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topic facts

Transition to adulthood

Planning early for the transition from home and high school to living and working in the community helps families to be better prepared for what lies ahead.

The process of planning and making the transition from school to adult life can be baffling for youth with disabilities and their families. They must navigate a maze of programs, each with its own eligibility requirements and procedures. After youth leave school, transition issues often arise for which they and their families need ongoing information and support.

Few will disagree that transition from high school to adult life presents challenges for families, youth, and professionals. But with the right support and information, youth and their families can narrow the gap between the education system and adult services. While in high school, youth have opportunities to prepare for the future and connect to support services that will further their work, education, and independent living goals.

Start Early

To plan and get the services and support that will be needed, it's important to start the process early. You and your student may be working with new service providers, such as a vocational rehabilitation or supported employment counselor. It may take longer to put in place services for students who have complex needs or those who can't use services in a typical way. Transition planning sometimes means a lot of trial and error, so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to try things out.

The IEP

When your son or daughter turns 16, the IEP should include measurable goals and objectives that address transition needs such as training, education, employment, and independent living skills. The IEP will also describe the frequency and duration of services as well as who will provide the services.

I look forward to college and getting my degree. Being able to make my own decisions will make me quite happy.



Other agencies that serve adults should be invited to IEP meetings to help plan transition goals and provide services. These agencies may include vocational rehabilitation, developmental disability services, mental health, and supported employment programs.

One year before your child turns 18 the school is required to inform you and your son or daughter that parental rights will be transferred from you to your 18 year old. If you retain guardianship of your child, you will keep your parental rights in special education.

If the IEP team believes that your son or daughter needs help to meet graduation requirements, the team will develop a multi-year plan when your student turns 14. A multi-year plan is an individualized plan for a student with limiting disabilities to enable the student to meet the requirements to graduate from high school.

The superintendent of schools must approve a multi-year plan before it goes into effect. Requests for a plan can be made by parents, students, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators.

Transition services

Transition services mean a coordinated set of activities that will enable a student with a disability to move successfully from high school to

- postsecondary education
- vocational education
- employment (including supported employment)
- continuing and adult education
- adult services
- independent living
- community participation.

If a student needs special instruction or related services to benefit from transition services, these services should be part of the student's IEP. Special education may include helping a student learn appropriate job skills

through one-to-one instruction or teaching a student how to take public transportation.

The student's needs, preferences, and interests are a critical part of providing transition services.

Activities to consider

The IEP team will develop activities to assist in preparing your son or daughter for the future. Transition activities may take place in school and in the community depending on IEP goals and objectives. Here are some suggestions for activities to include in your student's IEP.

Career exploration

- Plan, schedule, and conduct interviews to gather information about jobs your student is interested in.
- Learn about supported employment options.

Learning style

- Make a chart of your student's strengths and needs and identify accommodations to meet those needs.
- Assist student to learn about his or her disability and how it affects learning.

Self-advocacy

- Learn behaviors necessary for your student to advocate on his or her behalf.
- Learn rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Postsecondary education

- Meet with a guidance counselor to discuss choices for college or other adult educational program and application procedures.
- Make a list of questions to ask at a site visit to a postsecondary school.

Job preparation and training

- Conduct a vocational assessment to determine your student's strengths and interests.
- Arrange for your student to job shadow and/or participate in a community service program.



Independent living

- Have your student take a class to learn new skills for independent living.
- Encourage your student to take a driver's education class or learn how to use public transportation.

Performance summary

When your student graduates or ages out of special education at age 22, the school will provide your son or daughter with a summary of performance. This written summary describes your student's academic achievement and functional performance and includes recommendations to assist in meeting employment, postsecondary education, and independent living goals.

Planning tools

There are tools available to help families identify their child's goals, strengths, and needs and take steps toward planning what will happen after high school. The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) and Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children (COACH) are two programs that can be used to get more in-depth information about a student.

MAPS

Using the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) you can develop a personal profile that will help you and your young adult get a clear picture of likes and dislikes, daily activities, friendships, personal traits, and hopes for the future. Family members, friends, professionals, and others join together to help your son or daughter plan for the future.

MAPS asks you to make a list of

- the young adult's personal history, including important milestones in his or her life.
- current and future dreams and fears of the young adult, the family, and others.
- who the young adult is in terms of their likes and dislikes, strengths and interests, and the important people in their lives.

- what the young adult needs now and in the future and the steps to be taken to meet those needs.

After writing down this information, you will develop a plan of action that addresses your son's or daughter's immediate needs and describes what will happen next. This plan should include action steps, people responsible, and timelines for accomplishing future goals. To request a MAPS, contact your child's IEP case manager or the special education director.

COACH

The COACH process helps teams plan a student's IEP and effectively include students in the regular classroom and their neighborhood schools. COACH is designed to assist in identifying IEP goals and objectives and to provide information about a student's present level of performance. COACH may be used with students ages 3-21 with significant disabilities who are in school.

The COACH process includes several steps and the first step is a family interview. The interview can be facilitated by a team member who is familiar with the process or another individual. Other steps in the process include looking at learning outcomes, general support, and annual goals for the student. Information is then summarized for use by the IEP team and others involved in the student's education.

Self-advocacy

Learning how to speak up and advocate are skills that teenagers with disabilities should learn while they are in school and throughout adult life. The IEP can include goals and activities to help your son or daughter learn self advocacy skills.

Here are activities for your teenager that will help build confidence and promote self-advocacy.

- Get to know yourself.
- Identify the help you need and the people who can help you.



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- Play an active role in your IEP meetings.
- Practice speaking up when you don't like something.
- Get to know your communication style.
- Find out what happens when you turn 18.
- Continue to be a self-advocate after you finish high school.

Resources

Linking youth to resources in their communities is a critical part of the transition process. From schools to adult service agencies, it's important to identify what's available in your community and statewide and who the people are that can help youth and their families.

Vocational Rehabilitation offers transition counselors, benefits counselors, job training, driver education, and assistive technology.
1(866) 879-6757
1(800) 361-1239

Local Mental Health/Developmental Disability agencies offers counselors, personal care support, respite, employment services. Contact the Vermont Agency of Human Services.
1(802) 241-2244
<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/services>

Department of Labor provides job counselors, job training, employment opportunities.
1(802) 828-4000
www.labor.vermont.gov

Vermont Center for Independent Living offers peer mentoring, benefits counseling, living support, community-based learning (Bridges Project).
1(800) 639-1522
www.vcil.org

Department of Health provides specialized health care services, health insurance, financial support.
1(800) 464-4343
www.healthvermont.gov

Social Security Administration provides income support through SSI and SSDI for youth with disabilities who qualify.
1(800) 772-1213
www.ssa.gov

Green Mountain Self-Advocates is a self-advocacy group for people with developmental disabilities and other conditions.
1(800) 564-9990

The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver Program helps with independent living skills, case management, employment support, counseling, and rehabilitation.
1(802) 241-3624
www.dad.state.vt.us/tbi/

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) has a transition program that helps visually impaired young people move smoothly from school life to the adult world.
1(800) 639-5861
www.vabvi.org