

Transition Requirements: Beginning at Age 16

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.

Beginning at 16

When the student reaches age 16, (or earlier if appropriate), planning begins to focus on specific transition services, including interagency linkages.

“(b)(2) for each student beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services for the student, including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages...”

In transition planning consider:

- Employment/career planning
- Living arrangements/housing for the future
- Social and leisure activities
- Security, health, and safety needs
- Post-secondary education and training.
- What kind of supports may be necessary

Education’s Role and Responsibility

It is the school’s responsibility to plan and provide those services that will prepare the student to move successfully from school to the appropriate post-school environment and to assist the student to connect with the necessary community agencies, including vocational rehabilitation, that will provide support services. The post-school outcomes for post-secondary education or training, employment, and independent living are identified as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning process and are based upon the student’s preferences, interests and needs. Please note that the law does not specify where or how services are to be provided. Appropriate services may include:

- Planning and IEP development based on the student’s post-school goals
- Academic preparation for post-secondary education and training
- Vocational and career evaluation
- Job shadows and job tryouts
- Work experience
- Vocational education classes

The types of academic preparation, community experience, and agency linkages will be different based on the post-school outcomes that have been identified for each student.

How Do You Plan?

Transition planning involves a team of people drawn from different parts of the student's school and community life. The specific needs of the student for post-secondary services should determine who is invited to the IEP transition-planning meeting. 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. If representatives from the agencies do not attend the meeting, the school is required to "take other steps to obtain participation" in planning the student's transition services, such as separate meetings, phone calls or written correspondence.

Transition services can and should be delivered through curricular and extra curricular activities in many settings – in academic and vocational classrooms, at home, and throughout the community – to practice and reinforce newly acquired skills. The more young adults with disabilities have opportunities to practice their skills in real-life situations, the more comfortable and natural they will feel in those settings.

Many areas of service overlap and may be shared by education and other agencies. It is critical that linkages are made and agency service plans are developed before a student leaves the school setting.

What to Do:

Two to Three Years Before Leaving School

- Identify community support services and programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, Centers for Independent Living, Community Centered Board, etc.)
- Coordinate with adult service providers and ensure that appropriate referrals have been made.
- Match career interests and skills with academic course work and community work experiences.
- Gather more information on post-secondary programs and the support services offered; and make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams.
- 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.
- Begin a resume and update it as needed.

- 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.

One Year Before Leaving School

- Apply for financial support programs. (Supplemental Security Income, Independent Living Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Personal Assistant Services).
- Identify the post-secondary school the student plans to attend and arrange for accommodations.
- Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying necessary accommodations at post-secondary and work environments.
- Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed.
- Take responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments, and social activities including transportation needs.
- Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions etc.).
- Register to vote and for selective service (if a male).

Adapted from the National Transition Network Checklist
