Secondary Transition Process

Local Education Agency Toolkit

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)

Academics and Schools Divisions of Postsecondary and Career Education (PCE), Teaching and Learning (TAL) and Systems and Support, K-12 (K12)

Secondary Transition Process: Local Education Agency Toolkit

Updated July 2023

Dr. Christina Grant, State Superintendent of Education

Danielle Branson, Deputy Superintendent of Academics and Schools

Antoinette Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent of Postsecondary and Career Education

Elizabeth Ross, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Nikki Stewart, Assistant Superintendent of Systems and Support, K-12

OSSE Mission

As DC's state education agency, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) will set high standards, build educator and system capacity to meet those standards, expand educational opportunities for all learners with a focus on those underserved and hold everyone - including ourselves - accountable for results.

OSSE Vision

DC learners of all ages and backgrounds are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue and thrive on the life path of their choice.

The District of Columbia Secondary Transition Process Toolkit was designed to assist educators in effectively addressing the transition planning needs of students with disabilities who are preparing to transition from high school to postsecondary employment, education/training, and independent living. This guide was developed using federal and District of Columbia policies, procedures and regulations.

While this guide is intended to assist educators in understanding and applying best practices in secondary transition planning, this guide is not meant to:

- Be a complete explanation of all special education laws and regulations;
- Give legal advice; or,
- Supersede any local and/or federal law.

We hope you find this toolkit useful and welcome your feedback.

OSSE would like to acknowledge SchoolTalk Inc., the DC Secondary Transition Community of Practice members, and other local and national subject matter experts who made this publication possible. Particular thanks are extended to the following individuals for their significant contributions:

- Ms. Naté Dearden
- Ms. Lindsey Anderson
- Dr. Amy Gaumer
- Dr. Pattie Noonan
- Ms. Julie Holt
- Ms. Chelsea Kovacs
- Ms. Jess Gonzalez

OSSE sincerely appreciates your partnership in ensuring that our District youth with disabilities are well prepared to transition into adulthood and lead productive, fulfilling lives!

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Secondary Transition Process Toolkit was developed to support educators in the process of creating high-quality secondary transition plans, in partnership with the youth, their families and other stakeholders. This toolkit contains the following sections:

Secondary Transition Frameworks and Best Practices

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for ongoing research in secondary transition, which allows educators to ground their work in research-based practices that lead to quality transition plans and services. Educators will be familiar with practices that are predictors for postsecondary success and the frameworks that guide quality transition processes.

Secondary Transition Legal Requirements

Educators will understand the specific legal requirements from IDEA as it relates to secondary transition planning and services, as well as secondary transition compliance indicators. This section also explores the differences between IDEA and the laws that govern postsecondary education (Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504).

Secondary Transition Process

This section is based upon the Transition Assessment to Practice process, which guides educators through each part of the secondary transition process from assessments to plan development to service delivery and progress monitoring. This section also includes information about the summary of performance and transfer of rights at the age of majority.

Student Focused Planning

Students' self-determination and meaningful participation in the secondary transition process is critical for postsecondary success. In addition to information about self-determination and student-directed individualized education program (IEP) planning, educators will receive information about working with students and families of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, how related services fit into the transition process, and ways to support skill development across domains.

Family Involvement

Family involvement is a critical part of the secondary transition process. This section provides information for educators to increase family engagement in the transition process as well as provides a fact sheet for families with tips and resources.

Interagency Collaboration

Successful secondary transition planning requires coordination between families, schools, government agencies and community-based organizations to provide the services youth will need to find and sustain employment, live independently, and attain postsecondary education and training. This section provides best practices for schools to develop and improve those collaborations.

Program Structure

This section provides information for schools to consider when developing secondary transition programs for their students.

Glossary, Secondary Transition Resources, and References

The last three sections of this toolkit include a glossary of terms often heard in secondary transition planning, a resource guide of local and national organizations working to support secondary transition, and the references that were used to create this toolkit and can be accessed for further information by educators.

Toolkit Features

This Toolkit has the following features throughout the document:

LEA Best Practice

Suggested practices for local education Agencies (LEAs) are embedded throughout this document. These are simple tips and tricks professionals can use to apply the knowledge gained from this resource.

FACT SHEET

Quick guides for educators and families. Can also be exported and printed as standalone resources.

SECONDARY TRANSITION FRAMEWORKS AND BEST PRACTICES

I. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SECONDARY TRANSITION, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

One of life's most significant transitions occurs when a student prepares to leave high school and enter the world as a young adult.[1] This experience can be a rocky and emotional time for all families—especially for the families of youth with disabilities. Too often, transition is thought of as a one-time event that happens on the day a student walks across the stage to receive their diploma or certificate. This perception is misguided and can lead to confusion and a lack of adequate preparation for transition as the student moves on to their life after high school.

Transition as a Concept

The concept of transition generally has three major components:

Coach every student and family to think about goals for life after high school and to develop a long-range plan to achieve these goals.

Design the high school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and competencies needed to achieve their desired post-school goals.

Identify and link students and families to post-school services, supports and programs before the student exits the school system.

(O'Leary, Storms & Williams, 2000)

Although youth with disabilities may need to address unique circumstances during the transition from school to young adulthood, careful planning by educators and supporting agencies can provide students with experiences, skills and knowledge to ensure student success. The challenge in effective secondary transition planning is to ensure that all students achieve high academic standards while gaining the skills needed to achieve their desired post-school goals (including post-secondary education, training, or employment) and assume adult responsibilities in their communities. Additionally, educators must work to keep all students in school and engaged in meaningful educational experiences so they will be prepared for post-secondary education, employment and independent living.

To be effective, secondary transition planning must become a systematic and structured process in which entities collaborate to provide a continuum of services that address the individual strengths, needs and interests of students. Program development, evaluation for improvement and ongoing professional development are key components of this systematic approach. When students receive quality transition planning and services, the likelihood that they will graduate and experience positive post-school outcomes greatly increases. This resource is designed to assist parents, students, educators and community service providers in helping students identify, prepare for and achieve their postsecondary goals

[1] From Storms, J., O'Leary, E., & Williams, J. (2000). *Transition Requirements: A Guide for States, Districts, Schools, Universities, and Families,* available at http://www.ncset.org/publications/related/idea97.pdf.

II. Predicting Post-School Success

Educators must be familiar with evidence-based practices and understand how to implement these practices with fidelity to ensure students receive quality programming. Multiple resources point educators toward the "predictors of post-school success"—skills and experiences that increase the likelihood of postsecondary goal attainment. For example, students who build strong self-determination skills will have higher levels of postsecondary success.

Educators and other transition service providers who gain an understanding of effective practices and incorporate them into every aspect of secondary transition planning will achieve greater results in assisting youth with disabilities in reaching their postsecondary goals. Recent efforts to review secondary transition research found that there are 22 predictors for postsecondary success, which are listed in the chart below.[2]

Evidence-Based Practices	Research-Based Practices	Promising Practices
• demonstrates a **strong record** of success for improving outcomes • adheres to indicators of **quality research**	• demonstrates a **sufficient record** of success for improving outcomes • **may adhere** to indicators of **quality research**	• demonstrates **some success** for improving outcomes • **more quality research is needed**
• goal setting • inclusion in general education • paid employment/ work experience • program of study • self-advocacy/self-determination • student autonomy/decision-making • student support • work study	• career and technical education (vocational education)	• career awareness • community experiences • exit exam requirements/high school diploma status • interagency collaboration • occupational courses • parental involvement • psychological empowerment • self-care/independent living • self-realization • social skills • technology skills • transition programs • travel skills[2]

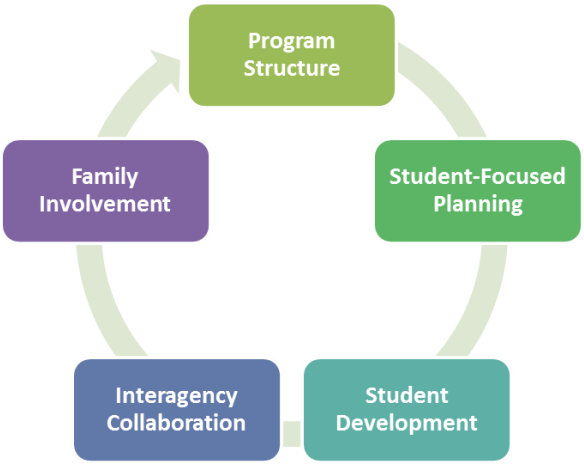
LEA Best Practice: Use The Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment (PISA) to evaluate current practices and to create an implementation plan for improved use of effective predictors.

[2] Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W., Fowler, C., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2020) Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, *44(1),*1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793

III. Frameworks to Guide Secondary Transition Planning

In addition to providing individualized and evidence-based secondary transition services to each student, schools must ensure that established systems, policies and procedures support the successful movement to post-school life at every level. Kohler's (2016) Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth's Guideposts for Success 2.0 (2019) provide two evidence-based frameworks that assist practitioners in assessing their practices and guidance on best practices within each area of secondary transition programming.[3]

A. Taxonomy for Transition Programming[4]



The Taxonomy for Transition Programming is an applied framework of secondary education and transition practices that is associated with improving students' post-school outcomes. Within the taxonomy, the secondary transition program philosophy includes the following components:

- Community-referenced and outcome-based curricula;
- Education provided in integrated settings and the least restrictive environment;
- Student has access to all educational options (secondary and post-secondary);
- Cultural and ethnic sensitivity in programs and planning;
- Flexible programming to meet student needs;
- Program planning is outcome-based; and
- Longitudinal approach to transition (early childhood to adult).

Together these components provide the framework for culturally responsive, effective secondary transition planning and services that meet the needs of each individual student.

[3] National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, *Cross-Referencing the Taxonomy for Transition Programming with NASET National Standards & Quality Indicators and Guideposts for Success for Transition-Age Youth.* http://www.nsttac.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdf/pdf/capacity_building/CrosswalkTaxonomy.pdf.

[4] Kohler, P. D., Gothberg, J. E., Fowler, C., and Coyle, J. (2016). *Taxonomy for transition programming 2.0: A model for planning, organizing, and evaluating transition education, services, and programs.* Western Michigan University. https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/NTACT-C_TaxonomyforTransition.pdf

Practices that define the taxonomy are organized into the five categories below that are relevant for organizing schools and instruction to facilitate secondary transition. Each category features a number of primary elements that describe specific secondary education and secondary transition practices. When implemented, these practices translate into conditions that can ensure successful outcomes.

Student-Focused Planning

Student-focused planning practices focus on using assessment information and facilitating students' self-determination to develop individual education programs based on students' post-school goals.

Student Development

Student development practices emphasize life, employment and occupational skill development through school-based and work-based learning experiences. Student assessment and accommodations provide a fundamental basis for student development that result in a successful transition.

Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration practices facilitate the involvement of community businesses, organizations and agencies in all aspects of secondary transition-focused education. Interagency agreements that clearly articulate roles, responsibilities, communication strategies and other collaborative actions that enhance curriculum and program development foster collaboration.

Family Involvement

Family involvement practices are associated with parent and family involvement in planning and delivering education and secondary transition services. Family-focused training and family empowerment activities increase the ability of family members to work effectively with educators and other service providers.

Program Structure

Program structures and attributes are features that relate to efficient and effective delivery of secondary transition-focused education and services, including philosophy, planning, policy, evaluation, and human resource development. The structures and attributes of a school provide the framework for a secondary transition perspective.

For more information and resources on how to utilize Kohler's Taxonomy for Transition Planning 2.0 in planning and service provision visit transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/NTACT-C_TaxonomyforTransition.pdf.

B. GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS[5]

Based on extensive research on effective secondary transition practices, the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) developed the Guideposts for Success that indicate experiences, skills, and supports that all youth will need to transition to adulthood successfully. The guideposts provide a statement of principles, a direction that will lead to better outcomes for all young people, and a way to organize policy and practice.

The guideposts are based on the important following assumptions:

1. High expectations for all youth, including youth with disabilities;
2. Equality of opportunity for everyone, including non-discrimination, individualization, inclusion and integration;
3. Full participation through self-determination, informed choice and participation in decision making;
4. Independent living, including skills development and long-term supports and services;
5. Competitive employment and economic self-sufficiency, which may include supports; and
6. Individualized, person-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate secondary transition planning; and
7. Universal Design of environments, programs and services to enable all individuals to access and participate in opportunities.

Who Should Use Them and How?

Youth and families should look for programs and activities that provide these features. Youth should use the Guideposts in developing any individualized plans, such as IEPs, individualized plans for employment (IPE) and other service strategies. ***Administrators and policymakers*** at the local level should use the guideposts in making decisions regarding funding, setting and establishing local priorities related to transitioning youth, and evaluating the work of agencies supported by that funding. ***Youth service practitioners*** (i.e., educators, related service providers, case managers, etc.) should use the guideposts to implement strategies in their work.

Guidepost 1: School-Based Preparatory Experiences

[5] Information adapted from the *National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth Guideposts for Success, 2.0 (2019)*. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598433.pdf

In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate and relevant indicators of student learning and skills.

These should include the following for ***all students***:

- Rigorous, relevant and inclusive academic curricular and program options that employ high-quality and engaging instructional practices tailored to the needs of diverse learners, including:
- A safe and supportive learning climate and environment characterized by high expectations, personalized communities, a participatory climate that promotes safety and belonging, and inclusive school practices.
- Access to effective educators.
- Postsecondary education success strategies including multiple measures of postsecondary readiness, comprehensive advising services, comprehensive, integrated supports and co-requisite course options for developmental education.

In addition, ***youth with disabilities may need:***

- Individualized secondary transition planning and services;
- Youth-led IEP and secondary transition planning process;
- Understanding of accommodations relevant to youth's needs in education;
- Access to specific and individualized learning accommodations; and
- Effective teachers and transition staff.

Guidepost 2: Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences

Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential for youth to form and develop aspirations and make informed career choices. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs and will require collaborations with other organizations.

All youth need information on career options, including the following:

- Career pathways aligned with industry-recognized credentials;
- Career assessment and exploration strategies;
- Work-based learning and service experiences;
- Career and technical education and other career-related applied learning; and

- Training in social skills, self-regulation and other employability skills.

In addition, ***youth with disabilities may need***:

- Access to accommodations and supports in career pathway programs;
- Accessible technology in employment training settings and the workplace;
- Training on rights to disability-related accommodations;
- Training on disability disclosure decision-making;
- Training on how to approach employers about accommodation requests; and
- Assistance finding and performing work in competitive, integrated employment settings.

Guidepost 3: Youth Development and Leadership

Youth Development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, ***all youth need*** the following:

- Challenging activities that promote positive growth and development;
- Formal and informal mentoring experiences with adults and peers;
- Opportunities to develop agency, self-determination and self-advocacy skills;
- Formal and informal experiences that develop initiative and leadership skills;
- Opportunities to build interpersonal skills;
- Opportunities to build social capital and connections to peers and role models; and
- Opportunities to develop critical thinking skills.

Youth with disabilities may need the following:

- Accessible programs and environments to engage in youth development and leadership;
- Mentors and role models with and without disabilities; and
- Training on disability-related rights and responsibilities, policies, history and culture.

Guidepost 4: Connecting Activities

Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. ***All youth may need*** one or more of the following:

- Mental and physical health care services, including direct services, education and support with transitioning to adult care;
- Assistance with securing basic needs, including accessible, safe, stable and affordable housing, accessible, transportation, and nutritious and affordable food;
- Training or coaching in various life skills;
- Financial literacy education;
- Accessible and universally designed recreational and leisure activities;
- Access to other services appropriate to one's needs, such as maternal health care for young parents, assistance obtaining childcare, parenting skills education, English language instruction and interpretation, veteran supports, immigrant supports, LGBTQ+ supports and services and information about legal rights and advocacy services.

Youth with disabilities may need one or more of the following:

- Connections to adult service agencies for assistance with independent living, employment support services, and other post-school services;
- Connection to parent training, information and resource centers;
- Peer-to-peer support with individuals with same disability;
- Assistive technology and training on how to use it;
- Benefits counseling;
- Personal assistance services and other long-term services and supports;
- Travel training;
- Training in functional life skills;
- Vocational rehabilitation counseling for individuals with disabilities, including veterans; and
- Supported decision-making and other alternatives to guardianship.

Guidepost 5: Family Involvement and Supports

Participation and involvement of parents, family members and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic and occupational growth of youth, leading to better

post-school outcomes. ***All youth need*** parents, families and other caring adults who do the following:

- Communicate and model high expectations for what youth can do and achieve;
- Support youth's learning through active involvement in their education;
- Participate with the youth in youth-led individualized planning and secondary transition meetings;
- Build skills in youth and support their ability to advocate for services and opportunities;
- Shift gradually from youth's advocate to youth's coach;
- Develop own and youth's understanding of high school, postsecondary, and employment requirements and expectations, relevant policies, rights and responsibilities;
- Assist youth in exploring postsecondary domains and related skills;
- Develop the family's own social capital and knowledge to navigate secondary transition

In addition, ***youth with disabilities need*** parents, families and other caring adults who do following:

- Communicate and model high expectations for what youth can do and achieve;
- Work in partnership with families to promote youth's academic learning, career development, health, access to community supports and transition to adult life;
- Engage families and youth as partners in secondary transition assessment and individualized planning;
- Include all families of youth, including culturally and linguistically diverse families, in the process of collaboration, planning and implementation for secondary transition;
- Strengthen and practice cultural competency;
- Assist families with accessing and learning how to use technology;
- Coordinate and integrate services across multiple service systems;
- Provide families with appropriate training, follow-up support and opportunities to build youth autonomy and access all elements of secondary transition;
- Connect families to people, institutions, and resources such as peer-led programs/support networks for families and youth, community-based wrap-around programs as needed and benefits planning assistance, including longterm services and supports.

For more information and resources on the Guideposts for Success 2.0, visit files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598433.pdf.

C. Emerging Frameworks

Current research is being developed to embed College and Career Readiness domains into Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS). For further information, visit ccr4t.education.uconn.edu.

FACT SHEET: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITION

1. **Why is planning for secondary transition important?**
   Presently, a large number of students receiving special education services do not graduate with diplomas or certificates or pursue education or training beyond high school. In comparison to the general population, students with disabilities struggle to succeed in the workplace and are less likely to live independently in the community.

   Secondary transition planning aims to increase every student's chance to succeed by bringing families, LEAs, and other service providers together to create a blueprint for post-graduation based on an individual student's strengths, needs and goals.

2. **For whom is secondary transition planning required?**
   According to IDEA, secondary transition planning begins for students who are 16 years old, but many states begin transition planning earlier. According to the DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR), transition planning is required for all DC students with disabilities who qualify for special education services and are age 14 or older.

3. **When does planning for secondary transition start?**
   According to DCMR, students who are turning 14 in their upcoming IEP year must have a transition plan in place. However, it is recommended that IEP teams begin transition planning at an earlier age (beginning in elementary school) through informal conversations about a student's goals for postsecondary education, employment and independent living. Schools can prepare students for meaningful participation in secondary transition by building self-advocacy and self-determination skills early on.

4. **Who is involved in the transition planning process?**
   The secondary transition planning process is driven by transition teams who work together to assist students in achieving their post-high school goals. Team members may include:
   - The student
   - Family members
   - Special and general education teacher(s)
   - Career/tech center personnel
   - Transition coordinator
   - Guidance counselor
   - Agency/community representatives

5. **What does a student need for effective secondary transition programming?**
   Effective transition planning begins with a comprehensive assessment of the student. Assessment data forms the basis for defining the goals and services that should be included in the IEP. Assessments can be formal or informal and are completed before the IEP meeting. Secondary transition-related assessment and student progress information should be

recorded in the present levels section and the secondary transition planning section in a student's IEP. For best practice, LEAs may create a central location for storing student data. Please see OSSE's Secondary Transition Assessment Toolkit for more information about assessment.

6. **How is a secondary transition plan written?**
   Prior to the IEP meeting, the team must go through an information-gathering process. In addition to gathering relevant assessment data relating to the student's functional strengths and needs, the team seeks input from the student, the student's family, education providers, and relevant outside agencies and community members.

   At the IEP meeting, the IEP team will review the student's present levels and discuss the student's postsecondary goals in the areas of education, employment and independent living. Based on this information, the team will work together to develop a secondary transition plan. The team will write measurable annual IEP goals to address the student's needs and complete the remaining sections of the IEP based on the student's postsecondary goals.

7. **Why is the participation of outside agencies in the secondary transition process important?**
   Collaboration with outside agencies helps IEP teams become familiar with the range/extent of services offered. Outside agency participation also allows parents and students to meet service providers and form personal connections.

8. **I'm new to this process. What resources are available to help me get up to speed?**
   On the national level, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funds two centers to provide technical assistance in secondary transition-related areas.
   - The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C):transitionta.org
   - The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD): www.dropoutprevention.org

   Additionally, several local websites provide helpful information to assist educators in familiarizing themselves with District of Columbia secondary transition resources and contacts.
   - OSSE's Secondary Transition Hub: osse.dc.gov/page/secondary-transition-resources
   - Secondary Transition Community of Practice: schooltalkdc.org/st-cop/

   For more information on resources related to the secondary transition process, refer to the Appendix at the end of this toolkit.

SECONDARY TRANSITION LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

I. SECONDARY TRANSITION AND THE IDEA: A LEGAL FRAMEWORK[6]

A. IDEA INTRODUCTION

While secondary transition planning was not mandated within IDEA until 1990, the philosophy of preparing students for life after high school has always been a primary purpose of education. Historically, the focus has been on preparing students with disabilities for the workforce, but as the labor market in the United States has shifted to require a highly trained workforce, the focus of schools has also shifted to preparing youth with disabilities for postsecondary education and independent living.

IDEA provides further clarification of this philosophy: "Disability is a natural part of the human experiences and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." ((c)(1)).[7]

Through sustained advocacy efforts, the right to a free and appropriate public education was afforded to children with disabilities in 1975 through the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also known as Public Law 94-142 (the predecessor of the IDEA). In addition, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 implemented nondiscrimination policies within public education and programs and activities that received federal financial assistance (e.g., postsecondary college and training programs). These two laws ensured that accommodations and services were (and continue to be) provided to youth with disabilities. Expanding on these laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed in 1990, prohibited discrimination and required reasonable accommodations by both public and private entities. It is vital that educators know the rights and responsibilities outlined in these laws and support students to advocate for their rights within school and beyond.

The secondary transition requirements in IDEA challenge educators to improve the post-school results of students with disabilities by improving the method through which they plan and prepare students and families for the challenges of transitioning into the adult world.

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[6] From Storms, J., O'Leary, E., & Williams, J. (2000). *Transition Requirements: A Guide for States, Districts, Schools, Universities, and Families.* Available at www.ncset.org/publications/related/idea97.pdf.

[7] 20 USC §1400(c)(1).

The IEP is the legal document that ensures schools provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that is designed to meet the unique needs of each student with a qualifying disability.

The secondary transition requirements in IDEA, DCMR and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy are designed to ensure that school staff:

- Work with eligible students and their families to think about what students want to do after high school;
- Design a rigorous course of specialized instruction and services that directly relates to each student's dreams and goals for the future;
- Provide instruction, related services, community experiences, employment and adult and daily living objectives that ensure adequate preparation while the student is in high school;
- Assist students and families in making the linkages to services they will need after high school; and
- Increase the probability that every student will be successful once they exits high school.

B. Secondary Transition Services[8]

The focus of the IDEA's secondary transition mandate centers on providing the secondary transition services students will need to successfully accomplish their postsecondary goals. The IDEA defines "transition services" as a results-oriented process that involves a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability.

Secondary transition activities should be focused on improving a student's academic and functional achievement and facilitating the young person's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation.

Additionally, secondary transition services should be based on an individual student's needs, taking into account his/her strengths, preferences and interests. Secondary transition services may include the following activities:

- Instruction;
- Related services;
- Community experiences;
- Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- Acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (when appropriate).

[8] 34 CFR §300.43(a).

C. Student Participation in IEP Secondary Transition Planning[9]

IEP teams must invite the student to attend the IEP meeting whenever the purpose of the meeting is to consider postsecondary goals and the transition services needed to assist the student in reaching those goals. Under federal law, IEP teams must involve a student in the secondary transition planning process when creating the IEP that will take effect during the year the student turns 16. Under DCMR, student transition planning begins at the age of 14 (or the IEP year in which the student turns 14). However, schools that initiate student involvement in IEP meetings and secondary transition planning at earlier ages experience more successful transition outcomes.

IEP teams should prepare students beforehand and facilitate meaningful student participation during the IEP meeting. If a student does not attend, the IEP team should take other steps to ensure the student's preferences and interests are considered throughout the secondary transition planning process. For more information on best practices for preparing students to participate in their secondary transition planning and IEP meetings, refer to the *Student-Focused Planning* section in this toolkit.

D. Secondary Transition Assessment[10]

Secondary transition assessment aims to provide information for IEP teams to use in developing and writing practical, achievable and measurable post-school goals and identify the secondary transition services necessary to help a student reach those goals. IEP teams should administer secondary transition assessments in the areas of education and training, employment and independent living. When properly conducted, information gathered from secondary transition assessments should provide answers to the following questions:

- What the student would like to do beyond secondary school (e.g., further education or training, employment, military, continuing or adult education)?;
- Where the student would like to live (e.g., dorm, apartment, family home, group home, supported or independent living)?; and
- How the student would like to take part in his/her community (e.g., transportation, recreation, community activities, etc.)?

Secondary transition assessments consist of a variety of formats and include:

- Behavioral assessments

[9] 34 CFR §300.321(b), 5-A DCMR § 3008.2(d), and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[10] Legal requirements on transition assessment can be found in 34 CFR §300.320(b), 5-A DCMR § 3026.1(a), and the OSSE Secondary Transition Policy

- Aptitude tests
- Interest and work values inventories
- Personalities or preference tests
- Career maturity or readiness tests
- Self-determination assessments
- Work-related temperament scales
- Vocational assessment
- Transition planning inventories

IEP teams should begin the secondary transition planning process with secondary transition assessment **before** a student turns 14 (per DC regulations; IDEA states 16 years old) and **before** any postsecondary goals or services have been selected; this is based on the idea that age-appropriate secondary transition assessment data provides the foundation for developing individualized goals and services that are based on a student's strengths, preferences and interests.

Following initial secondary transition planning, IEP teams should remember that secondary transition assessment is an ongoing process. Until a student with an IEP exits the school system, IEP teams should continue to collect data that adequately captures the student's academic progress, communication abilities, needs, preferences and interests to ensure a student's secondary transition plan continues to reflect their goals for postsecondary life accurately and provides secondary transition services that are aligned with supporting the student in achieving these goals. In addition, the ongoing data collection will measure progress toward the annual secondary transition goals.

For more information on how assessment guides the secondary transition planning process, refer to the *Age-Appropriate Secondary Transition Assessment* section in this toolkit and to OSSE's *Secondary Transition Assessment Toolkit* (updated 2023).

E. Secondary Transition Goals[11]

A student's IEP must contain appropriate measurable postsecondary goals beginning with the first IEP that is in effect when a student reaches age 14. The IEP should contain postsecondary goals in the areas of education/training, employment after high school and independent living (if appropriate[12]) and should be based on age-appropriate secondary transition assessments. The

[11] 30 CFR §300.320(b)(1) and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy

[12] The OSSE Secondary Transition Policy states, "It is up to the student's IEP team to determine whether IEP goals related to the development of independent living skills are appropriate and necessary for the student to receive

IEP should also contain corresponding annual goals that describe the skills and knowledge a student will learn within the academic year to assist them toward reaching their postsecondary goals. Both postsecondary and annual secondary transition goals should be updated annually to reflect current secondary transition assessment data and the student's changing interests, preferences and strengths.

For more information on secondary transition goal development, refer to the *Postsecondary Transition Goals* and *Annual Goals* sections in this toolkit.

F. Course of Study and Graduation Determination[13]

A course of study is the description of the coursework necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary activities and goal achievement and should list every course the student is required to take in order to graduate.[14] During the **eighth grade**, the IEP team should work together to determine the student's course of study and graduation plan.[15] A student's course of study should be reviewed annually (and modified if necessary) to reflect the student's changing needs, interests and performance.

Schools must provide all students with disabilities, including students with significant disabilities, the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. The determination that a high school diploma is not an appropriate goal for a student must be made by the IEP team. This determination should not be made prior to the student entering ninth grade.

If an IEP team determines a high school diploma is not appropriate, the team should develop a course of study that will assist the student in achieving an alternative to a high school diploma. Note that IEP teams are required to create a secondary transition plan and graduation plan regardless of whether a student is on a diploma or non-diploma track.

The following procedures apply whenever an IEP team determines to place a student on a non-diploma course of study:

- The school must provide the parents with written notification that the IEP team has determined that the student will be placed on a non-diploma course of study;
- The school must provide information in understandable language to the student and his parents about the differences between a diploma and a non-diploma course of study;

FAPE." In either instance, IEP teams should rely upon documented transition assessment data in the area of independent living to support this determination.

[13] OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[14] 20 USC §1416(a)(3)(B).

[15] 5-A DCMR § 3026.7(b)

- The LEA must obtain the parent's written acknowledgement that the parents have been informed and understand that the student will be placed on a non-diploma course of study;
- The student's IEP must contain a statement on why a standard diploma is not appropriate and that the parents and student have been fully informed of this decision.

G. INVOLVING OTHER AGENCIES IN SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING[16]

To the extent appropriate, IEP teams should invite a representative from the District of Columbia Rehabilitative Services Administration (DC RSA) and any other public agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for secondary transition services.[17]

Before inviting outside agencies to participate, a parent or adult student must provide written consent for the IEP team to invite outside agencies. To ensure the protection of confidentiality, parental consent (or consent by an adult student) must also be given before an IEP team releases any personally identifiable information, data, or records that have been collected or maintained by the school to officials from participating agencies.

Although the IEP team has the responsibility to invite individuals from other agencies to participate in secondary transition planning, the team does not have the authority to require representatives from other agencies to attend IEP meetings.[18] If an invited representative of a participating agency does not attend the meeting, the IEP team should take other steps to obtain the involvement of the agency during the secondary transition planning process.[19]

If a participating agency (i.e., any agency other than the school) fails to provide the secondary transition services described in the IEP, the IEP team must reconvene to identify alternative strategies for meeting the student's secondary transition goals and to amend the IEP accordingly.

H. TRANSFER OF RIGHTS AT AGE OF MAJORITY[20]

Prior to the date a student turns 17, LEAs must provide notice to both the student and the student's parent or legal guardian that the rights under Part B of IDEA will transfer to the student upon reaching age 18 (except in cases where a student has been determined to be incompetent under District of Columbia law). Additionally, the student's IEP must include a statement indicating that the student and his parents have been informed of the upcoming transfer of

[16] 34 CFR §300.321(b)(3) and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[17] For example, other adult service agencies an IEP Team might consider inviting include the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), the DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), the Child Family Services Administration (CFSA), the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS), or the DC Center for Independent Living (DCCIL).

[18] 34 CFR §300.324(c) and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[19] 5-A DCMR § 3026.8

[20] 34 CFR §300.320(c), 34 CFR §300.520, 5-A DCMR § 3026.9, and OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

rights. When a student reaches age 18, the LEA must provide notice to the student and the student's parents of the transfer of rights as part of the procedural safeguards. The rights regarding educational records must also be transferred to the student and the LEA must include a statement indicating the transfer in the notice.

Some students who have reached age 18 may not be able to identify when a decision needs to be made, consider possible options, or recognize the consequences of their decisions without support. Some students who have reached age 18 may elect their parent(s) **or legal guardian to continue their involvement in their educational decision-making.** This includes a signed power of attorney granting the parent or guardian the legal authority to make educational decisions unless the student opts to obtain parental support through a supported decision-making process. Documentation of supported decision-making arrangements must indicate the relationship of the identified adult to the student and the extent to which the identified adult can access the student's educational records. Students may change or terminate such arrangements or revoke access to their educational records at any time.

Students or their parent or guardian may pursue other options such as requesting an educational representative through OSSE, guardianship, or another form of representation by an advocate may be appropriate. Further information about DC's Education Decision-Maker and Transfer of Rights processes is available on OSSE's website: osse.dc.gov/service/education-decision-making.

I. Prior Written Notice[21]

Prior to completion of the last semester of secondary school in which a student is expected to graduate with a diploma or certificate of completion, the LEA must provide a Prior Written Notice (PWN) of the discontinuation of special education services at the end of the school year. If the student is older than age 18, the PWN must be provided to the student and, as applicable, to any legal educational decision-makers. If the student is younger than age 18, the PWN must be provided to the student's parent or guardian. The PWN must clearly state that the student will no longer be entitled to receive special education services from the LEA at the conclusion of the school year.

Students who receive a certificate of completion and exit school prior to their 22nd birthday are entitled to special education services. In order to access these services in a particular LEA, the student must enroll in an LEA for which they meet the residency requirement and, once they are

[21] 34 CFR §300.102(a)(3)(iii) and the OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

enrolled, notify the LEA that they are entitled to receive services. Students may continue to access these services until the end of the school year during which they turn 22.

J. Summary of Performance[22]

IEP teams are required to develop a Summary of Performance (SOP) for a student at least 60 days before the student graduates or exceeds the age eligibility for FAPE under IDEA (i.e., prior to the end of the school year in which the student turns age 22[23]). An SOP is most useful when the student (and parent, if appropriate) has had the opportunity to actively participate in developing the SOP. The SOP must include a summary of a student's:

- Academic achievement,
- Cognitive performance,
- Functional performance, and
- Recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his/her postsecondary goals.

Although the information found in the SOP can be useful in identifying reasonable accommodations and supports a student may need in postsecondary settings, please note that standing alone, an IEP and SOP do not provide sufficient documentation of a disability to establish eligibility with adult service agencies and other postsecondary institutions/service providers. IEP teams should provide accompanying documentation such as a current (no less than three years old) psychological or neuropsychological report along with the SOP to aid the student in accessing additional disability-related support services upon graduation. For more information, refer to the *Summary of Performance* section in this toolkit.

II. Federal Compliance and Reporting: An Introduction to the Secondary Transition Indicators[24]

Under IDEA, the US Department of Education, through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), requires states to develop State Performance Plans (SPP) on 20 indicators that guide their implementation of the IDEA. States are required to report annual data on their progress in meeting these indicators through yearly Annual Performance Reports (APR). In order to measure whether the special education services provided actually prepared students for further education, employment and independent living, four of the 20 indicators measure aspects of

[22] 34 CFR §300.305(e)(3), and the OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[23] 5-A DCMR § 3028.5

[24] Information adapted from NTACT:C *IDEA Data*. Available at https://transitionta.org/topics/data-collect_use/idea-data/.

secondary transition, including: Indicator 1 (Graduation Rate), Indicator 2 (Drop Out Rate), Indicator 13 (Secondary Transition IEP) and Indicator 14 (Post School Outcomes).[25]

A. Indicator 13: Secondary Transition IEP[26]

Indicator 13 measures the percentage of youths age 16 and older who have IEPs that include appropriate and measurable postsecondary goals. IEP postsecondary goals should be updated annually and based on current secondary transition assessments in order to satisfy this requirement. In conjunction, IEPs should include secondary transition services and chart a course of study that will practically enable a student to meet their annual IEP goals, postsecondary goals and secondary transition service needs.[27]

Indicator 13 also requires evidence that a student is invited to any IEP team meeting where secondary transition services are discussed. When applicable, representatives of participating agencies should also be invited to the IEP team meeting, with the prior consent of a parent (or a student who has reached the age of majority).[28] The following questions should be considered by teams to ensure their IEPs meet basic compliance standards for Indicator 13[29]:

Indicator 13 Compliance Questions

Consider these questions to ensure your IEP will meet basic compliance standards

- Is there a measurable postsecondary goal or goals for the student?
- Can the goal(s) be counted?
- Does the postsecondary goal(s) occur after the student graduates from school?
- Are the postsecondary goals based on an age-appropriate secondary transition assessment?
- Are there annual IEP goals that reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goal(s) or make progress toward meeting the goal(s)?
- Are there secondary transition services (including courses of study) in the IEP that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his/ movement from school to post-school?
- Do the secondary transition services listed in the IEP relate to a type of instruction, related service, community experience, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives (and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills), and provision of a functional vocational evaluation?
- Are representatives of other agencies invited (with parent or student consent) to IEP meetings when secondary transition services are being discussed that are likely to be provided or paid for by these other agencies?

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the OSSE no later than July 31 of the current year, the total number of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above which had appropriate transition goals and services as outlined in this policy, DCMR, and IDEA."

[27] 34 CFR §300.320(b)

[28] 34 CFR §300.321(b)

[29] NTACT:C *IDEA Data*. Available at https://transitionta.org/topics/data-collect_use/idea-data/.

B. INDICATOR 14: POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES[30]

Though graduation rates for students with disabilities have improved over time, outcomes for students who exit the public education system continue to leave room for improvement. Compared to their peers without disabilities, students with disabilities are less likely to participate in postsecondary education, face much higher adult unemployment rates and are much more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system or live in poverty as adults.

To assess the effectiveness of secondary education and secondary transition services, Indicator 14 requires states to collect data on the postsecondary education and employment status of young adults who received special education while they were in high school.[31] Each state must annually report the percentage of youth who had IEPs and are no longer in secondary school that are competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school (or both) within one year of leaving high school.

In addition to meeting federal reporting requirements, there are many benefits from gathering and analyzing information on the post-school employment and education experiences of students who have recently exited special education. When analyzed in a thoughtful way, Indicator 14 data assists LEAs to:

- Focus educators, families, administrators and students on preparing youth for postsecondary education and employment
- Identify services and experiences that contribute to better results and design more effective secondary transition programs
- Identify areas in which educators need support or additional training
- Determine the needs of specific schools and LEAs and strategically target resources
- Provide information that students and families can use to make informed decisions
- Develop state improvement plans that result in better post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities

[30] National Post-School Outcomes Center (NPSO), *Measuring Transition Success: Focus on Youth & Family Participation*. Available at http://www.pacer.org/publications/parentbriefs/ParentBrief_MeasuringTransitionSuccess.pdf.

[31] According to the OSSE Secondary Transition Policy issued January 5, 2010, "The OSSE is responsible for administering within one year of leaving high school a follow up survey for reach student who had an IEP and is no longer in secondary school. Each LEA is responsible for providing the OSSE accurate demographic data prior to the student graduation or exiting high school."

LEA BEST PRACTICE: Create and maintain a data collection process that tracks graduates' postsecondary education and employment status. LEAs can analyze that data to determine the effectiveness of their secondary transition program.

III. Legal Rights and Responsibilities in Postsecondary Education

Many high school students with disabilities plan to continue their education in postsecondary schools, including vocational and career schools, two- and four-year colleges, and universities. After a student leaves the school system, the educational entitlements of IDEA are no longer in place. Accommodations are not provided automatically and must be requested. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibit discrimination on the basis of a disability and outline the obligations that postsecondary schools have in providing academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and services. Students with disabilities need to be informed about their own rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities that postsecondary institutions have toward them.

IDEA and ADA/Section 504 Comparison Chart[32]

Topic Area	IDEA	ADA/Section 504
Identification	Schools must **identify students** with disabilities and provide services.	Students must **self-disclose** their disability condition and request services.
Disability Definition	Students ages 3-21 who are determined, by a multidisciplinary team, to classify in one or more of **13 predetermined disability categories**.	A **physical or mental impairment** that substantially **limits one or more major life activities**, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.
Legal Requirements	**Provide a free and appropriate public education** and any special and supportive **services** needed by the student.	**Cannot discriminate** on the basis of disability and **provide reasonable accommodations** to otherwise qualified students that ensure equal access to the university environment while not compromising essential components of curriculum.
Eligibility Determination	Schools **identify students, provide psycho-educational testing**, and determine needed services based on evaluation findings.	Students must contact the school for documentation guidelines and **provide school with necessary documentation**. New evaluations are the financial responsibility of the student unless special programs are available.
Specialized Plans	Schools must engage students in developing and following an **IEP** that	**Specialized plans are not developed.** Accommodations are identified and

[32] Adapted from Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, *A Comparison of ADA, IDEA, and 504*, available at https://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/laws/a-comparison-of-ada-idea-and-section-504/ and Leuchovious, D. *ADA Q&A...The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education* at http://www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/504.asp.

	outlines how the student will make satisfactory progress.	communicated to faculty members. Students choose whether to utilize accommodations or not.
Parental Involvement	Schools are **required to engage parents** in the IEP process.	Under FERPA and HIPPA, **parents are prohibited from accessing student information** unless authorized by the student in writing.

FACT SHEET: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ADA, SECTION 504 & POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION[33]

As students prepare for the transition from secondary school to postsecondary options, families often find they are less familiar with the protections offered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). It is crucial for students to become knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities in postsecondary settings because they have an ongoing responsibility to request and design their own accommodations.

How do the ADA and Section 504 affect admissions requirements?

Postsecondary programs cannot have eligibility requirements that screen out people with physical or mental disabilities. Application forms cannot ask applicants if they have a history of mental illness or other disability. Institutions may impose criteria relating to safety risks, but these criteria must be based on actual risk, not stereotypes or assumptions. It is also illegal for an institution to serve students with disabilities differently because it believes insurance costs will be increased.

Does the student have to provide documentation of his or her disability to request accommodations?

Schools may request current documentation of a disability. If a student obviously uses a wheelchair or is blind or deaf, no further documentation may be necessary. However, for students with hidden disabilities (e.g., learning or psychiatric disabilities or chronic health impairment), it is reasonable and appropriate for a school to request documentation from the student to establish the validity of the request for accommodations, and to help identify what accommodations are required.

What kind of documentation might be necessary?

Documentation should be completed and signed by a professional familiar with the student and the student's disability (i.e., a physician, psychologist, or rehabilitation counselor). Documentation should verify the disability and suggest appropriate accommodations. If previous documentation exists, it is most likely sufficient unless it is not current (usually **no more than three years old**). If no current documentation is available, the student is responsible for obtaining new documentation. This may mean paying to have the appropriate professional conduct a new evaluation. *It is recommended that students obtain an evaluation prior to leaving high school.*

[33] Adapted from Leuchovious, D. *ADA Q&A...The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education* at http://www.pacer.org/publications/adaqa/504.asp.

What do postsecondary programs generally have to do for students with disabilities?
A school may not discriminate on the basis of disability. It must ensure that its programs, including extracurricular activities, are accessible to students with disabilities. Postsecondary schools can do this in a number of ways: by providing architectural access, providing aids and services necessary for effective communication, and modifying policies, practices and procedures.

Are students with disabilities required to disclose their disability?
Students who do not require accommodations can keep this information private. However, if a student does need accommodations because of their disability, they must disclose in order to receive them. A school cannot provide any service, modification, or accommodation when it does not know one is required. It is a student's responsibility to make their needs known in advance. This process is often facilitated by an Office for Students with Disabilities. It is then the school's responsibility to work with the student to make reasonable modifications or provide appropriate services in a timely way.

For more information and tips on disclosure, refer to *The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities*, available at www.ncwd-youth.info/publications/the-411-on-disability-disclosure-a-workbook-for-youth-with-disabilities/.

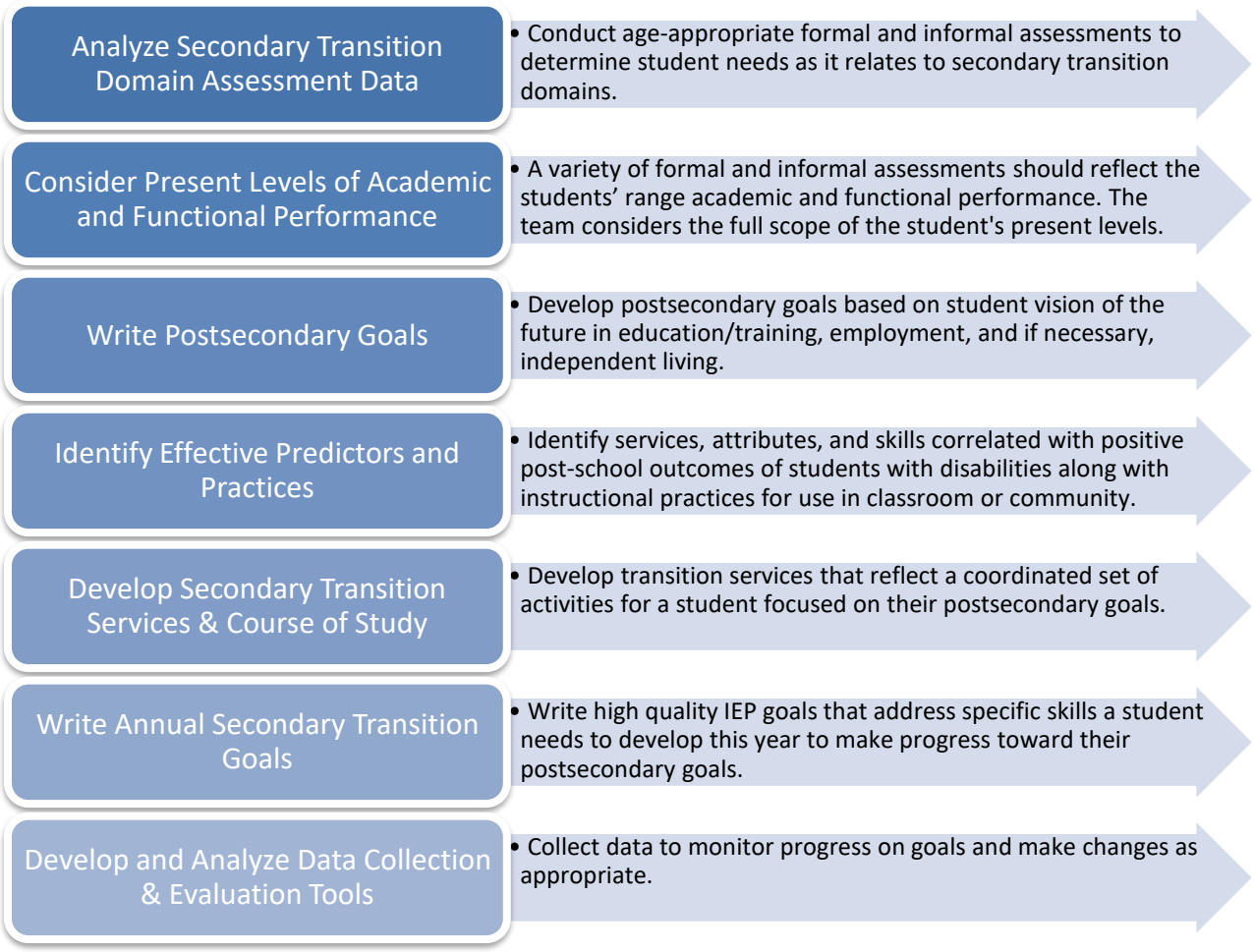
What kinds of aids and services must postsecondary institutions provide to ensure effective communication?
Qualified interpreters, assistive listening systems, captioning, TTYs (TeleTyperwriters), qualified readers, audio recordings, taped texts, Braille materials, large print materials, materials on a computer disc and adapted computer terminals are examples of auxiliary aids and services that provide effective communication. Public entities must give primary consideration to the individual with a disability's preferred form of communication unless it can be demonstrated that another equally effective means of communication exists.

Are schools required to make testing accommodations for students with disabilities?
Schools must establish a process for making tests accessible to students with disabilities. Schools accomplish this by providing appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. Although each student's needs are individual, examples of accommodations include allowing a student extended time to complete a test or providing a distraction-free space, sign language interpreters, readers, or alternative test formats. [Note: Testing accommodations are also required of agencies that administer college entrance exams and agencies/businesses that administer licensure and certification.

THE SECONDARY TRANSITION PROCESS

I. ASSESSMENT TO PRACTICE: A MODEL FOR TEACHERS[34]

Generally speaking, creating and using the secondary transition plan is similar to creating other sections of the IEP. Team members collect data to understand the student's current functioning, collaborate to write goals and determine services, and then implement the plan to ensure the student meets those goals. This section of the *Secondary Transition Process Toolkit* will walk through the Assessment to Practice Process, based upon *From Assessment to Practice: A Model for Teachers* from NTACT:C.



[34] *National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (2021). Assessment to Practice Model.* Available at https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/final_assessment-to-practice_2021.11.09_checked.pdf

FACT SHEET: TEN TIPS TO GUIDE SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING[35]

1. **Start the process early**

   The secondary transition process should begin in the year before the initial secondary transition plan is created (in DC, by age 14; therefore collecting data and working with the student and team begins in their 13th year). Remember—early secondary transition planning will typically result in better outcomes.

   LEA BEST PRACTICE: Review the secondary transition plans of any new students as they enroll for completion and compliance. Identify which students need new or updated secondary transition plans at the start of each school year. Create a list or tool that allows you to backward map from their eligibility or IEP due dates to allow enough time for the team to complete a thorough process.

2. **Get students involved**

   Student involvement is the cornerstone of effective secondary transition planning. By law, a student's preferences, interests and strengths must be considered during the planning process. Students should not only attend IEP meetings—they should be active participants before, during and after. To facilitate greater student involvement, provide training and opportunities for students to develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills.

3. **Utilize student strengths and interests**

   Every student will excel in some areas and have difficulty in others. Be aware of a student's strengths and preferences and develop them into specific job skills. Successful secondary transition planning focuses on strengths and interests, not deficits.

4. **Utilize the full range of team members**

   The secondary transition planning process is driven by teams who work together to assist students in achieving their post-high school goals. Ask the student and family about any important school or community members in the student's life who can share information or participate in meetings. Team members may include:

   - Student
   - Family members
   - Special and general education teacher(s)
   - Career/tech center personnel
   - Transition coordinator
   - Guidance counselor
   - Volunteer or employment supervisor
   - Agency/community representatives

[35] Adapted from South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project. (2006). *Cornerstones to Effective Transition Planning: Student and Parent Involvement.*

5. **Follow a sequential, documented process**
   Effective secondary transition planning does not happen by accident. When teams follow a sequential, documented process, the student's needs are more likely to be met. Consider utilizing checklists and student portfolios to plan from year to year. Ensure a central location is available to keep student data that team members can access.

6. **Co-Include Community-Based Instruction**
   The community is a natural teaching environment. The necessary skills for employment, independent living and leisure cannot all be taught in the classroom environment. The classroom and community should not be thought of as separate entities—both are integral components to gaining essential experiences and skills. Teach skills in the classroom and ensure the student has opportunities to practice them in the community.

7. **Plan for transportation and identification needs**
   Transportation can be overlooked in secondary transition planning. Effective secondary transition planning should address how the student will access services and the community, whether using a car or another method. In addition, students will need identification for driving, employment, and other situations. Consider how the student will obtain an ID during the secondary transition process.

8. **Develop relationships first, ask for services later**
   There are many adult services agencies that may provide services for students once they leave school. Begin by opening the lines of communication while the student is still in school, prior to the time service delivery will take place. Connecting students and families with outside agencies will allow all team members to better understand the supports and services that may be needed and ensure a smoother transition to those adult service agencies.

9. **Be creative**
   Effective secondary transition planning involves flexibility, problem solving and thinking outside of the box. The same secondary transition plan will not work for every student. Encourage creative approaches when planning for a student's transition and utilize a variety of resources and team members.

10. **Have high expectations**
    Encourage the student and other team members to develop challenging yet attainable goals throughout the planning process. Utilize student skills and strengths to create a plan that will allow students to reach their full potential and lead happy and productive adult lives.

II. Age-appropriate Secondary Transition Assessment to Analyze Secondary Transition Domain Data & Present Level Functional and Academic Data

The goal of transition assessment is to identify the strengths and needs of students with disabilities as they relate to future learning, living and working environments. Ongoing, age-appropriate assessment is essential in developing realistic and meaningful postsecondary goals. It is also necessary for the continuous self-discovery and decision-making of students this process increases student self-awareness of interests and skills which are based more on reality than imagination.

Secondary transition assessment should answer three basic questions:

1. Where is the student presently?
2. Where is the student going?
3. How will the student get there?[36]

OSSE's Secondary Transition Assessment Toolkit has more information about the assessment process and provides links to assessment tools that LEAs may opt to use.

Assessment takes place within the larger secondary transition process. The process begins with an initial assessment of students to gather information about students' strengths, interests and preferences. The team reviews information from the student's present levels across academic and functional areas. From that initial assessment data, appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals are written. Based on the identified postsecondary goals, a coordinated set of transition services is designed to help the student to reach his or her postsecondary goals. Finally, additional assessment data is collected to drive the continuation of the process.

An ongoing, cyclical assessment process has built-in flexibility that allows students to change their goals and alter their planning. By participating in this assessment process, students are at the center of their secondary transition planning. With student participation and continual data collection as the driving forces between postsecondary goal setting and goal attainment, it is more likely that student interests, preferences and strengths will lead to appropriate, realistic and desired goals. These types of goals more likely to result in post high school success.

[36] National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2013). Age Appropriate Transition Assessment Toolkit Third Edition. University of North Carolina at Charlotte, A. R. Walker, L. J. Kortering, C. H. Fowler, D. Rowe, & L.Bethune. Available at http://www.nsttac.org/content/age-appropriate-transition-assessment-toolkit.

A. Informal and Formal Secondary Transition Assessments

Secondary transition assessments generally include both formal and informal assessment methods. Formal assessments are standardized instruments that have been tested for reliability and validity and that have been normed. The advantage of these assessments is that they allow for comparisons of a given student's performance or measured interests to that of a peer group.

Informal assessments lack the formal norming process and reliability and validity information. This means that they tend to be more subjective. A major advantage of these assessments, however, is that they are often inexpensive and easy to use. Despite their less formal nature, informal assessments can provide a wealth of secondary transition-related information.

B. Secondary Transition Assessments Guide the IEP Secondary Transition Planning Process

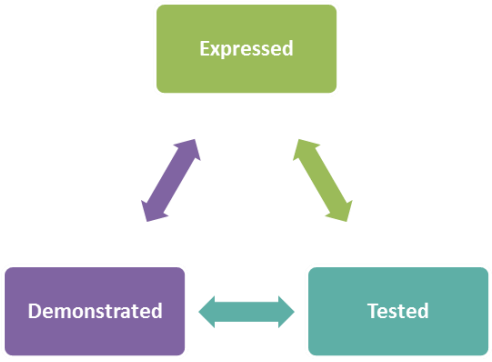
Secondary transition assessment should help students to identify their postsecondary goals. Informal and formal assessments can be used to determine what type of postsecondary education and employment a student is interested in; where and with whom that student wants to live after high school; what supports he or she will need in order to reach the postsecondary goals; and identify the skills necessary for attaining postsecondary goals.

Secondary transition assessment information can also be used to write the present levels of performance in the IEP, which is the starting point for writing annual goals designed to help students reach their postsecondary goals. This information helps to answer the questions, "What does the student currently know or can currently do?" and "What does the student need to learn or need to do better?"[37]

Secondary transition assessment information can also be used to identify appropriate annual goals. This is done when the IEP team uses data to determine what skills are needed to attain postsecondary goals, what skills the student already has, and what skills need to be developed for a student to progress toward meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

C. Triangulating Assessment Data

Data must be triangulated in order for any transition assessment information gathered about students to be meaningful. The process of triangulation requires that information be gathered through a variety of methods in order to find out what is expressed, what is tested and what has been demonstrated. This



[37] Rowe, D. A., Koertering, L., & Test, D. W. (2012). Transition assessment for instruction. In *Evidence-based instructional strategies for transition*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

process is important because, standing alone, different types of data do not always seem to match up. In order to see the full picture, it is important to gather and examine data from a variety of sources.

> **For example,** imagine a student who states during an interview that she wants to become a computer repair person. She then takes an interest inventory. Knowing that she thinks that she wants to work with computers, she responds that she loves every activity that is related to computers and that she dislikes everything else. Not surprisingly, the inventory shows that she has a strong interest in careers in which she can work with computers.

Too often, educators and service providers stop collecting data at this point and start moving ahead with postsecondary planning to help the student become a computer repair person. However, when the final type of data is collected to allow for triangulation, they have one last chance to see if it's a real match.

> **Example continued:** In order to see what kind of interests the student demonstrates, she might participate in a job site visit at a computer repair company. During the visit, her teacher observes that she looks completely bored, does not ask any questions and fails to engage. Further, when she is asked where she wants to go for job shadowing and she does not mention the computer repair company, it becomes clear that it is now time to step back and begin looking at career interests again. Had this student's teacher failed to triangulate assessment data, this student's secondary transition plan would have continued to reflect post-high school planning around a career in which she was not truly interested.

D. Variety of Sources and Assessment Areas

Besides collecting assessment data using a variety of *methods*, it is also important to collect data that provides insight into student interests, preferences and functioning in a *variety of areas* and a *variety of sources*.

Students have different relationships with the people in their lives, all of whom may have varying perspectives of the student's strengths, interests, preferences and functioning. Teams should consult various members of the student's environments when collecting data:

- Student
- Family members
- Special education and general education teachers
- Related service providers
- Guidance/college counselors
- Community agencies
- Adult service agencies
- Volunteer or employment supervisors
- Religious leader or mentor

In order to more fully understand a well-rounded perspective of the student, various assessment areas may include:

- Academic achievement
- Adaptive skills
- Aptitudes
- Cognitive development
- Emotional development and mental health
- Independent living skills
- Interests
- Preferences
- Recreation skills
- School engagement
- Self-determination skills
- Social skills
- Support system

Positive Personal Profile

Creating a positive personal profile is a way of looking at assessment data and present levels that pulls together various student attributes from multiple sources and environments, such as goals, skills, learning styles, interests, values, and experience. This creates a well-rounded picture of the student that the student can use to advocate for themselves and that the team can use when making decisions. A Positive Personal Profile is continuously updated over time as more information is gathered about the student and can identify areas where more assessments are needed. A sample Positive Person Profile template is available at https://transcen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Blank-Positive-Personal-Profile.pdf

(Tilson, G. (n.d.). Developing a Positive Personal Profile. TransCen. retrieved from https://employmentfirstma.org/files/PositivePersonalProfile_Transcen.pdf)

FACT SHEET: SECONDARY TRANSITION ASSESSMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is an age-appropriate transition assessment?

Transition assessment has been defined by the Division on Career Development and Transition of the Council for Exceptional Children as an "ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living and personal and social environments." Age appropriate refers to a student's chronological rather than developmental age.

2. How do I conduct an age-appropriate secondary transition assessment?

The secondary transition assessment process will depend on the specific secondary transition assessment tools and procedures being used and the characteristics of the student being assessed. The secondary transition process will inform and incorporate the student's present levels throughout the IEP. Whatever process is followed, the following should be considered when conducting secondary transition assessments[38]:

- Incorporate assistive technology and accommodations that allow the student to fully demonstrate their abilities or interests;
- Assessment should occur in environments that resemble actual education, employment, independent living, or community environments;
- Assessments should produce information that will contribute to the ongoing development, planning, and implementation of secondary transition planning;
- Use varied methods that sample a student's behavior and skills over time;
- Data must be verified by more than one method and more than one person;
- Data must be interpreted for the student, their family and the IEP team members;
- Data and results must be documented in a format that is useful to transition planning;
- Take into consideration the student's learning, cultural and linguistic characteristics; and
- Information should be current, valid and relevant to secondary transition.

3. What are the types of secondary transition assessments?

Formal Secondary Transition Assessment Methods

[38] Sitlington, P. L., Neubert, D. A., & Leconte, P. J. (1997). Transition assessment: The position of the Division on Career Development and Transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 20,* 69-79.

- Secondary transition planning inventories can help identify transition strengths and needs in various aspects of adult living including employment, education, independent living, interpersonal relationships and community living.
- Adaptive behavior/daily living skills assessments can be used to determine the type and amount of assistance that may be needed in order to live as independently as possible.
- Aptitude tests measure a specific skill or ability to provide information for career decisions.
- Interest inventories provide information about preferences for careers and work activities.
- Intelligence tests assess a student's cognitive performance.
- Achievement tests measure the learning of academic skills. Results can be linked to job and career requirements and can help to identify areas in need of remediation.
- Temperament inventories identify a student's preference for types of careers and work.
- Self-determination assessments provide information about a student's readiness to make decisions and take actions related to their postsecondary goals.

Informal Secondary Transition Assessment Methods

- Interviews and questionnaires can be conducted with a variety of individuals in order to collect information related to the student's strengths, needs, preferences and interests.
- Direct observations of student performance can be conducted within naturally occurring environments, including school, employment, or community settings.
- Curriculum-based assessments are designed by educators to gather information about a student's performance in a specific curriculum and to develop instructional plans for a specific student. Potential data includes work samples, portfolios, and/or criterion-referenced tests.
- Environmental analysis involves carefully examining environments where secondary transition-related and postsecondary activities occur. A critical part of this analysis should be to identify the types of accommodations that could be provided to help a student successfully manage the environment being analyzed.

4. How do I select secondary transition instruments?

In order to select appropriate instruments, you must become familiar with the instruments that are available to you by: reading the assessment manuals, seeking independent information (e.g., test reviews, professional articles) and speaking with local adult service providers and employers. Create a list of assessments available at your school and update regularly.

Select the assessment methods that will help the student to answer the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What are my unique talents and interests?
- What do I want in life—now, and in the future?
- What do I need to do now to get to those goals?

III. Postsecondary Goals

Defining and clarifying a student's post-school dreams, visions and outcomes gives IEP teams the foundation to begin developing secondary transition goals and objectives that reflect the skills a student will need to achieve their goals.

Ask yourself: *If we are to prepare students to successfully transition to the responsibilities of adult life, how can we accomplish this without knowing where the*

A. Student Questions

After reviewing secondary transition assessment results, students should begin formulating their postsecondary goals. Three key questions will assist students in providing the information needed to complete the postsecondary goals portion of the IEP. Note that these goals will most likely change over time as students develop and become more aware of their skills, talents, interests and limitations.

1. Where do I want to **live** after completing high school?
2. What type of **work** do I want to do after completing high school?
3. How do I want to **learn** to do my job after completing high school?

B. Parent Questions

Parents and other family members play an important role in assisting students in developing postsecondary goals. There are a variety of ways to collect information from parents regarding visions and goals for their students' futures. Parent questionnaires sent home with students, or in-person or phone interviews with parents can help clarify parents' vision for their students' future. Possible questions to ask parents include:

- Describe your child's best possible day 10 years from now.
- Describe your child's worst possible day 10 years from now.
- What is your worst fear for your child?
- What are your short-term and longterm goals for your child's future?
- What are you child's goals for his or her future?
- Under what circumstances do you see your child flourishing most?
- Under what circumstances do you see your child struggling most?

OSSE's Secondary Transition Assessment Toolkit has resources linked to a variety of student and parent questionnaires and input forms, which can help schools collect information.

C. Postsecondary Goal Requirements

Postsecondary goals set the course for the IEP transition plans by representing what the student wants to achieve after high school. Every postsecondary goal should be written in measurable terms and based on information about the student gained from age-appropriate secondary transition assessments. Every other component in the secondary transition plan must be aligned to support students in attaining their postsecondary goals.

Every transition-aged student's IEP must include at least one goal in each outcome area:

- Education or Training (required)
- Employment (required)
- Independent Living (when appropriate[39])

Tips for Writing Measurable Postsecondary Goals

- Use results-oriented terms such as "enrolled in," "work," "live independently"
- Use descriptors such as "full time" and part time"
- Consider where the student hopes to be approximately one year after high school
- Understand that postsecondary goals will likely be broader for younger students and more specific as students near graduation.

Postsecondary goals must address further employment and education or training after high school. An independent living postsecondary goal is optional and developed only if the IEP team believes the student needs to acquire skills while in school to live where and how the student would like to live.

Postsecondary goals should reflect high, but attainable expectations and be revisited annually as the goals may change as students grow. It is developmentally appropriate to have more broad goals in younger grades that become more specific as student's age and become clearer about their postsecondary goals.

[39] The OSSE Secondary Transition Policy states, "It is up to the student's IEP team to determine whether IEP goals related to the development of independent living skills are appropriate and necessary for the student to receive FAPE." In either instance, IEP teams should rely upon documented transition assessment data in the area of independent living to support this determination.

D. Postsecondary Goals Format[40]

When writing a postsecondary goal, consider using the format below to ensure the goal is clear, measurable and aimed for after graduation.

_____ _____ will _____ _____.

(After high school) (The student) (Behavior) (Where and how)
(After graduation)
(Upon completion of high school)

E. What if Students Do Not Attain Their Postsecondary Goals?

While student success after high school is arguably the greatest outcome measure of the education system's success, various factors influence whether postsecondary goals can be attained, some of which are beyond an educator's influence. Postsecondary goals provide a target that students prepare to meet while in high school and help chart the course the IEP team should follow in planning for post-high school success. These postsecondary goals may also help inform plans created by adult service agencies.

Remember that LEAs are still responsible for services leading up to mastery of the annual goals as provided in the IEP. In addition, the District of Columbia publicly reports on post-secondary outcomes as measured by Indicator 14 of the State Performance Plan.

LEA BEST PRACTICE: Create and maintain a data collection process that tracks graduates' postsecondary education and employment status. LEAs can analyze that data to determine the effectiveness of their secondary transition program.

[40] Information adapted from NTACT:C *IDEA Data*. Available at https://transitionta.org/topics/data-collect_use/idea-data/.

IV. Identify Effective Predictors and Practices

Once the student and their team have determined their postsecondary goals, the team needs to determine what predictors and practices will help the student meet their goals. First the team can select effective predictors (outlined in this chart below) and then select which High Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities (found here: highleveragepractices.org) will help meet the goal. These predictors and practices lead to the services selected for the student's IEP.[41]

Evidence-Based Practices	Research-Based Practices	Promising Practices
• demonstrates a **strong record** of success for improving outcomes • adheres to indicators of **quality research**	• demonstrates a **sufficient record** of success for improving outcomes • **may adhere** to indicators of **quality research**	• demonstrates **some success** for improving outcomes • **more quality research is needed**
• goal setting • inclusion in general education • paid employment/ work experience • program of study • self-advocacy/self-determination • student autonomy/decision-making • student support • work study	• career and technical education (vocational education)	• career awareness • community experiences • exit exam requirements/high school diploma status • interagency collaboration • occupational courses • parental involvement • psychological empowerment • self-care/independent living • self-realization • social skills • technology skills • transition programs • travel skills

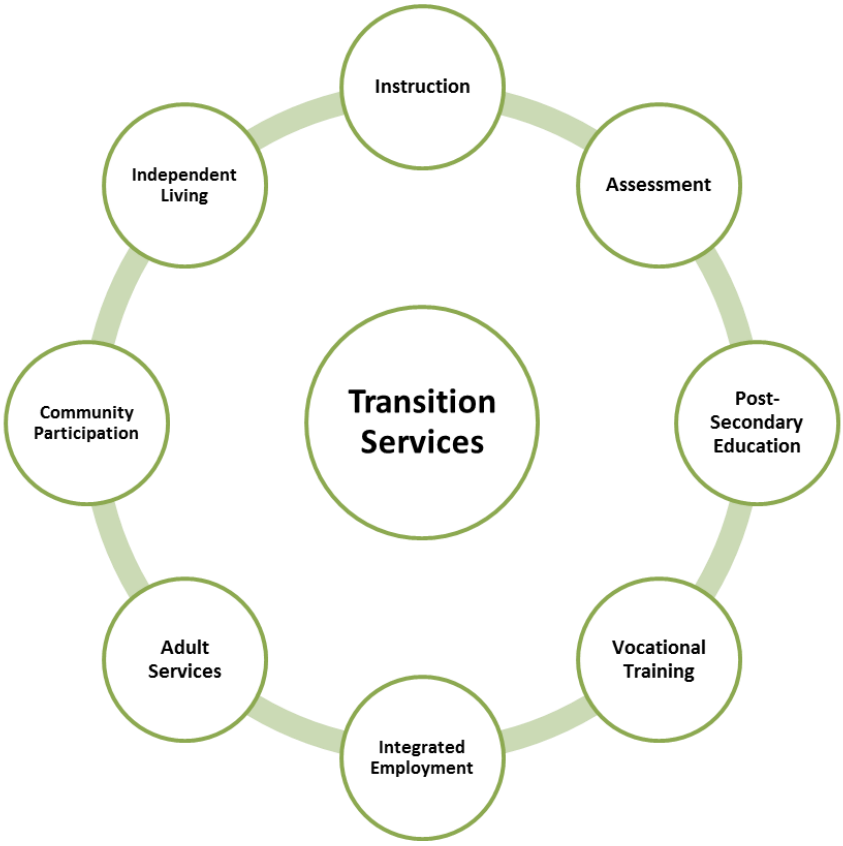
Student Example[42]

A student recently helped her team set the following postsecondary goal: *After graduation from high school, she will attend an adult continuing education program to maintain and improve communication and self-care skills*. The team discussed **social skills** and **self-determination** as effective predictors for her success in such a program. The team decided to use the following practices: a **social skills simulation** to build skills while also providing her with **instruction from a self-determination module**. Later, her IEP included direct services to provide those practices.

[41] Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W., Fowler, C., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2020) Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, *44(1),*1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793

[42] Adapted from National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT). (2019). *Lilly Case Study*. Indicator 13 Training Materials: Case Studies. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/Lilly-Case-Study_0.pdf

V. Secondary Transition Services: Coordinated Sets of Activities[43]



Secondary transition services are intended to prepare students to make the transition from the world of school to the world of adulthood. In developing an IEP, the IEP team must consider a coordinated set of activities to assist the student in reaching their post-school goals. Coordinated activities are tasks or activities that students will complete to learn the skills and knowledge associated with each annual goal.

These activities may take place in the school, at home, or in a community-based setting. More specifically, activities must be based on the individual student's needs, preferences and interests. When determining the secondary transition services that students will need, the IEP team must connect those services to the postsecondary goal, the effective predictors and the practices

[43] Adapted from OSSE Secondary Transition Policy and Oklahoma State Department of Education Special Education Services, *Oklahoma's Transition Education Handbook, 2011 Edition.* Available at http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/Handbook.pdf.

identified while planning. The IEP team must consider and plan for any of the following activities that will build their skills:

- A functional vocational evaluation and course of training;
- Acquisition of daily living skills (if appropriate);
- Any postsecondary education options;
- Integrated employment, including supported employment;
- Independent living goals and objectives;
- Continuing and adult education;
- Adult services; and
- Appropriate circumstances for referring a student or the student's parents to a governmental agency for services.

A. Ensuring Successful Coordination

In selecting each coordinated activity, the IEP team should:

- Ensure role clarity
  - Indicate the people who will be responsible for facilitating completion of each activity. Responsible persons could include general education teachers, co-workers, friends, or others who may be able to assist students in completing their secondary transition goals.
- Ensure engagement
  - Consider and plan for appropriate parent involvement with the student's secondary transition plan.
- Prepare the student for success
  - Review behavior expectations associated with any off-site environments, enable site visits and introductions of any new adults, and establish routines and schedules to reduce anxiety and increase predictability for the student.
- Ensure responsiveness
  - Provide the parent and student with points of contact for each activity and create a system for flagging and swiftly resolving challenges.
- Document the secondary transition service that the student will receive.
  - Consider services that may happen over time or only during specific years. These services can also be included in the course of study and can help the team understand the longterm plan for the student.

B. Examples of types of services that students may receive through secondary transition:

Employment Service Examples

- **Vocational guidance and counseling**
- **Vocational, psychological, or other types of assessment to determine vocational potential**
- **Assistance in obtaining competitive, customized, or supported employment**
- Job development, placement and follow-up services
- Rehabilitation, technological services and adaptive devices, tools, equipment and supplies
- Assistance to begin a new line of work
- Assistance with work expenses the individual has as a result of their disability
- Information and referral services
- Connecting students with mentors with disabilities

Postsecondary Education Service Examples

- **Vocational training**
- **Apprenticeship programs**
- College training toward a vocational goal as part of an eligible student's financial aid package
- Advocacy training
- Connecting students with mentors with disabilities

Adult and Independent Living Service Examples

- **Advocacy training**
- **Housing or transportation supports needed to maintain employment**
- **Orientation and mobility services**
- Case management services to access and obtain local services
- Therapeutic recreation, including day activities, clubs and programs
- Connecting with mentors
- Training on independent living skills (attendant management, housing, transportation, career development)
- Information and referral services

VI. Course of Study[44]

To be effective, secondary transition planning must become a systematic and structured process in which entities collaborate to provide a continuum of services that address the individual strengths, needs and interests of students. Program development, evaluation for improvement and ongoing professional development are key components of this systematic approach.

A. Graduation Plan

During a student's eighth-grade year, the IEP team must determine a student's course of study and assist the student in developing a graduation plan. LEAs must provide all students with disabilities, including students with significant disabilities, the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. If the IEP team determines a high school diploma is not appropriate, the course of study must assist the student in achieving an alternative to a high school diploma.

B. Course of Study and Secondary Transition Planning

Beginning with the IEP a student will have during high school, IEPs must contain a description of the course of study necessary to assist the student in preparing for post-school activities.[45] The course of study must ensure that the student has the knowledge and skills to qualify for and successfully complete at least one of the following paths:

- Two- or four-year postsecondary education program;
- Technical/vocational program;
- Apprenticeship;
- On-the-job training leading to a postsecondary credential (i.e., certificate, license, associate, or bachelor's degree)

The course of study should directly relate to the student's present level of performance and the student's postsecondary goals. In addition, the course of study should be designed to:

- Improve the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate his movement to life after high school
- Align with the student's secondary transition goals
- Align with academic requirements for a high school diploma or certificate of completion

LEA Best Practice: The IEP team can map out all the transition services and coursework the student will be expected to complete during high school to

[44] OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.
[45] 34 CFR §300.320(b)(3).

ensure alignment to goals. This can be reviewed and modified annually, as well as kept in a central location to be shared when new members join the team.

C. Non-Diploma Course of Study

The following procedures apply whenever an IEP team determines to place a student on a non-diploma course of study:

- The school must provide the parents with written notification that the IEP team has determined that the student will be placed on a non-diploma course of study;
- The school must provide information in understandable language to the student and his parents about the differences between a diploma and a non-diploma course of study;
- The LEA must obtain the parent's written acknowledgment that the parents have been informed and understand that the student will be placed on a non-diploma course of study; and
- The student's IEP must contain a statement on why a standard diploma is not appropriate and that the parents and student have been fully informed of this decision.

NOTE: A secondary transition plan and graduation plan is required regardless of whether a student is on a non-diploma or diploma track.

D. Nonpublic Students with IEPs in Nonpublic Programs

Students who have been placed in a nonpublic residential or day school must have the opportunity to access the same secondary transition services that are available to students in general education settings. The LEA in which the student is enrolled is responsible for ensuring the student's course of study is consistent with the student's secondary transition plan and all diploma or Certificate of Completion requirements.

Student Example Course of Study as Written in the IEP

Lilly is working to obtain an IEP Certificate of Completion because she requires significant modifications to the general education curriculum and will be taking the Alternate Assessments throughout high school.

For Lilly's 12th grade year, she will be taking: Career Technical Education, Social Studies I (Government/US History), Transition Course on Self-advocacy/Problem solving, Life Skills Science, Functional Finance, Adapted Health and Physical Education (1st semester), and Music II (2nd semester). She will be participating in a Cooperative Work Experience.

In the following year, Lilly will be enrolled in a workforce development training program and an extracurricular music program.

(Based upon *Lilly Case Study* from https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/Lilly-Case-Study_0.pdf)

VII. Measurable Annual Goals

Annual goals describe what a student will learn within an academic year to show progress toward achieving his postsecondary goals. An IEP must contain at least one annual goal that aligns with each of a student's postsecondary goals. Annual goals are not mere statements of enrolling in a class or passing a class with a certain grade. Annual goals are about the skills students will learn and master throughout the year. Annual goals must be written in a manner that allows for the measurement of progress and, as needed, any necessary adjustment.

Each annual goal is made up of three crucial components:

1. **Conditions**: The materials and environment necessary for the goal to be completed
2. **Behavior:** The action that can be directly observed and monitored
3. **Criterion:** How much, how often, or to what extent the behavior must occur to demonstrate that it has been achieved

Given _____ , _____ will _____ _____ _____

(Condition) (Student) (Target Behavior) (Criterion) (Timeframe)

A. Annual Goal Questions for Students

The following questions should be answered annually and are designed to help students create annual goals that correspond to their future goals and plans:

- What do I need to learn now to live where I want after graduating from high school?
- What do I need to learn now to do the job I want after graduating from high school?
- What do I need to learn now to be able to succeed in an educational program after graduating from high school?

B. Comparison Between Annual and Postsecondary Goals

Postsecondary Goals	Annual Goals
● Long term ● Occurs after graduation from high school ● Determined by the student ● Designed to be measured one year after graduation ● Initially stated in broad terms, becoming more specific and refined each year ● Must be related to student's strengths, interests and preferences	● Short term ● Occurs during high school ● Determined by the IEP team ● Designed to be measured at least quarterly ● Stated in specific terms ● Must be related to postsecondary goals, present levels of performance and secondary transition activities

VIII. Postsecondary and Annual Goal Examples

KEVIN

Postsecondary Goal Example
After graduation, Kevin will obtain a supported employment position that allows him to work to his maximum stamina and incorporates the use of assistive technology.

Annual Goal Example
Kevin will participate in yearlong on-campus vocational preparation, including the following experiences, each for a period of three months, with a frequency of a minimum of two sessions each week, and session duration of one hour per session in the following positions: clerical job experience in school office, school based laundry enterprise, janitorial work experience throughout school building.

The annual goal is compliant and appropriate for the following reasons:

- Kevin will gain important employment skills from participating in these on-campus job experiences;
- Data from the completion of the annual goal may provide Kevin's IEP team with information regarding his future employment strengths and interests; and
- The annual goal statement includes specific criteria to attain this goal, including minimum level related to (a) the duration of the work experience, (b) the frequency of participation, and (c) as well as the duration of each work session.

ALLISON

Postsecondary Goal Example:
After college, Allison will have a career in the field of early childhood education.

Annual Goal Example:
Allison will describe the similarities and differences of various early childhood careers in a two-page essay after conducting four structured interviews of employees in the field of early childhood including a professor, a child care director, and a preschool teacher, during the fall semester of this IEP.

This annual goal is compliant and appropriate for the following reasons:

- Describing aspects of related jobs is a logical step in helping Allison narrow her career path after college. (This annual goal may also provide Allison with information that will help her select courses in college that best prepare for a career in early childhood education.)
- The goal statement includes criteria, a timeframe and is measurable.
- The goal statement indicates acquisition of knowledge, through the completion of a series of activities.

MAYA

Postsecondary Goal Example:
Following graduation, Maya will be employed part-time in the community with supports.

Annual Goal Example:
Given staff supervision and school transportation to the sites, Maya will rank her top preference of career opportunities using a picture symbol rubric through completion of community-based instruction at four different community employment sites for three two-hour sessions every week that school is in session for the duration of this IEP.

This annual goal is compliant and appropriate for the following reasons:

- The goal includes activities that will prepare Maya for postsecondary employment;
- The goal states conditions and a timeframe in which it should be accomplished;
- The goal states a measurable behavior and the activities stated are measurable.

JASON

Postsecondary Goal Example:
After graduating from high school, Jason will enroll in a four-year college to obtain his undergraduate degree in history and education to become a high school social studies teacher.

Annual Goal Example:
Through participation in the district's teacher mentor program, Jason will write an essay about his expectations for his future career, including statements of: a goal, three or more negative aspects of teacher, three or more positive aspects of teaching, and a summary statement of the mentor experience with 80% or better accuracy in grammar and spelling by March 2024.

This annual goal is compliant and appropriate for the following reasons:

- This annual goal supports Jason's postsecondary goal of becoming a high school teacher;
- Writing well and synthesizing information are district standards and align with his postsecondary goal of attending college;
- This is a step toward that postsecondary goal that can be completed while in high school; and
- The annual goal includes a condition, criteria, timeframe and an observable behavior.

IX. Develop and Analyze Data Collection & Evaluation Tools[46]

Once the team has developed the annual goals, the team must decide who, how and when data will be collected to inform student progress with the goal. Data collected for annual goals can also be used to inform what additional secondary transition assessments or what changes to postsecondary goals or secondary transition services may be needed.

For each annual goal, the IEP team should discuss:

- Who will conduct, monitor and evaluate impact for annual goals (student, school, family, outside agencies)?
- How will the data be collected? (observation sheets, checklists, classroom-based work samples, rubrics, student-reflections, portfolio, etc.)
- When will these data collection tools be used?
- Who will organize and analyze all data that has been collected to:
    - compile progress monitoring reports?
    - identify needs for IEP addendums?
    - inform continued assessment plans and the next IEP?

[46] Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W., Fowler, C., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2020) Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, *44(1),*1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793

X. Providing Meeting Notice

A. Notification of Meeting Form

When an IEP transition team is planning on discussing information relating to transition, the notification of meeting form that is sent home to parents must include four essential items:

- An indication that secondary transition goals and services will be discussed at the meeting
- An indication that the student will be invited to attend the meeting
- The student's name listed among the named participants on the notification form
- If applicable, the staff member name (if known) and agency that may be responsible for paying for or providing secondary transition services among the participants listed on the notification form

B. Participating Agency Attendance

Whenever a participating agency is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for secondary transition services included in the plan, the LEA must invite a representative from that agency to attend and participate in the student's IEP meeting. However, LEAs must first obtain **written** parental consent (or student consent if the student has reached the age of majority) for the agency representative to attend.

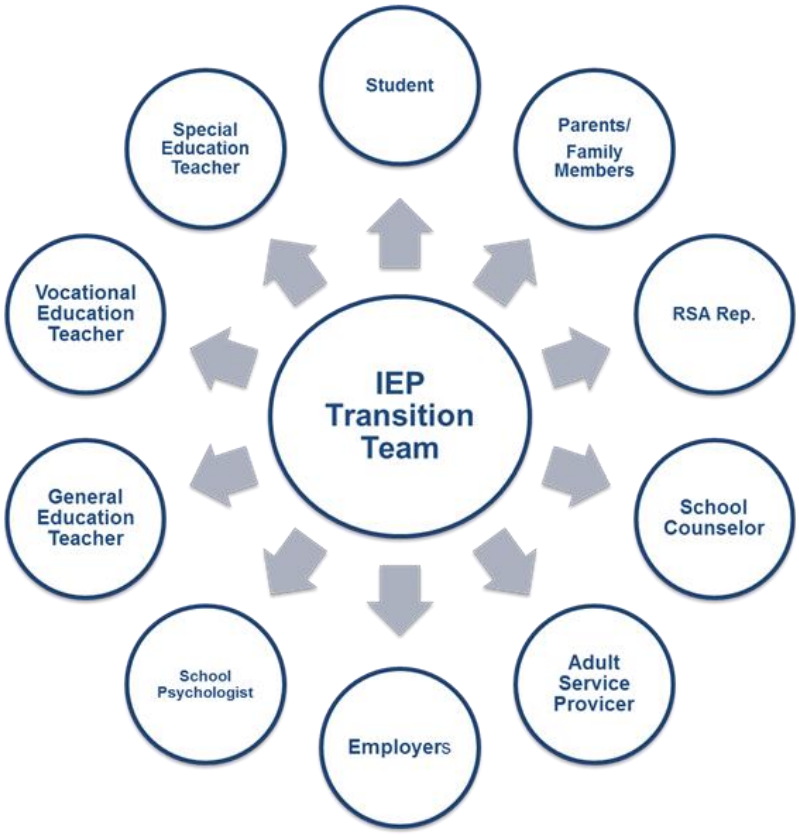
C. Invite Student to Attend

Students of transition age must be invited to attend their IEP meeting through written documentation. Best practice recommends that students are introduced to secondary transition terminology, roles of the IEP team and procedures *prior to* students attending and participating in their IEP meeting. Refer to the *Self-Determination* section in this toolkit for more information on how to assist students in preparing to actively participate in their transition planning meetings.

D. Holding Meetings without Student Present

If a student has been invited to attend the transition IEP meeting but declines, the meeting may continue so long as steps have been taken (and thoroughly documented) to obtain information from the student and consider the student's preferences and interests throughout the secondary transition planning process.

XI. IEP Transition Planning Team



A. Who belongs at an IEP Transition Meeting?

Depending on a student's needs, all or some of the following individuals may be members of a student's "Transition Team."

- The student;
- The student's parents;
- Case manager;
- Special, regular and/or vocational educators;
- Special education and/or transition coordinators;
- School psychologist;
- School counselor;
- Related service providers (based on student's IEP);
- Adult service providers;
- Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA) representative; and
- Employers.

B. WHAT IS EACH TRANSITION TEAM MEMBER'S ROLE?

Student

- Identifies career interests
- Shares views about various postsecondary options
- Identifies academic strengths, weaknesses and learning styles
- Describes and prioritizes necessary accommodations and modifications
- Makes decisions about the future
- Demonstrates self-advocacy skills by explaining and requesting necessary supports and accommodations

Parent or Guardian

- Shares information about the student's skills, interests and motivations
- Describes available support systems for the student to pursue postsecondary opportunities (e.g., transportation, housing, financial support)
- Provides information about the student's independent living skills and assistance the student may need in order to achieve the desired post-school goals
- Keeps records of the student's comprehensive evaluations, IEPs, educational achievement documents and a portfolio of the student's class projects
- Supports their student in organizing all documents from the postsecondary settings
- Is actively engaged as an equal partner in all aspects of IEP planning, discussion and decision making.

Special Education Teacher

- Coordinates the people, agencies, services or programs in the secondary transition planning
- Provides information about the student's strengths, past achievements and progress on the current IEP
- Provides examples of the student's coursework
- Develops curricular adaptations to meet student's anticipated postsecondary needs
- Provides instruction in the learning strategies that will help the student meet reading, writing, and test taking requirements in future postsecondary settings
- Ensures that classroom and testing accommodations are student-appropriate and documented
- Suggests courses of study and educational experiences that relate to the student's performance and interests and provide the foundation and skills to help the student achieve desired post-school goals

General Education Teacher

- Provides information about the student's strengths, past achievements and progress on the current IEP
- Brings examples of the student's coursework
- Assists in planning the courses of study in the general education curriculum that will assist the student in meeting desired post-school goals
- Offers counsel on appropriate academic coursework to enable student to prepare for postsecondary educational settings
- Ensures that classroom and testing accommodations are student-appropriate and documented

Adult service providers/ Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA) representative

- Provides information from assessments completed as part of eligibility processes (with release of information)
- Ensures team members understand available resources, services and programs
- Provides information about eligibility and plan processes at their organization

Additional Team Members

This may include any additional person who knows the student and can advise or support the secondary transition process. Examples may include: Special education and/or transition coordinators, school psychologist, school counselor, related service providers (based on student's IEP), employers, volunteer position supervisors, mentors, faith leaders, etc. Their participation may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Provides information about the student's strengths, interests and motivations;
- Describes available support systems for the student to pursue postsecondary opportunities;
- Provides information about the student's skills and assistance the student may need in order to achieve the desired post-school goals, including assistive technology supports;
- Offers counsel on appropriate academic coursework or services to enable the student to prepare for postsecondary settings; and
- Ensures team members understand available resources, services and programs.

XII. IEP Transition Meeting Process[47]

A. Before the IEP Meeting

- Assist students and parents to determine needs, preferences and interests related to life after high school.
- Encourage student and parents to actively participate in the IEP meeting and prepare the student for participation.
- Conduct appropriate assessment activities to determine the student's needs, preferences and interests.
- Formally invite the student to participate in the IEP process and meeting.
- Provide written notice of the IEP meeting to parents, students and outside agencies. If parents choose not to attend, document attempts to involve them.
- If the student chooses not to attend the IEP meeting, use other means to gather and share information about his or her needs, interests and preferences.
- If an invited agency chooses not to attend the IEP meeting, use other means to ensure their participation in the planning and decision-making regarding secondary transition service. Document these efforts and include them in the IEP.

B. During the IEP Meeting

Review the student's present level of performance, focusing on the student's strengths, needs, interests and preferences to guide the development of:

- Outcome-oriented post-secondary goals.
- A statement of secondary transition service needs that specifies the courses of study in which the student will be involved through graduation with a regular diploma or until reaching the maximum age for special education.
- A statement of needed secondary transition services to achieve the student's desired post-school goals through a coordinated set of activities including instruction, related services, community experiences, employment, daily living skills and other adult living objectives.
- Annual goals and objectives for the coordinated set of activities that are part of special education services for the current school year.
- Agreement of who will provide and/or pay for the activities outlined in the statement of needed secondary transition services.

C. After the IEP Meeting

[47] From Storms, J., O'Leary, E., & Williams, J. (2000). *Transition Requirements: A Guide for States, Districts, Schools, Universities, and Families*. Available at http://www.ncset.org/publications/related/idea97.pdf.

- Provide the instruction, experiences, supports and services outlined in the IEP.
- Conduct follow-up activities to ensure the student is achieving the IEP goals, including data collection and review for all annual secondary transition goals.
- Review the courses of study and secondary transition services that have been provided and plan for the coming years.
- Assist the student and family by linking them to any needed post-school adult services, supports, or programs.
- Reconvene the IEP team to plan alternative strategies if the secondary transition services are not provided as planned.
- Conduct annual review.

XIII. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE[48]

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Summary of Performance (SOP) is to provide a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance in order to assist the student in transitioning to postsecondary employment, training, and educational opportunities.

In compliance with IDEA and OSSE policy, LEAs are required to create an SOP for a student **at least 60 days prior to** the student's pending graduation or prior to the student attaining the age at which he or she exceeds the District of Columbia's age eligibility for FAPE.

If correctly drafted, the SOP serves as a valuable snapshot of a student's academic and functional abilities. The SOP also provides documentation that a student's disability currently exists (although an SOP is insufficient to document a disability for RSA purposes and further information may be needed for other postsecondary programs). Because SOPs are completed at the end of a student's high school career, they also give IEP teams a final opportunity to assist students and families in taking the next steps toward plans for post-secondary employment, training and education.

B. INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

The SOP must include a summary of the student's academic achievement, cognitive and functional performance and recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his post-high school goals.

Although the information found in the SOP can be useful in identifying reasonable postsecondary accommodations and supports, an IEP or SOP does not provide sufficient documentation of a disability to establish eligibility with adult service agencies and other postsecondary institutions/service providers. When providing a student with their SOP, an IEP team should also provide accompanying documentation such as a current (no less than three years old) psychological or neuropsychological report and any additional current related service provider evaluations to aid the student in accessing additional disability-related support services upon graduation.

[48] Information adapted from OSSE, Secondary Transition Policy and the U.S. Department of Education's *Q and A: Questions and Answers on Secondary Transition, Revised September 2011.* Available at https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Transition.QA_.September_2011_FINAL.pdf.

C. Including Student Feedback

The SOP is a valuable tool that allows students to summarize their abilities and describe the accommodations they will need to be successful in reaching their postsecondary goals. When students are involved in the SOP drafting process, they develop greater awareness and self-advocacy skills through learning to articulate their disability and how it impacts their education.

In order to facilitate student participation in the drafting process, the SOP contains a "Student Perspective" section that allows students to share information about their strengths and abilities and give feedback about accommodations and supports that have and have not worked in the past. The questions are as follows:

1. *How does your disability affect your academic work and school activities (such as grades, relationships, assignments, projects, communication, time on tests, mobility and extra-curricular activities)?*
2. *What supports have teachers, or you tried to help you succeed in school (aids, adaptive equipment, physical accommodations, other services)?*
3. *Which accommodations and supports worked best for you?*
4. *Which accommodations and supports have not worked for you?*
5. *What strengths and needs should professionals know about you as you enter the postsecondary education or work environment?*

These questions can be given to a student to complete in writing prior to finalizing the SOP document, or they can be recorded during an informal interview between the student and a member of the IEP team. In circumstances where a child is non-verbal, these questions could be completed by a family member.

LEA Best Practice: Present these questions to students at the beginning of their last year of high school and use this information (or lack thereof) as a tool to identify additional goals or activities for the year.

XIV. Transfer of Rights at Age of Majority [49]

"Age of majority" is the legal age established under state law at which an individual is no longer considered to be a minor and, as a young adult, has the right and responsibility to make certain legal choices that adults make.

Prior to the time when a student turns 17, LEAs must provide notice to both the student and the student's parent(s) or legal guardian that the rights under IDEA Part B will transfer to the student upon reaching age 18 (except in cases where a student has been determined to be incompetent under District of Columbia law). Additionally, the student's IEP must include a statement indicating that the student and his parents have been informed of the upcoming transfer of rights.

When a student reaches age 18, the LEA must provide notice to the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian of the transfer of rights as part of the procedural safeguards. The rights regarding educational records must also be transferred to the student, and the LEA must include a statement indicating the transfer in the notice.

What Rights Are Transferred?

All education rights such as the following transfer at the age of majority to the student:

- Receive notice of and attend individual education program meetings
- Consent to reevaluation
- Consent to change in placement
- Request for mediation or a due process hearing to resolve a dispute about:
  - Evaluation
  - Identification
  - Eligibility
  - IEP
  - Placement
  - Other aspects of a free appropriate public education (FAPE)

A. Continued Parent Involvement

It is important that IEP teams continue to involve parents in the secondary transition planning process even after educational decision-making rights transfer to the student. Although a transfer of rights allows students to begin developing greater self-advocacy skills as they take the lead in planning and decision-making, it does not mean a student no longer needs support or advice from parents and others who care about their success. Parents should not feel pressured by schools to obtain guardianship as a prerequisite for continuing to attend IEP meetings. Under the IDEA, parents may continue to participate as IEP team members, either upon the invitation of the student (through formal or informal means) or the school.[50] Even after a student reaches the age of majority, parents still have much to contribute and play an important role in motivating and assisting their students in reaching their post-secondary goals.

B. Alternatives to Transferring Rights

[49] OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

[50] 34 CFR §300.321(a)(6).

Some students who have reached age 18 may not be able to identify when a decision needs to be made, consider possible options, or recognize the consequences of their decisions without support. Some students who have reached age 18 may elect their parent(s) or legal guardian to continue their involvement in their educational decision-making. This includes a signed power of attorney granting the parent or guardian the legal authority to make educational decisions unless the student opts to obtain parental support through a supported decision-making process. Documentation of supported decision-making arrangements must indicate the relationship of the identified adult to the student and the extent to which the identified adult can access the student's educational records. Students may change or terminate such arrangements or revoke access to their educational records at any time.

Students or their parent or guardian may pursue other options such as requesting an educational representative through OSSE, guardianship, or another form of representation by an advocate may be appropriate. Further information about DC's Education Decision-Maker and Transfer of Rights processes is available on OSSE's website: osse.dc.gov/service/education-decision-making.

C. Prior Written Notice[51]

Prior to when a student completes the last semester of secondary school in which he is expected to graduate with a diploma or certificate of completion, the LEA must provide the student (if older than age 18) and his parents with a Prior Written Notice (PWN) of the discontinuation of special education services at the end of the school year. The PWN must clearly state that the student will no longer be entitled to receive special education services from the LEA at the conclusion of the school year

[51] OSSE Secondary Transition Policy.

STUDENT-FOCUSED PLANNING

INTRODUCTION AND BENEFITS[52]

Student-focused planning is one of the five components of Kohler's (2016) Taxonomy for Transition Programming[53]. It is a strategy that can be used in the development of a student's IEP and secondary transition planning that encourages student participation in the IEP process. Student-focused planning tends to be driven by student interests, strengths and goals. Once students set goals through student-focused planning, they work with their IEP team to plan, make decisions and evaluate their progress toward attaining their goals.

Many educators find that the benefits of involving students meaningfully in the secondary transition process are worth the time that it takes. Student-focused planning enables service providers to create a more meaningful secondary transition plan and provides students with the opportunity to develop many of the skills necessary for postsecondary success. Research on student-focused planning has identified five important benefits to this process.

Why involve students with disabilities in their transition planning?

1. To provide students with opportunities to make important decisions
2. To encourage school completion
3. To encourage family involvement
4. To teach important life skills
5. To encourage independence

First, student-focused planning **allows students to make important decisions about their lives**. A student's preferences, interests and choices in the areas of education, employment and independent living are at the center of student-focused planning. When students are encouraged to actively participate in the IEP and secondary transition planning process, they are given the opportunity to practice making important life decisions in a supportive environment.

Involving students with disabilities in the secondary transition planning process can also **improve school completion**. In part, this is because student involvement in secondary transition planning can help to make coursework relevant and meaningful to the lives of students. When students find their coursework to be relevant, they are more likely to continue in school.

[52] Test, D. W. (2012). *Evidence-based Instructional Strategies for Transition*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[53] Kohler, P. D., Gothberg, J. E., Fowler, C., and Coyle, J. (2016). *Taxonomy for transition programming 2.0: A model for planning, organizing, and evaluating transition education, services, and programs.* Western Michigan University. https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/NTACT-C_TaxonomyforTransition.pdf

Third, student-focused planning often **encourages family involvement**. Family involvement has been connected to school completion and improved postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Next, students can **develop important life skills** through active involvement in the IEP and secondary transition process. Through this process, students can develop skills related to goal setting, planning, and attainment. Further, students practice important skills related to self-advocacy and self-determination as they are given opportunities to speak up and learn about their disability and the supports that they will need to be successful after high school.

Finally, student-focused planning **provides opportunities for students to develop independence**. In student-focused planning, students are often asked to take on a leadership role in the IEP process through a gradual process, giving students the opportunity to become increasingly independent as they are taught the skills necessary to take on that leadership role.

Before students are able to actively participate in their secondary transition planning process, they will need to be taught the knowledge and skills necessary for active participation. Students will need to develop an awareness of their strengths, disability, areas of need and interests. Students will also need instruction in the skills needed to participate in the IEP process, such as asking questions, listening to others, decision making and problem solving.

I. SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination[54] is a critical concept related to successful post-secondary outcomes for youth with disabilities. An individual is self-determined when their can make her own choices, solve problems, set goals, and take action to reach those goals.[55] Without self-determination, a student will be unable to meaningfully participate in the secondary transition planning process and will be less likely to accomplish any goals that are developed for them.

Sharon Field's research[56] has led to the development of a model for self-determination that includes six components:

1. Know yourself
2. Value yourself
3. Plan
4. Act
5. Experience outcomes and learn
6. Environment

Self-Determination

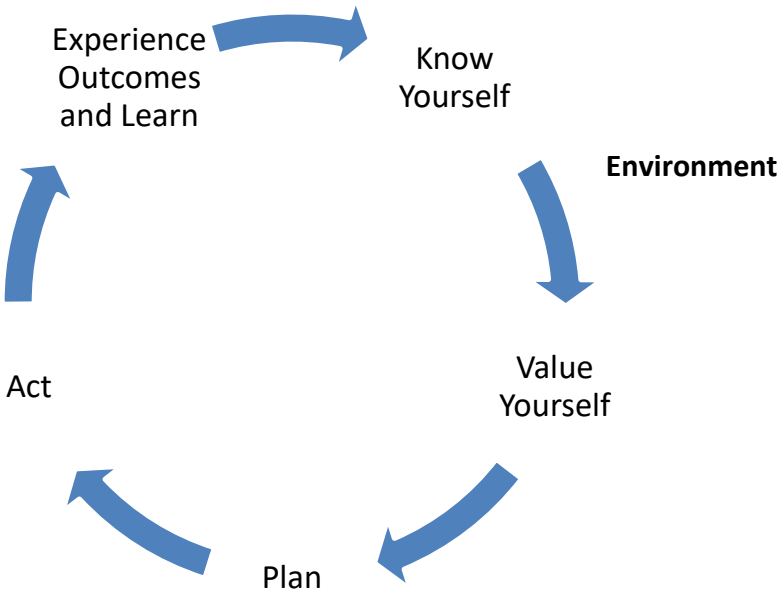
"Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enables a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in one's self as capable and effective is essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society."

Field, S., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, M., & Wehmeyer, M. A (1998). Practical Guide to Teaching Self-Determination. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

[54] Test, D. W. (2012). Evidence-based instructional strategies for transition. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[55] Schall, C. & Thoma, C. A. (2010). Quality educational outcomes and annual goals. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes

[56] Field, S., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, M., & Wehmeyer, M. A (1998). Practical Guide to Teaching Self-Determination. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.



1. Know Yourself

The most basic component of self-determination is self-knowledge. In order to develop the necessary self-knowledge, students must be given opportunities to:

- Understand their needs, preferences, strengths and weaknesses
- Become aware of their options
- Acknowledge what is important to them

2. Value Yourself

The second foundation for self-determination is for students to learn to value themselves, including learning to accept their strengths and weaknesses and take responsibility for their successes and failures. Students are able to do this when they can:

- Accept themselves and be good to themselves
- Acknowledge and appreciate their unique strengths
- Respect rights and responsibilities

3. Plan

The next component of self-determination is the ability to plan. Planning involves a number of important skills, such as goal setting. Students are able to plan when they can:

- Set goals
- Make plans to meet goals
- Anticipate positive and negative consequences of potential actions

4. Act

Planning should always lead students toward action to reach their goals. Therefore, acting is the fourth component of self-determination. Students can act when they can:

- Take appropriate risks
- Identify and utilize resources and support
- Communicate
- Respond to feedback
- Initiate action independently as needed

5. Experience Outcomes and Learn

The fifth component of self-determination is for students to experience outcomes from their actions and learn from the experience. Students are able to experience outcomes and learn when they can:

- Evaluate differences between the actual outcome and expected outcome of their actions
- Celebrate successes
- Deal with criticism or failure

6. Environment

The final component of Field's self-determination model is the environment that is created for students. Environments can either support or hinder the development of student self-determination. Environments that support self-determination provide:

- Ways for learners to share their strengths and needs
- Clear learning objectives
- Tasks at learners' levels
- Specific and timely feedback
- Ways for learners to keep track of their progress

FACT SHEET: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF-DETERMINATION[57]

Why is self-determination important?

Students who have been taught self-determination skills have been found to do better in school and have better employment outcomes. Further, it is important for students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for self-determination while in high school because they will no longer be entitled to services once they enter postsecondary settings. In order to receive the services and accommodations they need, youth will need to understand their disabilities in order to disclose, explain and advocate for their needs.

What skills are necessary for self-determination?

Many definitions of self-determination include common characteristics and skills that a student must develop in order to become more self-determined:

- **Self-awareness**:
  - The ability to identify and understand personal needs, interests, strengths, limitations and values
- **Self-advocacy**:
  - The ability to express personal needs, wants, and rights in an assertive manner
- **Self-efficacy**:
  - The belief that one will attain a goal
- **Decision-making**:
  - The skill of setting goals, identifying possible plans, considering consequences and choosing the best option to reach goals
- **Independent performance**:
  - The ability to initiate and complete tasks independently
- **Self-evaluation**:
  - The ability to self-assess performance and determine when a goal or task has been satisfactorily completed
- **Adjustment**:
  - The ability to revise personal goals and plans

It is important to realize that all students are capable of developing these skills. No disability is so severe that a student will be completely unable to develop these skills and communicate their

[57] Adapted from National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, *Self-Determination for Postsecondary Students.* Available at http://www.ncset.org/topics/sdpse/faqs.asp?topic=7.

choices. Often it is the lack of *opportunity*, rather than the disability, that leads to a failure to become self-determined.

What can educators do to encourage the development of self-determination?

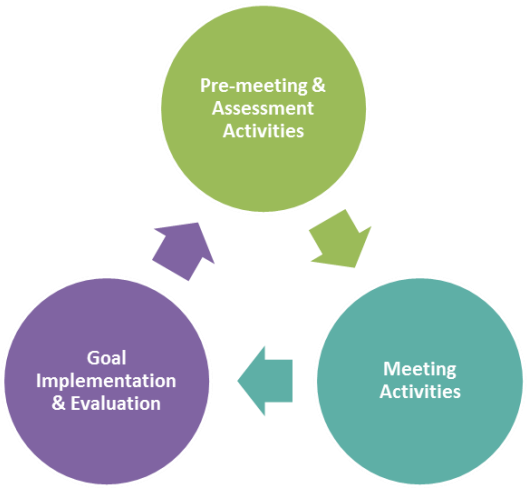
- Work with parents to promote the development of self-determination skills
- Facilitate student-centered planning and student-directed learning
- Increase students' awareness of their disabilities and needed accommodations
- Offer courses on self-determination
- Teach and promote self-advocacy skills and students' use of those skills
- Infuse self-determination into the general education curriculum

I am new to self-determination for students. Where do I begin?

- The Best Me I Can Be Video Series (2013) and Discussion Guide (2014) - OSSE and SchoolTalk, Inc.
- Who I Am Video (2016) & Activity Guide (2019) - OSSE and SchoolTalk, Inc.
- Getting Started Now: Talking About Disabilities (2014) - OSSE and SchoolTalk, Inc.
- I'm Determined - Virginia Department of Education
- Self-Determination: Supporting Successful Transition (2003) - National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
- Person-Centered Thinking Philosophy - DDS

II. Student-Directed IEPs

A student-directed IEP process involves students with disabilities in the IEP process to the maximum extent possible.



Many think of the IEP process as only consisting of the activities that take place in the annual IEP meeting. A successful IEP, however, can be thought of as consisting of three components that take place throughout the year: pre-meeting preparation, the meeting itself and the post-meeting implementation and evaluation.[58] Each of these components presents opportunities for active student involvement in the IEP process.

When one considers the IEP as an ongoing process, it is easier to identify opportunities for students to be actively involved in that process. Opportunities for student involvement include:

1. Identifying strengths, needs, and present levels of performance
2. Participating in goal-setting, planning and evaluation activities
3. Preparing a formal presentation for the meeting
4. Communicating interests and preferences before and during the meeting
5. Participating in conversations about postsecondary goals, plans and needs
6. Identifying and advocating for needed accommodations[59]

The level of student participation and leadership during the IEP process exists along a continuum. Considering the variety of activities that make up the IEP process can help educators think about how to increase student involvement and leadership of the process beyond simply attending and participating in the annual meeting.

Although student leadership of the entire IEP process may be unrealistic or ill-advised for some students, it should still be the ideal for which IEP teams strive. It is important to determine where

[58] Thoma, C. A., Saddler, S., Purvis, B., & Scott, L. A. (2010). Essentials of the student-directed IEP process. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes

[59] Thoma, C. A., Saddler, S., Purvis, B., & Scott, L. A. (2010). Essentials of the student-directed IEP process. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes

each student is on the continuum and move that student even closer to the ideal. The level of student participation and direction should increase between each IEP meeting. It is also important to realize that not all students have to start at the first stage. Instead, students should start at the stage that is right for them; this means they are asked to perform tasks that are difficult, but not impossible.[60]

There is a seven-step process that can help to identify opportunities, strategies and methods that can be used to increase student participation and direction of the IEP process.[61]

Step 1: Involve Students in the IEP Planning Process

For students to become actively involved in the IEP planning process, they will need to be taught about the process itself. This includes learning about the activities, terms and participants. Students can also be encouraged to write scripts of what they can say during the IEP meeting and then be provided with an opportunity to practice using their scripts before the meeting. Finally, it is important that all IEP team members, including parents, are taught how to support and encourage the student's active involvement. Note: When students attend meetings, it is extremely important to ensure that the adults involved do not speak about the student as if he or she were not present. In addition, it is particularly important to use strengths-based, rather than deficits-based, language.

Step 2: Students Complete a Three-Part Transition Assessment

IDEA requires that secondary transition assessments be used to help the student select appropriate postsecondary goals. It is a good idea to administer assessments in at least **three areas**. The first area is *career interests and exploration*. These assessments can help students determine their postsecondary employment goals, which will also inform postsecondary education and training goals. The second area is assessments related to *independent living*, which will inform the postsecondary goals in the area of independent living. Finally, students should take assessments of *self-determination*. The results of these assessments can help students identify annual secondary transition goals.

Simply administering assessments is not enough. It is important that students are given the opportunity to review the assessment results with a teacher. After reviewing the results, students can work with their IEP team to write their secondary transition present levels of performance and goals based on the assessment results.

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[60] Thoma, C. A., Saddler, S., Purvis, B., & Scott, L. A. (2010). Essentials of the student-directed IEP process. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[61] From OSSE's Introduction to the Student-led IEP Initiative (2014) https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Student-led%20IEP%20Information%20Session.pdf

Step 3: Students Write and Present Levels of Performance

The student and special education teacher should work closely together to write a comprehensive statement about the student that includes:

- Student's strengths and weaknesses
- Supports that help with learning
- What interferes or limits learning
- Data from current assessments and evaluations
- The impact of the student's disability on his or her ability to access the general education curriculum

Step 4: Students Develop a Course of Study

The next step is to teach students how to be actively engaged in selecting their course of study. Teachers should review graduation requirements, transcripts, course offerings and extracurricular opportunities with the student. It is also important that students are encouraged to select a course of study that is aligned with their postsecondary goals.

Step 5: Students Develop and Attain IEP and Personal Goals

Students should be taught strategies they can use to write and attain both IEP and personal goals. Teachers will likely need to teach and model a specific goal-setting and attainment strategy and will need to provide students with opportunities to use the strategy in a number of settings. Students should work with their IEP team to identify both short- and longterm goals.

Step 6: Students Assist in Building Post-School Linkages

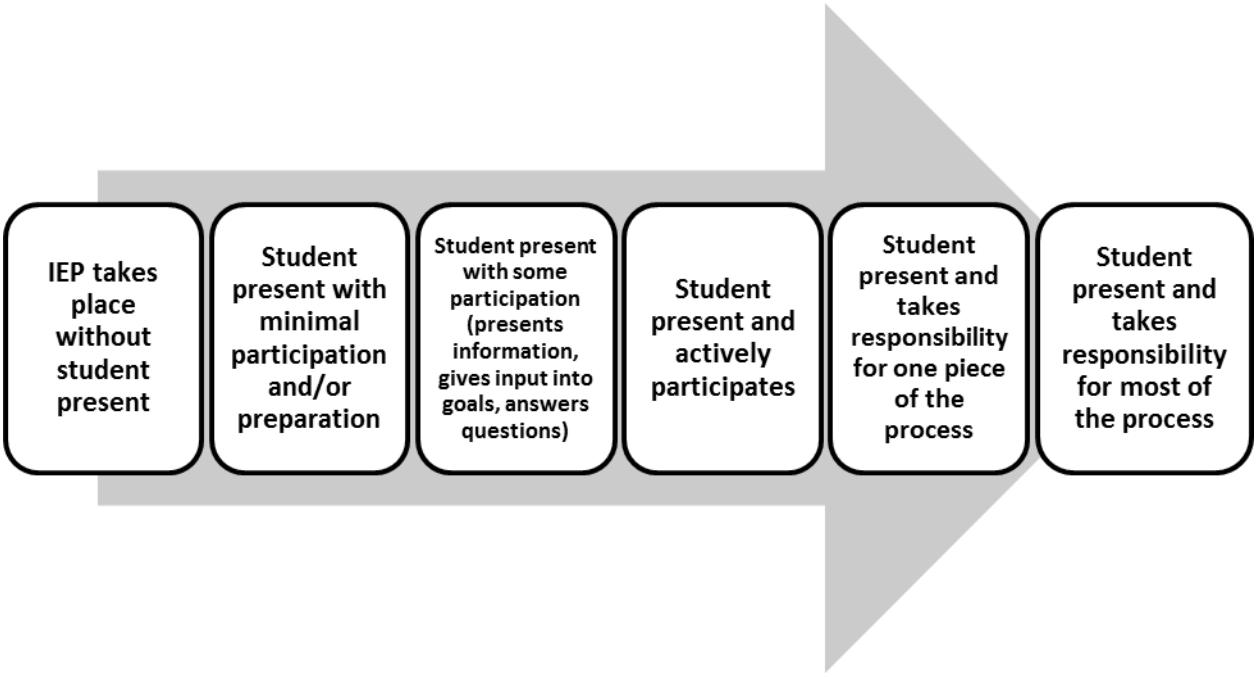
In order to ensure a seamless transition into postsecondary settings, it is important that post-school linkages are made before the student leaves high school. Students can be involved in this process as they begin to build relationships with postsecondary service providers. Providers may include the Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA), the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), postsecondary education disability support services offices, supported employment programs, health care providers and transportation support programs.

Step 7: Students Write Student-Directed Summary of Performance

IDEA requires that LEAs provide students with a summary of their academic achievement and functional performance upon graduation through the SOP. The SOP identifies postsecondary goals and recommendations for reaching those goals and can be used as a tool throughout the secondary transition planning process. Students can begin writing their own SOP as early as middle school. The SOP is most effective when it is used as a tool for students to explore and articulate their postsecondary goals over time. When this process is used, the SOP becomes an

accurate reflection of students' postsecondary plans rather than just a few statements quickly written to meet a requirement.[62]

Below is the spectrum of participation by students in the IEP process. Educators can start where the student is and then build student skill and participation to higher levels of participation.[63]



[62] Getzel, E. E., Deschamps, A., & Thoma, C. A. (2010). Transition individualized education planning and summary or performance. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[63] From OSSE's Introduction to the Student-led IEP Initiative (2014) available here: https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Student-led%20IEP%20Information%20Session.pdf

III. CONSIDERING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS[64]

The population of students receiving special education services in the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Educators need to be prepared to work with students from culturally diverse backgrounds and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In order to provide culturally appropriate services, educators must accept differing cultural identities, allow for language preferences, and respect religious beliefs. It is also important to recognize some of the family and cultural factors that may impact the student's and family's level of participation in the IEP and secondary transition process.

Considering culture during the secondary transition process is an essential part of individualizing the process. In order to make cultural considerations a part of the secondary transition planning process, practitioners must examine the student's beliefs, values, customs, perceptions and family expectations. Practitioners should also examine the postsecondary culture and environment into which the student will transition. Schools and workplaces are all characterized by a particular culture and in each culture different behaviors are seen as acceptable and unacceptable. It is important to identify any possible conflicts between the student's culture and the postsecondary environment in order to give the student the opportunity to learn the behavior that will be needed for postsecondary success.[65]

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES[66]

- Find out how disability, education and support services are viewed by different ethnic and religious groups.
- Talk to students, families, fellow staff members and other teachers to learn more about the cultural characteristics of the students with whom you work.
- Do not assume that you know what the family needs in order to participate in the IEP meeting. Families should be invited to request any necessary accommodations (translators, large print materials, special meeting time, etc.).
- Make sure that you have enough time to have materials, forms and documents translated when necessary.
- Give students and family members sufficient time to respond during meetings.
- Offer a choice of language for communication.

[64] Xu, Y., Purvis, B., & Terpstra, J. E. (2010). Involving families in the process and multicultural considerations. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educators guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[65] Obiakor, F. E. & Wilder, L. K. (2010). Transitioning culturally and linguistically diverse learners with emotional or behavioral disorders. In *Transition of secondary students with emotional or behavioral disorders: Current approaches for positive outcomes*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

[66] Xu, Y., Purvis, B., & Terpstra, J. E. (2010). Involving families in the process and multicultural considerations. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

- ∉ Offer a variety of levels at which students and families can participate in the IEP process.
- ∉ Use culturally appropriate language.

The challenges that commonly impact culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) youth with disabilities in transition are summarized in the table below. While it may be possible to address these challenges on an individual basis, solutions for most of them really require action and change at the broader school or system level. Transition personnel can contribute by advocating for change and encouraging youth and families to communicate their opinions and needs to the appropriate decision-makers.

For more information on considering the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse youth, refer to:

- The PACER Center's *Working with Culturally Diverse Families* provides a variety of research and tools for families and educators, available at www.pacer.org/cultural-diversity/.

- The University of Kansas Work Group for Community Health and Development's Community Toolbox, *Working Together for Racial Justice and Inclusion*, available at ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1027.aspx.

COMMON CHALLENGES & POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

CHALLENGES	WHAT TRANSITION PERSONNEL CAN DO
CLD youth with disabilities may not be well included in the social life of the school.	• Provide individualized social skills training. • Link youth with peer or adult mentors to support social skill development. • Advocate establishment of school-wide climate of acceptance. • For youth with more severe disabilities, create "circles of support." • Involve family and community.
CLD youth with disabilities may lack attitudes, skills, and knowledge for self-determination and self-advocacy.	• Support youth to meaningfully participate in, and preferably lead, their IEP/ITP planning meetings. • Conduct training using culturally sensitive self-determination and/or self-advocacy curricula and include family and community in the training. • Link youth with peer or adult mentors to model attitudes and skills.
CLD youth with disabilities may be at risk for poor academic achievement or dropping out.	• Convey high expectations to youth. • Link youth with mentors to encourage commitment to academic excellence. • Advocate for increased cultural competence of instruction. • Seek the input of cultural experts. • Advocate for disciplinary approaches that do not encourage youth to drop out.
CLD youth with disabilities may have poor English proficiency.	• Access school or community English tutoring programs. • Link youth with mentors to practice English.
CLD youth with disabilities may lack access to assistive and/or information technologies.	• Identify technology needs of youth for different transition settings. • Support youth/families to identify and access needed technology resources.
CLD youth with disabilities may lack financial resources for postsecondary education.	• Support youth/families to identify and apply for sources of financial aid. • Support youth/families to identify and apply for Social Security Administration programs.

IV. Related Services and Assistive Technology

Related services help students with disabilities benefit from their education by providing them with any extra help and support they may need. IDEA states that related services should be considered when identifying secondary transition services. It is important that as students reach transition-age, related services begin to focus on providing students with the services they will need in order to reach their postsecondary goals. For example, an occupational therapist can help to identify assistive technology and other supports in order to promote a student's employment in a community-based setting.[67]

Related Services Examples

- Audiology Services
- Counseling/Behavioral Support
- Interpreting Services
- Medical Services
- Mobility Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Parent Counseling and Training
- Physical Therapy
- Recreation Services
- Rehabilitative Counseling
- School Health Services
- Social Work
- Speech-Language Pathology Services
- Transportation Services

It is also important that assistive technology (AT), environmental adaptations and accommodations be considered by identifying what the student will need in both school and post-school settings. Decisions about these matters should made by the IEP team and driven by the preferences and needs of the student. A framework that can help the team make these decisions is to consider the following areas:

1. The student's strengths and needs;
2. Environments and situations in which help may be needed;
3. Tasks the student will need to complete in order to reach his or her goals; and
4. Tools that might be useful to help the student to complete the identified tasks.[68]

Tips for Identifying Related Services, AT, Accommodations and Environmental Adaptations[69]

- Help students develop self-awareness so they can become more informed about their needs and able to advocate for the services and tools that they require now and in the future.
- Become knowledgeable of related services, AT and accommodations so that you can help students to begin thinking about their possible needs and teach them how to advocate.
- Invite relevant people to IEP meetings, including service providers and experts.

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[67] Targett, P. S. & Wehman, P. (2010). Related services. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[68] Zabala, J. (2005). *Using the SETT Framework to level the learning field for students with disabilities*. Retrieved from https://www.joyzabala.com/_files/ugd/70c4a3_77bfa0ecfc064fff8c49e7bcde572eaf.pdf

[69] McManus, S., Smith, F., & Jones, S. (2010). Assistive technology. In *Getting the most out of IEPs: An educator's guide to the student-directed approach.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

- Provide students with an opportunity to actively explore the AT and accommodations that may be helpful to them. It is best if this can be done before any technology is purchased. This process will help to match AT and accommodations to student needs and preferences.
- Consider AT, accommodations, environmental adaptations and related services for all students, not just those with severe disabilities.

V. Skill Development

A. Academic Skills

Research indicates that far too many students with disabilities are failing to reach the basic goal of earning a high school diploma. Students with disabilities who do not complete high school report that dislike of their school experience and poor relationships with teachers and peers are top reasons for dropping out. Student-centered planning can be one way to combat these issues as it should result in coursework that matches students' interests, preferences and needs.[70] Research supports using High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities (highleveragepractices.org). Other suggestions for increasing student engagement in schooling include[71]:

- Active engagement:
  - Increasing the amount of time that students are appropriately engaged in learning tasks through effectively designed and delivered lessons, selection of relevant and appropriate learning materials, multiple opportunities for student response during lessons, and positive reinforcement for class participation
- Providing experiences of success:
  - Giving students the opportunity to experience success early and often.
  - Grouping for instruction:
    - Using flexible grouping techniques (whole-group, small-group, one-to-one) to increase student engagement, success and learning.
  - Addressing forms of knowledge:
    - Providing declarative knowledge (facts and vocabulary), procedural knowledge (steps to solve problems), and conditional knowledge (when and where to use strategies) during each lesson.
- Organizing and activating knowledge:
  - Teaching students how to learn.
  - Making instruction explicit by clearly stating lesson goals and objectives, structuring the lesson logically and presenting content directly and clearly.
  - Teaching sameness: Helping students recognize patterns and organize knowledge both within and across content areas.

[70] Walker, A. & Kelley, K. (2012). Strategies for teaching academic skills. In *Evidence-based instructional strategies for transition*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

[71] Bost, L. W. & Riccomini, P. J. (2006). Effective instruction: An inconspicuous strategy for dropout prevention. *Remedial and Special Education, 27(5)*, 301-311

The *What Works in Transition Research Synthesis Project* has built upon these principles to identify a comprehensive list of strategies for teaching academic skills that are evidence-based.[72]

- Mnemonics:
  - Used to help students memorize concepts by using keyword cues to facilitate learning. Examples include:
    - Memory-associative techniques that use known information to facilitate the learning of new information
    - Keyword mnemonic strategies that combine visual and auditory cues to provide direct links to responses
    - Keyword-peg-word strategies that use numbering or ordering along with rhyming
    - Reconstructive elaborations that use keywords and pictures to help students to learn abstract information
- Peer Assistance:
  - Includes a variety of strategies, including peer tutoring, cooperative learning and peer instruction
- Self-Management:
  - Methods used by students to manage, monitor, record and/or assess their behavior
- Technology-Based Instruction:
  - Using technology to deliver, assist, enrich and manage instruction
- Visual Displays:
  - Help students organize complex ideas into meaningful topics using strategies such as graphic organizers, cognitive maps, structured overviews, tree diagrams, concept maps and thinking maps.

B. Life Skills[73]

Models of secondary education that only emphasize the development of *academic skills* have been shown to be inadequate in preparing youth with disabilities for their postsecondary lives. For this reason, *life skills education* is often cited as a best practice. Functional-life skills are skills that are both academic and needed to successfully function as an adult. These may be skills that are related to social skills, independent living, recreation, health and communication. These may be taught as a part of a separate curriculum, but they can also be integrated into the general education curriculum with creativity and collaboration between special and general educators.

[72] National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, *Academic Evidence Based Practice Descriptions.* Available at http://www.nsttac.org/content/academic-evidence-based-practice-descriptions.

[73] Kochhar-Bryant, C. and Greene, G. (2009). *Pathways to successful transition for youth with disabilities.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Many life skills can be taught using the same methods that are used to teach traditional academic content. However, because most life skills are learned so that students can participate more fully in their community, it is important that teachers use strategies that have been specifically designed for use with students with disabilities. This means considering the environment in which these skills will be used. The conditions under which these skills are taught and practiced should closely reflect the conditions under which the skills will be used as much as possible. This will likely require the use of community-based instruction.

C. Employment Skills[74]

Preparing students for employment is an important part of the secondary transition process. Career education is one school-based service that can be used to ensure that all students are provided with services and instruction designed to prepare them for postsecondary employment.

Career education promotes an emphasis on careers in all courses from pre-kindergarten through secondary school. It is one way to provide employment preparation instruction within the general education curriculum.

There are a number of benefits to providing career education to all students, including those with and without disabilities. When career education is infused into the curriculum, learning becomes more meaningful. When students are taught curricula that are relevant to their future goals, they are more motivated to learn the skills that they will need in order to be successful after graduation. Further, the skills that students can learn through career education activities, such as working independently and with others, following directions and communicating effectively, are important for job success.

Integrating Academic and Career Education

- Modify career and academic courses to encourage the learning and application of both sets of skills
- Require senior projects in which students participate in a culminating experience related to their chosen career path
- Offer classes related to occupational clusters, career pathways, or career majors
- Give hands-on assignments that require the application of academic skills to career related activities

Career education traditionally has four stages from career awareness to career assimilation, beginning in elementary school and extending through high school.

[74] Test, D. W., Aspel, N. P., & Everson, J. M. (2006). *Transition methods for youth with disabilities.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Career Development Stage Descriptions			
Stage	**Timeframe**	**Goals**	**Related Activities**
Career Awareness	Early Elementary – Middle School	• Provide students with basic awareness of all kinds of work, the role of the worker, and how the student can fit into a work-oriented society • Develop initial work-related values and skills • Develop an initial understanding of personal strengths, interests, and limitations • Develop an appreciation of **all** careers to develop an awareness of the wide range of available occupations	• Exploring jobs in the community • Performing classroom jobs • Identifying likes and dislikes • Investigating what adults do at work, at the school, and in the community
Career Exploration	Middle – High School	• Explore interests and abilities in relation to the various occupations available • Explore unique abilities and needs through hands-on experiences both in and outside of the school-setting	• School-based enterprises • On-campus jobs • Service-learning projects • Community-based job shadowing • Administering vocational assessments
Career Preparation	High School	• Assist with career decision making • Develop skills that are needed for success in the workplace	• Instruction in self-determination skills • Promoting student-directed IEP planning processes • Interpersonal skill instruction • Job obtainment skill instruction • Job-specific skill instruction • Paid and unpaid work experiences • Job clubs
Career Assimilation	Final Years of High School	• Finalize plans for transition to postsecondary environments • Create plans to reach postsecondary goals • Develop interagency linkages	• Student-directed IEPs • Referrals to adult providers • Summary of performance

While career education is a powerful employment preparation strategy, it will not be enough for many students with disabilities if they are not given the opportunity to apply the skills that they are using in class to environments that more closely resemble work environments.

I. On-Campus Employment Related Activities

School can be a great place to offer early work experiences to students as it is generally an environment that is understanding and supportive of students who have not yet mastered many of the skills that are necessary for job success. Further, the school environment can provide work situations in which many variables such as level of supervision, pace of work and amount of interaction with others can be controlled.

One example of an on-campus employment skill training program is **school-based enterprises**. These have been described as any school-sponsored activity that engages a group of students in producing goods or services for sale or to be used by people other than the students involved. These are an excellent way to simulate a real-life work environment inside of the school. When done well, these enterprises simulate real working conditions while students perform real work like operating small businesses, performing work for area businesses, and/or completing tasks for nonprofit organizations.

Examples of School-Based Enterprise Work

Contracts with Local Businesses

- Labeling linens for hospitals or nursing homes
- Preparing silverware packages for restaurants
- Labeling file folders
- Collating and mailing

Providing Services

- Laundry service
- Mending or sewing service
- Packaging supplies
- Collating and mailing
- Recycling
- Shredding

Manufacturing Products

- Gift baskets
- Herbs or plants
- Seasonal crafts
- Jewelry
- Candles
- Stationary

School-based enterprises give students the opportunity to learn and apply the work behaviors and skills needed to perform in a competitive employment setting. Further, students are exposed to a variety of job tasks related to a number of career clusters that can assist them in career decision-making. Finally, students are also typically involved in many of the procedures associated with operating a retail or service-oriented business, such as projecting costs, ordering materials, maintaining equipment, marketing products, organizing tasks and taking inventory.

On-campus jobs are another type of school-based employment skill training experience. These can be paid or non-paid work experiences in which a student is placed in a real job within the school under the supervision of a school employee. These jobs introduce students to a work environment that requires many of the same skills that they will encounter in competitive work settings.

Potential On-Campus Jobs

- Cafeteria worker
- Office assistant
- Custodial assistant
- Teacher assistant
- Maintenance assistant
- Grounds keeping assistant
- Bus maintenance assistance
- Lab assistant
- After or before care assistant

On-campus jobs give students the opportunity to explore vocational interests and develop job-skills. For example, students can learn about the tasks involved in education, secretarial, media, custodial, landscaping, maintenance and food service careers. They can also compare their personal interests and ability levels to what is required for these occupations. Further, students get hands-on experience in completing job tasks, using work-related equipment, interacting with others in a work environment and following directions.

Job clubs not only provide students with disabilities with an experience related to employment preparation, but they can also provide them with an integrated social experience by including students with and without disabilities. A job club can help students develop job-seeking skills while also providing peer support for obtaining and maintaining employment.

Job clubs consist of a group of students with the common goal of obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. Typically, they meet after school hours one day a week with a staff sponsor to focus on employment-related activities. These activities may include:

- Sharing job leads
- Instruction on completing job applications and writing résumés
- Researching the local job market
- Visiting local businesses and meeting with personnel directors
- Developing job-seeking and interpersonal skills through instruction, role playing and peer critiques

The staff sponsor of a job club provides instruction, leadership and encouragement while facilitating important employment preparation activities.

II. Community-Based Employment Related Activities

While school-based employment preparation activities are important, an over-reliance on only school-based activities denies students the opportunity to generalize skills to community-based work environments. In order to prepare most students with disabilities for successful employment after high school, students should be provided with community-based career preparation as well.

Benefits of Community-Based Training

- Promotes generalization of skills
- Offers a high level of interaction with individuals without disabilities
- Exposes students to a wider variety of careers and job tasks
- Places students in natural environments where skills can be more accurately developed and assessed

Job Site Visits

Job site visits are one example of a community-based employment exploration activity that is relatively easy to implement.

Job site visits are typically short tours of local job sites. When they are most effective, these visits focus on the work being done at the site. Students get a sense of the job tasks and the education, skills and training needed for the jobs that they are exposed to during the visit. These short visits are an excellent opportunity for students to see the wide variety of jobs that are often available within one building.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing provides students with a more in-depth look at a particular career. These experiences give students a chance to try out a job by working alongside employees at area businesses. This allows students to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the work tasks associated with a particular position.

Job shadowing usually involves spending a few hours at a single worksite and can help students develop a better understanding of their personal interests and abilities.

Internships

Internships allow students to spend an extended period of time at a single job site in order to develop skills and knowledge needed for that job in their internship field. Internships typically last for several weeks or months.

A number of employers are interested in working with schools in order to provide youth with disabilities work-based experiences. However, the primary concern of employers is to successfully run their business. Therefore, they are going to be even more willing to work with schools when schools can show them how working with youth with disabilities can benefit their

business. In order to do this, educators must get to know what employers need and how students with disabilities can help meet those needs.

III. Developing Relationships with Potential Employers

Informational interviews are an easy way to learn more about area employers and identify opportunities for work-based experiences that may take place at their workplace. They are a great way to meet employers and discover their needs. Often these interviews can lead to future activities for students at the worksite. Here are a few tips to help conduct successful informational interviews[75]:

- Ask to meet with someone who is knowledgeable about the business.
- Make your request for a meeting easy to fulfill. For example, you might say something like, "I work with youth with disabilities at a local high school, and I would like to learn more about what I can be doing to prepare them to be better employees by learning more about your business" or "I work with a number of students who are very interested in _____. Is it possible for me to meet with you briefly in order to learn more information?"
- Be prepared. Conduct research on the business and industry before the meeting and prepare questions ahead of time.
- Use the interview to better understand the staffing and operational needs of the business and how you may be able to help meet them. Request a tour and ask questions to help you understand what you are seeing.
- Respect the employer's time by keeping the meeting to no more than 15 to 20 minutes.
- Be sure to thank the employer for time. When you get back to school or your office, take the time to write a short thank you note or email to thank the employer for their time and interest.

It's important to keep in mind that not every informational interview will lead to a work-based experience for students. However, each interview adds a contact for possible future activities and increases your knowledge of what employers are looking for and how they operate.

D. Promoting Graduation

[75] Luecking, R. G. (2009). *The way to work: How to facilitate work experiences for youth in transition*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Students with disabilities are at a substantially higher risk for dropping out of high school than their peers without disabilities. The dropout rate of students with disabilities has been declining and has reached 12.7 percent across the nation, which is an improvement. However, of special concern are students with emotional disabilities, for whom the dropout rate is almost 26.8 percent, more than double the average across disabilities.[76]

A first step toward promoting graduation is recognizing the warning signs and risk factors that contribute to the decision to leave high school. Warning signs and risk factors include[77]:

- Poor attendance, missing classes, skipping school
- Academic failure such as poor grades, failing classes and losing credits; retention is an especially serious risk factor
- Behavior problems that lead to the repeated use of consequences such as suspension and expulsion; not only do these consequences exclude students from school, but they also lead to a further loss of instructional time and academic difficulties
- Emotional withdrawal and a lack of interest in school activities
- Certain subsets of students, including those with emotional disabilities and those from low-income households, are at an increased risk for leaving high school before graduation

Why Youth Say They Dropout

- Dislike of school
- Poor grades
- Problems with other students
- Problems with teachers
- Belief that administrators or teachers want them to quit
- Family responsibilities
- Need to work
- Pregnancy

Educators need to be on the lookout for these warning signs, which often begin as early as middle school. Ninth grade is a particularly important time, as academic achievement during this year has been found to be predictive of achievement throughout high school. It is important to act in order to identify the causes and possible interventions as soon as possible when these behaviors are observed in students. It is easier to promote graduation when one understands the reasons behind the decision to drop out. The decision to drop out is not always an intentional one; for many students, they simply stopped going to school one day and found that no one seemed to notice or care. Students frequently report school-related issues as their reasons for

[76] U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *44th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the* Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2022.* Available at *https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/44th-arc-for-idea.pdf*.

[77] Bost, L. W. (2006). Building Effective Dropout Prevention Programs: Some Practical Strategies from Research and Practice. In *Big IDEAs: Dropout Prevention Strategies*, 3(3). Available at http://www2.edc.org/ndpc-sd/vol8.htm.

dropping out. Students report that they leave high school due to a lack of motivation, boredom, a lack of challenging coursework and a general lack of school engagement[78].

A number of steps can be taken to promote the graduation of all students, including those with disabilities. Loujeania Williams Bost of the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with disabilities has offered the following suggestions[79]:

- **Establish systems to routinely monitor risk factors and warning signs of school dropout**
  - Collecting and analyzing data on a regular basis can help to identify which students are most at risk for dropping out in order to target and provide interventions to those who need them most.
- **Intervene early**
  - Interventions should begin as soon as warning signs or risk factors are identified. High school is often too late, so interventions should begin in middle and elementary school whenever possible.
- **Increase family involvement**
  - Families play an important role in determining whether or not a student graduates from high school. Families can be positively involved by encouraging their children to stay in school, focusing on their children's strengths and expressing high expectations for academic achievement. Schools should collaborate with families, providing them opportunities to become more involved in their children's education.
- **Create school environments that are inviting, safe and supportive**
  - Safe and welcoming environments have been shown to improve learning and student attendance. Moving to an emphasis on positive behavioral supports over exclusionary disciplinary practices is one way to cultivate this sort of an environment.
- **Help students to address problems that interfere with learning**
  - Help students obtain the academic, health, social and personal support services that they need in order to overcome any barriers that may stand between them and graduation.
- **Consider using evidence-based dropout prevention programs**
  - There are a few programs that have been successfully used as interventions to address the factors that lead to the decision to leave school before graduation. The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities provides a description of some of these programs on their website. This information can be found at dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms/

[78] National Parent Technical Assistance Center. (2010). *Promoting Graduation and Academic Achievement for Youth with Disabilities.*

[79] Bost, L. W. (2006). Building Effective Dropout Prevention Programs: Some Practical Strategies from Research and Practice. In Big IDEAs: Dropout Prevention Strategies, 3(3). Available at http://www2.edc.org/ndpc-sd/vol8.htm

- **Listen to students**
- Students can tell us a lot about what will make school more relevant to them and increase their desire to stay in school.

- **Provide relevance and rigor**
  - Give students the opportunity to apply what they are learning to real-world problems and help them to see the connections between what they are learning now and their lives in the future.
- **Help students build relationships at school**
  - Support students' ability to build relationships with caring adults by providing opportunities and time for these relationships to develop. These relationships deepen students' connection with the school and can enhance their learning.
- **Focus on effective instruction**
  - Change teaching and learning practices in ways that will increase engagement, academic success and the development of the skills necessary for life after high school.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT FAMILIES THROUGHOUT THE SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS?[80]

Families are the first, most knowledgeable and most consistent influence a youth will have. The transition to adulthood is a critical time during which youth require a great deal of support from their families and other caring adults. Many families wish to assist their youth but are looking for guidance. They may not have thought about the full range of supports youth may need as they transition from school to further education, competitive employment and independently living in their communities. Families may not be familiar with formal planning processes or supports available outside of the education system, or may not anticipate important questions to ask or the information they need to know before their young adult leaves school or home.

Families play an important role in helping youth envision a future for themselves that is rooted in high expectations and thoughtful planning. All youth need the support of their families and other caring adults as they transition into adulthood. Whether a youth has a disability or not, it is beneficial for all youth to dream and set high goals from an early age. Youth need to be supported as they ask themselves where they want to work, where they want to live and what they want to do in their spare time.

The IDEA requires parent involvement in the IEP planning process and requires schools to document their attempts to gather information and notify parents prior to developing an IEP secondary transition plan. Through proper and thoughtful involvement, family members can assist the rest of the team in identifying student strengths and weaknesses, providing existing documentation, and collaborating in creative problem solving and goal development.

STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING FAMILY EMPOWERMENT[81]

From the beginning, schools should ensure that families feel welcome at the school and are treated as valued partners in the secondary transition planning process. Successful transition service providers understand that it is important to:

- Recognize that families are key resources that are often underutilized in the secondary transition process.

[80] Adapted from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, *The Guideposts for Success: A Framework for Families Preparing Youth for Adulthood*. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598433.pdf

[81] [81] Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative. *Family Involvement & Participation*.

- Provide outreach and communication in formats that engage families and create collaborative relationships across all programs with which families interact.
- Understand that fragmented services are often confusing to families and they need help bridging them.
- Recognize that the structure and functional definition of "family" is defined from the youth's perspective.

What Do Families Need to Become Active Participants?

An important aspect of involving families begins with the way in which schools plan for and conduct secondary transition planning meetings. Schools should strive to hold meetings at convenient times for family work schedules and arrange for interpreters or translators to provide information in the parents' native language. Additionally, meeting preparation should be conducted in such a way that families are notified of their legal rights and given information on various options and resources. Most often, families will need moral support, help with problem-solving and assistance with cultivating natural and community supports.

How Do We Increase Parent Involvement in Secondary Transition Planning?[82]

A barrier many parents face during the secondary transition process is a lack of information and understanding of the secondary transition process. Parents may not fully understand their child's disability or be able to articulate how their child's disability impacts learning. Many parents are confused or intimidated by the special education system and unknowledgeable about the secondary transition process. Other barriers may be the school's lack of flexibility in scheduling meeting times around parent work schedules or difficulties in arranging transportation and child care.

Parents are more likely to be actively involved if the school environment is welcoming and their input is heard, respected and acted upon. When educators make the effort to provide accurate and honest information about the secondary transition process and requests for attendance and involvement ahead of time in a format that is easy for parents to understand, parents will feel prepared and willing to participate.

[82] South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project. (2006). *Cornerstones to Effective Transition Planning: Student and Parent Involvement.*

FACT SHEET FOR EDUCATORS: SUPPORTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

HOW CAN EDUCATORS SUPPORT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS?

When supporting family involvement in IEP meetings and during the secondary transition planning process, it is critical to work to build partnerships with families. Partnerships involve collaboration between professionals and family members where each person's expertise is acknowledged and used to increase the benefits of education for students with disabilities.

IEP teams and secondary transition service providers should apply Turnbull's Seven Principles of Effective Family-Professional Partnerships in all of their work with families.[83]

- **Communication:** Communicate openly and honestly with families in a medium that is comfortable for them.
- **Professional Competence:** Ensure you are highly qualified in the area you are working in, continue to learn and grow, and have high expectations.
- **Respect:** Treat families with dignity, honor cultural diversity and affirm strengths.
- **Commitment:** Be available, consistent and go above and beyond.
- **Equality:** Recognize the strengths of every member of the team, share power and work together.
- **Advocacy:** Focus on getting to the best solution for the student.
- **Trust:** Be reliable and act in the best interest of the student.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS:

- Become familiar with resources on developing family-professional partnerships in secondary transition. Resources are available at:
  - I'm Determined: www.imdetermined.org/resource/parent-path-to-success/
  - OSSE & SchoolTalk, Inc: Let's Talk about It: A Family Perspective: osse.dc.gov/node/1033152
  - National Dropout Prevention Center: www.dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/family-engagement
  - National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative: transitionta.org/topics/family-engagement/
  - PACER Center: www.pacer.org

[83] Adapted from the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) *Fast Facts: Parental Involvement.* Available at https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/SPED/34aee1c1-7ded-4d59-af82-da4af08d5fc4/UploadedImages/DCDT-Fast-Fact-Parental-Involvement_Delphi_Final.pdf

- Develop materials and organize or identify training to give parents the knowledge they need to actively participate in the secondary transition planning process. Remember—keep materials simple and parent friendly, reduce the use of educational jargon, keep training sessions brief, cover one topic at a time, and divide complex topics into several sessions.
- Provide training and/or instructional materials in the early stages of transition planning.
- Encourage parents to attend workshops on secondary transition planning and other transition-related topics offered by Advocates for Justice and Education, the Arc of DC and other community-based organizations.
- Begin reaching out to family members well before the IEP meeting to get to know the vision family members and their child have for the future. Incorporate this into your preparations for the IEP or secondary transition planning meeting.
- Help families understand the importance of having high expectations for their child and reflect on the consequences of making educational program choices that will not lead to a standard high school diploma to ensure that they are making a fully informed decision.
- When considering work-based learning experiences for individual students, engage parents in thinking about how their own personal, professional and community networks might lead to work opportunities in the community.
- Help parents connect with systems their son or daughter may need after they graduate from high school and follow up on their progress.
- Remember that the most involved members of a family may be parents, or they may be extended family members, friends, or others that regard themselves as family.

TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Create a culture of high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities. Hold staff accountable for conveying that expectation to families.
- Create a culture supportive of family involvement in your school. Identify ways for parents of all students to be engaged in school activities, such as:
  - Hosting community events,
  - Involving parents on formal leadership committees, or
  - Sponsoring activities that offer parents basic information about college preparation, entrance exams and financial aid.
- Be creative—think of traditional and non-traditional ways for parents to be engaged.
- Ensure time is devoted to strategies to create family-professional partnerships and implementing culturally responsive practices during in-service activities.
- Support a comprehensive secondary transition process by allocating resources (substitutes, etc.) so that teachers can devote the time and attention required for positive student outcomes.

FACT SHEET FOR FAMILIES: THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING

Families are the first, most knowledgeable and most consistent influence a youth will have. Families are also in a unique position to teach the necessary social skills and work skills a youth and to instill a sense of determination and high expectations that goals can be achieved.[84] Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes youth's social, emotional, physical, academic and occupational growth and leads to better post-school outcomes.

How can families influence and support their youth as they transitions into adulthood?

All youth need parents, families and other caring adults who do the following:

- Have high expectations that build upon the young person's strengths, interests and needs and that foster each youth's ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;
- Remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood;
- Help youth access information about employment, education and community resources;
- Take an active role in secondary transition planning with schools and community partners; and
- Have access to medical, professional and peer support networks.

All youth with disabilities need parents, families and other caring adults who have the following:

- An understanding of the youth's disability and how it may affect his or her education, employment, and daily living options;
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation;
- Knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and
- An understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving secondary transition goals and objectives.

For a youth, "family" may mean a traditional family, households led by single parents, grandparents, or relatives, being involved in foster care, or living in a group home. Whatever the situation, youth benefit from families who are well informed about education, employment, youth development and community supports. Informed families are better prepared to help youth understand options and make responsible decisions about their own lives.

[84] Adapted from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, *The Guideposts for Success: A Framework for Families Preparing Youth for Adulthood InfoBrief*. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598433.pdf.

How can families assist in developing their youth's secondary transition plan?

Families can support their youth in developing skills related to each secondary transition domain. Below are some suggestions:

Education/Training

- Help student set goals; discuss appropriate options
- Assist student in developing self-advocacy and self-management skills
- Help student develop decision making and communication skills

Employment

- Provide informal career awareness experiences
- Encourage student to work at a community or neighborhood job
- Reinforce work-related behaviors at home (grooming, etiquette, following directions, completing assigned tasks, etc.)

Independent Living

- If appropriate, initiate future financial and residential planning by:
  - Applying for the student's Social Security card or assisting with a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) application
  - Developing a will
  - Determining guardianship
  - Promote self-reliance and independence at home
  - Assigning specific duties and chores around the home to the student
- Encourage and facilitate social activities with peers
- Teach and promote daily living skills (banking, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- Promote good money management, budgeting and saving
- Explore and promote community resources and experiences with student
- Emphasize, model and teach good grooming, physical fitness and social skills
- Provide opportunities for participation in sports, daily exercise, hobbies, etc.
- Reinforce positive community citizenship and work values and support self-esteem

In General

- Advocate for the development and initiation of services that do not currently exist in the school or community
- Actively support efforts to provide transition in a variety of community settings

How can families assist in developing their youth's transition plan BEFORE, DURING and AFTER the IEP meeting?

Before the IEP Meeting:

- Help your student to prepare to participate in his or her IEP meetings by helping to practice making introductions and identify accomplishments, goals and dreams
- Become informed about quality secondary transition planning and relevant community services that can assist and support your child in achieving success as adults
- Provide an assessment of the student's skills outside of the school environment

During the IEP Meeting:

- Share information about your student, including:
  - What has worked in the past
  - Family strengths and resources
  - Challenges the student and family are facing
  - Your dreams of the future for your student
  - Provide information about your student's skills outside of the school environment

After the IEP Meeting:

- Assist in implementing identified secondary transition goals
- Ensure the intentions of agreements and collaborative efforts between various agencies are fully met

What Local Organizations are Available to Support Families in the Secondary Transition Process?

Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE): www.aje-dc.org/

District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education: educationombudsman.dc.gov

Office of the Student Advocate: studentadvocate.dc.gov/

OSSE Parent and Community Resources for Special Education: osse.dc.gov/service/parent-and-community-resources-special-education

Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE): dcpave.org/

Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities: https://www.dcqualitytrust.org/

What Resources Can Families and Youth Access to Support the Secondary Transition Process?

Families are critical to the secondary transition process because family participation increases the positive outcomes for students once they move to adult life. Below are some resources for families:

- Getting Ready for When Your Teen Reaches the Age of Majority: A Parent's Guide (2023) - Center for Parent Information and Resources: www.parentcenterhub.org/age-of-majority-parentguide/#who
- Got Transition: www.gottransition.org/
- I'm Determined Parent Pathway to Success: www.imdetermined.org/tool/parent-path-to-success/
- Let's Talk About It: A Family Perspective (2014) - OSSE & SchoolTalk: osse.dc.gov/node/1033152
- Life Course Tools: https://www.lifecoursetools.com/
- OSSE Education Decision-Making & Transfer of Rights: osse.dc.gov/service/education-decision-making
- PACER Center- Transitioning to Life after High School (n.d.): www.pacer.org/students/transition-to-life/
- PACER Center- Additional Secondary Transition Resources: www.pacer.org/publications/transition.asp.
- Special Education Hub: specialeducation.dc.gov/
- Wrightslaw: www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.index.htm

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

I. IMPROVING INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION[85]

Possible Partners

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (RSA)
- Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
- Workforce Development
- Juvenile Corrections
- Mental Health Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Social Security Administration
- Adult Service Providers
- Youth and Parents
- Advocates
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Businesses

One of the challenges IEP teams face during the planning process relates to meeting the complex support needs of many transition-aged youth with disabilities. Successful secondary transition planning requires coordination between families, schools, government agencies and community-based organizations to provide the services youth will need to find and sustain employment, live independently and attain postsecondary education and training.

Interagency collaboration is a broad concept that describes formal and informal relationships between schools and adult agencies where resources are shared to accomplish common secondary transition goals. Although research indicates that interagency collaboration is a key indicator of successful adult outcomes, it remains challenging for most educators. Some common barriers toward establishing collaboration and effective service coordination include:

- Fragmentation, duplication and inadequacy of secondary transition services and programs
- Poor or inaccurate perceptions of outside agencies by school staff, parents and students
- Nonexistent or ineffective procedures for collaboration of school and agency staff throughout the referral, eligibility, determination and secondary transition-planning process

These interrelated yet distinctive strategies represent collaborative activities that high-performing districts regularly utilize. Successful implementation depends on an interrelated system of staffing, support, knowledge, relationships and funding. To achieve true collaboration, targeted strategies should occur in a consistent manner at the practitioner, administrative, local and state levels.

[85] Information in this section adapted from Noonan, P., Morningstar, M., and Gaumer, A., *Improving Interagency Collaboration: Effective Strategies Used by High-Performing Local Districts and Communities*, Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, Vol. 31, No. 5.

PROMISING STRATEGIES FOR INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

1. Flexible scheduling and staffing
   - School staff work outside of schools
   - Agencies allowed to come into schools
   - Shared workspace
   - Focus on accommodating families whenever possible
   - Clearly identified expectations

2. Follow-Up After Transition
   - Operate with the understanding that transition coordinators would continue to assist families and students after graduation

3. Administrative Support
   - Collaboration between special education administrators and adult agencies
   - Provide opportunities for collaboration by providing flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid training and substitutes

4. Use a Variety of Funding Sources
   - Schools identify ways to share funds and resources with other agencies
   - Schools regularly pursue external grant opportunities

5. State-Supported Technical Assistance
   - Regularly consider the needs of transition counselors, secondary teachers, and individual communities
   - Seek local input when designing resources and training
   - Prioritize local and state needs before developing professional development activities

6. Ability to Build Relationships
   - Educators build collaborative, trusting relationships with adult service providers
   - Learn adult agency needs and limitations and share resources
   - Develop relationships through shared problem-solving, goal-setting and joint training

7. Agency Meetings with Students and Families
   - Educators facilitate meetings between adult agencies, students and families
   - Districts engage in early and ongoing relationships between students and agencies by promoting high levels of agency presence at high schools

8. Training Students and Families
   - Provide information and training on adult service agencies to families
   - Provide information to students through school-based classes, agency presentations and community-based programs
   - Agencies visit schools to explain available programs
   - Provide information to families through transition fairs, and conferences, parent visits to agencies and ongoing agency parent trainings

9. Joint Staff Training
   - Provide joint training opportunities where educators, adult service agency representatives, families and related-service providers come together to build knowledge and working relationships

10. Interagency Transition Teams
    - Hold regularly scheduled meetings (monthly or quarterly) between schools and adult service agency staff
    - Ensure ongoing collaboration through information sharing and individualized student planning

11. Dissemination of Information to a Broad Audience
    - Provide information to parents and students about adult agency contacts, types of available services and strategies for securing services
    - Disseminate information through products, local-level interagency groups, websites, mailings and presentations

II. Establishing Formal Collaborative Agreements and Structures among Schools, Employers, Employment-Related Agencies and Post-Secondary Institutions

Effective interagency collaboration often requires a change in the behavior of participants and increased attention to both the process of collaboration and its goal while keeping a student-centered focus.

Collaborative planning and service delivery requires a team whose members know complex service issues and have:

- An understanding of local and state agencies and community resources;
- Skills and willingness to work with others;
- Willingness to share knowledge and resources (no "turf-ism"); and,=
- The ability to accept responsibilities for decisions and carry-out/enforcement/ implementation made by the group.

Memorandums of Understanding

One mechanism professionals can use to promote interagency collaboration is a formal collaborative agreement, otherwise known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

MOUs can be described as formal documents that outline the relationships between various agencies, such as the state education agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and developmental disability organizations. MOUs can occur at the state or local levels and appear to be an effective way of solidifying and maintaining relationships. MOUs are often connected with a state or local transition council and promote activities such as shared funding and joint training.

MOUs can provide clear guidelines for sharing local-level resources. For example, an MOU was developed between two agencies to form a new service provision to provide at-risk students and students with mild disabilities vocational training and assessment through community colleges. Additionally, developing an MOU can serve as a major collaborative activity between several entities. This is a key strategy for relationship building, in which participants share information and work on common goals.

There are many different kinds of interagency agreements. Some may only identify the relationship between two entities, but many MOUs are much more comprehensive and involve numerous entities such as the Social Security Administration, the Department of Labor, postsecondary education, the district, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Health, etc.

MOUs are often developed at the administrative level and frequently detail agency responsibilities. One transition coordinator noted, "It [MOU] gives all the teachers and everyone clear guidelines on 'how' and 'who should' and 'what are we looking for' to tap into those different agencies … it justifies why we invite various agencies to meet with parents and students."

In another district, an administrator explained how the transition council developed "an agreement signed by middle-level management and the directors," which was updated every two years, and included: mental health, Commission for the Blind and the development disability organization. The MOU identified points of contact for each agency, outlined potential services and eligibility requirements and provided a formal commitment to working together.

Potential Topics to Include in MOUs	
Methods of communication	Methods of communication are critical for any team that is attempting to work toward a shared vision. Types of communication can include ongoing meetings, emails, listserv or website. It is important to consider methods of communication to meet the needs of each individual agency for clarity and involvement. Also, the use of minutes and agendas promote effective use of time and action-oriented teaming.
Information sharing protocols	It is important for agencies to consider how much and how little information should be shared, as well as how often. Also, issues of confidentiality, particularly related to students, should be addressed prior to sharing any information. These issues can be discussed and documented by the MOU members.
Referral protocols	There is often misunderstanding between education and adult agency staff related to services provided and populations served. To make matters more difficult, services and eligibility may change due to issues in funding or reauthorized legislation mandates. Because of this, it is important to have a clear understanding of agency eligibility requirements, as well as referral protocols such as needed paperwork (e.g., proof of disability, diploma and family income).
Service/task responsibilities	When a group of people join together around a common vision, it is important that individual members have a clear understanding of their tasks in group endeavors. For this reason, action plans should be used to plan team activities by goals, and they should include a timeline, person responsible, and how the activity will be evaluated. Additionally, agendas and minutes are mechanisms to keep work on track and prevent large amounts of work falling on one or two people.
Funding responsibilities	When developing a formalized agreement, any funding responsibilities need to be clearly stated, or it should be stated that funding is not included in the agreement.
Points of contact	Clear points of contact should be identified for all members and should include name, email, agency website and phone numbers if appropriate.

III. Utilizing School and Community Level Transition Education and Services Based on a Community Context[86]

In a time of diminishing resources, it is very important to identify school and community resources (i.e., personnel, time, money, knowledge/training, materials) that could positively impact secondary transition education and services. Resource mapping is a system-building process that: leads to change, identifies resources and barriers to building a system, strategizes optional use of resources, identifies limitations and gaps in resource coordination, explores new resources, and coordinates resources for strategic planning.[87]

Resource mapping requires three major steps:

1. Identifying how current resources are used;
2. Determining if and how current resources can be altered to meet a given need; and
3. Identifying additional resources to meet a given need.

Step 1: Pre-Mapping Assessment

Establish a team and create a vision/goal (e.g., reduce dropout rates, improve post-school outcomes). Potential partners could include:

- Secondary education staff (i.e., transition, general, special)
- Adult education representative
- Advocacy organizations
- Business-education partnership representative
- Community action agency representative
- Correctional education staff
- Drop-out prevention representative
- Employers
- Extension service representative
- Transportation representative
- Higher education representative
- Community-based organizations

[86] National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT:C): https://transitionta.org/resource-mapping-toolkit/

[87] Crane and Luecking, NSTTAC Secondary Transition State Planning Institute, 2009.

Step 2: Create an Organizing Framework

Determine how the team will collect and organize information before beginning. For example, resources can be categorized in the following way:

- Universal Resources
  - Resources available to all youth aimed at enhancing success and reducing barriers to the secondary transition process
- Selected Resources:
  - Supplemental resources provided to small groups of youth to reduce the potential for increased difficulty and risk for longterm failure
- Targeted Resources:
  - Individually designed, intensive resources or interventions needed by very few youth

Step 3: Complete a Community Resource Mapping Tool[88]

When contacting the service agency, find out the following information:

- Name, address, phone number, website/email contact information
- What services do they provide for youth with disabilities? (Ask about services for specific disabilities or in general.)
- What services do they provide for adults with disabilities?
- How are services funded? What types of funding sources pay for services?
- Are there services the agency is planning on offering in the near future for youth with disabilities?
- Are there critical resources, services missing?
- Does the agency know of other agencies or organizations in the community that provide services to similar populations of individuals with disabilities (e.g., other employment services, mental health services, housing services, case management services)?

[88] To obtain a tool template, visit https://transitionta.org/resource-mapping-toolkit/

Community Resource Mapping Tool 4: Scanning the Resources

Task: To produce a comprehensive list of the various resources in the community.

Process:
Step 1: Across the top of the chart, identify your domains for improved outcomes (e.g., secondary education and graduation; postsecondary education and training; career preparation and employment; youth development and leadership; and supportive and adult services).
Step 2: In the left-hand column, list the community resources including organizations, funded projects, initiatives, etc., that support your domains (e.g., workforce-development funded programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, faith-based organizations, school initiatives, etc).
Step 3: In the columns to the right, indicate the services or supports provided by each community resource under the appropriate domains.

Targeting Community Resources to Improve Postschool Outcomes for Youth

COMMUNITY RESOURCES [List organizations and funded projects, programs, and initiatives.]	Secondary education and graduation	Postsecondary education and training	Career preparation and employment	Youth development and leadership	Supportive and adult services
	Access to high standards Educational assessment Vocational assessment Graduation standards Diploma options Staff training and professional development Alternative education	GED preparation Career and technical programs Two- and four-year degree & certificate programs Adult education	Career awareness Vocational assessment Work experience (paid and unpaid) Supported employment Competitive employment Job development Service learning	Person-centered transition planning Self-advocacy Self-determination Social, civic, and leadership skills Leadership opportunities Mentoring	Housing Transportation Recreation Mental health Physical wellness Adult service programs Assistive technology Day rehabilitation Family involvement Benefits planning Child care Case management

*The above figure can be found in the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Crane, K. & Mooney, M. (2005). *Essential Tools: Improving Secondary Education and Transition for Youth with Disabilities, Community Resource Mapping*, pg. 17.

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT THE MAP

"The power of resource mapping comes with what happens after the resources have been identified."

Once you've finished mapping, work as a team to develop a strategic action plan, facilitate access to resources, and communicate and disseminate information.

It is important to create an action plan after reviewing results of the Community Resource Mapping project.[89] By reviewing availability and distribution of services, extra resources in one area can be redirected to an area of need. Furthermore, a plan to access previously unutilized community resources can be created. Through resource mapping, your team will identify important agencies in order to build mutually beneficial partnerships.

[89] Crane and Luecking, *Essential Tools: Improving Secondary Education and Transition for Youth with Disabilities-Community Resource Mapping*. (2005).

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

I. EFFECTIVE RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Secondary transition planning is not a process that can be effectively implemented by only one or two professionals. As the saying goes, "It takes a village." Within transition services, this village not only includes transition professionals (such as transition coordinators or specialists), but also all special education teachers, general education teachers, related services personnel, administrators, family members and community agency personnel. Together these individuals must collaborate to identify needs and address those needs through the creative use of resources. This may mean providing instruction within the community, training job coaches to support students in learning employment skills at job sites, applying academic content to real-life experiences, or carving out a position that can focus on the coordination of transition services among all entities.

While the secondary special education teachers must be trained to provide effective secondary transition services, many districts have found it to be beneficial to create a transition coordinator position, as this role is substantially different from that of the classroom teacher.

Transition coordinators employ many strategies to collaborate with adult agencies, such as:

- Communicating with a wide spectrum of agencies,
- Meeting with and training students and families about adult agency services,
- Participating in joint training with adult agency staff,
- Participating in transition councils, and
- Disseminating adult agency information.

Transition coordinators also need the flexibility in their work schedules to dedicate ample time to building relationships and creating linkages for youths with disabilities. They build positive interagency relationships by attending meetings and trainings with adult agencies, developing formal collaborative agreements, and engaging in systems and individual student advocacy. Transition coordinators must be highly active outside school walls to forge quality relationships with adult agencies, families and community organizations.

Another strategy that districts have implemented to enhance secondary transition services is the blending of resources and/or staff with community agencies. For example, some schools provide an office for the local Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Others pool funds to create a joint position between the school and the agency. Blending these resources can help students smoothly transition from school to adult services.

II. Human Resource Development

Transition planning is often only a cursory topic within pre-service special education programs, and therefore few educators have the training and experience to implement effective secondary transition practices without further training. This training often is provided in the form of in-service, workshops, or collaborative communities. Cross-disciplinary training can also increase the effectiveness of collaborative secondary transition services within the school and the community. Because secondary transition planning is not the responsibility of a single person, all individuals involved in the secondary transition process benefit from joint training and action planning.

Transition-related personnel competencies have been identified by the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Career Development and Transition (available here: exceptionalchildren.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Advanced%20Specialty%20Set%20-%20Special%20EducationTransition%20Specialist.pdf). These competencies can form the framework for professional development planning within transition. Additionally, many educators, family members and agency staff seek out resources and self-paced training online through the numerous entities dedicated to transition planning. Several of these entities are provided in the Appendix.

III. Transition Evaluation: Measuring our Success in the District of Columbia

The effectiveness of transition planning and other special education indicators are evaluated in each state through the State Performance Plan (SPP). This plan outlines the activities and targets for 20 indicators, and outcomes for each indicator must be reported to the US Department of Education, OSEP on an annual basis. As identified in the tree of influence on the following page, many indicators are impacted by transition planning (i.e., graduate and dropout rates, adequate goals and transition services and post-school outcomes).

At the school level, the SPP indicators can provide a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of transition services. Collection of this data can be simplified through a data-base management system. Then the data can be analyzed on an ongoing basis for both program evaluation and program improvement.

As with all components of transition planning, program evaluation is not limited to high school special education programs and services. School interdisciplinary policies (e.g., core curriculum, electives, discipline practices), collaboration with agencies and family perspectives must also be included in the interpretation of student outcomes. When considering changes or additions to transition programs, a needs assessment should be conducted to identify the perceptions of students and families, continuum of services provided by the school, continuum of services provided by collaborative community providers, and gaps in post-secondary services

GLOSSARY

Accommodation – a modification or adjustment that makes something accessible

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

ADHD – Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Age of Majority – the age at which a student becomes a legal adult and when IEP decision making rights transfer from the parent to the student (age 18)

AJE – Advocates for Justice and Education

Apprenticeship – on the job training

Assistive Technology – any piece of equipment (low tech to high tech) used to obtain access and/or independence

Behavior Assessment – an evaluation that assists in identifying special needs

CFSA – Child and Family Services Agency

DCPS – District of Columbia Public School District

DDA – Developmental Disabilities Administration

DDS – Department of Disability Services

DOES – Department of Employment Services

FAPE – free and appropriate education as determined by law

Goals – measurable ideas, directions, tasks, objectives, etc. in an IEP

Graduation Certificate – certificate issued by the state to students who do not fully meet the diploma standards

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP – Individualized Education Program/Plan

Internship – training in an identified career choice in a community setting

Job Coach – an individual who helps train a person on the job site

Job Shadowing – when an individual follows or "shadows" an employee to observe what a job entails

LD – learning disability

LRE – least restrictive environment

NYTC – National Youth Transition Center

Objectives – specific tasks to meet a goal

OSSE – Office of the State Superintendent of Education

PCSB – Public Charter School Board

PLAAFP – Present Levels of Academic Functioning and Performance

Post-secondary – after high school

Psychological Evaluation – a series of evaluations that assists in identifying a psychological disability

PWN – Prior Written Notice

Regular Education Teacher – a teacher who teaches regular education courses

RSA – Rehabilitation Services Administration

Section 504 – a section of the Rehabilitation Act addressing reasonable accommodations

Self-assessment – determining one's own needs

SOP – Summary of Performance

Special Education Coordinator – a person who helps educators design curriculum, schedules and leads IEP team meetings, etc.

Special Education Teacher – a teacher who works with students with disabilities

SSA – Social Security Administration

Technical College – a college that offers course study geared towards careers as well as university transfer programs

Transition – any movement from one area to another, e.g. school to work

Transition Coordinator – a school staff member who helps design transition plans and assists in meeting the needs of students with disabilities

TTY/TDD – telephones used by the deaf consisting of a keyboard and display

ULS – University Legal Services

Vocational Assessment – a way to determine career interests

VR – Vocational Rehabilitation

SECONDARY TRANSITION RESOURCES GUIDE

SECONDARY TRANSITION RESEARCH & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

- The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C): transitionta.org/
- Center on Transition Innovations - Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU): centerontransition.org/
- Transition Coalition - University of Kansas: https://transitioncoalition.org/
- Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) - Council for Exceptional Children: dcdt.org/
- Center for Transition and Career Innovation (CTCI) - University of Maryland: education.umd.edu/research/centers/ctci
- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) - University of Minnesota: www.ncset.org/
- National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NTLS-2) - Institute of Education Sciences (IES): nlts2.sri.com/
- I'm Determined - Virginia Department of Education - www.imdetermined.org/

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICES AND AGENCIES

- District of Columbia Public Schools Transition Services: dcps.dc.gov/service/transition-services-programs-and-supports
- DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA): www.cfsa.dc.gov
- DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH): www.dmh.dc.gov
- District of Columbia Developmental Disabilities Council: ddc.dc.gov/
- DC Department of Disability Services (DDS): www.dds.dc.gov
- DC Department of Employment Services (DOES): www.does.dc.gov
- DC Office on Disability Rights (ODR):www.odr.dc.gov
- DC Ombudsman for Public Education: educationombudsman.dc.gov/
- DC Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA): dds.dc.gov/node/724762
- OSSE Division of Postsecondary and Career Education (PCE): osse.dc.gov/publication/division-postsecondary-and-career-education-pce-overview
- OSSE Secondary Transition Hub: https://osse.dc.gov/page/secondary-transition-resourcesOSSE Education Decision-Maker and Transfer of Rights osse.dc.gov/service/education-decision-making
- Social Security Administration (SSA): www.ssa.gov
- Special Education Hub: specialeducation.dc.gov

Local Transition Resources

- Secondary Transition Community of Practice: schooltalkdc.org/st-cop/
- SchoolTalk Inc., InclusiveDC: schooltalkdc.org/inclusivedc/
- Special Education Cooperative: specialedcoop.org

Education Advocacy and Training

- Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE): www.aje-dc.org/
- Children's Law Center: childrenslawcenter.org/
- District of Columbia Advocacy Partners: dcpartners.iel.org/
- DC Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education: educationombudsman.dc.gov
- Office of the Student Advocate: studentadvocate.dc.gov/
- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE): dcpave.org/
- Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities: www.dcqualitytrust.org/
- University Legal Services: www.uls-dc.org/

Assistive Technology

- Assistive Technology Program for DC: www.atpdc.org/
- DC Public Library Adaptive Services Division: www.dclibrary.org/plan-visit/martin-luther-king-jr-memorial-library/center-accessibility

Education

- DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DC TAG): osse.dc.gov/dctag
- DC College Access Program (DC CAP): www.dccap.org
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid: studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa
- High Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities: highleveragepractices.org

Employment

- Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP): summerjobs.dc.gov
- US Department of Labor: www.dol.gov/general/topic/youthlabor

Independent Living

- The DC Center for Independent Living (DCCIL): www.dccil.org
- District of Columbia Housing Authority: www.dchousing.org/P
- MetroAccess: www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/
- National Health Care Transition Center: www.gottransition.org
- Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS): www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-545.html

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