



Diploma vs. Certificate of Completion

Depending on the student's post high school needs, preferences and interests, a decision about whether to pursue a diploma or a certificate of completion will need to be made.

A high school diploma is awarded to a student who meets a prescribed course of study for which there are minimum standards set forth for graduation. These standards typically include completing a certain number of credits and specific classes in math, science, social science, etc. Graduation with a high school diploma will make a student ineligible for further special education services, so it is important that the student be ready for post-secondary education, employment or community living before he/she receives his/her diploma. If you disagree with the IEP team's determination of graduation, you may file for due process.

[continued >](#)

Diploma vs. Certificate of Completion (cont.)

Alternatively, a student may receive a certificate of completion and receive special education services until the age of 22. The adult student will enroll in vocational education that is designed to help him/her obtain skills necessary for employment. The certificate provides recognition to students who meet their IEP/ITP goals.

A certificate of completion is not the same as a high school diploma. A diploma is typically required to apply for four-year colleges and federal financial aid. Some employers may also require a high school diploma to apply for employment.



TRANSITION TO ADULthood

FOR STUDENTS AGE 14 AND UP

A General Overview of the Transition Process from High School



Produced by:

FRANK D. LANTERMAN
REGIONAL CENTER
SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW CLINIC

3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, California 90010
213.383.1300 • Fax: 213.383.6526
kyrc@lanterman.org • www.lanterman.org

[f](#) lantermanregionalcenter
[i](#) frankdlantermanrc

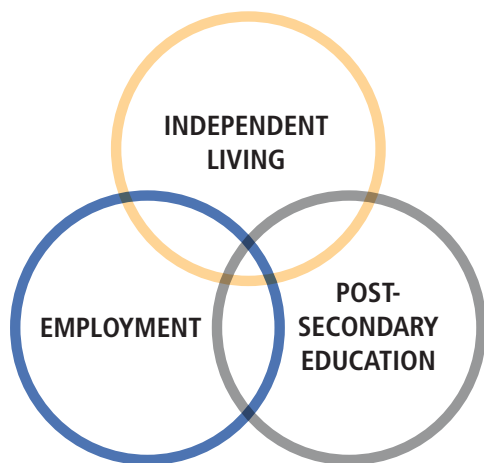
To learn more about the Law Clinic,
contact your service coordinator.





What is Adulthood Transition?

The goal of adulthood transition is to prepare students in special education for life after high school. Ideally, the last day of school should look like the first day in the community. Students should be prepared to enter college, work or live independently by the end of their schooling.



What is an Individual Transition Plan?

An Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is a written plan that helps prepare students for life after high school. An ITP is the portion of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that specifically focuses on post-secondary education/training, employment and independent living skills.

To be eligible for an ITP, you must be 14 or older and already have an IEP. The ITP must be based on the student's needs, preferences and interests, and include goals, timelines and specify who will assist with each goal. School districts must have an ITP based on a student's interests by the time he/she turns 16 years old.



What Kind of Goals Should an ITP Contain?

All ITP goals should be "outcome-oriented." Good ITP activities provide important skills required to accomplish the overall ITP goal, and services provided are in support of learning the necessary skills and building upon them until the goal is achieved. For example, a student with a goal of employment in a retail store should have services that focus on applying for employment and creating good work habits.



How Are a Student's Interests Determined?

There is no one-size-fits-all program option for students of transition age. The school district must assess a student to determine the services needed to address his/her transition needs. If the district has not completed an assessment, you can request that the school complete a comprehensive transition assessment.

Students must be invited to attend any ITP meeting. If the student does not attend the meeting, the district must take other steps to ensure that the student's interests are considered. The district must also consider a parent's input when developing an ITP. However, it is important to note that at the age of 18 a student becomes the legal rights holder. Parents that are interested in learning more about how they can remain involved should talk to their service coordinator.



How Can Parents Help?

Parents can help transition-age students by emphasizing the importance of grooming, physical fitness, mobility, communication and social skills, and help to practice and develop these skills. It is never too early to begin working on these skills, and the sooner basic skills are developed, the quicker the school district can shift its focus to other goals that increase independence, such as learning to use public transportation.