



IEP REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Transition refers to the process by which students begin to learn how to assume adult roles. Though not always smooth for typical students, students on the autism spectrum can have a particularly difficult time with transition due to the fact that it involves so much change.

To help students with disabilities prepare for the changes of transition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that schools begin addressing transition needs for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) no later than age 16. Recognizing the importance of transition, some states have mandated that transition start even earlier. Pennsylvania and New Jersey, for example, begin transition at age 14.

If your child has an IEP and is of transition age (16, or earlier in states like Pennsylvania and New Jersey), IDEA requires:

- Transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, when appropriate, independent living skills;
- Appropriate and measurable IEP transition goals to address what your child will do after high school; and
- Transition services to assist your child in reaching those goals.

According to the federal regulations implementing IDEA, transition is “a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities.” Services should be provided and goals should be worked toward and updated each year until your child graduates. Students with IEPs can graduate in four years, as most typical students do, but they may also stay until the end of the school year when they turn 21.

Your child will become a member of the IEP team when he or she reaches transition age, and should be included in all decisions related to what he or she will

do after graduation. These options include post-high school education, for example four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and trade/technical schools; vocational education and training, for example programs funded through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and private occupational training programs; employment; and community programs. Additionally, the team must plan for where your child will live and the supports that will be necessary, how he or she will get from place to place, and what he or she will do for fun (social and recreational opportunities). Outside agencies, such as your local OVR agency, may also join the IEP team as appropriate. In Pennsylvania, OVR serves clients as young as 14 years old through an “early reach” initiative.

Transition planning must be based on your child’s needs, taking into account his or her strengths, preferences, and interests. Your child’s school may ask you and your child to complete questionnaires designed to help you and your child think about what your child likes to do (and what he or she does not enjoy), his or her talents, how your child learns best, sensory sensitivities, and available community supports, to name a few. Teachers and others will also contribute their opinions, and more formal assessments may also take place. For students who are considering employment after high school, work trials or job sampling may be a part of transition. These allow students to “try out” a job with necessary supports in place.

IDEA and the federal regulations that accompany it require that transition activities be coordinated with each other and address both academic and functional achievement. In addition to the development of employment skills, transition services can include community experiences and other activities to build life skills. These include learning to use public transportation, handling money (including budgeting, paying bills, and balancing a checkbook, where appropriate), preparing food, housekeeping (laundry, vacuuming, etc.), maintaining hygiene and health, time management, participating in community activities, developing and maintaining adult friendships and support networks, and building self-advocacy skills.

If your child is planning to go to college or pursue other educational opportunities, the plan should specify when and how your child will complete all academic prerequisites, mandatory testing (such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test - “SAT”), and admissions applications. If your child’s goal is to be employed after high school, in addition to a program to develop vocational skills, your child’s plan

should include practicing interview skills, completing job applications, and developing appropriate workplace social skills.

In summary, the transition plan should be individualized to enable your child to live as independently as possible after high school graduation. Because the transition plan is designed to benefit your soon-to-be adult child, your child's involvement is essential to the development of the plan.

Related Articles:

- [Assessing Needs for Support in the Workplace](#)
- [Finding a Job: Measuring Your Interests and Aptitude](#)
- [College or Employment: What's Right for Me?](#)
- [Functional Skills](#)
- [Self-Advocacy](#)
- [Self-Advocacy in an IEP Meeting](#)
- [Post-Secondary Admissions Assessments](#)
- [Graduation Testing](#)
- [Ending the School Years: Your Child's Summary of Performance](#)
- [Is Your Child with ASD Ready to Move Out?](#)

Recommended Link:

- [CAR Resource Directory \(Select Transition Services and Vocational Programs\)](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Transition to Adult Life for Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Secondary Transition Website, from the Pennsylvania Department of Education](#)
- [Pennsylvania OVR Early Reach Initiative](#)
- [Autism Transition Handbook](#)
- [Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood](#)
- [Transition to Adulthood, from the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Supporting Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders through Postsecondary Transition](#)
- [Questions and Answers on Secondary Transition, from the U.S. Department](#)

of Education

- [IDEA Regulations on Transition Services](#)
- [Transition, from Autism New Jersey™](#)
- [Transition Planning IEP Packet, from Autism New Jersey™](#)
- [Transition Matters Website, for Family Support Center of NJ](#)

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