

Chapter 8:

Secondary Transition

In this chapter you will -

- learn what is included in a transition plan
- get information about questions to ask the student to help in planning for his or her future
- find out about the transfer of rights at age 18
- learn about the Delegation of Rights form and where to complete it
- find out what happens if the student receives a regular diploma
- learn about student participation in a graduation ceremony while maintaining the right to continue special education services
- acquire information on student participation in the home-based support services program authorized by the Developmental Disability and Mental Disability Services Act

Leaving high school is the beginning of adult life for all students. For students with disabilities, choices and decisions about the future may be more complex and may require a great deal of planning. State regulations require transition planning and the implementation of a transition plan to start by the time a student reaches 14½ years of age, or younger, if appropriate. This transition plan becomes an official part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Students and their families are expected to take an active role in preparing the students to take responsibility for their own lives once school is finished. It is critical that families and their students understand that a student's entrance into adulthood and exit from high school means that the right or entitlement to special education services and a free and appropriate public education ends. Where once school provided a centralized source of education, guidance, transportation, and even recreation, after students leave school they will need to organize their own lives, manage their needs, and navigate an array of adult service providers and federal, state, and local programs. This can be a scary task, and students and their families need to be prepared. Families provide a critical support system for their children especially during the transition to adulthood. Active participation and partnership with the IEP team can assist families in bridging the gap between school and adult service systems and pave the way to a successful transition to adulthood for their students.

What Is Transition Planning and What Does It Do for Students with Disabilities?

Transition planning is a great opportunity for families and students to take a leadership role in setting goals and directions for the future. Transition planning -

- begins at age 14½ in Illinois and continues until the student graduates or reaches age 22.
- prepares students for life after high school.

- helps students plan for and choose high school courses.
- helps students decide what skills they need to develop to live and work in their community after high school.
- gives students the opportunity to explore work and career options while still in high school.
- helps students and families make connections with education and training programs, colleges, agencies, and support services for after high school to continue working toward goals.
- helps students and the entire IEP team learn about student interests, what works and doesn't work in their lifestyles, their skills and talents, and who can help in achieving specific student goals.

What Are Transition Services?

Transition services are a coordinated set or group of activities for a student that fits together like a puzzle. The full picture of the puzzle is the student's life after high school. The transition plan should be designed to help each student access a variety of transition services, activities, and supports that will help the student move from school to adult life activities including postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, adult education, adult services, and independent living.

Transition services are intended to prepare students to move from the world of school to the world of adulthood. In planning what types of transition services and activities a student needs, the IEP team considers areas such as postsecondary education or training, employment, and adult living. The transition services themselves are a set of activities that are based on the student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.

The pieces of the transition services puzzle may include the following components, depending on the student's needs:

Instruction

Instructional support extends to what the student might need in specific areas to complete courses for graduation, succeed in the general curriculum (e.g., tutoring), be placed in advanced classes, gain the skills he or she needs (e.g., social skills training, preparation for college entrance exams, self-determination skill training, etc.), and could also include teacher developed accommodations, curriculum adaptations, peer tutoring, or adult basic education.

Community Experiences

These are provided in community settings by schools or other agencies including, but not limited to, job site training, job shadowing, work experiences, banking, shopping, transportation, counseling, and recreation.

Related Services

The student may need related services to benefit from special education, to be equipped to enter the adult world (e.g., transportation, social services, medical services, rehabilitation technology), and to be linked to related services he or she might need after high school.

Development of Employment and Other Postsecondary Adult Living Objectives

These include services that lead to a job or career (e.g., career planning, guidance counseling, person-centered planning, job placement, job tryouts), and activities like registering to vote, filing taxes, renting a place to live, accessing medical services, and accessing adult services such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Daily Living Skills

Daily living skills are skills adults need as a foundation for

everyday life including self-care, independent living, money management, maintaining a home, health care, etc.

Functional Vocational Evaluation

This evaluation is used to find out what talents, aptitudes, and job skills a student has (e.g., situational work assessment, work samples, work adjustment programs, aptitude tests, series of job tryouts, if appropriate).

Transition Planning Questions

How can families, parents and guardians help their students begin planning for the future?

Parents, families and guardians can assist the transition planning team by helping to find answers to the follow questions. What are the student's ...

- » long-range employment and life goals?
- » interests and talents?
- » learning styles?
- » positive personality traits?
- » achievements?
- » social skills?
- » work experiences (paid, volunteer, at home, at school, in the community) and where might he or she like to work?
- » specific challenges and strategies for dealing with them?
- » needs for accommodations and support?
- » options after high school (college, career or technical school, military service, employment, living arrangements, healthcare, recreation, etc.)?

Why is it important for students to participate in their IEP planning and meeting?

Tips for Parents

Families should take time to discuss postsecondary agencies and find out what they are and why their participation in the IEP meeting could be critically important to the student's future success.

Participating in planning for life after high school builds student confidence and responsibility and helps parents transition to new roles as guides and mentors for their student as they step back and let their student take on a more active, decision-making role.

Must the school district have parental consent to invite postsecondary service agencies to the IEP meeting?

The IDEA requires the school district to invite a representative of any agency outside the school district who might be an important support or linkage for the student to be successful in his or her postsecondary goals. However, before inviting any agency representative, the school district must obtain the consent of the parent or the student if he or she has reached the age of majority (18) to extend the invitation.

What Are the Basic Components of the Transition Plan?

Age-appropriate Transition Assessment

The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children defines transition assessment as the "...ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common threads in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the ... IEP." [Sitlington, Neubert, and Leconte. (1997) in *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 20, 69- 79].

The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) has prepared some guidance under the direction of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). In regard to the selection of assessment tools they recommend that district staff -

- become familiar with the different types of transition assessments and their characteristics
- select methods that assist students by helping them answer the following questions:
 - » Who am I?
 - » What are my unique talents and interests?
 - » What do I want in life, now and in the future?
 - » What are some of life's demands that I can meet now?
 - » What are the main barriers to getting what I want from school and my community?
 - » What are my options in the school and community to prepare myself for what I want, now and in the future?
- select approaches that are appropriate for students in terms of intellectual ability, cultural sensitivity, and language comfort (including parent and student interviews/questionnaires)
- always interpret and explain assessment results in formats that students and families can understand easily

Must a District Obtain Parental Consent To Complete a Transition Assessment?

Parental consent is not required for age-appropriate transition assessments or questionnaires. 34 CFR 300.302 states, "The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services."

Measurable Postsecondary Goals

These goals identify what the student will achieve after leaving high school. Postsecondary goals are -

- based on student strengths, preferences, and interests
 - shaped, refined, and updated by the use of age-appropriate transition assessments
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- written using results-oriented terms such as “enrolled in,” “will work,” “will attend,” “will live,” and descriptors such as “full-time” or “part-time”

Measurable postsecondary goals are written for the following areas:

- Education and/or training
 - Education: community college, university, technical/trade/vocational school
 - Training: vocational or career field training, independent living skill training, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, Job Corps, etc.
- Employment
 - Paid employment (competitive, supported, sheltered)
 - Non-paid employment (volunteer, training position)
 - Military
- Independent Living
 - independent living skills, health/safety, financial/income, transportation/mobility, social relationships, recreation/leisure, self-advocacy/future planning

Specific Transition Services

A course of study is a list of specific courses the student is projected to take and should align with the student’s postsecondary goals. There are two important questions to consider for course of study:

- Does a postsecondary goal require a certain minimum requirement of courses, such as is required for college, trade school, district graduation requirements, etc.?
- Does a postsecondary goal require or benefit from the successful completion of specific high school classes, e.g., a future chef planning to take and complete all cooking related classes, a future childcare provider

planning to take and complete relevant classes in Family and Consumer Science, etc.?

Transition services are the coordinated set of activities that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate movement from school to postsecondary. The components of the coordinated set of activities include instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment and other postsecondary adult living objectives, and if appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

What Is the Summary of Performance (SOP) and When Is This Developed?

When a student's eligibility for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) ends either because the student is graduating with a regular diploma or reaching the maximum age of eligibility (22), the school district must provide the student with a summary of his or her academic achievement (e.g., academic successes, etc.) and functional performance (e.g., works skills, accommodations, social skills, self-determination skills, etc.) and include recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

- The SOP is developed during the final year of eligibility for FAPE and should include input from the student.
- The SOP can also include input from the student and/or family expressing their point of view about successes and support needs related to postsecondary goals.

Whose Responsibility Is It to Give the SOP to Outside Agencies Such as Employers?

The SOP is for the student and/or family's use. Similar in use to a resume, the SOP is a portable, user-friendly document that provides a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance, as

well as recommendations regarding accommodations, linkages and/or activities that will help the student successfully transition or move toward postsecondary goals. Therefore, the school district would keep a copy and has no responsibility to share this document with outside agencies.

What Is the Transfer of Parental Rights All About?

When a young adult reaches the age of 18 in Illinois, he or she has truly become an adult in the eyes of the law and has the right to make his or her own decisions. According to the IDEA, at least one year before a student reaches the age of 18, the school district must inform the parent(s) and student of the rights under federal and state regulations that will transfer from the parent to the student upon turning 18. This means that unless other arrangements have been made by the family (e.g., guardianship), the student has the right to make the final decisions about his or her education.

Delegation of Rights - Another Option

Worth a Look

The School Code provision that discusses delegation of rights is found at 105 ILCS 5/14-6.10. You can also find a sample delegation of rights form on the ISBE website at https://www.isbe.net/Documents/nc_deleg_34-57k.pdf

The school code (105 ILCS 5/14-6.10) allows a student to retain independent legal status while delegating his or her right to make educational decisions. According to this requirement, a student who has reached the age of 18 can choose to sign a Delegation of Rights to choose a parent or another adult to represent him or her and assist in making decisions about his or her education. This delegation applies only to educational decisions and can be ended by the student at any time. The school district must provide a copy of the Delegation of Rights to the parent and student during the IEP meeting during the year that the student turns 17.

Resources

<http://www.dd.illinois.gov/LocalAgency.cfm>

Home-based Support Services Program – Follow this link to find your local Developmental Disability Local

Coordination Agency or call 1-888-DD-PLANS or 1-866-376-8446 (TTY).

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Indicator-13.aspx>

ISBE's Special Education Department's secondary transition webpage provides access to a great variety of resources, tools, and information related to postsecondary transition including the Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL) modules.

The Big Picture: Transition Planning

Effective transition planning is the result of teamwork over the course of a student's time in the educational system.

- DO NOT wait until graduation to think about what your student wants to do.
- DO provide support and mentoring to help your student make a plan.
- DO ask your family, friends, neighbors, school teachers, and counselors to help you along the way.
- DO use networking as a way to find out what options might be available for life after high school and how your student can access them.