care staff. Currently, the program regulates licensed child care facilities, licensed family day care homes, and licensed large family child care homes. In addition, the Child Care Services Program office administers the regulation of family day care homes not required to be licensed. <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us>

**Department of Education (DOE)**

- ***Division of Blind Services, Blind Babies and Children and Families Program***
  - o Blind Babies Program



Referral Network (CCR&R), School Readiness (sometimes referred to as child care assistance), and the VPK Education Programs. **Florida’s OEL is dedicated to ensuring the accessibility, affordability, and quality of early learning services for Florida’s children and families.** <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>

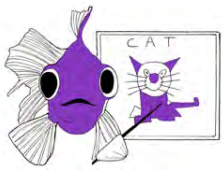
- ***Child Care Resource and Referral Network***

The state CCR&R Network is dedicated to helping families find out how to identify quality child care and early education programs and how to locate a provider that meets the needs of each family. Local CCR&R specialists can generate referrals to child care providers and other service providers in your community that may meet the needs of your family. The CCR&R Network can provide you with information on state or federally funded early learning programs such as School Readiness, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Even Start. Your local CCR&R can also provide you with creative financial assistance options and community resources that may ease your financial burden.



- ***The School Readiness Program***

The School Readiness program offers qualified parents financial assistance for



not be keeping pace developmentally with other children their age in walking, talking, hearing, seeing, understanding, or behaving.

FDLRS may help provide evaluations for individual children who are nearing three years of age, are leaving Early Steps, and who might enter school system programs for children with disabilities.

<http://www.fdlrs.com>

### **Florida Kidcare**

This is a health insurance program for low-income children. Children may be enrolled in one of four **programs: Medikids, Healthy Kids, Children's Medical Services Network, or Medicaid.** Children are enrolled according to their age, need, and **their family's income.**

- **Medicaid** is a federal health care program. Children and families may be eligible for programs such as the Child Health Check-Up. This program includes a physical exam, immunizations (shots), vision and hearing checks, and other tests and services to help keep your child healthy.

<http://www.floridakidcare.org>

### **Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL)**

Florida's Office of Early Learning is responsible for administering the Child Care Resource and

The Blind Babies Program promotes early development of life skills and places emphasis on the development and use of functional vision skills or use of all other senses in order to minimize developmental delays. The program is designed to help children with visual impairments progress through the normal stages of development. Early intervention services offered through the Blind Babies Program are delivered by non-profit community rehabilitation providers whenever possible, through contracts funded by the Blind Babies Grant.

- o Children and Families Program  
This program provides services for children from birth to 21 years of age who have a diagnosed bilateral visual **impairment that will affect the child's ability to learn or to function independently in the home or school.** Successful outcomes enable children to transition from preschool to school or other appropriate community programs.





- ***Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities***

Specially designed instruction and related services for prekindergarten children, three through five years of age, with disabilities are part of the exceptional student education **program offered through Florida’s local school districts**. Once a child is determined to be eligible, an IEP must be developed and implemented.

If the child is transitioning from Early Steps, the IEP must be written and **implemented by the child’s third birthday**.

- ***The Just Read, Florida!/Office of Early Learning-Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program***

The Just Read, Florida!/Office of Early Learning is responsible for the creation of standards, curriculum, and accountability for the VPK Program (see pages 19 and 20 for an overview of VPK).

<http://www.fldoe.org>



## **Head Start/Early Head Start**



Head Start is a group of federally funded child development programs for children from birth to mandatory school age. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children from birth to age three; Head Start serves children from three to five years old; and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start serves children from six weeks old to school age.

Of the participating families, 90 percent must have incomes at or below the national poverty guidelines. Head Start is also mandated to provide at least 10 percent of its enrollment to children with disabilities. The full range of services provided to all children participating in the Head Start program includes:

- High-quality early childhood education in inclusive settings
- Health services—including medical, dental, and mental health—and nutrition counseling
- Family services and parent engagement activities

<http://www.floridaheadstart.org>

## **Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System**

Nineteen FDLRS centers throughout the state provide free screening for children who might