



From “NO” Where to “KNOW” Where

A Parent Handbook for Their Child’s Transition to Adult Services

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What is in store for youth with disabilities after they leave school? What will happen to them when they no longer receive the educational services or accommodations which have been mandated by federal law? These questions are important to all parents of youth with special needs and, even though disabilities may vary greatly in their severity or impact, the need to plan for the future is very important.

It is vitally important for families to realize that transition represents the process of moving from services in school that eligible students are **eligible** to under their Individualized Education Program (IEP) to services in adult programs that are available based on varying **eligibility** criteria.

Families who begin planning early will have more time to identify concerns, overcome challenges or barriers that arise, and create opportunities which will help their student achieve their goals. Planning for the future early will alleviate disappointment and anxiety as they approach adulthood.

SIX KEY AREAS TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION

1. Understanding of the laws
2. Understanding of the planning process and the importance of understanding what “informed choice” means
3. Record-keeping and documentation
4. Knowing about the wide range of adult services and programs
5. Understanding how the adult system works
6. Learning about the legal requirements and appeal processes available in various agencies

HELPING YOUR YOUTH DISCOVER A VISION

Before you start down the road to transition planning it is important to understand where your child wants to be in the future. Sometimes the nature of their disabilities makes it difficult or impossible for them to think through or talk about their ideas and feelings.

This handbook has a variety of activities for you to participate in with your child to help them answer some of the questions that will be able to help you, your child, and the transition IEP team best plan for your child’s future.

OVERVIEW OF THE LAWS THAT IMPACT TRANSITION

There are several federal laws that impact the transition of individuals with disabilities from school to adult life. Some of the basic information on some of the laws is reviewed in this section including:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA 2004)
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act – An Anti-Discrimination Law
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Other legislative supports for transition including: Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998; Fair Labors Standards Act (FLSA); School-to-Work Opportunities Act; Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); and Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.

WHAT IS TRANSITION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Transition is change. It is passage from one state to another. We each face many changes or transitions in life, bur this handbook talks about the transition from school to whatever is next for your child with a disability. This transition is change...and change is scary and it is hard – for all of us!!!

Some parents don’t think about what will happen after their child no longer goes to school until a few months before graduation and then they realize that “the bus won’t be coming!” That’s traumatic! – OR we do plan and find that what is available through adult service agencies and in the community may not provide the ongoing assistance needed by our young people. We may find that our young people don’t have choices for a myriad of reasons.

This handbook helps parents, family members, and individuals think through all possible scenarios and helps them know where to turn for help and what planning processes can start right now!

WHAT IS TRANSITION PLANNING?

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA 2004) was reauthorized for the first time in 1997, it continued to recognize the need for transition services and included the first federal mandate for those services. It is clearly intended that those services be an integral part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Transition planning was designed to assist students with disabilities as they move from school into the adult world.

In this portion of the handbook, parents are given prompts and ideas to help with: the purpose, preparation, and development of transition plans.

SEVEN STEPS TO TRANSITION

The better prepared that parents and their child are before a transitional IEP meeting, the more efficient and effective the process will be. These seven steps will help parents prepare for a successful IEP meeting:

1. Identify the **environments and planning areas** important to the young adult;
2. Identify the **skills needed** for the child to succeed in each of the targeted planning areas (identified in step one);
3. Prioritize **needs, interests, and preferences** to be considered in the IEP;
4. **Prepare** for the IEP meeting;
5. **Develop** the transition plan during the IEP meeting;
6. **Implement** (start doing) and monitor the IEP; and
7. **Watch and record** outcomes.

Follow the descriptions of the seven steps to transition there are 14 pages of activities for parents to do with their transitioning child that will help maximize the transition planning process. Planning areas include: employment; an employment traits assessment; job productivity; postsecondary training and education; independent living (life skills, housing, transportation, and medical and support services); financial management; community participation; setting priorities for transition planning – career/employment, education, residential/living, recreation/leisure, transportation, social/interpersonal, personal concerns, and health.

WHO WILL BE THERE?

There are some key players in a child's transition planning. Transition plans are most effective when they are developed by team members who are working together. IDEIA 2004 requires that the following people be part of the IEP development:

- student (child);
- parents (other family members);
- special education teacher (at least one);
- regular education teacher (at least one) who has knowledge of the student;
- related service providers (if appropriate; speech or occupational therapists, etc.)
- representative from the Local Education Agency (LEA); and
- other adult service providers, such as: Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and Support Coordinators (case managers for the Division of Services for People with Disabilities – DSPD)

The handbook includes a page to help parents and family members think through who the best transition planning team members will be.

TRANSITION PLANNING TIMELINE

This timeline is very instrumental in helping parents and other family members know what they should be doing and when and what the school should be doing and when.