

Transition to Adulthood

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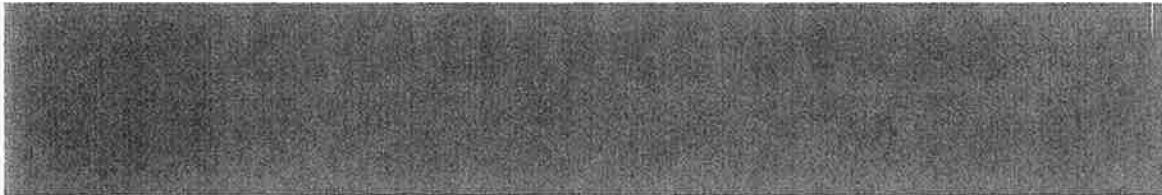
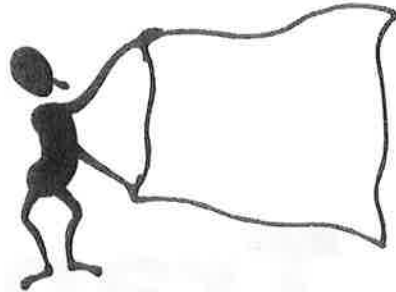
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INTRODUCTION

What are transition services?

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities to help students with disabilities and their families prepare for life after high school. Life after high school may include job training, college, employment, independent living, or assistance from public agencies. Transition activities, which indicate student strengths, abilities, needs, preferences and interests, result from age appropriate assessments. The results of these assessments help IEP teams develop appropriate post-secondary goals in the areas of education and/or training, employment and, if appropriate, independent living skills.



What is transition planning?

As a student gets older, the student and his/her family start to plan the future. Students and families consider many questions. What will a student do after high school? Will a student go to college or vocational school? Will a student work in supported employment or get a competitive job? Will a student live independently or continue to live at home? Will we need help from other agencies to carry out these plans? By the time the student is 14 years old, the IEP must include activities to help the student move from high school to life as an adult in the community. This process is transition planning.

What are the stages of transition planning?

Prior to a student's 14th birthday, the student's areas of strength, ability, need, preference, and interests are identified. These are then documented at the IEP/ITP meeting along with a statement of transition services. Services may be documented in the form of transition activities in the areas of education and/or training, employment and, if appropriate, independent living skills. Transition activities at this stage may involve instruction around career awareness. This includes knowledge of personal strengths, learning styles, and various occupations.

At the age of 15, an age-appropriate assessment is administered to update areas of student strength, preference, and interest. Post-secondary goals are determined based on the student's desires after completing high school. Transition activities supporting student post-secondary goals are then documented. Transition activities at this stage may involve opportunities for career exploration and preparation. This may include instruction and/or participation through small learning communities, Career and Technology education, work experience, daily living skill development, transition trips, and vocational training programs. The IEP document may also include connections to community agencies, if appropriate.

Before a student's 18th birthday, families are informed about "age of majority". When turning 18, the right to make educational decisions transfers to the student. However, there are legal alternatives to this rule. Parents and students must be informed about the transfer of rights by the IEP team. This act of communication is then documented on the IEP beginning at least one year before the student's 18th birthday.

TIP: Parents and students should get a head start in understanding "age of majority" rights and responsibilities.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Your young adult is protected by certain laws and policies that will help during the transition process and throughout his/her life. During your child's school years, the protections offered by IDEA and the IEP, which documented the accommodations and goals, were automatically provided. **The IDEA protections, however, end when your young adult turns 22. Other laws take their place; but, as these are not entitlement laws, it will now be up to you and your child to seek out their protections.**

Laws and Policies

Three laws overlap to benefit and safeguard you and your child with a disability as you begin the transition process: IDEA, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These laws help you and your young adult to access the most appropriate services to prepare for the transition to post-high school life.

IDEA, Section 504, ADA, and the Transition Process

The following lists in this section summarize how these laws specifically impact your young adult during the transition process. IDEA specifically requires a transition plan once your child reaches age 16. This plan must have the following characteristics:

- An outcome-oriented system based on your child's strengths, areas of interest, and accommodations
- A transition plan that is monitored and revised as your child gets older – A team approach based on the specific services your child needs
- A process that cannot be changed or modified without your knowledge and consent (**Note:** In states that transfer rights to the student at age 18, unless the parent has documentation showing that the individual is unable to offer consent [e.g., parent has applied for, and obtained, guardianship], the adult child, and not the parent, has the right to provide consent to any changes.)
- Involvement of the child with ASD to ensure his/her goals and needs are addressed
- Services that help address the skills and accommodations needed to prepare for transitioning post-high school
- A summary of services acquired during the transition process to assist post-high school

Section 504 and ADA work together to ensure that a child with ASD cannot be discriminated against in school and beyond:

- Equal opportunities available to students with disabilities
- Access provided to supportive services (such as an in-classroom aid)
- Protections provided for the child post-high school (in college or at work) – All programs accessible, including extracurricular activities
- Protections provided for children with ASD in education and employment

Remember: After high school, IDEA requirements no longer apply, but Section 504 and ADA will continue to provide protections for your child. IDEA accommodations were provided automatically by your school. After high school, it is your child's (or your) responsibility to make sure the appropriate accommodations are requested in college or at a place of employment.

TRANSITION PLAN

Transition planning allows you, your young adult with disabilities, and his/her school system to begin planning for the road to graduation and beyond. The planning process introduces you and your young adult to services, activities, instruction, and support designed to provide him with the skills necessary to succeed post-high school. A good transition plan will include both long- and short-term goals, identify the necessary supports, and be very specific to the interests, abilities, and desires of your child.

While this process may seem overwhelming and even scary, starting early will allow you to take smaller, more manageable steps and help you and your child reach your goals successfully and, ideally, with less stress. Therefore, this chapter outlines the key steps of the process, the overarching goals of transition planning, and how to create a successful transition plan that takes into consideration all of your young adult's strengths and plans for the future.

This information will become part of your young adult's IEP although it may be developed as a separate document called an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP). In either case, it may include information on such areas as:

- Vocational training and job sampling (similar to on-the-job training)
- Employment goals and a timeline for achieving them
- Goals in support of residential opportunities, including independent living
- Community participation goals, including social and leisure skills, travel training, purchasing skills, and personal care, to name a few
- Goals relevant to postsecondary education (college), when appropriate
- Coordination with state and private adult services agencies and providers

Planning to Plan—Reflecting and Gathering Information to Build Your Young Adult's Transition Plan

Start small, but think big! Before you begin the actual paperwork and planning with your young adult's school and IEP team to implement the transition plan, you can start planning on your own to lay a foundation for the entire process. This section will outline a three-step process to:

1. Facilitate thinking and brainstorming about your young adult's future (Assessment)
2. Begin planning future goals (Goal Writing)
3. Understand realistic challenges to these plans (Anticipating Obstacles)

Involve your child in the planning process as much as possible. Person-centered planning not only empowers the individual, but it also creates a more productive and effective transition plan in the long run.

Step One: Assessment

As you begin the transition planning process, think about the “big picture” of your young adult’s future:

- What do you want your child’s life to look like 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years from now?
- What do you NOT want your child’s life to look like in 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years from now?
- What will he/she require to get to one and avoid the other?

As a parent of a young adult with a disability, you may have struggled to adjust your expectations for the future you once dreamed of for your child. But realistic, concrete goals and expectations are the foundation of a successful transition plan. It is important not only to set goals that can be reached by your child, building one on the next, but also to be sure to challenge your child’s growth and leave room to be pleasantly surprised by all that your child can accomplish through this process.

Throughout this discussion (often called “futures planning”), the concept of future quality of life is central. Quality of life basically refers to how satisfied your child feels about his/her education, work, recreation, spiritual life, social connections, community living, health, and emotional well-being. You may not have specific ideas about all of these areas, but you should start imagining and thinking about what you would like for your young adult and what your child would like for him/herself as he/she transitions out of high school. At different times in this process, you will begin to find connections among all of these areas and start to identify realistic and attainable goals for your child. Although the concept of quality of life is often as much about the process as it is about the product, neither process nor product should be readily compromised as part of transition planning. Once you have this broad vision in mind, start brainstorming about some of the specifics, such as personal interests, strengths and challenges, past learning history, and the supports that will be necessary for your young adult along the way. These constitute the starting point of the transition plan.

Personal Interests

As with any adolescent, your child may have strong personal interests and hobbies. These preferences may be discovered by observing your young adult to see what makes him happy, what he/she does during downtime, or what items or activities motivate him.

Strengths (Capabilities) and Weaknesses (Challenges)

You are obviously well aware that there are certain areas in your child’s life that he/she does better in and other areas that are more challenging to him. It is important to list all of your young adult’s strengths and challenges, and then to look at them with a new eye.

In real life, patterns of behavior previously considered to be potential challenges may actually help in the workplace: things like attention to detail may be especially valued at a quality assurance position, and punctuality is always valued in any workplace. If your young adult is overly interested in sci-fi movies, is there a way in which this can be translated into a strength? If so, how? Take a look at how specific capabilities and challenges that your young adult faces can be turned into assets in the workplace or school.

Building on Experience

Building from your child's strengths and challenges, it is useful to think about areas in which he/she has succeeded or been challenged in the past.

Previous experiences, whether good or bad, are excellent sources of valuable information relevant to the transition planning process. These experiences can illuminate areas where your young adult is more likely to succeed or areas that may not work the best for him. This kind of knowledge is also extremely valuable to the transition planning process.

Aside from the learning value, previous work experience, coupled with comprehensive, community-based instruction, makes it more likely that your young adult will have an easier time accessing employment in the future. If your child has not had any work experience, consider looking for opportunities now, early on in the transition process. If actual work experiences are not a possibility, you may want to consider having your child volunteer in an area of interest as this, too, can provide information on your child's interests, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses across a variety of tasks and environments. Finding such opportunities may not, at first glance, appear easy. However, by networking with friends, other parents, your employer, the businesses you frequent (e.g., local shops), and community services (e.g., houses of worship), you will probably find a number of opportunities just waiting to be discovered.

Support Structure

Throughout the life of your child, a support network of teachers, counselors, friends, family, and others has been important and helpful. This support structure will continue to be important to both you and your young adult through the transition period and across new environments. However, because social relationships can be challenging for someone with a disability, this area requires some closer consideration and attention:

Are there service organizations at a local high school or college that coordinate a buddy or mentor program in which same-age peers are paired with individuals with disabilities for social outings and activities?

Keep in mind that many of the people involved in your young adult's support network leading up to graduation will not be there after graduation. Developing comprehensive and effective support networks is, almost by definition, an ongoing process.

Step Two: Writing Overarching Goals

Later in the transition process, you will be asked to help determine—and write down—many specific objectives you want your young adult to achieve. But now is the time to think of the broad, overarching goals that qualitatively reflect the future you want for your young adult. You can think of this as a **mission statement** for the transition you envision.

These overarching goals should build from the information you gathered in the previous assessment regarding **quality of life**, personal interests, strengths and challenges, and past experience.

Step Three: Anticipating Obstacles

A goal is not meant to be easy to accomplish, and it is not something that will only take a short amount of time to achieve. But each goal can be broken into smaller steps for achievement. As you think of the skills, lessons, materials, and information you and your young adult need to move through the transition process successfully, obstacles may present themselves. For instance, as you created the list of goals for your child, did you think of any skills that he/she may need to be successful? Or resources that will help him accomplish them? Lack of any key “ingredient” may delay, if not stall, the transition process. So, if certain skills need development, such as effective communication techniques, toileting, table manners, cell phone use, or personal hygiene skills, now is the time to create a strategy to develop them.

Other obstacles may appear along the way, but you are building a solid plan that can be revised and modified to accommodate the changing needs, desires, and skills of your young adult.

The Transition Plan

Characteristics of a Good Transition Plan

IDEA specifies that transition planning is a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is:

- **Outcome-oriented**—a process with clear goals and measurable outcomes
- **Student-centered**—based on the specific skills that the student needs and reflective of the young adult’s interests and preferences
- **Broad-based**—includes instruction and related services, community experiences, development of employment and post-school living objectives, and acquisition of daily living skills and vocational evaluation
- **A working document**—outlines current and future goals, along with the specific strategies for achieving these goals, and changes over time

What the Plan Should Include

Your young adult’s transition plan will be customized based on his/her needs. In particular, a solid transition plan will include many of the following elements:

- Assessment of your young adult’s needs, interests, and abilities
- Statement of preferences for education, employment, and adult living
- Steps to be taken to support achievement of these goals
- Specific methods and resources to meet these goals, including accommodations, services, and/or skills related to the transition goals
- Instruction on academic, vocational, and living skills
- Identification of community experiences and skills related to future goals
- Exploration of service organizations or agencies to provide services and support
- Methods for evaluating success of transition activities (e.g., a video portfolio)

Additional Logistical Information in the Plan

In addition to stating the goals for your young adult, the transition plan should include logistical information on how the plan will be implemented and monitored, such as:

- A timeline for achieving goals

- Identified responsible people or agencies to help with these goals
- Clarification of how roles will be coordinated
- A plan for identifying post-graduation services and supports, and obtaining the necessary funding

Who is Involved

Transition planning should help you and your young adult connect with the adult service system. Adult service organizations that may provide or pay for post-transition services need to be invited to participate in the development of the IEP transition plan. If they are unable to attend, then the school must find alternative ways of involving them in planning any transition services they might pay for or provide. Each transition activity should include someone who consents to monitor the provision of that service as outlined in the IEP.

Guidance counselors, related service providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and administrators all have a potential voice in designing transition plans for students. These participants may vary, depending on the goals and needs of your young adult.

There is one major difference between transition planning and the IEP meetings you may be used to—it is required that your young adult be involved!

Your Role as a Parent

As a parent, you play a very important role in the development of the transition plan. You will need to:

- Be your child's primary advocate in the absence of his/her ability to do so
- Provide unique and personal information about your child that is not reflected in the school's or agency's records
- Ensure the transition plan is meaningful, practical, and useful for your individual child
- Monitor transition planning in the IEP to ensure agreed-upon activities are implemented; frequent communication with your child and other IEP team members will help keep the plan a working document
- Promote your young adult's independence, self-advocacy, and decision making
- Plan for future financial and support needs, such as guardianship, estate planning, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and related work incentives, along with other sources of financial support

The IEP team relies on your knowledge of your child. Effective transition planning adopts an approach that is sensitive to the culture and context of the family, thus empowering your family's role in guiding your adult child.

Families must be notified ahead of time when an IEP meeting includes development of a transition plan. While many schools will send materials prior to the meeting to help you think about your vision for your child's future, other schools may not. You will have to initiate the process yourself.

Implementing and Monitoring the Transition Plan

You will work with the transition team during a series of meetings to develop a comprehensive transition plan for your young adult. You should record important details during any planning meetings. Once the actual plan is completed by the team, it is a living, evolving document that should be reviewed and updated several times a year to ensure it reflects and meets all of your young adult's needs, and adequate progress is being made to that end. Each team member will be responsible for implementing the specific transition tasks, together with your child with ASD.

By creating a document with outcome-oriented goals that can be measured, you can more efficiently and effectively monitor your young adult's progress. It is important to work with the transition planning team to periodically update this plan as your young adult continues through school to ensure a successful transition to adulthood.

Early Planning Leads to Success

Planning for your young adult's future and exploring the world of postsecondary education or employment may seem daunting or even a distant prospect. However, starting to plan early and building particular life skills, postsecondary education, or employment goals into your young adult's transition plan/IEP will break the process into manageable steps and help engage an accessible, ongoing support system of transition team member

Areas to Consider When Developing Annual Transition Goals and Objectives

Requirements for graduation are one of the first things to discuss when developing plans for transition from school. You should receive a high school diploma if you have met the graduation requirements as agreed upon by the IEP and your local Board of Education. A meaningful IEP must be developed in order to make a successful transition from school to adult life.

By the time you leave school, you should have:

- An awareness of your own strengths and needs and know what you like and dislike;
- An understanding of the needs that would have to be met to enable you to live as independently as possible;
- Self-advocacy skills that allow you to express preferences and make choices;
- An ability to display appropriate social skills for participating in a community;
- A basic knowledge of your rights under disability legislation, including civic responsibilities;
- A basic understanding of community resources; and
- An understanding of your disability.

Bearing in mind the statements listed above, there are three basic areas of your life that you must think about when developing transition goals:

- Postsecondary education or training;
- Employment; and, if appropriate,
- Independent living/community participation.

The following pages look at each of these areas and provide additional information to help you and your parent(s) identify the services and supports that may be necessary for you to prepare for the transition from school to adult life.

A Personal Checklist: Personal Strengths

Directions:

Put a one (1) next to any sentence that describes you. Then, put a circle around the three (3) sentences that *best* describe you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm reliable (people can count on me). | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of energy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm friendly. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a good listener. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm polite. | <input type="checkbox"/> I like to have a good time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm good at many things. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm honest. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I try to follow instructions. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm hard-working. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to do things with others. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm usually on time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to do things on my own. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm serious. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to help other people. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm generous. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like to keep things neat and organized. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm proud of myself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a good friend. | <input type="checkbox"/> I can keep a secret. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have good common sense. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a good student. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I stick with things until they get done. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm musical. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm good at fixing things. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm artistic. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can work out my problems on my own. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm creative. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm good with words. | <input type="checkbox"/> I ask others for help when I need it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm good with my hands. | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm good at one or two things. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can help others work out their problems. | |

Use this space to write down your other strengths:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

A Personal Checklist: Likes and Dislikes

Directions:

Put a one (1) next to any hobbies, interests, or activities that you like. Put a two (2) next to any activity you do not like. Then, put a circle around the three (3) things that you like to do the *most*.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> Sketching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking | <input type="checkbox"/> Painting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking care of people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> Babysitting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to church/synagogue/temple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling | <input type="checkbox"/> Belonging to a club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding | <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting with friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping pets | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking care of animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening or taking care of plants | <input type="checkbox"/> Using a computer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farming | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing computer games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking | <input type="checkbox"/> Crocheting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woodworking | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty and hair care | <input type="checkbox"/> Knitting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing songs, stories, poems | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV or movies | <input type="checkbox"/> Rollerblading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing an instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor cross |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a leader of a group | <input type="checkbox"/> Working out/exercising |

Use this space to add other hobbies and interests that you can think of:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Self-Awareness Questionnaire

1. **I know I am in special education**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
2. **I have a disability**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
3. **I have IEP**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
4. **I have goals in my IEP**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
5. **I know my IEP goals**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
6. **I have a copy of my IEP (or my parents have one.)**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
7. **I know what accommodations I have**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
8. **I can describe what accommodations I need in class to my teachers**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
9. **I feel positive about the future**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
10. **People with disabilities can go to college**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
11. **I can talk about my goals and dreams for after high school**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
12. **I can explain to others how my disability affects my work.**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
13. **I am comfortable telling others about my disability**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No
14. **People with disabilities can get good jobs after high school.**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I think so
 - c. I'm not sure
 - d. No

15. Things I can do well at school

16. Things I need help with at school

17. Things I can do well at home, work or another place

18. Things I need help with at home, work or another place

19. The most important thing in my life is

Sample Transition Goals and Objectives Bank

Self-Advocacy

How does self-advocacy play a part in postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living/community participation?

Self-advocacy skills play a very important part in all areas of your life. The skills you develop during the school years will carry over into your adult life. Developing appropriate skills must start at a very young age. Here are some sample areas that will help you to assess and identify your level of self-advocacy skills.

Goal: Student will demonstrate self-advocacy skills in order to communicate learning style and academic, vocational, and personal life care needs.

Objectives:

- ___ Student will complete a learning style inventory and be able to describe his/her learning style.
- ___ Student will communicate to others the strengths and weaknesses of his/her learning style.
- ___ Student will review the accommodations/modifications page of his/her IEP.
- ___ Student will communicate with teachers to seek help, clarify instructions or requirements of academic tasks, and make them aware of accommodations.
- ___ Student will learn skills to begin to facilitate his/her IEP meeting.
- ___ Student will identify impact of behaviors on self and others and how it affects learning.
- ___ Student will assess accuracy of assignments and tests by reviewing for errors and making necessary revisions.
- ___ Student will accept the consequences of being unprepared for class by discussing such consequences and developing a strategy to avoid such problems in the future.
- ___ Student will demonstrate the skill of obtaining information from teachers regarding tests, quizzes, projects, etc.

Sample Transition Goals and Objectives Bank

Self-Advocacy

(continued)

Objectives:

- ___ Student will develop and carry out a plan for making up work missed due to absences.
- ___ Student will accept responsibility for utilizing study period/resource services to meet classroom objectives.
- ___ Student will discuss specific behaviors (positive and negative) and their effect on academic classes and/or social networks.
- ___ Student will seek guidance/direction when facing new or difficult situations.
- ___ Student will appropriately confront topics/issues that are uncomfortable to discuss, with teacher/paraprofessional support.
- ___ Student will plan and implement alternative solutions for school problems with adult guidance as they occur.
- ___ Student will face academic and social situations positively and appropriately and discuss feelings regarding these situations.
- ___ Student will accept praise and/or criticism from peers or adults and utilize such feedback to change social and behavioral outcomes.
- ___ Student will learn the skills necessary to say "No" when he/she feels uncomfortable in a particular situation.
- ___ Student will become aware of his/her disability.
- ___ Student will be aware of his/her emotions/feelings and discuss them.
- ___ Student will learn coping skills when in a stressful situation.
- ___ Student will learn about rights and responsibilities under state and federal disability legislation (e.g., IDEA, Section 504, ADA).
- ___ Student and the IEP will develop self-advocacy skills, goals, and objectives if appropriate.
- ___ Student will communicate his/her likes and dislikes.

My Transition Goal

My goal for *Self-Advocacy* is:

The objectives/activities I need to have included in my **IEP** to help me reach this goal are:

For students with an IEP, please bring this book to your IEP meeting and copy these pages for members of your IEP.

Record Keeping

Records are very important when planning your transition from school to life as a young adult. Keep track of what you, your child, and the school have agreed to, have actually completed, and still have left to do.

Depending upon your child's future goals, each college, training facility, and local, state and/or federal agency will require a variety of information from you. Having your child's records within reach for a quick response will make the transition more accurate, timely, and, hopefully, less stressful.

Request the following copies to keep in your child's file:

- All high school transcripts;
- Evaluations, tests, counselors/therapists' reports, and special education records;
- Accommodations that have and have not worked;
- Types of assistive technology software programs that have been helpful;
- On-the-job training reports and work experiences; and
- Letters of recommendation from employers or any agencies where your child has done volunteer work.

When researching colleges, places of employment, and local, state, and/or federal agencies:

- Create a file folder for each agency, school, or employer contacted;
- Have the contact person's name, address, and phone number on the outside of the folder for easy reference or maintain a special contact list;
- Keep accurate, dated notes of each conversation with agency personnel;
- Keep copies of all letters you or your child write to an agency and all letters received from the agencies;
- Keep brochures, handouts, guidelines, and copies of any applications by agency name and indicate the date you obtained this material; and
- Maintain a dated "to do" list of responses, follow-ups, and agency deadlines, and check it often.

Always save these files and keep them up-to-date. Goals may change after your child leaves school, but the information in the files will be important throughout his/her life.

How Can Family Members Help with Transition?



There are many ways that family members can help make their child's transition as smooth as possible. The following are some guidelines:

- Set realistic goals. Include your son or daughter in setting goals for the future and make sure that the school program prepares him/her to meet those goals. All students need to gain as many independent learning, work, and living skills as possible.
- Encourage gradual independence. Parents or other family members are not always going to be around. Begin now to encourage independent travel, self-care activities, money management, and decision-making. A person with a disability may always need support, but each task or activity that he or she can do alone is a great gain and one less thing that someone else may have to be paid to do for him or her one day.
- Encourage self-advocacy. Students need to gain confidence and speak out appropriately for what they need and want.
- Gather information about issues such as guardianship, power of attorney, sex education, sexual responsibility, and driving. Decisions about these matters will have to be made based upon the person's level of independence and competency, the family's values, and the resources available to help with each issue.
- Familiarize yourself with the adult service system. Have you contacted agencies outside the school system that may be able to assist with long-range goals?

How Can Family Members Help with Transition? (continued)

Apply for future benefits/services early and be persistent:

- Build self-esteem. Set high expectations for your son or daughter. Teach him or her skills that you would teach any child who is getting ready to go out into the world: how to do laundry, make a simple meal, and sew on a button. Because you have confidence, he or she will have confidence, too.
- Encourage social integration. Everyone wants and needs friends. Young people with disabilities cannot afford to be isolated from persons their age without disabilities. Encourage participation in clubs and sports in and outside of school.
- Provide real experiences. Persons with disabilities need experience in work situations. This should be addressed by the IEP team and incorporated into the IEP. Parents/guardians should also look for ways to assist their child in obtaining work or volunteer experiences outside of school.
- Encourage good grooming, good work habits, and appropriate social skills. Since a person with a disability usually has to overcome a certain amount of prejudice, it makes sense for him or her to take particular care to make a good impression by being appropriately dressed, well-groomed, punctual, reliable, and hard-working.
- Foster an acceptance of criticism. Most teenagers are sensitive to even the most mild criticism. Young people have to learn to cope with the standards of the workplace and with unfair criticism. Practicing acceptable responses to criticism needs to begin early.
- Provide opportunities to manage money. Teenagers should be paid for the work they do and taught the necessary skills to manage their own money. Gradually, they should be encouraged to do their own shopping using their own money, and those who are able should begin to do some budgeting, saving, or long-term planning.
- Transition means “letting go” for families. The issues surrounding transition are complex and loaded with emotional significance. However, the more information that you have, the easier it is for you to make wise decisions.

How important is student participation?

Student involvement is the most important part of transition planning. The student must be notified of the IEP team meeting in writing. The student may take part in the following ways:

- Take an active role in the IEP meeting by asking questions or leading the IEP meeting
- Set goals and participate in transition activities to reach goals
- Find out about local resources and services
- Get additional work experience
- Listen and respond to team members present at the meeting
- Provide information regarding personal strengths, abilities, needs, preferences, and interests

TIP: Students should develop decision-making and communication skills in order to express their plans for the future during the IEP meeting.



How important is parent participation?

Parent participation is a key component to successful transition planning. Parents must be notified of the IEP team meeting in writing.

Parents take part in the following ways:

- Take an active role in the IEP meeting by asking questions
- Ask questions about transition assessment results
- Help your child with transition activities
- Contact the transition staff at your child's school

TIP: Parents should be active members of the transition team. Parents can take an active role in helping their student with their transition activities. Transition activities may include participation from families, schools, the community, and outside agencies. To get the most out of the IEP team meeting, it is best to prepare in advance.

How long do students receive transition services?

Transition services are provided until the student:

- Receives a diploma, or
- Receives a Certificate of Completion and voluntarily leaves the District, or
- Reaches the age of 22

What are the graduation requirements for a diploma?

District graduation requirements are periodically changed. They should be discussed at every IEP team meeting by reviewing the student's Individual Graduation Plan. If the student needs accommodations and/or modifications to succeed in general education curriculum they must be documented in the IEP. These accommodations and/or modifications must be permitted during instruction and when the student takes State or District tests including those required for graduation.

To receive a diploma the student must:

- Pass the required classes
- Earn the required credits

What happens if the student does not meet graduation requirements for a diploma?

If the student does not earn a diploma, he/she may earn a Certificate of Completion.

A Certificate of Completion may be given to students who access standards within the General or Alternate Curriculum. Students receiving a Certificate of Completion must complete one of the following:

- Complete the prescribed course of study stated in the IEP, or
- Satisfactorily meet the IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team, or
- Satisfactorily attend high school, participate in the instruction prescribed by the IEP and meet the objectives of the statement of transition services.

Students receiving the Certificate of Completion may take part in graduation and graduation activities.

