

What is Transition?

For Families and Students

Transition Planning

Transition planning is used to describe the very intentional, organized, and coordinated process of guiding students with disabilities toward meaningful and successful lives after high school through education, experiences, support and services. We all experience transitions during our lives. There are several types of transitions across our lifespan, with varying difficulty levels. For students, moving from middle school to high school is an expected transition: new school, new teachers, new classes, and new expectations. The same goes for transitioning from high school to adulthood. Employment, education and training, independent living, and relationships are a few major changes to think about. The Transition IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a living document that will help students in special education plan for those events. It outlines a student's expectations for the future, sets goals, outlines tasks and activities and defines who will assist in the process.

Early transition planning is critical as students move through the school system and prepare for adult life. The transition process officially starts at age 14, or earlier when necessary, as students and families collaborate with educators to create a Transition Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The plan, once developed, is updated at least annually but can be revisited at any time. Transition IEPs address the following components:

- Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance
- Transition Assessments
- Postsecondary Goals
- Transition Services and Activities
- Annual Goals Added Related to Transition

The following components address all the areas of a student's desired and meaningful life:

- Employment
- Independent living
- Post-secondary education or training
- Social activities to include leisure/recreation and community
- Communication, speech therapy

- Physical needs, occupational therapy
- Transportation
- Safety, e.g., avoiding abuse, harassment, and neglect
- Decision making

For more information on the components of the Transition IEP, please visit [IN*SOURCE](#) or [Indiana Family to Family](#).

What to Expect During a Transition Case Conference

The student and their IEP team begin the transition planning process; however, team members may expand to include those who are or will be involved in transition-related activities. The Transition IEP team members may include the student, their parent(s)/caregiver(s), Teacher of Record (TOR), Public Agency Representative (PAR), General Education teacher, Instructional Strategist, agency providers (Vocational Rehabilitation) and other relevant individuals (e.g., therapists, community members). Parents may invite anyone interested in the student to Transition IEP team meetings to provide their input and expertise.

Transition planning includes:

- Assessing student needs, strengths, and skills
- Developing transition services and activities
- Setting annual IEP goals
- Considering academic courses, non-academic courses, employment, healthcare, and community engagement

The student is the most important team member, as planning should focus on their needs and preferences. They must actively participate in the process by sharing their interests, strengths, goals, and dreams, essentially driving the decision-making around their post-secondary education, employment, and independent living plans, ensuring the transition plan reflects their individual needs. The family is a vital member of the IEP transition team. Their role is critical to ensure support; they should ask questions, request meetings, and actively advocate for their child while respecting the child's wishes. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) should understand how to support self-advocacy.

During the meetings, team members collaborate to envision a desirable future and plan the critical skills to be taught, activities, timelines, etc., to reach the goals. Consistent communication, avoiding acronyms, and using preferred contact methods help the team build a strong foundation and unified vision.

Desired Outcomes of Transition

Competitive integrated employment and/or post-secondary education are the anchors of a meaningful day for students after leaving high school. Other aspects of life are aligned with and built around employment (i.e., community living, recreation/leisure, transportation, etc.).

There are various services students can access during school that improve their ability to be successful. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) provide job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Teachers can assist students and families in gaining access to Pre-ETS and incorporate this into the Transition IEP.

Services After High School

The services available to students after high school are not guaranteed like education; they depend on the student's eligibility. This means those services require an application and a determination of eligibility. Early connections ensure key adult service personnel, e.g., from state agencies and service provider agencies, are involved as members of the transition team. All elements of a student's adult life should be in place on their last day in high school to ensure a smooth transition. A few relevant services to explore include:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):** Provides career counseling, job training, and other employment support services to individuals with disabilities.
- **Centers for Independent Living (CILs):** Offer a range of services including independent living skills training, advocacy, and peer support.
- **Disability advocacy organizations:** Provide information, legal assistance, and advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities.
- **Supported employment programs:** Assist students in finding and maintaining competitive employment with ongoing support.
- **Adult day services:** Provide structured activities and support for individuals with disabilities who need assistance with daily living skills.
- **Higher education accommodations:** Connect students with disability services at colleges and universities to access necessary academic supports.

Moving into adult life is complex and intimidating for anyone, but especially for students with disabilities and their families. They are leaving the familiar world of education for an often-fragmented adult service system. Transition helps students develop a vision of their adult life, become self-advocates, identify and accomplish goals to meet their post-school goals, and establish connections for future success.

Resources

IN*SOURCE:

- ✓ [Transition to Adult Life Resources](#)
- ✓ [IEP Resources and Information](#)
- ✓ [Young Adult Program](#)
- ✓ [Connect with an IN*SOURCE Liaison to learn more about special education rights](#)

Indiana Family to Family:

- ✓ [Transition Timeline](#)

NTACT:

- ✓ [Transition Planning](#)

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