

Transition Best Practices

From School to Work

This document is for parents and caregivers of middle and high school students with disabilities. It explains the key features of exemplary transition practices, from school to competitive integrated employment. Though the document is written for you, we encourage you to share these best practices and ideas with your student in transition.

Competitive integrated employment is a term we use to describe jobs, usually in your local community, paying wages at or above the minimum wage in workplaces that include people with disabilities as well as people who don't have disabilities.

The five best practices below should be the focus of a student's entire transition team—students, parents or caregivers, support workers, teachers, and other transition professionals who join you on your transition journey. Incorporate these practices into your teamwork. Start early if at all possible but start wherever you are, whether that's seventh grade, sophomore year, or six months before leaving school.

1. Promote high expectations for an inclusive future.

Envision an inclusive lifestyle (“Start with the end in mind”) and share your vision with school and adult service personnel. Ask questions to learn how other students and young adults have successfully navigated the transition to adulthood and advocate for experiences that will lead to desired outcomes for your student. Use the Transition Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process to actively participate in concrete and ongoing conversations with school and adult service personnel about the future.

2. Connect with other parents and peers to get and share information.

Communicate with other parents and individuals with disabilities to get information, ask questions, and discuss your concerns about the transition to adulthood. Indiana's family advocacy and self-advocacy organizations are an excellent resource (see the document, “Transition Planning and Processes”).

Connect regularly with school transition educators to use the critical school years to prepare students for adult life. Use the Transition IEP process to get and share information.

3. Develop goal setting and self-advocacy skills.

Work alongside school personnel to teach your student how to set goals and advocate for themselves from an early age. Developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills is a lifelong process and it takes repeated, ongoing practice for youth to learn how to set and communicate their goals and express their needs and expectations.

4. Emphasize employment and building work skills through real world work experience.

Encourage students to share information about their likes, dislikes, support needs, and experiences with transition team members and prospective employers. Collaborate with school personnel to provide students with multiple work experiences in community businesses to explore different jobs and careers, develop work skills, and build their self-advocacy skills.

The school years are a critical time to teach students about various jobs and careers and to build work attitudes and skills that lead to competitive integrated employment. IEP goals should be steppingstones that lead to employment and other desired post-school outcomes.

5. Learn about and secure post-school services and supports.

Research and learn about the service options in your area. It is critical to seek information early and often from school and adult service personnel about relevant state and local resources, services, and supports. In addition, it is very important to ensure that needed services are in place prior to school exit. Once again, Indiana disability advocacy organizations are a good source of information.

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