

Final Transition: High School to Adulthood

What's Next?

Some students who receive special education services will graduate with a diploma at age 18 or 19. At that point, special education services will end. Other students may continue in public school post-secondary programs through the year during which they turn 22. Public school programs provide a variety of options for students who remain in school. *Important considerations:*

- The decision of when to graduate is an important one and needs to be considered during early middle school and finalized during early high school. This must be documented in the IEP.
- Students must have a Transition Plan included in their IEP that is in effect during the year in which they turn 16. Beginning at age 14 transition issues must be considered.
- Questions regarding the student's participation in standardized assessments (those for all students) with or without accommodations or modifications must be addressed carefully.
- It should be noted that students who remain in school after their peers may participate in all graduation activities/ceremonies with their peers and when they graduate.

Transition Plans

Transition services are defined as “a coordinated set of activities” that is “results oriented” and focused on “improving the academic and functional achievement” of the child to facilitate their movement from school to post-school activities. The focus is on preparing them for:

- further education
- employment
- independent living

Plans must address a child's needs and take into consideration strengths, preferences and interests. The high school activities that are part of the transition plan can include:

- instruction
- related services
- community experiences
- the development of employment and other adult living objectives
- when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills, and
- when appropriate, a functional vocational evaluation

The IEP/Transition Meeting

Transition planning is not one meeting or one set document. It needs to occur over time, involving the student and outside agencies and resources as appropriate. The relationship between the student's high school activities and desired post-secondary school outcomes needs to be clear and meaningful. Transition planning needs to include:

- Structured discussions with a student and parent, as appropriate, about a student's interests and post-school goals.
- Transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills.
- Student exploration with school and family support of options after high school (e.g. vocational programs, community college, Department of Rehabilitation, disabled adult services, further independent living skills training, etc.)

- Appropriate and measurable post-secondary goals based on assessments and results of student exploration or planned exploration.
- “Who, what, and when” will carry out the activities needed to meet the goals.
- Student progress toward meeting graduation requirements and IEP transition goals.
- A “summary of achievement” (both academic and functional) for students who exit special education with a diploma or when they reach age 22. This summary must include recommendations on how to assist a student in achieving their post-secondary goals.

Ahead of Time

Some things to consider doing:

- Learn about agencies in your community that serve young adults.
- Follow up on student’s interests in specific vocations by speaking with professionals in that field or visiting schools that provide training or other educational options.
- Encourage greater self-advocacy as a student matures, helping them "do for themselves" rather than “doing for” them.

Independence and Adulthood

Careful planning and follow through will ensure that a student exits public school and special education with skills that will move them toward a satisfying and successful future, whatever their level of skills or choice of post-school activities.

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