

Transition Requirements: Beginning at Age 14

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. Identifying the challenges students will face as adults, and preparing them to meet those demands requires careful transition planning beginning at the earliest age possible.

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. Students and families are often faced with much paperwork to meet eligibility requirements and some adult services have long waiting lists. For example, it is recommended that youth who have a developmental disability have their names placed on the waiting list for services at the age of 14.

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 14 and over must be invited to attend the IEP meeting. The invitation should be documented. If the student does not attend, the district or BOCES must document how the student's interests and preferences were considered.

“(b)(1) For each student with disabilities beginning at age 14 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), and updated annually, a “statement of the transition service needs” of the student under the applicable components of the IEP that focuses on the student’s courses of study (such as participation in advance-placement courses or a vocational education program); ...”

The same need for long-range educational planning exists for all students with disabilities, beginning at 14 years of age. If a long-range educational plan is not developed early, the student could end up not graduating or graduating without the courses and experiences needed for independent living, further training or employment. Actively involving students in the planning process could motivate them to remain at school. Involving students in the discussion and decision-making may help students understand that the courses they are taking in school have a direct relationship to achieving what they want to do beyond school.

After first identifying the student's long range transition outcomes 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.

In the student's IEP, this requirement can be met in several ways. For example:

- List the anticipated courses and experiences that the student will have by grade level or year.
- Include a narrative statement that outlines the steps the student should take to reach the identified post school outcome.
- Attach a four-year plan that has been developed for the student as part of a general education, school-to-career, planning process.

The student's course of study may be stated in several ways. Examples include:

- Grade 9: Reading, Study Skills, World Geography, Earth Science, Beginning Foods, Applied Math, Theater
- Grade 10: Oral and Written Communication, Reading, Applied Math, Intro. To Biology, Geography, Experience Based Career Education
- Grade 11: Algebra, U.S. History, Natural Resources/Forestry, PE, Computer Studies, Photography, Single Survival, Cooperative Work Experiences
- Grade 12: Composition, Government, Technical Carpentry, Natural Resources and Forestry (dual enrollment program), Alternative Cooperative Education

OR

(1) Sam expresses an interest in pursuing post-secondary education upon graduation from high school. He will need to determine entrance requirements for the colleges he is considering and complete the courses required. Sam should enroll in the college preparatory course at the high school to receive support in the areas of study skills, time management, organizational skills and self-advocacy skills.

(2) Suzie expresses an interest in seeking full-time competitive employment or technical skills upon graduation from high school. She should investigate the program options at the regional vocational-technical school and determine necessary prerequisites. If this is not feasible, Suzie should address how she will begin career exploration, job training and community based work experience as part of her high school program.

What to Do

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 and practice informed decision-making skills.
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities.
- Broaden student experiences with community activities and expand friendships.
- Pursue and use local transportation options
- Acquire an identification card and the ability to communicate personal information.
- Identify and begin learning skills necessary for independent living including money management.

Adapted from the National transition Network