



California Early Childhood
Special Education Network

Funded by the California Department of Education (CDE),
Special Education Division

Kindergarten Transition Assessments
January 30, 2025



CaIECSE



California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Funded by the CDE

Implementation Leadership

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CaECSE

California Early Childhood Special Education Network
Funded by the CDE



<https://www.calecse.org>

CalECSE is a technical assistance project funded under the California Department of Education (CDE) that supports Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPAs), County Offices of Special Education (COEs), and other Agency Partners in the areas of IDEA Part C to B Transitions, Preschool Assessment Practices, and Preschool Child Find by providing technical assistance, professional learning, and demonstration of tangible practices *that have been proven successful*.

The CalECSE Network leverages collaboration amongst agencies, disseminates resources, highlights existing exemplar practices, and provides direct technical assistance to improve the capacity, knowledge, collaboration, and implementation of evidence-based practices across agencies throughout California.

The CalECSE Network is committed to improving outcomes for children and their families by eliminating and addressing barriers to successful transition for California's youngest children with disabilities.

Today's Presenters

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We Will Start with an Anonymous Poll



Moving from Preschool to Transitional Kindergarten (TK) or Kindergarten (K)

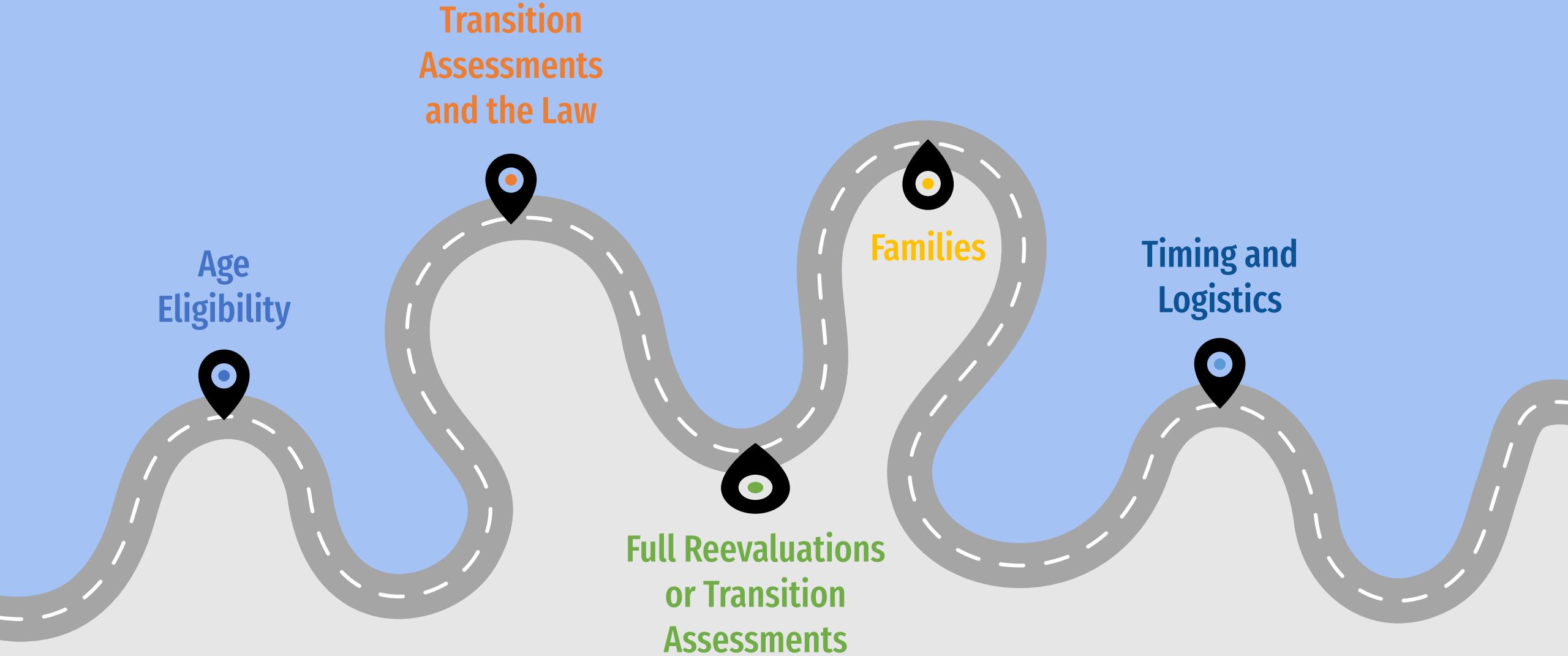
- Can be an anxiety-provoking transition for any family.
- For all children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in preschool (including those eligible under Speech and Language Impairment [SLI] receiving only speech services), there are requirements under California *Education Code (EC)* for a reassessment in order to redetermine eligibility prior to transitioning to kindergarten.



Common Challenges Faced by Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

- Large numbers of students to transition from preschool to TK or K
- Limited assessors and staffing shortages
- Unclear on legal requirements for TK and K transition assessments
- Communication challenges with receiving teams
- Receiving teams have limited availability and bandwidth to plan for incoming students
- Everyone is just too busy in the spring
- Organizational challenges across the district make planning difficult
- Difficulty determining appropriate placements for preschoolers going into TK and K
- Disagreements with families on appropriate placements

Understanding the Lay of the Land





Keys to Successful Transition from Early Childhood Special Education to TK or K

01

Well-Planned

Plan in detail, well ahead of time

02

Child Centered

Individualize it to each child's needs

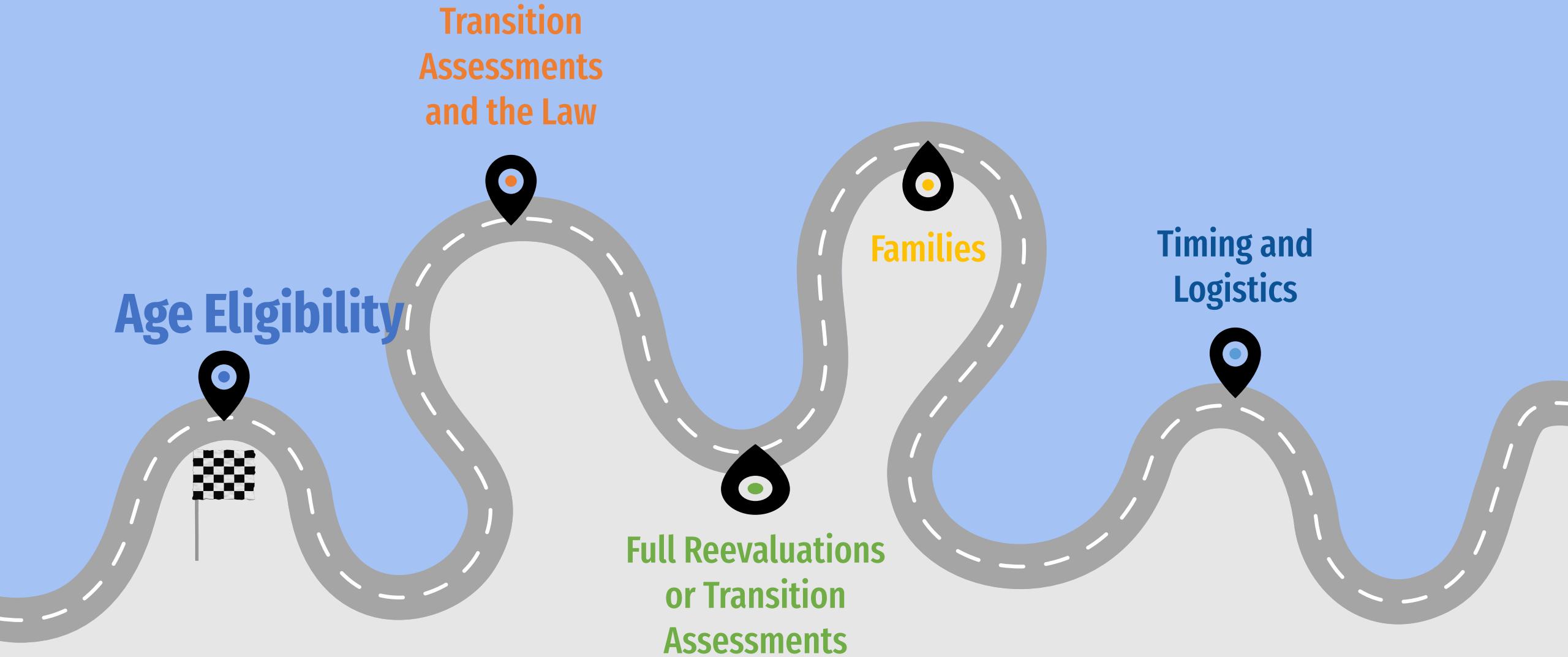
03

Collaborative

Work together with the family and receiving team



Understanding the Lay of the Land



Age Eligibility for Preschool, TK, and K in 2025–2026



Preschool

Any child who is or turns three during the 2025–2026 school year or who is not four by September 1, 2025. Four year olds by parent choice under California Universal PreKindergarten.

Preschool Birthdates

Any child who turns three in the summer before or during the school year or who is not four by September 1, 2025.

Transitional Kindergarten

In 2025–2026, LEAs are required to make TK available to all children who will have their fourth birthday by September 1, 2025 of the school year.

TK Birthdates

September 2, 2020–September 1, 2021

Kindergarten

Must be age five by September 1, 2025

Sources:

https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp#:~:text=%20In%202022%E2%80%9323%2C%20children%20are%20eligible%20for,school%20year.%20%20*Inclusive%20of%20these%20dates.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp>

K Birthdates

September 2, 2019–September 1, 2020

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Preschool, TK, and K Enrollment



1. What is California Universal Preschool (UPK) and how does TK fit in?

California's UPK initiative emerged from efforts to expand access to early childhood education and address educational equity across the state. It was formally established in 2021 through the State Budget Act, which allocated significant funding to establish and expand **TK as the cornerstone of UPK**.

The program aims to provide free, high-quality preschool education to all four year olds in the state, regardless of family income, while also expanding services for three year olds and younger children through partnerships with existing early childhood programs. California began rolling out UPK in the 2022–2023 school year, starting with expanded eligibility for TK. The full implementation is set to be completed by 2025–2026, ensuring that all four year olds in the state have access to early learning opportunities free of cost.

Pathways to Kindergarten

Early Learning and Care **0-3 years old**

Early Head Start/Head Start

State-Funded Preschool

Licensed Childcare Center or Home

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregiver

Universal PreKindergarten **(UPK)**

3-4 years old

Head Start

State-Funded Preschool

Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

Private PreK Provider

Family choice of Childcare or Home

Early Childhood Special Education
program

Kindergarten **5-years-old**

Starting Kindergarten

2. Is TK or K mandatory for families?

No, children are not required to attend TK or K; however, in California, children are subject to compulsory full-time education beginning at age six (*Education Code Section 48200*).

3. Can students eligible for K attend TK?

This a local decision made by LEAs. However, if allowed, the child is required to attend two years of kindergarten and parents need to sign a Kindergarten Continuance Form, which can be accessed on CDE's website here:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/documents/parentagreeform.pdf>

Source:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp#:~:text=Districts%20must%20admit%20children%20at,maintained%20by%20the%20school%20district.>

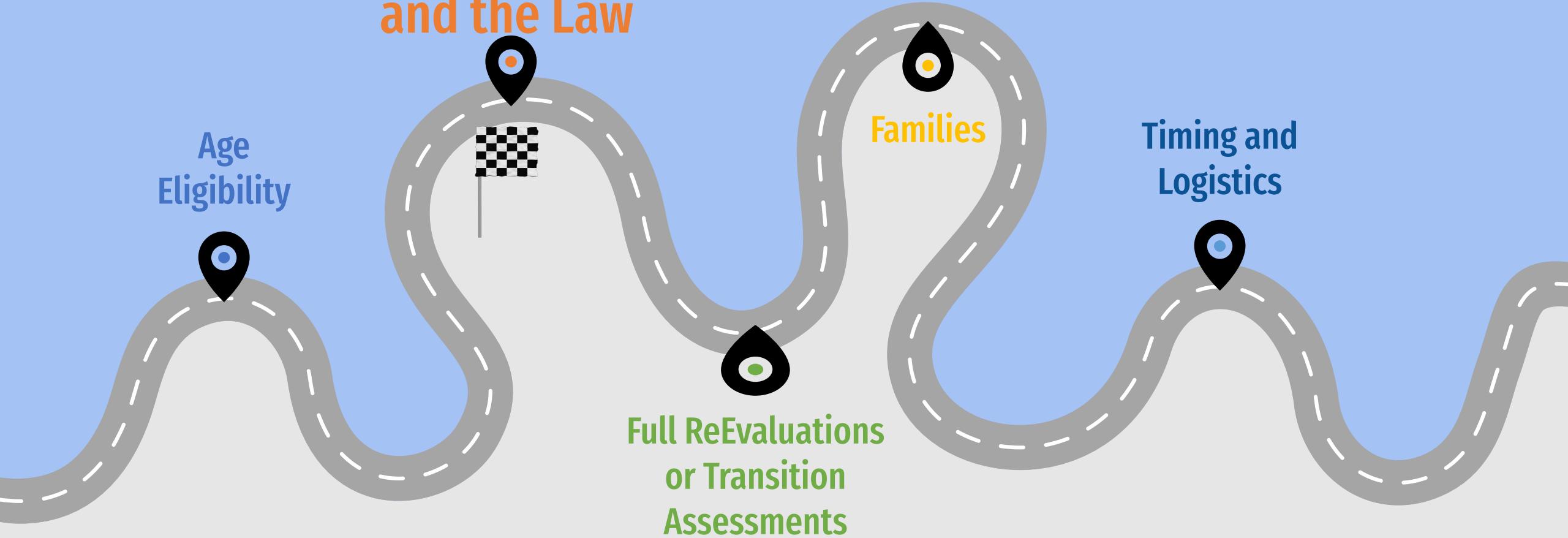
4. If parent/guardian requests a child age-eligible for TK to remain in a preschool program, does the IEP team need to consider it?

Yes, an IEP team should consider parent's request. However, it is considered the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to be placed with same-age peers and therefore, matriculating to the next grade-level with same-age peers is generally considered the best and most appropriate practice. However, if parents are requesting that their child remain in preschool an IEP team should consider it, and a discussion should occur and be documented with the risks and benefits to the child in the IEP meeting notes. The IEP team should make the decision on a case-by-case basis.

California *Education Code* does not indicate that a child has to be exited from a preschool program and moved into TK or K when age eligible to do so. In fact, the foundations of the California Universal PreKindergarten program allows for parent choice in selecting a PreKindergarten setting for their child.

Understanding the Lay of the Land

Transition Assessments and the Law



California *Education Code* Section 56445



Transition from preschool program to kindergarten or first grade:

(a) Prior to transitioning an individual with exceptional needs from a preschool program to kindergarten, or first grade as the case may be, an appropriate reassessment of the individual shall be conducted pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 56320) of Chapter 4 to determine if the individual is still in need of special education and services.

Take Away

Every child with an IEP (including those with only speech services) needs a reassessment prior to entering K or 1st

Sources: California EC § 56445: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=56445.

California EC § 56320 https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=4.&title=2.&part=30.&chapter=4.&article=2.

California *Education Code* Section 56445, Continued

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that gains made in the special education program for individuals who received special education and services, in accordance with this chapter, are not lost by too rapid a removal of individualized programs and supports for these individuals.

(c) As part of the transitioning process, a means of monitoring continued success of the child shall be identified by the individualized education program team for those children of kindergarten or first grade equivalency who are determined to be eligible for less intensive special education programs.

Source: California *EC* § 56445

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=56445.

Take Away

Be cautious of taking away supports too fast so gains are not lost.

Take Away

Monitor progress in kindergarten/1st to ensure continued success.

California *Education Code* Section 56445, Continued



(d) As part of the exit process from special education, the present performance levels and learning style shall be noted by the individualized education program team. This information shall be made available to the assigned regular education teacher upon the child's enrollment in kindergarten or first grade as the case may be.

Take Away

If exited in preschool, share information with receiving general education teacher on how to support

Source: California EC § 56445

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=56445.

Legal Analysis and Main Points



- The kindergarten transition assessment's main purposes:
 - determine if the preschool child still requires special education services
 - make sure children with IEPs in preschool do not lose the gains they made with early intervention by too quickly removing supports
- Transitioning children (especially if exited), should be closely monitored
- Information should be shared with general education kindergarten teachers (particularly if exited)
- This assessment is distinct from other evaluations and serves its own purpose: it can be individualized to the child's needs and a full reassessment (triennial) is not necessarily needed
- At the same time, districts should not just uniformly conduct "Records Reviews" for every child

Legal Analysis and Main Points, Continued

- Whether a student requires a full Reevaluation (early triennial) at the time of transitioning to TK or K is an individualized determination and should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis based on each child's situation.
- As indicated in the statute, transition assessments under Section 56445 are conducted pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 56320) of Chapter 4, which refers to laws regarding initial assessments and all the required components to make them legally defensible.
- Accordingly, it is not recommended for LEAs to waive reevaluations for all students during this time in lieu of conducting a records review.

Take Aways

- Do not adopt a policy that all transitioning children will have “Records Reviews”
- Do determine what type of assessment each child needs individually

Legal Analysis and Main Points, Continued



- Each child should be analyzed individually, and regardless of whether a team determines a Full Reevaluation or a Transition Assessment/Records Review is necessary, it should notify parents of how this determination was made and obtain consent in accordance with procedures for regular evaluations via an Assessment Plan.

Take Aways

- Parents must be notified of decision on what type of assessment via a Notice of Proposed Action
- An Assessment Plan (AP) is needed

We Need An Assessment Plan?

- Yes, whether the team decides on a full Reevaluation or an abbreviated Transition/Records Review to meet the requirements under Ed Code 56445, provide the parents with an Assessment Plan and obtain their consent.
- With or before sending the Assessment Plan, districts need to provide written Notice of Proposed Action indicating what type of assessment (i.e., Transition/Records Review or Reevaluation/Triennial) will be conducted.
- In either case, a hearing and vision screening must be conducted as part of the assessment unless parental permission is denied. (California Code of Regulations § 3027.)

Practical Pointer

Completing a Records Review for the Transition Assessment requirement is still an “assessment” to redetermine eligibility and requires an Assessment Plan with parent consent.

At minimum check the boxes and note:

- Health: Hearing & Vision Screenings*
- Other: Records Review including updated present levels, classroom observations, and parent and teacher report*

Source: California Code of Regulation Section 3027

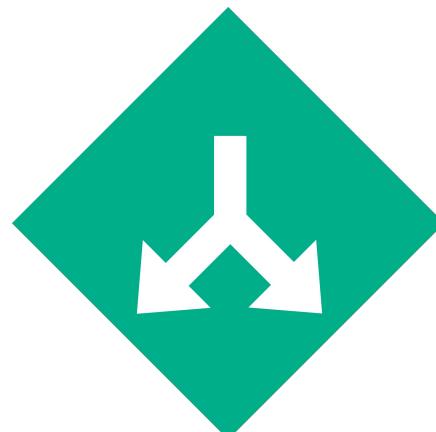
[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I302857734C6911EC93A8000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&bhcp=1](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I302857734C6911EC93A8000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)&bhcp=1)

Notice of Proposed Action

- Parent/Guardians should be included in the discussions about what type of assessment will be conducted and when the assessment will take place—they are important IEP team members.
- Parent/Guardians should be provided with written notice in winter/early spring with school team's recommendation to conduct either an abbreviated Transition/Records Review Assessment or a Full Reevaluation (early triennial) either prior to or with an Assessment Plan.
- An example of a Notice of Proposed Action can be found here:
https://docs.google.com/document/u/4/d/18W3MTRHObmTHbXWeAJM_PhVk-ZX6hFa5elcBpwWytjg/copy

When to Assess: Before TK or K?

- Education Code 56445 was written before Transitional Kindergarten and UPK were initiated.
 - There is no guidance in the code that stipulates when a Kindergarten Transition assessment should take place—prior to a child transitioning to TK, K, or 1st grade.
- Districts have been making these decisions locally and on case-by-case basis as IEP teams.



When to Assess: Before TK or K?— Legal Interpretations Conflict



- Different legal interpretations have come out from various attorney groups:
 - TK has been referred to by the CDE as: “the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.” (See under Transitional Kindergarten on the link <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp> for source material.) The guidance from some legal firms is that TK is the beginning of a child’s elementary career with an elementary team and so a transition assessment makes sense prior to starting TK.
 - Other attorney guidance indicates children have just begun receiving preschool intervention when they are ready to transition to TK. Moreover, TK curriculum is aligned to the *California Preschool Learning Foundations* which can be found at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp> and therefore TK can be considered as extension of prekindergarten programing and so it makes sense to give the child more time to receive early intervention and then to assess prior to transitioning to kindergarten.

Take Away: Decision on When to Assess Before TK or K Should Be Child Centered

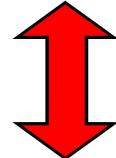
- Assessments can be conducted before TK or K or 1st
 - However, if preschool team does not complete assessment before TK, TK team will need to complete an assessment in spring before K or K team before 1st
- It should be based on child's individual need
 - Sometimes it may make sense to wait until the K or 1st grade transition to complete an assessment to allow for more intervention



Decision on When to Assess Before TK or K Can Be Influenced By Programmatic Factors

- It can be influenced by your district's programming
 - If your district's TK programming is linked to preschool programming (housed together on a campus), it probably makes more sense to assess a TK–age eligible child before they physically move campuses when they go to K.
 - If your district's preschool program is on a separate campus and all children move to their home school for TK with a new team, it may make sense to assess prior to TK to prepare for that transition.

Possible Transition Assessment Scenarios

 = Team Conducts Transition Assessment

Three Years Old



Tyler

Became eligible under Autism in December 2024, enrolled in inclusion ECSE preschool

Four Years Old

August 2025 enrolls in general ed TK with special ed supports and team conducts transition assessment in spring before K



Nikki

Began receiving speech therapy at age three, is eligible for K in August 2025, speech pathologist is considering exiting, conducts assessment spring before kindergarten



Essie

Became eligible at age three under SLI, participates in district's partial inclusion program. IEP team has concerns that she will need substantial support in TK and Autism eligibility should be considered. Team assesses before TK.



August 2025 enrolls in school district's TK program with AUT eligibility, substantial specialized academic instruction, 1:1 support, and increased related services. Team assesses before TK due to eligibility category questions and IEP changes.

Five Years Old

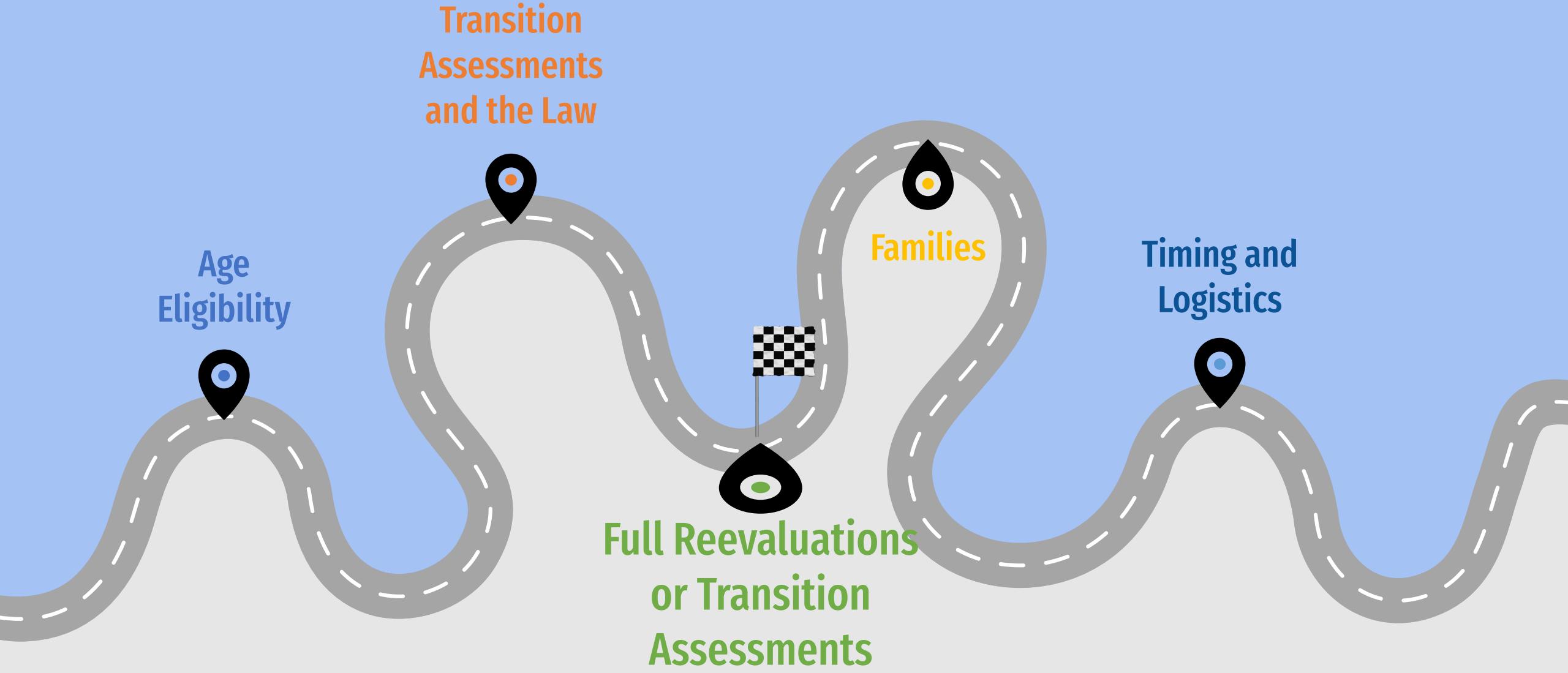
Starts Kindergarten



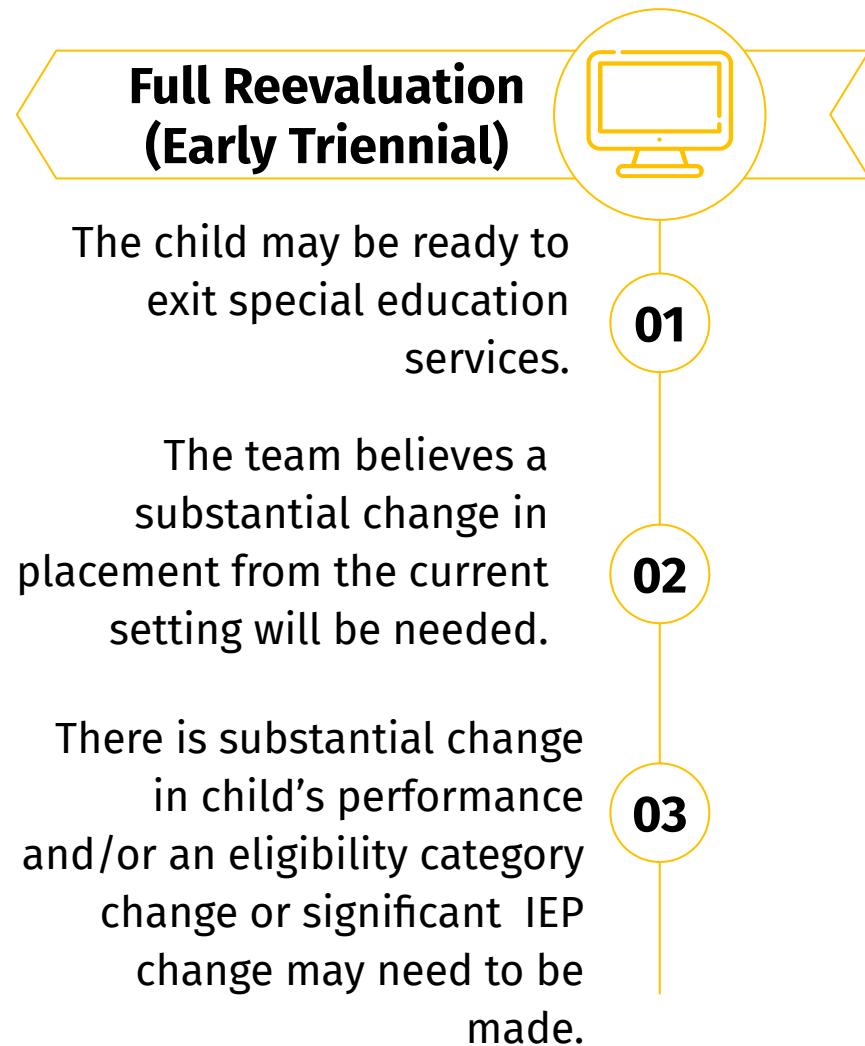
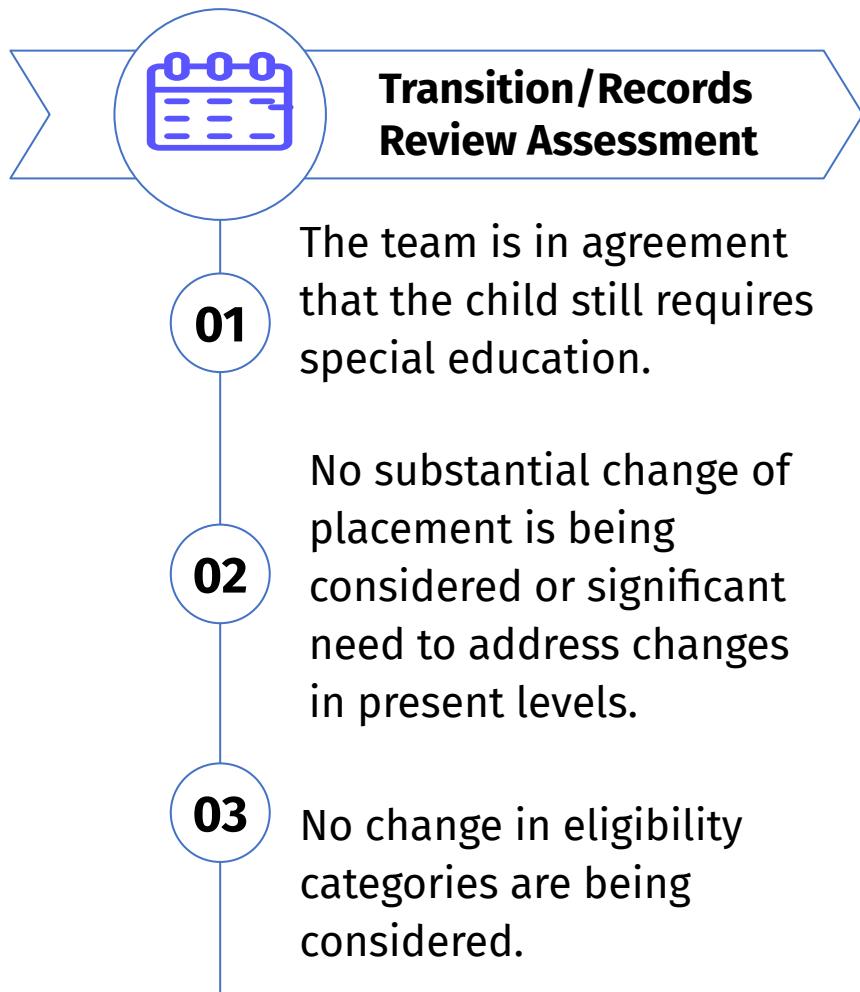
Starts Kindergarten

Starts Kindergarten

Understanding the Lay of the Land



Transition/Records Review or Full Reevaluation



Deciding Between Assessment Types

Considerations	Transition/Records Review Assessment Can Be Used	Full Reevaluation (Triennial) Should Be Used
An initial assessment has been completed in the last year		
The child might be ready to exit from special education services		
The child's placement may substantially change when moving from preschool to TK or K (e.g., moving from Special Day Class [SDC] preschool to full general education K or moving from full inclusion preschool to SDC)		
The team is considering change in eligibility categories or an additional eligibility category (e.g., adding Autism or changing from Speech and Language Impairment to Intellectual Disability)		

Keeping Families Involved

Notice the Caregivers in Writing

Send parents a Notice of Proposed Action of type of assessment with or before sending Assessment Plan.

Gather Parent Input During Assessment

Incorporate caregivers' concerns, strategies to support, and hopes for the transition

01

At Initial IEP Meeting
Explain the TK/K transition process, including the purpose of the assessment

02

Send an Assessment Plan

Send AP with Procedural Safeguards at least 60 days before planned TK/K transition IEP meeting. If conducting a full Reevaluation (early triennial) check the Reevaluation box on AP. Conducting a reevaluation will restart the timeline for the next triennial. If Records Review, check other and denote "TK or K Transition Assessment/Records Review"

03

04

Components of a TK or K Transition Assessment/Records Review

- Update Hearing and Vision Screening
- Classroom Observation completed by Case Manager or Other IEP Team Member
- Parent Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- Teacher Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- Review Records (review IEP goal progress, Desired Results Developmental Profile [DRDP] results, informal assessments, and any new information gathered)
- Complete Assessment Report
 - Sample Template of TK/K Transition Records Review Assessment can be found at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q632IGC_LLbYER2hDh0BQEYaoZdKqblc/copy
 - Discussion of Eligibility Recommendation under California *Education Code*

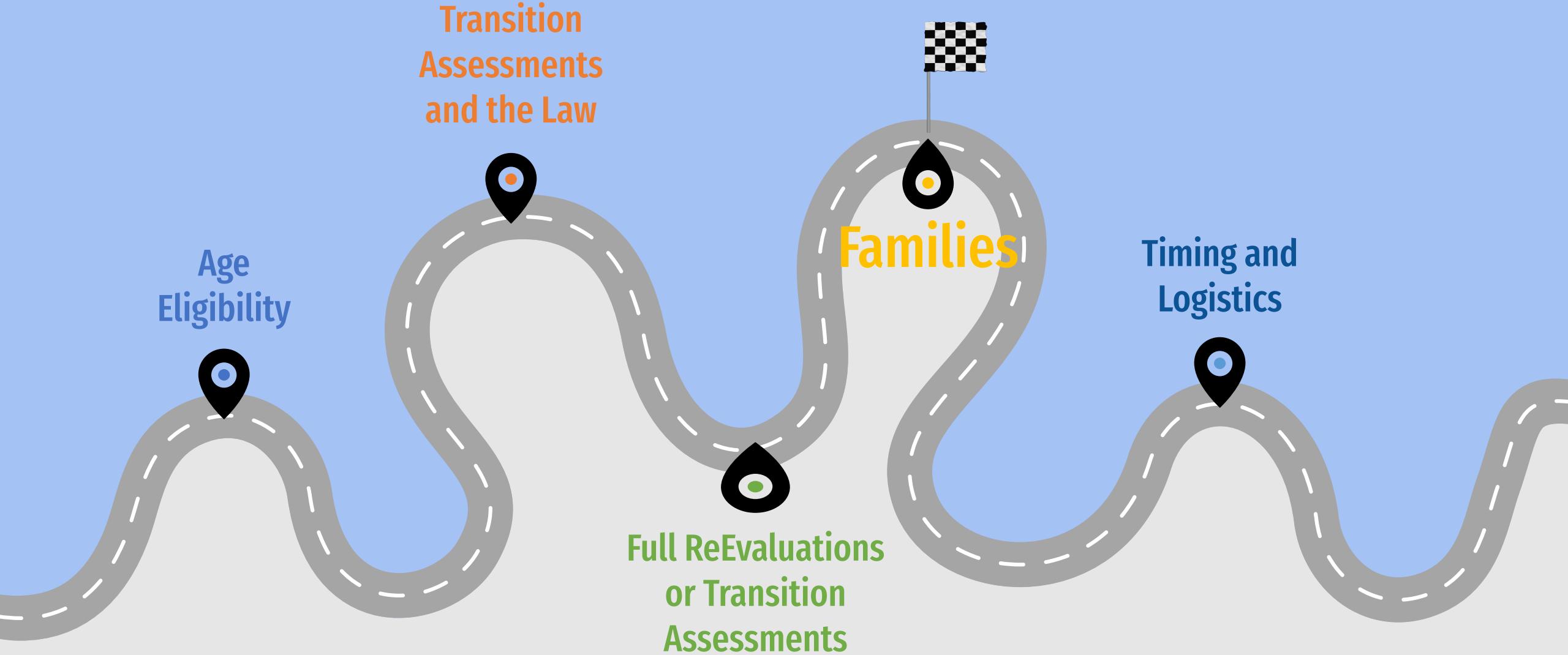
Components of a Comprehensive Speech & Language Reevaluation Assessment

- ❑ Health & Developmental Review
- ❑ Hearing and Vision Screenings
- ❑ Parent Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- ❑ Teacher Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- ❑ Review and Consideration of Outside Reports/Diagnoses and Previous Assessment
- ❑ Assessment/Clinical Observations
- ❑ Classroom Observation
- ❑ Language Sample
- ❑ Standardized Assessments
 - ❑ Expressive and Receptive Language
 - ❑ Speech Sounds
 - ❑ Voice and Fluency
 - ❑ Pragmatics
- ❑ Statement of Validity
- ❑ Summary of Findings
- ❑ Discussion of Eligibility Recommendations under California *Education Code*

Components of a Comprehensive Full Reevaluation Assessment

- Health and Developmental History Review
- Hearing and Vision Screenings
- Parent Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- Teacher Report (include strengths, concerns, strategies to support transition)
- Review and Consideration of Outside Reports/Diagnoses/Previous Assessments
- Classroom Observations
- Assessment/Clinical Observations
- Play-Based Assessment
- Standardized Assessments
 - Speech and Language
 - Cognitive (unless working with an African American child due to Larry P case injunction, then use alternative assessment)
 - Preacademic Skills
 - Adaptive Behavior
 - Social-Emotional/Behavior (including Autism if warranted)
 - Motor/Sensory (if warranted)
- Statement of Validity
- Summary of Findings
- Discussion of Eligibility Recommendations under *Education Code*

Understanding the Lay of the Land



Concerns Often Voiced By Families

- Worry of leaving the play-based environment and entering a more academic environment
- Worry their child is not “ready” for TK or K
- Worry about starting with a new team of support personnel they do not know
- Concern about new site especially if elementary site is larger and there are safety concerns due to child’s disability
- Concern if recommendation is not home school
- Concern if recommendation is full inclusion or exit and they do not believe child is ready to be exited or fully included
- Concern is setting is more restrictive and they believe child should be fully included
- Concern about needing full-time, individual 1:1 paraeducator
- Concern if new eligibility category is being considered
- Concern about cognitive or academic test results and what they may indicate
- Concern about loss of services
- Concern about change in general
- General coming to terms with disability

“I think one thing that I could have been told was that [transition] is a process. It’s a process that takes years, and every time that something changes, it’s going to be different. And you’re never going to be comfortable with it. Every change you go through is going to be a reminder that it is different for you and that it is different for your child and that it is hard.”

—Anonymous parent

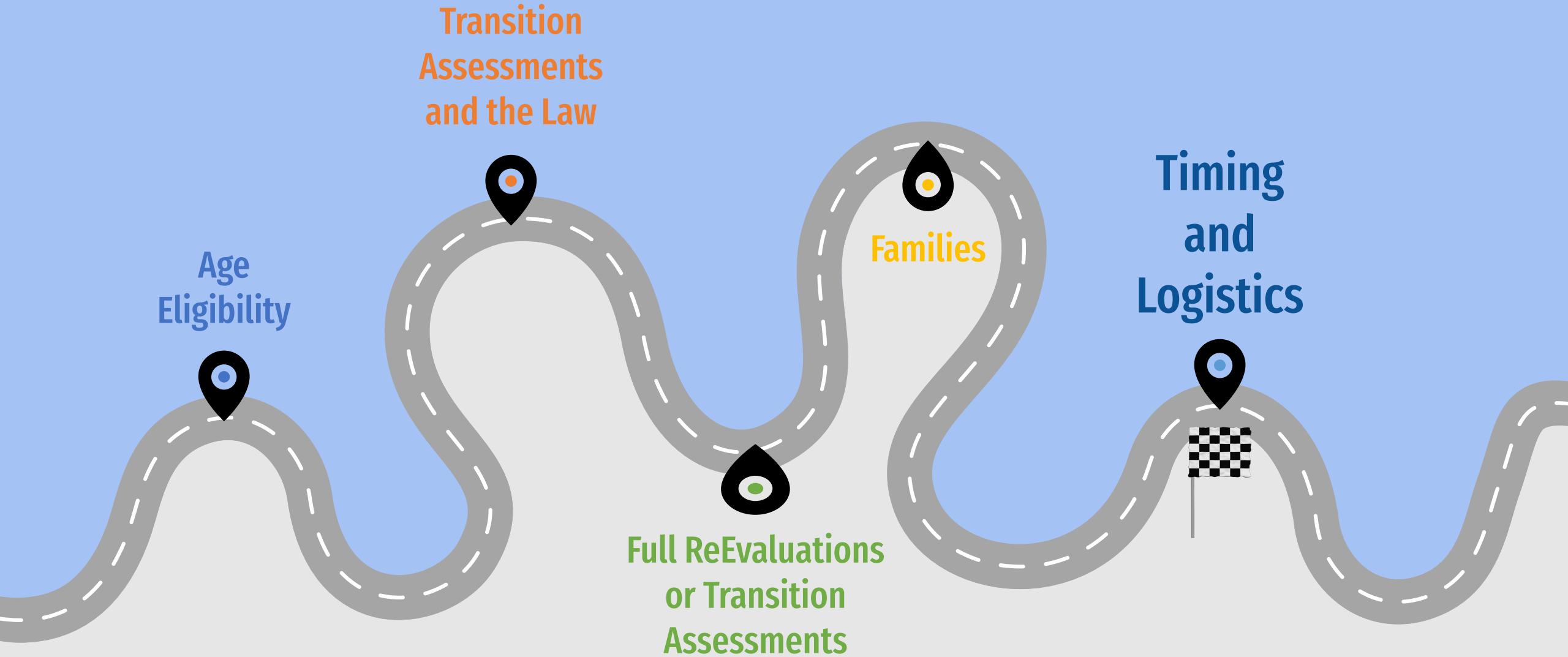
Source:

<https://www.seedsofpartnership.org/pdf/transition.pdf>

Meeting the Needs of Families

- Maintain a family-centered, child-focused approach.
- Gather parent input on their concerns and hopes throughout process.
- Begin discussions about transition at the initial IEP meeting. Provide timelines and explain the steps.
- This is a hard transition for families. Listen to their concerns throughout the process and take time to answer their questions. Explain that parents are important members of the IEP decision making process.
- Receiving team should observe the child and meet with the family prior to the transition.
- The school team needs to present the continuum of service options but come forward with a **single and clear** recommendation of Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) services and placement to the parents/guardian.
- Give families opportunities to see the TK or K program being recommended (through preplacement visits, videos). Connect them with other parents, parent groups, elementary school websites, elementary tours/informational sessions.

Understanding the Lay of the Land



A Systematic Process Will Help



- Internal procedures should be developed that clearly explain the transition process and meet legal requirements and timelines. A **Sample Timeline** can be found here:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v91SW3z7lop7z8JGg0hpJFv4DUGHAtlWOCeinLwEcU/copy>
- Designate a coordinator of transition on preschool team for TK/K Transitions
- Designated a coordinator of transitions for elementary sites (receiving teams) for TK/K Transitions
- Early and Frequent Communication:
 - Between families and staff
 - Between preschool and elementary teams
- Track transitions and timelines on central spreadsheet, a **Sample Tracking Spreadsheet** can be found here:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rd1w_zt4YbQOJt1tIm_NdUXK8MLj-fe3TLv98JA_FUM/edit?usp=sharing

IEP Documentation To Dos



1. In early winter, provide the parents/guardian in writing with a Notice of Proposed Action indicating what type of assessment is recommended. See sample of a Notice of Proposed Action here:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/18W3MTRHObmTHbXWeAJM_PhVkJX6hFa5elcBpwWytja/edit?tab=t. This notice can also be sent with the Assessment Plan.
2. At least 60 to 75 days before the transition IEP, send parents an Assessment Plan (whether full Reevaluation [early triennial] or Records Review) and a copy of the Procedural Safeguards and obtain consent to assess.
3. About 10 days before the Transition IEP meeting, send a Notice of IEP Meeting.

IEP Documentation To Dos, Continued



4. For the Transition IEP meeting be sure to:
 - a. Update **Present Levels** page include new parent input and make sure hearing and vision results are from within last year.
 - b. Update **Services page** indicating the “Service Options Considered,” “Supplementary Supports,” and “Special Education and Related Services” and “Extended School Year.” If the services will be different for the following school year, be sure to indicate the ending date as of the last day of school (e.g., June 3, 2025) and the new services beginning on the first day of school next year (e.g., August 10, 2025) with an ending date of the student’s annual review date.

IEP Documentation To Dos, Continued



- c. Update **Educational Settings** page: See Decision Trees for filling out Educational Settings here:

https://highqualityieps.net/uploads/blogs/files/1682358326_DecisionTreeForReportingECP_final.pdf

https://highqualityieps.net/uploads/blogs/files/1682358403_DecisionTreeForReportingupto22_Final.pdf

See video training with guidance on how to complete Settings page for children transitioning from preschool to TK or K: <https://vimeo.com/1036865697>

Finally, be sure to complete the section “Transition Activities” section listing activities to ensure a smooth transition. Examples of Transition Activities include, but are not limited to: consultation between sending and receiving service providers, visit to new classroom prior to first day of school, social story about new setting, and participation in orientation meeting for general education kindergarten.

Keys to Successful Transition from Early Childhood Special Education to TK or K

01 **Well-Planned**

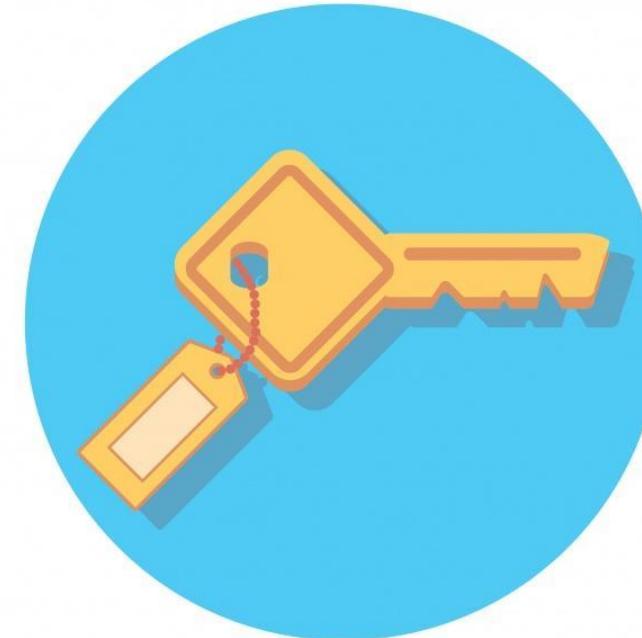
Plan in detail, well ahead of time

02 **Child Centered**

Individualize it to each child's needs

03 **Collaborative**

Work together with the family and receiving team



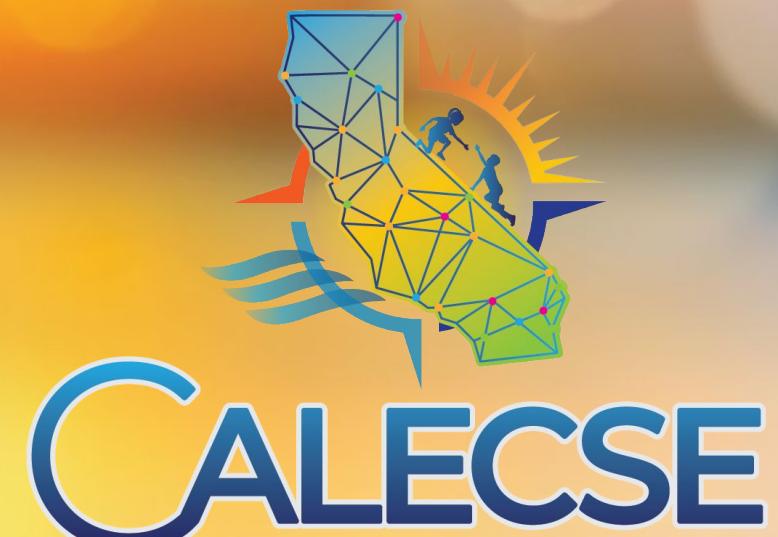
Questions?



Interested in joining a local Community of Practice (CoP) for practitioners who support children ages zero to five ?

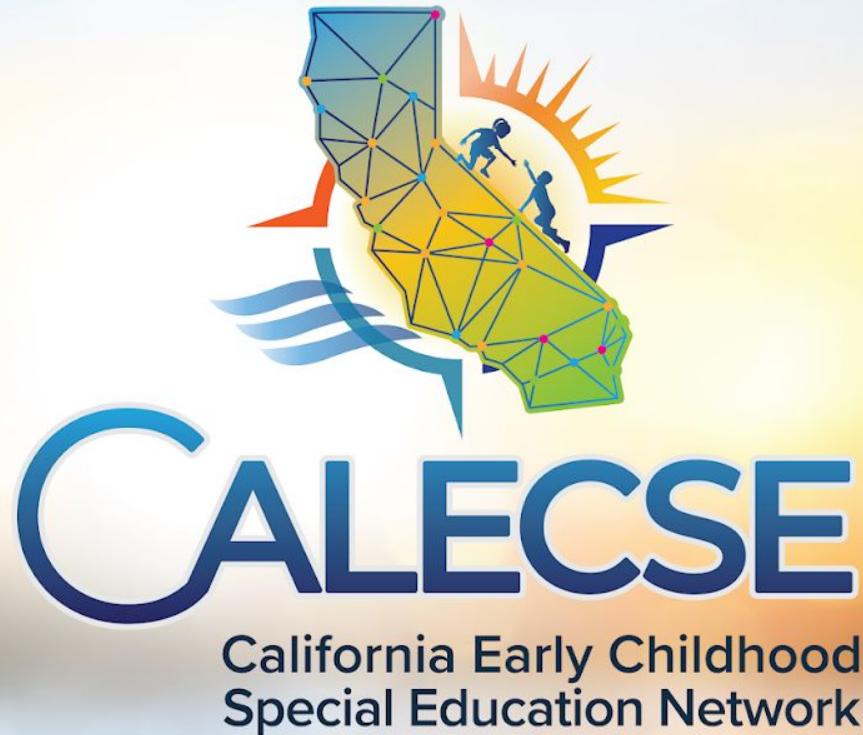
Acces the link to sign up for
local CoPs here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdovcKf7VXbd2FWdo-CJ3fEFR5Rxn08AV9pVrXd9qpeuc4Wsg/viewform>





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References

California Code of Regulations. 2024.

[https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I302857734C6911EC93A8000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&bhcp=1](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Document/I302857734C6911EC93A8000D3A7C4BC3?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)&bhcp=1)

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https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp#:~:text=%20In%202022%E2%80%9323%2C%20children%20are%20eligible%20for%20year.%20%20*Inclusive%20of%20these%20dates.

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