



# Preparing for Adulthood Transition Planning

## WHAT IS TRANSITION AND WHEN SHOULD IT BEGIN?

Transition is the process of preparing a child to move through childhood to adult living. Real life experiences help the child acquire the skills needed for successful transition. The transition process needs clear planning so all available resources can be used.

Ideally, transition begins at birth and focuses on the child's interests, preferences and needs. According to IDEIA 2004, schools must begin transition planning when the student turns 16 years old.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), was originally authorized in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. (EHA Public Law 94-142). The EHA required that public schools provide free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities. Since 1975, there have been many amendments to the Act. The amendments of 2004 addressed a number of issues including, but not limited to discipline, excusing some team members from participating in IEP meetings, requiring short-term objectives or benchmarks for only some students, appropriate measurable postsecondary goals, and not requiring teams to conduct three-year reevaluations of students.

## THE INTENT OF TRANSITION

The federal law says that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free education in the public schools. Children with disabilities are also entitled to a special education that meets their needs and prepares them for more education, jobs, and adult living. Transition planning helps parents and schools prepare children for adult life by making sure that children learn important life and academic skills.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PARENT IN TRANSITION?

The parents' role in transition is extremely important. Parents can begin to prepare their child at an early age by teaching skills, and encouraging the child's independent decision-making. Actions and decisions must have natural consequences. Consequences are part of the process of fostering independence.

At early ages, these experiences can include:

- Simple skills in communication (how to ask for and receive something; when to say "please" or "thank you" or "excuse me")
- Eating skills (using utensils, basic table manners)
- Mobility skills (how to get from A to B by oneself, crawling, walking etc.)
- Social skills (sharing, taking turns, group play)

## TRANSITION WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Educators also work toward transition. Often, schools use the IEP (Individualized Education Program: a plan written by parents and teachers to create a child's customized special education) and include a list of goals or skills that parents and educators want the child to learn. The goal for parents and teachers is to improve the child's decision-making skills and teach the child to analyze and reach a conclusion when a problem or question is posed. Parents should purposefully plan specific activities that will require the child to make decisions. The child needs to learn how to evaluate options and make decisions based on what is best.

### Common Life Skills

- Deciding how to spend money at a local store
- Saving for the future to buy something they want
- Inviting someone to spend the night (instead of the parent doing it for him or her)
- Hygiene and grooming
- Making telephone calls
- Crossing streets safely alone
- Sending a thank-you note
- Cleaning their room
- Safety awareness
- Sex education

### Common Academic Skills

- Cleaning their desk area
- Volunteering to help someone
- Recognizing money denominations
- Telling time
- Following a schedule
- Developing organizational skills

Elementary school age children can begin the process of examining career opportunities and the world of work through classroom activities, role-playing, and modeling their parents and family members.



## TRANSITION WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

As middle school age children continue to build their independence, they should learn how to advocate for themselves and learn more about their disability. Students at this level should become active participants in their IEPs and participate in detailed career exploration activities and advocacy training. Parents and students can also consider volunteer positions or paid jobs to help the student develop good work habits.

## WHO ARE THE “PLAYERS” IN TRANSITION?

Typically, people who are currently involved with the child, and anyone expected to be part of the child’s life in the future can help build the transition plan. The list incorporates the student, school personnel, family, and friends and can include potential employers, higher education representatives and agency personnel who are, or will be, providing services.

### Required members of IEP teams

- A special education teacher
- A regular education teacher
- One or both parents
- The student, whenever appropriate, must be invited by age 14
- A school district staff member qualified to provide or supervise special education, who is knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the availability of district resources
- Someone who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results

### Invited IEP team members

- Other teachers
- Service providers or educational recruiters
- People who know the student well

## TRANSITION AND FUTURES PLANNING

Futures planning is an ongoing, relatively informal process, that, when combined with concrete planning from an IEP, can help with the huge leap from high school to adult life. Personal Futures Planning is meant to complement the IEP and adult services planning. It focuses less on academic requirements and more on personal goals for life and career. The topics discussed in transition planning, like jobs, community involvement, and personal interests, are essential elements of the futures planning process.

## HIGH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: IEP TRANSITION SERVICES

Transition planning is a natural element of an IEP. When the child is a teenager and transition is a topic at IEPs, the student and the parents have a prominent role in discussing what has been done, what is needed, and what can be provided for the future. Transition planning creates a coordinated set of activities as part of a process focused on improving the child’s academic and personal life skills and helping the child move from school to adult life.

By age 16, the child’s IEP should include postsecondary goals and other transition assessments, including:

- Student’s preferences and interests
- Student’s post graduation goals (in employment, adult life, community activities, post-secondary education, etc.)
- Student’s academic and functional strengths and weaknesses related to these goals
- Development of a Long-Range Educational plan (documents expected graduation date, credits achieved, and course credits remaining until high school graduation, and what those courses will be

IEPs use the “Statement of Needed Transition Services” to describe the types of services that the child will need to achieve the IEP transition goals. Common services are:

- Functional vocational assessments
- Community experiences
- Post-school adult living services
- Related services, daily living
- Post-secondary education
- Employment services

All services described by the IEP team must include the person responsible for the transition services, the outcomes for such services, the time lines, and the IEP goals related to the services.

## RESOURCES

Career Voyages at <http://www.careervoyages.gov>  
Job Accommodation Network (JAN) at <http://www.jan.wvu.edu>

Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) at <http://www.opi.stat.mt.us/SpecEd/trans.html>

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) at <http://www.ncset.org>  
Parents, Let’s Unite for Kids (PLUK) at <http://www.pluk.org>

Rural Institute at the University of Montana at <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/default.asp>

Transition Project Home, MSU-Billings at <http://www.msuhillings.edu/transition>