

What is transition planning?

The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that students with disabilities are to be prepared for employment and independent living. IDEA also requires coordinated and documented planning. Early and meaningful transition planning, which actively involves students and their families, has a positive influence on students' post-school success and independence.

The IEP (Individual Education Program) team must think and plan several years ahead of the student's transition from school to the adult community. IDEA requires that the IEP team carefully consider post-school goals when the student is about to enter high school at age 14.

Beginning at age 16 (or younger, if appropriate) a statement of transition services needed by the student must be included in the IEP. High school experiences, both academic and social, greatly influence future options for all students. For adolescents with disabilities, these experiences are pivotal. Decisions about any transition service needs or a student's course of study should be grounded in the answers to the following questions:

- * What are his/her dreams?
- * His/her vision for life as an adult?
- * What are his/her strengths?
- * How will he/she use them to build success during high school?
- * Will he/she seek a regular high school diploma requiring a prescribed course of study with possible accompanying proficiency tests?
- * Will he/she work toward a vocational completion certificate?
- * Does he/she have a career interest now? If not, when and how can the team help her discover his/her interests and preferences?
- * Does this team believe that he/she will remain in public school through the maximum age of eligibility? If so, what age-appropriate experiences may be available after 18?
- * What skills need to be developed or improved to help her make progress toward her goals?
- * Are there any at-risk behaviors that might interfere with his success during high school?
- * In what school and community activities will he/she participate?
- * What does the team believe his/her high school course of study will look like?
- * What transition services, supports and accommodations does he/she need for success in high school?

Discussing and answering these questions will meet the intent of the IDEA regulations. All IEP decisions should be made in the context of how that decision may affect the student's future school or post-school experiences.

Developing a Comprehensive Plan

Section 300.29 of the IDEA regulations defines transition service as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Transition services are based on the individual student's needs and take into account the student's preferences and interests.