

TRANSITION PLANNING

WHICH STUDENTS NEED TRANSITION PLANNING AND WHEN?

A process designed to plan for life after graduation, through identifying dreams, goals, instructional needs and supports is beneficial for all students regardless of the extent or type of disability. IDEA requires that transition planning be included for every student receiving special education services for the IEP in place when the student turns 16. Colorado ECEA states that a transition plan is required “beginning when the student is 15, but no later than the end of 9th grade, or earlier if deemed appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually.”

TRANSITION PLANNING BEGINS

Good transition planning can start at any age. It is recommended that transition planning begin no later than eighth grade. Some school systems are beginning to use transition planning starting at the elementary level.

In Colorado, as a result of inter-agency agreements, the state is committed to a developmental process for transition that fits the uniqueness of each local community in the state.

Colorado's approach is based on the following guiding principles:

- Local community efforts to develop transition programs are valued and supported by the state.
- All state agencies that serve youth and young adults with disabilities share in the problem and the solutions for the successful transition from school to adult life.
- State agencies can support local efforts through policy change that affects and coordinates rules, regulations, guidelines and funding streams.



An Effective Transition Planning Process:

- Provides awareness to students, families, educators, community and adult service providers about what each system and person does.
- Facilitates communication between schools, families and community and adult service providers about students who need services.
- Develops a planning process that identifies a clear path for students to follow from school to adult living.
- Refocuses the school curriculum to include applied academics, career development and daily living skills.
- Utilizes assessment information across agencies, reducing duplication and streamlining the referral and eligibility determination process.
- Establishes a consistent referral system so students can more easily access agency supports.
- Effectively coordinates services between the school and other agencies leading to a successful transition.
- Successfully utilizes the available resources across agencies.
- Creates networking opportunities and expertise across agencies.
- Provides a support system for professionals, families, and students.

Transition Questions

Transition is nothing magical. It is answering the right questions that are individualized for each student. Identified outcomes for students leaving the school system and entering adult life guide the process. The following questions guide transition planning and must be answered prior to graduation for each student:¹

- Where is the student going vocationally (competitive or supported employment, volunteer work)?
- Will the student need postsecondary education or training?
- Where will the student live and what support will be needed?
- What will the student's transportation needs be?
- How will the student maintain his or her social life?
- What type of leisure activities will the student participate in?
- How will the student meet his or her need for medical care including health insurance?
- What community agencies can help and how will they be accessed?

¹ McAlonan, 1989

HOW DO WE ORGANIZE FOR TRANSITION PLANNING?

The transition plan, as part of the IEP, provides the framework for identifying, planning, and carrying out activities that will help the student make a successful transition to adult life. It includes the long-range postsecondary outcomes identified by the student, a statement of a projected course of study, and specific transition services that the student will need, including agency services. Plans must include:

- What agencies will be involved
- What services each agency will provide
- How all of the services will be coordinated

How Do You Plan?

Transition planning involves a team of people drawn from different parts of the student's school and community life. The specific needs of the student for postsecondary services should determine who is invited to the IEP transition planning meeting. It is important that students be linked to the general education curriculum as well as various adult agencies and organizations, such as mental health agencies, vocational rehabilitation, community colleges, housing, and employment and training agencies. If representatives from the agencies do not attend the meeting, the school is required to "take other steps to obtain participation" in planning the student's transition services, such as separate meetings, phone calls or written correspondence.

Transition goals *cannot* be achieved in one year. Transition planning, services, and activities should be approached as a multi-year process. Young adults themselves, along with their parents, play an important role in the transition process. While the law requires involving the student in his/her own transition planning, perhaps the most important reason for student involvement is to facilitate the development of his/her self-determination skills. These are essential for the student to develop the ability to manage his or her own life.



THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE²

A sound foundation provided by an appropriate school program

- Career development begins at the elementary level with teachers and school personnel from all levels involved in program development.
- A curriculum that includes academic and functional skills, sequenced across grade levels, assures smooth and logical movement from one level to another.
- Vocational opportunities include many training and work experience options based on availability in each community and student interests.
- Training in real community-based settings includes instruction in job skills and interpersonal skills.
- Students have opportunities to participate with disabled and non-disabled peers.
- Parents are provided with information about community agencies and are encouraged to work with their children on life and work skills to prepare them for employability and independent living.
- Administrators and program supervisors provide support for community-based instruction, coordination of services with community agencies, and appropriate work experience and job training.

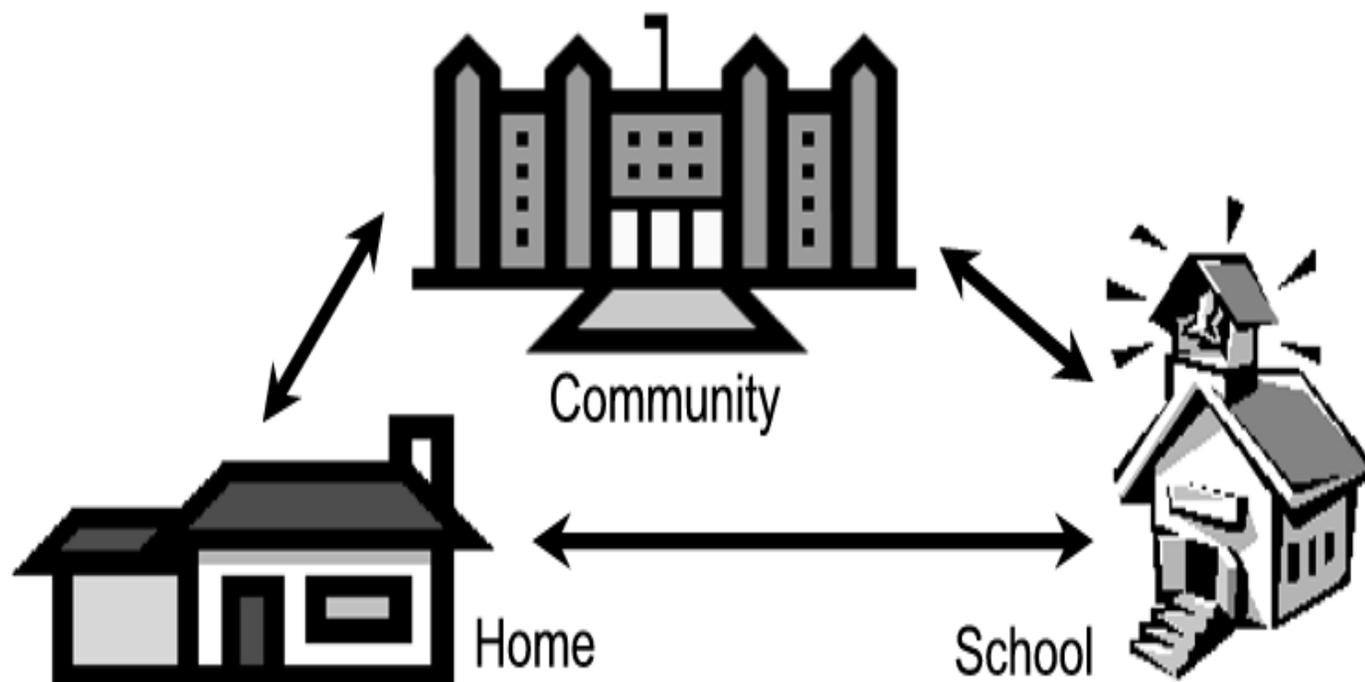
A written, formal transition plan

- A transition plan is developed for each individual student, as a part of the IEP process, that includes annual goals and short-term objectives that focus on skills required for the student to meet identified postsecondary goals.
- The plan includes instruction in living, career and social skills.
- The plan is ongoing, started no later than age 15 and updated annually.
- Adult service providers are involved long before the student graduates. The plan encourages the coordinated efforts of all appropriate agencies.
- The plan specifies who is responsible for each aspect of the process, including referral to appropriate agencies, work experience, on-the-job training and follow-up.

² CDE, (1991) *Colorado Transition Manual*, Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

Parent involvement in the transition process

- Parents are familiar with the agencies in the community and the responsibilities of each.
- Parents participate in the development of the transition plan that identifies employment, postsecondary education and training, independent living, social, recreational, and transportation options at least 3-5 years prior to their child's exit from the school system.
- Parents see that the school and adult agencies are coordinating services and, when appropriate, there is an assigned case manager before the child exits the school system.
- Parents actively support teachers' efforts to provide academic instruction and job training at school and at a variety of community-based sites.
- Parents work with their child at home to promote employment and social skills. They allow him or her to be as independent as possible and provide opportunities to explore and enjoy the community.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES³

IDEA 2004 may require some different thinking about the role of participants in the IEP meeting process. The following selected persons are required to be part of the IEP development. Suggested roles are listed as well.

Student:

- Participate actively in all discussions and decisions.
- Communicate his or her preferences and interests (e.g., what he or she wants to do after completing school).
- Communicate his or her strengths; areas where help is needed; how she or he is doing in classes and community experiences; what accommodations, modifications and supports are needed for the student's success in school and in the community.
- Take part in his or her IEP development; some students may lead their own IEP meetings. This participation will likely require coaching, training and practice.

Parent (and if desired, the family):

- Support the student.
- Reinforce the value of an individually appropriate educational program.
- Provide information about the student's strengths and interests and areas where assistance is needed.
- Provide information about the student's independent living skills and the help the student may need in order to achieve the desired post-school goals.
- Be actively engaged as equal partners in all aspects of the IEP planning, discussion and decision-making.



³ Storms, Jane, O'Leary, Ed, Williams, Jane. (2000) *Transition Requirements: A Guide for States, Districts, Schools, Universities and Families*. Stillwater,OK: National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials pp. 12-14

At least one of the student's special education teachers (or, if appropriate, related services providers):

- Provide information on the student's strengths, past achievements and progress on the current IEP.
- Provide strategies for effectively teaching the student, including appropriate accommodations and/or modifications so that the student can successfully access the general curriculum.
- Suggest courses of study and educational experiences that relate to the students preferences and interests and that provide a foundation and skills to help the student achieve his or her desired postsecondary goals.
- Identify needed related services.
- Provide appropriate input into transition service needs and postsecondary agencies, services and/or supports and incorporate those into the IEP (the statement of transition needs and the statement of needed transition services).
- Link students and parents to the appropriate post-school services, supports or agencies before the students leave high school.
- Coordinate all the people, agencies, services or programs in the transition planning.

District or BOCES representative:

- Support the special and general education staff.
- Allocate the necessary resources to ensure that the IEP is implemented.

At least one of the student's regular education teachers

- Assist in planning the courses of study and the general curriculum that will assist the student in achieving his or her desired postsecondary goals.
- Assist in identifying and providing needed accommodations, modifications, and supports necessary to assist the student to participate in the regular education setting and on state and district-wide assessments.
- Assist in identifying and providing needed positive behavioral strategies and interventions to assist the student in the regular education setting.

Other appropriate agency personnel (with written permission of the parent)

- Provide information about services and eligibility criteria for community or adult services and supports (e.g., college support services and financial aid, vocational rehabilitation services, family services, Social Security work incentives).
- Help explain the differences between the entitlement of school programs and eligibility of adult services.
- Assist in identifying community or adult services that may assist the student in achieving his or her postsecondary goals.
- Assist the student and his or her family in application processes for supports and services at colleges, training institutions, or adult services, as appropriate.
- Alert families and the school to potential waiting lists for services.
- As appropriate, provide services to the student prior to exiting the school system.



Parent's Roles in Transition⁴

Parents and guardians can be very influential in the successful transition of their son or daughter. Parents and family members play a variety of important roles in the transition planning process.

1. Providers of Unique Information

Parents know many things about their children's traits, interests, and abilities. They know what motivates their children, upsets them, or catches and keeps their attention.

2. Role Models

Children get messages about the value of work inside and outside the home from parents. When parents send the message, "There is a world of work out there and you are going to be a part of it," they boost their child's self-image and encourage their interest in work.

3. Case Monitors

Service providers and teachers are very busy and come and go at various points in the student's life. The parent should be aware of the total picture of the child's transition plan so that her or she is better able to make sure that important information, deadlines, and opportunities will not fall through the cracks.

4. Risk Takers

Letting go allows children and young adults to use public transportation, spend their own money, call a boy or girl on the phone, join Little League, attend the football game alone, etc. Parents know that letting go is necessary for their children's growth and maturity, but letting go is hard to do. Letting go is easier if parents are involved early as answers are found to the question, "Letting go to where?" and, "Are the proper supports in place?"

5. Financial Planners

Young adults with disabilities and their parents face very difficult decisions as they try to find a balance between the rewards of working and the need for immediate and long-term financial security. Policymakers are working to change the laws attached to federal financial assistance programs and more benefits are becoming available to persons participating in supported work programs.

6. Advocates for Career Education Programs

Career education is the process that prepares the student to participate in the world of work, family, and community life. Parents, recognizing the need for a functional, community-based career education program, can become key players in bringing it about for their children and their school system.

⁴ *CDE Next Steps*: Adapted with permission from *PEATC NEXT STEPS* publication

Specific transition activities initiated and the appropriate time for them to occur should be based on the individual needs of each student. This timeline provides a general guideline for school personnel to follow in designing the transition plan for each student however, keep in mind that parents may have primary responsibility for some of the activities.

AGE APPROPRIATE TRANSITION ACTIVITIES⁵

Student Age: 15	
<p>Assign Monitor/Coordinator for transition plan and assemble transition team.</p> <p>Give transition information and materials to student and parent(s) or guardian.</p> <p>Clarify the IEP transition process for the student and parent(s) or guardian.</p> <p>Review student's cumulative file</p> <p>Complete Home Inventory.</p> <p>Obtain copies of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Birth Certificate (optional) ▪ The student's Social Security card. ▪ An official Colorado identification card (from Drivers License Bureau). ▪ Credit and Academic Skills Audit Worksheet ▪ IEP History <p>Begin a portfolio of letters of recommendation</p> <p>Hold initial transition meeting, infused into the IEP process, to be continued and updated annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify post-secondary outcomes. ▪ Develop an academic plan in conjunction with the IEP to achieve those goals. <p>Provide orientation to high school facility and services.</p> <p>Provide self-advocacy training.</p>	<p>Begin to have student access public transportation – explore transportation options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply for local transportation pass/discount card if available. ▪ Provide training in reading transportation schedules/maps. <p>Begin transition-related assessment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify learning styles ▪ Identify vocational support needed ▪ Identify vocational interests/abilities <p>Provide career awareness, exploration and job training experiences in a variety of school and community sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete sample job applications ▪ Complete exploration of areas of vocational interest. ▪ Begin job shadows ▪ Explore summer job opportunities <p>Initiate application to adult service agencies with lengthy waiting lists (i.e., CCB system).</p> <p>Provide training in communication, self-care, mobility, independent living, and recreation skills within the context of job training activities whenever possible.</p> <p>Prepare job placement file with references, descriptions of acquired skills, work history and community assessment information.</p>

⁵ CSU Transition Services. Adapted by CDE, Exceptional Student Services Unit 2000.

Student Age: 16-18 – Some of these activities may continue for students who will receive school services beyond the age of 18

Establish linkages/review status to adult service programs.

- Education and training (as postsecondary).
- Social Security disability programs (includes Medicare and Medicaid).
- Residential services.
- Vocational.
- Recreational.
- Medical.

Complete eligibility process in application requirements for needed services.

Conduct formal and informal transition-related assessments

Update Home Inventory.

Review transition information materials with student and parent(s) or guardian.

Review date for graduation or program completion.

Clarify the high school IEP transition process for the student and parent(s) or guardian.

Update/complete vocational assessment(s).

Continue self-advocacy training.

Investigate need for driver's license.

Provide job training at community sites and/or through Vocational Education Programs.

Update resume/job placement file with references, descriptions of acquired skills, work history and transition assessment information.

Establish part-time community employment while student is still in school.

Develop a resume.

Establish needed health benefits/medical services.

Register for draft if applicable.

Register to vote (16 and 17 year olds can pre-register to vote).

Consider guardianship.

Develop a long-term financial support plan.

Update transition plan in cooperation with adult service providers for transition from school to adult life to determine and provide support for:

- Vocational direction.
- Living arrangements.
- Transportation needs.
- Social/recreation/leisure needs.
- Medical/health support.

Take PSAT, PACT, ACT, SAT, ASVAB, ASSET as appropriate

Investigate support services to students with disabilities at various post-secondary programs.

Visit local colleges/vocational schools.

Continue development of career portfolio:

- Letters of recommendation
- Updated resume and references
- Updated cover letter
- Transcript and academic information

TRANSITION CHECKLIST

The following is a checklist of transition activities that students, parents, and school personnel may wish to consider when preparing transition plans with the IEP team. The student's skills, interests and needs will determine which items on the checklist are relevant. Use this checklist to determine whether or not these transition issues should be addressed at IEP transition meetings. The checklist can also help identify who should be part of the IEP transition team. Responsibility for carrying out the specific transition activities should be determined at the IEP transition meetings.

Four to Five Years before Leaving School

- For students who will require community participation and residential supports as an adult, make application to the Community Center Board.
- Identify student learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker.
- Identify career interests and skills, complete interest and career inventories, and identify additional education or training requirements.
- Explore options for postsecondary education and training including admission criteria.
- Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports.
- Learn to communicate effectively his or her interests, preferences and needs.
- Be able to explain his or her disabilities, areas of strength and accommodations needed.
- Learn and practice personal health care and hygiene management including appropriate sexual behavior.
- Learn and practice informed decision-making skills.
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities.
- Broaden student experiences with community activities and expand friendships.
- Pursue and use local transportation options outside of family.
- Acquire an identification card and the ability to communicate personal information.
- Identify and begin learning skills necessary for independent living including money management.

Two to Three Years Before Leaving School

- Identify community support services and programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, Centers for Independent Living, Community Centered Board, etc.)
- Coordinate with adult service providers and ensure that appropriate referrals have been made.
- Match career interests and skills with academic course work and community work experiences.
- Gather more information on post-secondary programs and the support services offered; and make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams.
- Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues.
- Determine the need for financial support (Supplemental Security Income, state financial supplemental programs, Medicare).
- Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication, and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, with peers, etc.).
- Explore legal status about decision-making prior to the age of majority and consider the need for guardianship
- Begin a resume and update it as needed.
- Practice independent living skills, e.g., budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping.
- Identify needed personal assistant services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and manage these services.

One Year Before Leaving School

- Apply for financial support programs. (Supplemental Security Income, Independent Living Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Personal Assistant Services).
- Identify the post-secondary school the student plans to attend and arrange for accommodations.
- Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for assistance, and identifying accommodations that will be necessary in postsecondary and work environments.
- Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed.
- Take responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments, and social activities including transportation needs.
- Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions etc.).
- Register to vote and for selective service (if a male).



Checklist adapted from the National Transition Network Checklist.