



Special education series

Know your Rights:

Transition planning for adult life



Transition services are special education services to assist children with disabilities prepare for adult life. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the school must provide transition services to help your child move from school to post-school activities such as college, vocational or adult education, employment, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Transition services are designed to be results-oriented and focused on improving your child's academic and functional achievement.

Transition planning should align your child's educational experience with his or her goals for life after high school. Transition services are based on your child's needs, taking into account his or her strengths, preferences, and interests. The team should include your child's input when planning transition services.

Transition services should be a coordinated set of activities involving your child, school, and any agency that might assist the student after graduation. Services should focus on helping your child get the skills and experience necessary to prepare for life after graduation. For example, a student with post-graduation goals of independent living and employment in customer service might need a wide array of services, including instruction in bill paying, assistance from vocational rehabilitation to find an internship in a local business, a link with the housing agency for assistance in applying for state subsidized housing, and training on how to use public transportation. All of these services should be coordinated through the transition planning process.

What is the parents' role in transition planning?

You are a member of the educational team. Your role in transition planning, as it is in the entire IEP process, is critical. You know your child better than anyone else and make sure that your child's needs are heard and addressed by the educational team.

When do transition services start?

Transition planning should begin during the school year when your child will turn 14, or younger when appropriate. A team meeting should be called to discuss transition, develop a plan, and incorporate the plan into your child's IEP.

Common problems with transition planning

- It doesn't happen
- It happens on paper but nowhere else
- The right agencies are not involved
- Premature graduation (Students are eligible for special education until they earn a regular high school diploma or turn 21)



What should transition plans include?

The transition plan should include:

- Appropriate measurable post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills.
- The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.
- The plan should show how your child's current educational program is linked to his or her post-secondary goals. If your child's goal is to be a computer programmer, the transition plan could include computer classes; if the student's goal is to go to college, the transition services may include college preparatory coursework.
- Transition services may be provided by an agency other than the school district, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or the Area Agency. However, if the agency fails to provide the

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transition services, the school district must reconvene the team and identify alternate strategies.

- The school district must monitor the transition services at least weekly.
- The transition plan must be updated annually.

What can I do to make transition planning successful?

- Ask for a meeting – parents have the right to request a team meeting at any time – let the school know the purpose of the meeting is transition planning.
- Ask for the right agencies to be involved. Find out if your child is eligible for services from the Mental Health Center, Area Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation, or other agencies in your area.
- Involve your child. Ask your child to participate in the development of his or her transition plan. This will help ensure that your child will be invested in the plan.
- Go to the meeting prepared. Make a list of the areas that need to be addressed and the services you think your child needs, and discuss them with the team. If you aren't sure what your child needs, consult with your child's doctor, therapists, other agencies, or anyone else who may be able to offer advice.
- If you have concerns regarding transition planning for your child, and you have had an unsuccessful meeting with the school, call the DRC for further information about your rights.

