



TIP SHEET

Transition Planning



What is transition planning and why is it important?

Transitioning into the adult world can be a challenge for all young people, even more so for students with disabilities. Transition planning is a process that is designed to provide your teen with the necessary skills and services to move smoothly from high school to adult life. Transition plans are built into your teen's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Does every student need a transition plan?

All students with disabilities that are between the ages of 14-21 must have transition plans in their IEP. Transition planning can begin earlier than age 14. Thoughtful planning is needed so students can acquire the skills and experiences necessary for them to achieve their goals for life after high school. Starting transition planning at age 14 gives your teen time to explore their postsecondary goal choices and modify or change them based on transition experiences and acquired knowledge.

Who is involved in the transition planning process?

The IEP team consists of you, your teenager, school personnel, agency representatives, and others working with your teen. Agency members participate with prior written parental consent if they may be providing services after your teen graduates. Your teen's attendance and participation in the transition planning process is essential.

IEP teams complete transition assessments to determine your teen's strengths, needs, interests, and preferences to create a transition-focused IEP. Transition assessment is used to form postsecondary goals in three areas:

- What is your teen's long term goal in the area of postsecondary education or training?
- What is your teen's long term goal in the area of employment?
- What is your teen's long term goal in the area of independent living (when appropriate)?

It is important to keep in mind that your teen's goals may change as they get older and experience more opportunities. These experiences begin to personally define your teen's path to adulthood.

What is transition assessment?

Transition assessment is an ongoing process of collecting data on your teen's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests related to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments (DCDT 2011). These assessments provide data for developing a transition-

focused IEP to help your teen develop skills to move through high school and become an adult.

Transition assessment data is used to identify courses (required and elective) that support your teen's specific postsecondary goals. The course of study outlines classes that help your teen reach his/

her present and postsecondary goals. Courses of study may also detail work programs, internships, career academies, job shadows, and other

employment-based opportunities completed during the school day.

What are coordinated transition activities?

Federal law states transition services must be a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

- is designed to be results-oriented
- is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student
- is designed to facilitate the student's movement from high school to post-school activities
- is based on the student's individual needs
- takes into account the student's strengths, preferences, and interests
- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, and the development of employment and post-school adult living objectives

- when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Daily living skill goals and functional vocational evaluations are not necessary for every student.

(Source: PRN Texas, 2020)

Coordination implies that all members of the IEP team are active in the transition planning process and vested in its outcomes. This includes you, your teen, the school, and any outside agencies or providers. A coordinated set of activities accounts for:

- what will happen (activity),
- when it will occur (timeline),
- who is involved in each activity, and
- who is responsible (for providing and paying for the service)

What transition activities are included in the IEP?

The transition pages of the IEP include sections that outline the strengths and needs for each of the areas listed below. Your teen's strengths could also be documented in the present level of academic and functional performance section of the IEP, and the sections below can be saved to describe the activities needed to make progress towards obtaining your teen's postsecondary goals. The IEP team does not have to list an activity under each of the areas listed below, but the team should consider each when thinking about your teen's future. The activities listed in these areas are going to be completed by the review date. The activities should change from year to year as activities are completed.

Instruction is the direct teaching of knowledge or skills. These activities may include the need for instruction in specific curricular areas, educational experiences, and skill training. It may also include activities necessary to prepare for and take part in college, continuing education, employment, further skill training, adult living, etc.

Related Services are provided by speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, mental health providers, and other providers that help your teen move towards achieving their annual and postsecondary goals. It may include services such as job coaching, transportation, etc.

Community experiences prepare your teen for participation in community life. These activities encourage participation in social, recreational, leisure, shopping, banking, volunteer work, or other opportunities

Employment activities focus on developing your teen's work-related behaviors, job seeking and keeping skills, career exploration, skill training, work experiences, etc.

Post-school adult living activities are completed occasionally, such as registering to vote, obtaining a driver's license, renting or buying a home, registering for civil service, applying to college, and accessing adult services.

Daily living skills are activities that adults do most every day. These can include personal grooming, meal preparation, budgeting, maintaining a residence, paying bills, and raising a family.

Functional vocational evaluations are assessments that identify interests, skills, and needs as they pertain to current and future employment situations. Functional vocational evaluation data is best when obtained in real-life situations.

How are outside agencies involved in transition planning?

Federal law requires the school to invite outside agencies that may be providing or paying for transition services. Special education teachers need to know about the services provided by community agencies in order to invite the appropriate people. Agencies that may be invited to your teen's IEP include Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR), mental health providers, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Developmental Disabilities, and other agencies specific to your teen's plan. Schools must get your written permission to invite outside agencies to meetings. Schools cannot enroll your teen in programs or services provided by outside agencies. This is a parental responsibility. Often there are waiting lists for services. It is vital that you contact outside agencies well before graduation day.

One agency that is commonly involved in transition planning and activities is Nebraska VR. Nebraska VR supplements transition activities provided through the school district. Nebraska VR provides Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students ages 14-21. Pre-ETS services include:

- Job Exploration
- Work Readiness Training
- Counseling on Postsecondary Training Options
- Self-Advocacy
- Work-Based Learning Experiences

For further information on Nebraska VR, please see www.vr.nebraska.gov.

How does the IEP team determine when my teen will graduate?

Your teen is eligible for special education services until they meet the graduation requirements to receive a regular, signed diploma or until the end of the school year in which they reach age 21. There are no specific curriculum requirements that students with disabilities must meet to graduate from high school. Instead, they may graduate with a signed, regular diploma when they meet the transition goals in the IEP.

Assessment data can provide information for the team to consider when making graduation decisions. Progress toward graduation should be addressed in all transition plans. Graduation plans should be considered in the development of the course of study and reviewed annually. **The**

receipt of a signed, regular diploma terminates the service eligibility of students with special education needs. A student who receives a document such as a certificate of attendance, unsigned diploma, or blank folder is eligible to continue receiving special education services until receipt of a signed, regular diploma or until the end of the school year in which the student turns 21.

When your teen graduates, a document called the Summary of Performance (SOP) is written. The SOP serves as an information-sharing tool that helps adult service providers (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, disability support specialists in college settings) tailor services to your teen's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.

How can families work alongside schools in transition planning?

Families are often the first, most knowledgeable, and consistent support system for their teen. You

possess valuable information about your teen's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.

This information is captured when you complete transition assessments, as this assessment data is the foundation of every transition-focused IEP.

Encourage your teen to participate in their IEP. It is important that their voice is heard, as the transition

plan is their plan for the future. If your teen is nonverbal or has difficulty communicating, share their preferences and interests with the rest of the IEP team.

Key Points

- A transition plan is required in the IEP by age 14. You may request transition planning be included in your teen's IEP at a younger age.
- Age-appropriate transition assessment is the foundation of your teen's IEP. Ask to be included in the assessment process.
- Completing transition activities helps your teen refine their post-school goals and learn valuable academic and functional skills.
- Your teen's school may refer you to outside agencies as part of the transition plan. It is the parent's responsibility to complete all agency applications. Ask your school for help if you need assistance completing the agency applications.
- The transition plan reflects your teen's goals for the future. As a parent, your dreams, ideas, and concerns for your teen's adult life are reflected elsewhere in the IEP.

For more information about transition planning, contact your child's special education teacher, a PTI Nebraska parent/professional at (800) 284-8520 and pti-nebraska.org, or the Nebraska Department of Education at (402) 471-2471 and education.ne.gov/sped/.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. See <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/> for more information on IDEA.

Rule 51 is the document that outlines regulations and standards for special education programs in Nebraska. Rule 51 can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education's website: https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Rule51_2017.pdf.

Rule 55 is the document that outlines rules of practice and procedure for due process hearing in special education contest cases. Rule 55 can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education's website: https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Rule55_2012.pdf

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