

SECTION 1: Creating a Vision for the Future What is Transition Planning and Why is it Important?

- ❖ Transition planning is a process that brings together a student with a disability and those individuals directly involved in helping the student, to prepare to enter a post-high school environment.
- ❖ Transition planning is designed to ensure that the student will be provided the necessary skills and services to make a smooth transition from school to adult life and enable them to achieve the maximum possible independence in working, living and participating in the community.
- ❖ Transition into the adult world can present challenges for all young people, but the process is often more difficult for young people with disabilities.
- ❖ Transition planning is initiated at the first PPT (Planning and Placement Team) meeting following your child's 13th birthday. This PPT includes your child, family members, school personnel, agency representatives, if appropriate, and any significant others. The overall value of the meeting is the sharing of knowledge about your child's strengths, interests, and preferences in order to create a map of where help is needed and what experiences are going to be valuable during the high school years.
- ❖ Creating a vision for the future is the first step in transition planning. Before attending the PPT that begins to develop a transition path for your child to follow, take time to discuss his/her interests, dreams and visions for the future. It is very important for you to keep an open mind. Seemingly unrealistic and impossible hopes and dreams often lay the foundation that helps the PPT direct your child's dreams into realistic goals.
- ❖ Four areas must be discussed when participating in a transition planning meeting.
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Postsecondary Education?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Employment?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Independent Living?
 - What is your child's long-term goal in the area of Community Participation?

You must work with your child to formulate possible answers to the above questions so that a sequential, coordinated plan can be developed in each area.

- ❖ **Waiting until your child is ready to graduate is too late to begin the transition process.**
- ❖ **Remember:** There is no "system" like special education that entitles a student to receive appropriate supports and services after they graduate from high school.
- ❖ **Remember:** Your child's transition goals can and should be changed as they mature, experience more opportunities and begin to personally define specific career directions.

- ❖ **Remember:** Quality transition planning requires a commitment from you and your child to be actively involved in the process.

SECTION 2

TRANSITION: A Federal Mandate

It is critical that students with disabilities and their families take the time to plan for life after high school. The school system plays an important role in assisting the student to gain the skills required to reach the goals of their plan. The transition service requirements mandated in the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** recognize the responsibility schools have in this planning.

Public Law 101-476, **IDEA**, was enacted in 1990 by Congress with a transition amendment that provided services for students with disabilities as they prepare to complete school and move into employment. In June 1997, **IDEA** was amended as Public Law 105-17 to include additional provisions for transition. Currently, **IDEA** specifies that a student's IEP must include "a statement of needed transition services for students beginning at the PPT following the 13th birthday, and annually thereafter, including when appropriate, a statement of outside agencies who may support the student before the student leaves school."

Definition of Transition Services Sec. 602 (30) 20 USC 1401

"Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation."

The coordinated set of activities must:

- 1) be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.
- 2) include:
 - a) instruction;
 - b) community experiences;
 - c) the development of employment and other post-high school adult living objectives; and
 - d) if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

IDEA requires that goals and objectives be developed, as part of the IEP, in each of these areas and that the student and family participate in the planning process. The student must be invited to the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting.

At age 18, educational rights of the parents transfer to the student. Both parents and student must be informed of this transfer at least one year prior to the 18th birthday. Arrangements can be made if the student is not capable of making independent decisions.

A student's eligibility for special education services ends when the student graduates from high school or at the end of the school year in which the student reaches 21, whichever happens first.

However, before the student can graduate from high school, the PPT must evaluate the student and determine whether the student continues to require special education. If the PPT determines that the student no longer needs special education and will graduate, the school must notify the student's parents (and student if he/she is at least 18 years old), that the student will be graduating and that, as a result, special education services will end upon graduation. The school must also provide information to the parent and student regarding action that can be taken if either disagrees with the PPT decision. Due process procedures may be initiated by a parent/guardian or the school district when they cannot reach an agreement with respect to any matter relating to the proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or education placement of the student, or the provision of a free and appropriate public education. Due process procedures include: mediation, advisory opinion, and hearing. If a due process hearing is requested, the school must continue to provide all IEP services to the student until it is determined otherwise throughout the hearing process.

Failure to Meet Transition Objectives Sec. 614 20 USC 1414

As further protection, the federal law states that if a participating agency, other than the local school, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the school shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the student.

These numbers are citations for the Public Law 105-17, IDEA amendment of 1997, for reference purposes.

SECTION 3

Roles in Transition Planning

THE SCHOOL'S ROLE

The school serves as the initial and primary source for the preparation for transition. The involvement of teachers, guidance counselors, vocational educators, social workers, psychologists, etc., is essential to the transition planning process.

Think about what your school is doing in the following areas:

1. **Vocational Assessment** – What experiences and assessment techniques are being used to help the student identify interests, abilities, and aptitudes? This will help the student focus on a proper career direction.
2. **Curriculum and Instruction** – Which of the following areas are addressed in the secondary program?

• Career Awareness	• Job-Seeking/ Keeping Skills
• Independent Living	• Personal Living
• Social Skills Development	• Self Advocacy

Are these skills taught in a self-contained class, an inclusive class, or in the community?

3. **Vocational Training** – What vocational training experiences are offered in your secondary program?

• In-School Job Sites	• Community-Based Work/Study
• Supported Employment	• Job Shadowing

4. **Interagency Collaboration** – Does your school provide you with information about, and assist you in making referrals to the following agencies, if appropriate?

• Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
• Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)
• Board of Education & Services to the Blind (BESB)
• Commission on the Deaf & Hearing Impaired (CDHI)
• Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS)
• Postsecondary Education/Training Opportunities
• Parent Support Groups
• Respite Care Opportunities
• Leisure/Recreation Programs
• Financial Planning Needs

5. **Parental Involvement** – What activities or programs does your school have to inform parents of the above agencies and services, to assist them in becoming stronger advocates and well-informed partners in the transition planning process?
6. **Follow-up Procedures** – Does your school have any formal follow-up procedures to contact special education graduates to determine if their transition from school has been successful?

THE PARENT'S ROLE

1. Parents are integral members of the Planning and Placement Team. They bring a wealth of information about their sons/daughters which is critical to effective transition planning.
2. Parents must become informed advocates about quality transition planning, services in the community, and agencies which can assist your sons/ daughters in achieving success and independence in their communities. Parents must understand the difference between entitlement of special education programs under IDEA, and the eligibility for services of adult agencies.
3. Parents know their community and have many contacts they can share to assist in the provision of community training alternatives and activities. Parents and students must be willing and committed to assist in the implementation of identified transition activities.
4. Parents can advocate for, develop and initiate new programs that do not currently exist in their son's/daughter's school or community.

THE ADULT AGENCY'S ROLE

1. Once a referral has been made to the appropriate adult service agency, the agency can become an important member of the Planning and Placement Team. They will begin to know the needs, strengths, and abilities of your son/daughter well before they exit their secondary programs.
2. Adult agency counselors know the resources in your community and can assist you in accessing many of these services.
3. Adult agency counselors know the future of the labor market and available training programs which allows them to focus school experiences in realistic directions.
4. Once a student has exited school, the agency can provide programs and services to assist your son/daughter in vocational training, job placement, and living alternatives.

THE COMMUNITY'S ROLE

1. The community is the ultimate site for the student to work and live. The student seeks to become an active member of the community, and thus, the involvement of the community in the transition process is natural and logical.
2. The community is in the position to develop and support programs that assist in the transition planning process. These programs should exist in the areas of employment, residence, and recreation.
3. The community should develop a means whereby community members may become informed of the needs of their citizens with disabilities, as well as federal and state programs that offer support to businesses that train and hire persons with disabilities.

SECTION 4

Agencies Providing Services for Adults with Disabilities

The following is a list of agencies that provide services to adults, and in some cases children, with disabilities. Each agency has criteria that will determine whether or not a person is eligible for their services. This is different from services you are entitled to under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which end at age 21 or at high school graduation. It is worth making a call if you think you may qualify for some of the services.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS):

The Connecticut Department of Social Services administers a range of services and programs through bureaus and agencies with local offices throughout the state. The central office of DSS is located at 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT, 06016. Their toll free telephone number is 1-800-842-1508. Their web address is <http://www.dss.state.ct.us>.

The following is a list of some of the DSS agencies and programs you may find helpful:

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)	Phone:	1-800-537-2549 (Toll Free) 860- 424-4839 (TDD/TTY)
Central Office: 25 Sigourney Street, 11 th Floor, Hartford, CT 06016 Call for local office information Web Address: http://www.brs.state.ct.us/		
Provides services to assist persons with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. BRS can provide individualized services to eligible persons that may include vocational assessment, guidance and training, career education and on-the-job training, supported employment services, rehabilitation technology services, and information on State and Federal benefits programs.		
Independent Living Centers (ILCs)	Phone:	Call Central DSS Office for Local Information
Assists persons with disabilities to live independently in their communities. This program is administered by BRS. Services are provided through five ILCs. These services may include assistance in obtaining modifications to home or vehicle, adaptive equipment, personal care assistance, advocacy, peer counseling, and independent living skills.		
Social Work	Phone:	Call Central DSS Office for Local Information
Can provide services to income eligible people with disabilities, ages 18-64, who need supportive home care or social work services to live independently in the community. In addition to counseling and advocacy, paid services such as housekeeping, home delivered meals, and emergency response services may be available.		
Personal Care Assistance	Phone:	Call Central DSS Office for Local Information

		Information
Provides annual grants that are made available to help people with severe mental or physical disabilities to become and/or remain employed. These grants enable clients to employ personal care assistants to help them with daily activities. Social work services are also provided. For additional information, call the central office of DSS.		
Medicaid	Phone:	Call Central DSS Office for Local Information
Provides health insurance for persons who meet eligibility criteria. To obtain additional information, contact the central office of DSS, or call your local DSS office.		

OTHER STATE AGENCIES:

Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)	Phone:	860-418-6000 (Voice) 860-418-6079 (TD)
Central Office: 460 Capitol Ave. Hartford, CT 06106 Web Address: http://www.dmr.state.ct.us/		
Provides, and funds, a wide array of services for people with mental retardation. To find the office nearest you, look in the Blue Pages of your phone book under "State of Connecticut, Mental Retardation, Department of", or contact the central office at the number above.		
Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A)	Phone:	860-297-4300 (Voice) 860-566-2102 (Voice or TDD) 1-800-842-7303 (Toll Free Voice Only)
Client Assistance Program (CAP)		
Central Office: 60B Weston Street, Hartford, CT 06120 Web Address: http://www.state.ct.us/opapd/ The mission of the Office of Protection and Advocacy is to advance the cause of equal rights for persons with disabilities and their families by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the ability of individuals, groups and systems to safeguard rights; • exposing instances and patterns of discrimination and abuse; • seeking individual and systemic remediation when rights are violated; • increasing public awareness of unjust situations and of means to address them; and • empowering people with disabilities and their families to advocate effectively The purpose of the CAP program is to help individuals who are having problems with BRS or BESB.		
Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)	Phone:	860-602-4000 (Voice) 860-602-4020 (Fax) 860-602-4221 (TDD)
Central Office: 184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095 Web Address: http://www.besb.state.ct.us/		

Responsible for the confidential registry of people who are blind in Connecticut and provides, within available resources, comprehensive low vision services, specialized education services, life skills training, case management, and vocational services to individuals of all ages who are legally blind and to children who are visually impaired. The agency assists them in acquiring the skills and support services necessary to be independent.

FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS:

Social Security Administration	Phone:	800-772-1213 800-325-0778 (Voice/TDD)
Web Address: http://www.ssa.gov/		
<p>For information about SSI, SSDI, PASS, Work Incentives, or Medicare, contact the Social Security Administration at the numbers above. These are benefit programs that individuals with disabilities may be eligible for under the adult service agency system.</p> <p>Social Security Income pays monthly benefits to people who are 65 or older, or blind or have a disability and who don't own much or have a lot of income.</p> <p>Social Security Disability Income pay cash benefits to individuals who are unable to work because of a disability.</p> <p>Plan for Achieving Self Support, is a special work incentive program for individuals with disabilities who receive or would like to receive SSI but would like to work.</p>		