

SECONDARY TRANSITION

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why is it important to do secondary transition planning?

Transition planning is required by federal law (IDEA 2004) and Pennsylvania regulations (Chapter 14). Research shows that a large number of students receiving special education services do not pursue education or training beyond high school and, when compared to the general population, are not as successful as adults in the work place and in living independently in the community. Effective transition planning and programming helps to close these gaps.

For whom is transition planning required?

Transition planning is required for all students with disabilities, at the time the student turns 14 (or sooner if appropriate), who qualify for special education services.

When does secondary transition planning start?

Transition planning and services are required by Pennsylvania regulations (Chapter 14) to be addressed in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of the student in the year in which the student turns 14 years of age. Transition planning may begin at an earlier age if the IEP team decides that early planning is appropriate. These planned services should support the student's post-school goals for education and training, employment, and independent living.

Who is involved in the transition planning process?

Transition planning involves the student, the family, all relevant educational staff (including a representative from Career and Technical Education if the student is planning to attend or is involved in a career and technical education program), personnel from outside agencies, and other applicable community members who engage as a team in developing a purposeful transition plan.

How do we determine what a student needs for effective transition programming?

Transition planning begins with good assessment. This assessment should be completed before developing the IEP. Assessment data serves as the common thread in the transition process and forms the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the IEP. Transition assessments can be formal or informal. Formal assessments typically involve using a standardized procedure for administering, scoring, and interpreting an assessment. For example: adaptive behavior/daily living skills assessments; general and specific aptitude tests; interest inventories; intelligence tests; achievement tests; employability tests; and self-determination assessments. Informal assessments could be interviews and questionnaires, direct observations, curriculum-based assessments, or environmental analyses. Transition related assessment and student progress information should be described in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP) section of the student's IEP.

How is a transition plan written?

Once all of the assessment information about the transition needs of the student is completed, including academic and functional strengths and needs, along with information from the student, the student's family, relevant education personnel, agency staff and applicable community members, an IEP team meeting is held. At this meeting, the IEP team discusses the student's postsecondary goals for education, employment and independent living. Based on the student's postsecondary goals, the IEP team reviews the student's present educational levels, develops the transition services and activities section (the transition grid), writes measurable annual IEP goals that address the identified needs, and completes the remaining sections of the IEP based on the student's postsecondary goals.

How important is the participation of outside agencies in the secondary transition process?

Collaboration with outside agencies is crucial. Federal law (IDEA 2004) requires if a community agency is likely to be responsible for providing a program for transition services prior to and/or after graduation, the school must invite, with parental consent, the agency representative to the IEP meeting. This includes agencies such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office of Developmental Programs, the Office of Mental Health, and other community agencies providing services to adults.

In the IEP, what is a coordinated set of activities?

A coordinated set of activities is a long-range plan for adult life. This plan should reflect all the activities, experiences and services that need to be done beginning at age 14, or younger when appropriate, to help the student prepare for the transition to the adult world. In preparing the coordinated set of activities, several important questions should be asked, including: What are the student's current levels of educational performance based on the student's long-range goals for adult life? What activities and strategies can be included in the IEP to help the student move toward the realization of his/her postsecondary goals? What community linkages, services, supports, or programs will the student need in order to achieve the desired post-school goals and ensure success as he/she enters the adult world? The school's responsibility is to ask these questions and to help identify services and activities, involve appropriate agencies, and coordinate the process so that the student's goals are met.

What services and activities will students need to assist them in acquiring a desired job or career?

Services and activities can focus on developing work-related behaviors, seeking employment, exploring careers, pursuing skills training, taking apprenticeship training, and finding actual employment. In order to succeed in the workplace, students may need to focus on basic employee behaviors, such as staying on task, responding appropriately to instructions, working with a team, working under pressure and developing skills for self-advocacy. Workplace readiness skills may be gained through part-time (supported or nonsupported) employment, community service, apprenticeship programs, or involvement in the local Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and/or Career Link Offices. Students may also explore postsecondary educational programs and settings.

What experiences and activities outside the school building will prepare a student for participation in community life?

Many students can benefit from planned experiences and activities in their communities. These activities can include social, recreational and leisure activities, routine appointments, shopping, banking, transportation, or experiences in local government settings. Some specific examples include:

- Securing a driver's license
- Applying for a state identification card
- Visiting or joining a community recreation center or YWCA
- Investigating opportunities for socialization (bowling, ice skating)
- Participating in community and civic organizations
- Investigating participation in a local church, temple, or synagogue youth group
- Learning the location of convenient and affordable places to shop for food, clothes, etc.
- Identifying transportation options within the community

What is a functional vocational assessment?

The IEP team may need information about a student's aptitudes, interests, and skills in relation to employment. A functional vocational assessment is information gathered through situational assessments, preferably in the setting where a job is performed. It can include observations, surveys, interviews, and formal or informal measures. It focuses on practical skills needed for job and career success. Information can be collected about personal/social interactions, ability to manage money, mobility, personal hygiene, following directions, ability to complete a task, etc. The information that is collected can be used to refine the transition services and activities in the IEP.