

UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION PROCESS

SECTION 1:

Creating a Vision for the Future

What is Transition Planning and Why is it Important?

- Transition planning is a process that brings together a student with a disability and those individuals directly involved in helping the student, to prepare to enter a post-high school environment.
- Transition planning is designed to ensure that the student will be provided the necessary skills and services to make a smooth transition from school to adult life and enable them to achieve the maximum possible independence in working, living and participating in the community.
- Transition into the adult world can present challenges for all young people, but the process is often more difficult for young people with disabilities.
- Transition planning and the IEP (Individual Education Program) should be in place by your child's 16th birthday. The IEP team includes your child, family members, school personnel, agency representatives, if appropriate, and any significant others. The overall value of the meeting is the sharing of knowledge about your child's strengths, interests, and preferences in order to create a map of where help is needed and what experiences are going to be valuable during the high school years.
- Creating a vision for the future is the first step in transition planning. Before attending the IEP meeting that begins to develop a transition path for your child to follow, take time to discuss his/her interests, dreams and visions for the future. It is very important for you to keep an open mind. Seemingly unrealistic and impossible hopes and dreams often lay the foundation that helps the IEP team direct your child's dreams into realistic goals.
- Four areas must be discussed when participating in a transition planning meeting.
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Postsecondary Education?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Employment?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Independent Living?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Community Participation?You must work with your child to formulate possible answers to the above questions so that a sequential, coordinated plan can be developed in each area.
- Waiting until your child is ready to graduate is too late to begin the transition process.
- Remember: There is no "system" like special education that entitles a student to receive appropriate supports and services after they graduate from high school.

- Remember: Your child's transition goals can and should be changed as they mature, experience more opportunities and begin to personally define specific career directions.
- Remember: Quality transition planning requires a commitment from you and your child to be actively involved in the process.

SECTION 2

TRANSITION: A Federal Mandate

It is critical that students with disabilities and their families take the time to plan for life after high school. The school system plays an important role in assisting the student to gain the skills required to reach the goals of their plan. The transition service requirements mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognize the responsibility schools have in this planning.

Public Law 101-476, IDEA, was enacted in 1990 by Congress with a transition amendment that provided services for students with disabilities as they prepare to complete school and move into employment. In June 1997, IDEA was amended as Public Law 105-17 to include additional provisions for transition. Currently, IDEA specifies that a student's IEP must include "a statement of needed transition services for students by their 16th birthday, and annually thereafter, including when appropriate, a statement of outside agencies who may support the student before the student leaves school."

Definition of Transition Services Sec. 602 (30) 20 USC 1401

"Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation."

The coordinated set of activities must:

1. be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.
2. include:
 - a. instruction;
 - b. community experiences;
 - c. the development of employment and other post-high school adult living objectives; and
 - d. if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

IDEA requires that goals and objectives be developed, as part of the IEP, in each of these areas and that the student and family participate in the planning process. The student must be invited to the IEP meeting.

At age 18, educational rights of the parents transfer to the student. Both parents and student must be informed of this transfer at least one year prior to the 18th birthday. Arrangements can be made if the student is not capable of making independent decisions.

A student's eligibility for special education services ends when the student graduates from high school or at the end of the school year in which the student reaches 21, whichever happens first.

However, before the student can graduate from high school, the IEP team must evaluate the student and determine whether the student continues to require special education. If the IEP team determines that the student no longer needs special education and will graduate, the school must notify the student's parents (and student if he/she is at least 18 years old), that the student will be graduating and that, as a result, special education services will end upon graduation. The school must also provide information to the parent and student regarding action that can be taken if either disagrees with the IEP team decision. Due process procedures may be initiated by a parent/guardian or the school district when they cannot reach an agreement with respect to any matter relating to the proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or education placement of the student, or the provision of a free and appropriate public education. Due process procedures include: mediation, advisory opinion, and hearing. If a due process hearing is requested, the school must continue to provide all IEP services to the student until it is determined otherwise throughout the hearing process.

Failure to Meet Transition Objectives Sec. 614 20 USC 1414

As further protection, the federal law states that if a participating agency, other than the local school, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the school shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the student.

These numbers are citations for the Public Law 105-17, IDEA amendment of 1997, for reference purposes.

SECTION 3

Roles in Transition Planning

THE SCHOOL'S ROLE

The school serves as the initial and primary source for the preparation for transition. The involvement of teachers, guidance counselors, vocational educators, social workers, psychologists, etc., is essential to the transition planning process.

Think about what your school is doing in the following areas:

1. **Vocational Assessment** – What experiences and assessment techniques are being used to help the student identify interests, abilities, and aptitudes? This will help the student focus on a proper career direction.

2. **Curriculum and Instruction** – Which of the following areas are addressed in the secondary program?

➤ Career Awareness	➤ Job-Seeking/ Keeping Skills
➤ Independent Living	➤ Personal Living
➤ Social Skills Development	➤ Self Advocacy

Are these skills taught in a self-contained class, an inclusive class, or in the community?

3. **Vocational Training** – What vocational training experiences are offered in your secondary program?

➤ In-School Job Sites	➤ Community-Based Work/Study
➤ Supported Employment	➤ Job Shadowing

4. **Interagency Collaboration** – Does your school provide you with information about, and assist you in making referrals to the following agencies, if appropriate?

➤ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
➤ Department of Workforce Services (DWS)
➤ Schools for the Deaf and Blind
➤ Postsecondary Education/Training Opportunities
➤ Parent Support Groups
➤ Respite Care Opportunities
➤ Leisure/Recreation Programs
➤ Financial Planning Needs

5. **Parental Involvement** – What activities or programs does your school have to inform parents of the above agencies and services, to assist them in becoming stronger advocates and well-informed partners in the transition planning process?

Adapted from Connecticut State Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education Transition Task Force/Transition Training Manual

6. **Follow-up Procedures** – Does your school have any formal follow-up procedures to contact special education graduates to determine if their transition from school has been successful?

THE PARENT'S ROLE

1. Parents are integral members of the IEP team. They bring a wealth of information about their sons/daughters which is critical to effective transition planning.
2. Parents must become informed advocates about quality transition planning, services in the community, and agencies which can assist your sons/ daughters in achieving success and independence in their communities. Parents must understand the difference between entitlement of special education programs under IDEA, and the eligibility for services of adult agencies.
3. Parents know their community and have many contacts they can share to assist in the provision of community training alternatives and activities. Parents and students must be willing and committed to assist in the implementation of identified transition activities.
4. Parents can advocate for, develop and initiate new programs that do not currently exist in their son's/daughter's school or community.

THE ADULT AGENCY'S ROLE

1. Once a referral has been made to the appropriate adult service agency, the agency can become an important member of the IEP team. They will begin to know the needs, strengths, and abilities of your son/daughter well before they exit their secondary programs.
2. Adult agency counselors know the resources in your community and can assist you in accessing many of these services.
3. Adult agency counselors know the future of the labor market and available training programs which allows them to focus school experiences in realistic directions.
4. Once a student has exited school, the agency can provide programs and services to assist your son/daughter in vocational training, job placement, and living alternatives.

THE COMMUNITY'S ROLE

1. The community is the ultimate site for the student to work and live. The student seeks to become an active member of the community, and thus, the involvement of the community in the transition process is natural and logical.

2. The community is in the position to develop and support programs that assist in the transition planning process. These programs should exist in the areas of employment, residence, and recreation.
3. The community should develop a means whereby community members may become informed of the needs of their citizens with disabilities, as well as federal and state programs that offer support to businesses that train and hire persons with disabilities.

SECTION 4

Agencies Providing Services for Adults with Disabilities

The following is a list of agencies that provide services to adults, and in some cases children, with disabilities. Each agency has criteria that will determine whether or not a person is eligible for their services. This is different from services you are entitled to under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which end at age 21 or at high school graduation. It is worth making a call if you think you may qualify for some of the services.

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF REHABILITATION (USOR): <http://www.usor.utah.gov/>

Utah State Office of Rehabilitation administers a range of services and programs. The Administration office of is located at 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT, 84114. Their toll free telephone number is 1-800-473-7530.

The following is a list of some of the USOR agencies and programs you may find helpful:

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Phone:	1-800-473-7530 (Toll Free)
Provides counseling services, medical/psychological treatment, assistive technology, job placement, and follow-up services.		
Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Phone:	1-800-860-4860 (Toll Free) 1-877-860-4861 VP/TTY
Offers a multitude of training and adjustment services. These services include computer evaluation and training, orientation and mobility services, daily living skills, home repair courses, low vision screening, magnification and other assistive aids, and a variety of adjustment-to-blindness classes and services. These services are provided to individuals at the Center for the Blind and in the community statewide.		
Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Phone:	1-800-284-1823 (Toll Free) 1-801-323-4695 TTY (Local)
Offer a full range of services for seniors, youth, family, and people with multiple disabilities. Offer services to the many people in the community who are hard of hearing. Offer classes including the following subjects: computers, gardening, parenting, orientation for using service dogs. Other workshops have included how to buy or sell a home, tips on how to live in a hearing world, as well as retirement planning.		

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES (DWS):

Medicaid	Phone:	Call Central DWS Office for Local Information
Provides health insurance for persons who meet eligibility criteria. To obtain additional information, contact the central office of DWS.		

FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS:

Social Security Administration http://www.ssa.gov/	Phone:	800-772-1213 800-325-0778 (Voice/TDD)
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Adapted from Connecticut State Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education Transition Task Force/Transition Training Manual

For information about SSI, SSDI, PASS, Work Incentives, or Medicare, contact the Social Security Administration at the numbers above. These are benefit programs that individuals with disabilities may be eligible for under the adult service agency system.

Social Security Income pays monthly benefits to people who are 65 or older, or blind or have a disability and who don't own much or have a lot of income.

Social Security Disability Income pay cash benefits to individuals who are unable to work because of a disability.

Plan for Achieving Self Support, is a special work incentive program for individuals with disabilities who receive or would like to receive SSI but would like to work.