

Transition Requirements: What—Why--How

Planning – Start Early

As students prepare to move from school to community living and employment, good program planning can help them become independent, productive adults.

Early and long-range planning are critical in order for the student to receive many post-school programs or services whether they include support services in college or residential services from an adult provider. In the public education system, students are entitled to free services; however, in the adult system, people must be determined eligible for services based on specific criteria. Students and families are often faced with much paperwork to meet eligibility requirements and some adult services have long waiting lists.

How Do You Plan?

Transition planning involves a team of people drawn from different parts of the student's school and community life. It is important that students be linked to various adult agencies and organizations, such as mental health agencies, vocational rehabilitation, community colleges, housing, and employment and training agencies.

Transition goals cannot be achieved in one year. Transition planning, services, and activities should be approached as a multi-year process. Young adults themselves, along with their parents, play an important role in the transition process. While involving the student in his/her own transition planning is required by law, perhaps the most important reason for student involvement is to facilitate the development of his/her self-determination skills. These are essential for the student to develop the ability to manage his or her own life.

What Should the Transition Plan Include?

IDEA contains detailed requirements for planning the education of individual students including a statement of what must be included in the IEP. Students 15 and over must be invited to attend the IEP meeting. If the student does not attend, the district or BOCES must document how the student's interests and preferences were considered.

“(d)(i) Beginning with the first IEP developed when the child is age 15, but no later than the end of 9th grade, or earlier if deemed appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include: Appropriate measureable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and when appropriate, independent living skills;....”

After first identifying the student's long range measureable post school goals in the areas of career/employment, post-secondary education and training, and community or residential needs, the focus of the IEP should be framed to identify the projected course of study related to the student's post-school outcomes. Consider core courses required for graduation or acceptance into a post-secondary program, any courses and experiences that are modified or specially designed for this student and elective courses. The concept is to think about, plan for and ensure that all courses and educational experiences offered to the student will help them achieve their desired post-school goals or outcomes. Basically, the plan becomes a road map for this student.

Transition services can and should be delivered through curricular and extracurricular activities in many settings – in academic and vocational classrooms, at home, and throughout the community – to practice and reinforce newly acquired skills. Decisions about specific service models and diploma options are determined by local school districts.

Transition Checklist

The following is a checklist of transition activities that students, parents, and school personnel may wish to consider when preparing transition plans. The student's skills and interests will determine which items on the checklist are relevant.

- Identify student learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker.
- Identify career interests and skills, complete interest and career inventories, and identify additional education or training requirements.
- Match career interests and skills with academic course work and community work experiences.
- For students with developmental disabilities, contact the local community centered board and place the student on the waiting lists.
- Explore options for post-secondary education and training including admission criteria.
- Coordinate with adult service providers and ensure appropriate referrals have been made.
- Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports.
- Learn to communicate effectively student interests, preferences, and needs.
- Be able to explain student disabilities and the accommodations he or she needs.
- Learn and practice personal health care.
- Learn/practice informed decision-making skills.
- Pursue and use local transportation options
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities.
- Acquire an identification card and the ability to communicate personal information.
- Identify and begin learning skills necessary for independent living including money management
- Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues.
- Determine the need for financial support (Supplemental Security Income, state financial supplemental programs, Medicare).
- Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication, and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, with peers, etc.).
- Explore legal status about decision-making prior to the age of maturity and consider the need for guardianship.
- Practice independent living skills, e.g., budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping.
- Identify needed personal assistant services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and manage these services.

Adapted from the National Transition Network