Transitioning from high school to post high school life

TIPS for student success

Important Information to Know

Transition is the "Formal process of cooperative planning that will assist students with disabilities to move from school into the adult world" (Ed O'Leary). It provides the bridge from high school to life after high school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 requires that transition planning begin no later than 16 years of age but can begin earlier if appropriate. Students with more severe disabilities can often benefit from early planning, especially if their plans include agency services that can have waiting lists in excess of 10 years. Transition plans must include appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals that are based on data obtained from transition assessments related to training/education, employment, and if appropriate, independent living skills. These assessments can be formal or informal and are an ongoing part of the transition process. Goals initially may be general, but as students approach graduation, goals should become more specific. Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment, and other adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition planning considers students' strengths, needs, and abilities and prepares them for employment, education/training, independent living, and community participation. When students turn 17, the school district is required to apprise them and their parents that the rights accorded to parents of students with disabilities will transfer to students when they turn 18 (reach the age of majority), unless the parents have legally obtained guardianship. All students who graduate, or leave school because they have reached their 22nd birthday, must receive a Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (SOP) which includes recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals.

What Can Families Do?

- Become aware of the federal, state, and local requirements for transition
- Make sure to attend and collaboratively participate in your child's Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings by sharing knowledge of your child's abilities, interests, dreams, and goals
- Encourage and support your child in working toward those goals
- Provide opportunities to practice interviewing and other job-related skills at home
- Reinforce self-determination and self-advocacy skills by giving your child choices and opportunities to act on those choices
- Attend all presentations and fairs at your school relating to transition

What Can School Districts Do?

- Provide opportunities for staff and families to learn about transition-related topics (e.g., federal, state, and local requirements, as well as appropriate agencies and the services they offer)
- Create a support group for parents of students with disabilities and bring in speakers to address specific transition topics and participation in IEP meetings
- Hold a transition fair that brings together agencies providing transition services
- Reach out to parents and acknowledge the important role they play in the transition process by treating them as valued partners
- Provide ongoing, targeted transition assessments that enable the development of appropriate postsecondary and annual goals

- Assure that annual goals facilitate achievement of postsecondary goals when this topic is addressed in the IEP meeting
- Assure that the student has a measurable postsecondary goal in training or education, employment, and (if appropriate) independent living skills
- Allow teachers and administrative staff to attend transition-related training sessions and conferences to keep abreast of changes in the laws and best practices
- Assure that all required parties attend IEP meetings
- Provide training and support that allow students to lead a portion of their IEP meetings

What Can Students Do?

- Make sure to attend your IEP meeting
- Understand and be able to discuss your disability and how it affects you
- Know your strengths, abilities, and interests
- Know which accommodations work best for you
- Know your goals for after graduation, including employment, education and/or training, and living arrangements
- Be prepared to lead a part of your IEP meeting
- Be prepared to discuss these topics at your IEP meeting, and if you need help, ask for it
- Remember that this meeting is about your future, so let people know what you think in an appropriate manner

Terms to Know

Related Services- are support services that assist a student with disabilities to benefit from special education (e.g., speech-language, audiology. psychology, physical and occupational experiences, transportation, social work, medical, etc).

Community Experiences- are activities that are generally provided outside the school building and that prepare the student for participation in community life (e.g., government, social, recreational, leisure, shopping, banking, transportation, or other opportunities).

Functional Vocational Evaluation- is an evaluation that takes place in a real-life setting, where the student is required to perform adult tasks in the environment in which they occur. Assessment areas include work, community living, recreation, leisure, and other life experiences.

Resources

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004 has Regulations Information on IDEA 2004 and related topics. ***http://idea.ed.gov***

Career Voyages has information about the education required to enter various fields, as well as statistics and salaries. This site also has many free resources for students including parent/student action plans, online career advisors, career videos, and more. ***www.careervoyages.gov***

Youthhood has information for parents, students, and teachers on transition planning and services for students with disabilities, including college, employment, and independent living, presented in an interactive format. ***www.youthhood.org***

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) has national resources, technical assistance, and information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities to create opportunities for youth to achieve successful futures. ***www.ncset.org***

Government Benefits contains information for students and teachers on college loans and classroom resources. ***www.govbenefits.gov***

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