

Transition Planning and Processes For Students and Families

Successful transition from school to competitive integrated employment (CIE) and adult life requires ongoing and collaborative planning among professionals, students and families, and the transition team. The essential elements of transition services include individualized learning experiences in community jobs and setting high expectations for a future that includes a real job, a home, relationships, and community inclusion.

Engage in Ongoing, Student-Centered, Collaborative Planning

Transition planning requires the transition team to envision life after high school and design educational, career, and community activities throughout high school. This helps students move toward a vision. The following recommendations can help make that process smooth and effective.

1. Begin with the end in mind.

It is difficult to know early on what your student will do after high school. The transition team plans community learning experiences that help the student make informed decisions about careers and community living. At the same time, those experiences provide the team with insight into what support the students will need now and in the future.

2. Use Person-Centered Planning Tools.

There are many planning strategies for finding student strengths, interests, preferences, needs, goals, and dreams. They can also aid in pinpointing student knowledge, skills, learning preferences, values, personality traits, likes and dislikes, life experiences, support systems, support needs, and accommodations. These strategies allow families to document and use the information in planning Transition IEP goals. This must be updated as the student gains experience. Investigate the planning tools below:

- [Transition Assessments/Discovery Matrix](#)
- [LifeCourse Framework Tools](#)
- [MAPS- Making Action Plans](#)
- [PATH- Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope](#)
- [ELP- Essential Lifestyle Planning](#)

3. Engage actively on the team.

Students and families are equal partners on the case conference transition team. Over a student's time in high school, they should take increasing responsibility for contributing to the team. This is also an additional opportunity for them to gain leadership skills.

4. Insist on meaningful goals.

The transition team should develop Transition IEP goals and activities that advance knowledge, skills, and independence in inclusive school, home, work, and community settings. Meaningful goals for people with disabilities can include a wide range of activities, such as:

- **Independence:** Being able to order food at a restaurant, keep a key to their home, or develop self-care skills.
- **Social skills:** Learning to take turns in group activities or trying out different coping strategies for challenging situations.
- **Academic and cognitive skills:** Improving reading comprehension or solving math problems.
- **Vocational skills:** Learning job-related skills through community work experiences.
- **Mental health:** Practicing physical activity to help with depression, anxiety, and stress.
- **Technology:** Learning how to use a computer or cellphone, such as for online groups or organizing photos.

5. Communicate regularly and clearly.

The transition team must meet annually to review progress and plan the next steps. Clear communication means everyone understands the discussion, so do not be afraid to remind the team to avoid jargon.

6. Pay attention to important tasks.

The closer to exiting school, the more important certain activities become. Reference resources listed below to find what topics to address by year.

7. Value everyone.

It is important to have input from individual perspectives. Try to understand and be sensitive to team members' backgrounds and traditions. Ensure your team knows what things are important to the student and your family based on your values.

8. Expand the transition team.

As the student gets closer to graduation, preferably starting junior year, the transition team should invite adult service providers who may be supporting them after school. These professionals can help to outline and put in place the kinds of services available to make sure the student continues career and personal growth.

9. Utilize personal and professional networks.

You can help the transition team find those meaningful learning activities using your connections. This includes your employer, church, friends, other family members, and neighbors. These networks increase the team's resources and give them the chance to get to know your son/daughter.

Provide Activities and Experiences that Lead to Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes

The goal of transition is for the student to work, live, and engage in their community, particularly focused on competitive, integrated employment. CIE is a work model that provides people with disabilities with the opportunity to work alongside people without disabilities in a community setting. Below you will find some ways to ensure a positive outcome.

- Include students in general education alongside students without disabilities from an early age.
- Increase the students' levels of independence and self-determination at home and school as they move through elementary, middle, and high school.
- Encourage students to learn functional life skills in real-life places, e.g., the workplace, the grocery store, and transportation systems.
- When students learn academic skills such as math, reading, and writing, it is important to apply them to real-life situations.
- Engage the student in various work-based experiences, for example: community-based instruction, job exploration and training, internships, work-study programs, and school-supported community-based programs for students ages 18-22.
- Incorporate education and training opportunities that prepare students for postsecondary education, leading to competitive, integrated employment and careers.
- Secure job placements before high school graduation.
- Engage students in programs that teach work, self-advocacy, and life skills like [Pre-Employment Transition Services](#) available in most school districts.

- Maximize the use of natural supports versus only relying on paid supports. Natural supports are the people and places in an individual's community that are available to all people and are necessary for individuals with disabilities. Examples of places where people find these natural supports are churches, schools, clubs, civic organizations, family, and friends.

Understand Adult Service State and Federal Benefits

While educational services for students with disabilities are mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), adult services are based on eligibility. Adult services can include job training, placement assistance, workplace accommodations, housing support, transportation, and recreational activities. Many states have long waitlists for these services, so getting connected as early as possible is critical. The transition team can refer you and the student to adult agencies to get those supports in place before graduation. Below are tips for making those connections.

- Address the Transfer of Rights at age 18 and alternatives to guardianship.
- Gather information and resources to understand assistance programs like Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid benefits, and how your son/daughter can get the most out of work.
- Find and work with key people who are experts on benefits and employment.
- Get connected to resources for Indiana's Medicaid Waivers, including eligibility, when to apply, and what each waiver provides.
- Learn about community services and support (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, employment service providers) available post-school.
- Access those services early, while the student is still in school.

Common Terms & Language Related to School-to-Work Transition

The following are terms you may hear from the transition team. You and your student should learn more about each one.

- **Asset-based (vs. deficit-based) approaches:** A classroom method that focuses on the strengths and potential of students versus teaching that highlights students' inadequacies.
- **Competitive, transferable, and marketable job skills:** Skills that can be useful in the community in real jobs.

- **Customized employment:** Customized employment (CE) is a process for achieving [competitive integrated employment](#) (CIE) or [self-employment](#) through an employee and employer relationship that is personalized to meet the needs of both.
- **Discovery:** This is a process that focuses on understanding a job seeker's strengths, needs, and interests.
- **Employment specialist:** An adult service provider staff member helps find employment for students and supports them in learning and maintaining their jobs.
- **Individualized services:** Resources that are tailored to the student's needs.
- **Job seeker:** The student who is looking for a job.
- **Meaningful goals:** Goals that lead to jobs, living skills, community involvement, and are important to the student.
- **Natural supports:** People and places in an individual's community that are available for everyone and are necessary for individuals with disabilities to truly be a part of their community.
- **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS):** A program that helps students with disabilities prepare for employment and transition from high school to post-secondary education. Pre-ETS offers activities like job exploration counseling, work-based learning, and self-advocacy instruction, and is done in collaboration between the school, Vocational Rehabilitation, and adult service providers.
- **Positive Personal Profile:** A way to “take inventory” of all the attributes of job seekers that will be relevant to their job search, employability, job match, retention, and long-range career development.
- **Self-determination:** The process by which you control your own life, including the skills, knowledge, and beliefs that allow you to make informed choices.
- **Self-advocacy:** Knowing your rights and having the ability to effectively communicate your needs, interests, and desires.
- **Support networks:** Your family, neighbors, friends, and business connections. All can be valuable resources for jobs and community engagement.
- **Transition-aged students:** Students aged 14 and older.
- **Work-based learning:** Opportunities that take place in real-world workplaces help the student learn important career skills.

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