




April 2017

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Public School Administrators
Charter School Administrators
Superintendents of State-Operated and State-Supported Schools
Executive Directors of Approved Private Schools
Nonpublic School Administrators
Directors of Special Education
Directors of Pupil Personnel Services
Chairpersons of Committees on Special Education
Organizations, Parents and Individuals Concerned with Special Education

FROM: Christopher Suriano 

SUBJECT: Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities

This memorandum is to inform you that the New York State Education Department has developed the attached policy brief, *Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities*, to remind Committees on Special Education and school districts of their specific responsibilities under federal and State law and regulations to provide appropriate transition planning and services for students with disabilities. This guidance also identifies technical assistance resources available to assist school districts, students, and families in the transition planning process.

Additionally, in January 2017, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the United States Department of Education issued *A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities* to ensure that all students and youth with disabilities are equipped with the skills and knowledge to be engaged in the 21st Century workforce and to facilitate a seamless transition from school to post-school activities. This guide is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-2017.pdf>.

Schools are strongly encouraged to use the guidance and resources provided in these documents to assist them in meeting their responsibilities relating to transition planning and services for students with disabilities.

Questions regarding this memorandum may be directed to speced@nysed.gov, the Special Education Policy Unit at (518) 473-2878, or the Program Development and Support Services Unit at (518) 486-7462.

Attachment: *Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities*



The University of the State of New York
New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education

April 2017

Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities

This is one in a series of policy briefs prepared by the New York State Education Department on topics pertaining to implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in New York State and Part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education relating to students with disabilities.

What is transition planning?

Transition planning is a process that requires a partnership among the student, family, and school district and, as appropriate, other agencies that can provide transition activities to help students with disabilities move from school to adult life. By its very nature, transition planning is a collaborative effort and must be thought of as an ongoing process across multiple school years. Effective transition planning is based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests and focuses attention on how the student's educational program, including instruction and career and educational experiences, can be planned to help the student make a successful transition to his or her goals for life after high school.

When must transition planning begin?

Beginning with the first individualized education program (IEP) to be in effect when the student turns age 15 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate) and updated annually, the IEP must include:

- a statement (under the student's present levels of performance) of the student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences, and interests, as they relate to transition from school to post-school activities;
- appropriate measurable postsecondary goals;
- a statement of needed transition services;
- needed activities to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities; and
- a statement of the responsibilities of the school district and, when applicable, participating agencies for the provision of services and activities that promote movement from school to post-school opportunities, or both, before the student leaves the school setting.

What are measurable post-secondary goals?

The IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals based on the student's preferences and interests as they relate to transition from school to post-school activities in the areas of:

- employment (e.g., integrated competitive employment);
- postsecondary education and training (e.g., career and technical education and training, continuing and adult education, college); and
- when appropriate, independent living skills (e.g., adult services, independent living or community participation).

Postsecondary goals identify the student's long-term goals for living, learning, and working as an adult. The student's IEP should include goals, services and activities to incrementally prepare the student to achieve

his/her measurable postsecondary goals. Information to develop a student's measurable postsecondary goals should be obtained using a variety of formal and/or informal methods which may vary from student to student. These include, but are not limited to vocational assessments, assessment of postsecondary education skills, interviews with the student and/or parent, strength-based assessments, and teacher observations.

What are transition services?

Transition Services means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability designed to improve his/her academic and functional achievement to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including, but not limited to:

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

Transition services should address identified transition needs of the student and should be considered throughout the IEP development process, including during discussions of the student's present levels of performance, annual goals, services, accommodations, program modifications, and placement. The provision of meaningful and effective transition services requires the district to have appropriate instructional, career and work-related and community experiences available to students.

What is the coordinated set of activities?

The coordinated set of activities to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities must be based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests and include needed activities in the following areas:

- instruction;
- related services;
- community experiences;
- the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

The coordinated set of activities summarizes in one place in the IEP how the student's transition needs that are identified in the present levels of performance are being addressed comprehensively across all of these areas. Activities are not required for all areas but must be considered by the committee on special education (CSE) and documented in the student's IEP.

What information is needed to determine transition services?

To determine the transition services the student needs, the CSE should consider the student's most recent evaluation information including vocational assessments, teacher recommendations, annual reviews, student strengths, preferences, interests and goals, and parent concerns.

The development of transition goals and services must include a discussion with the student's parents regarding:

- the graduation requirements that apply to the student depending upon the year in which he or she first enters grade nine; and
- the progress the student is making toward receipt of a diploma including:
 - the courses the student has passed and the number of credits the student has earned as required for graduation;
 - the assessments required for graduation that the student has taken and passed; and
 - the appeal, safety net, and superintendent determination options that may be available to the student to allow the student to meet the graduation assessment requirements.

At the CSE meeting in which transition services will be discussed, the student's parents must be provided with written information explaining the graduation requirements. Such information must include the eligibility criteria and processes for seeking an appeal to graduate with a lower score on a Regents examination and for requesting that a student be considered for a local diploma through the superintendent determination option. Parents must also be informed that graduation from high school with a local or Regents diploma will terminate their child's entitlement to a free appropriate public education and their eligibility for special education services.

What are age-appropriate transition assessments?

The CSE is responsible for conducting assessments to identify transition needs and appropriate transition services for students with disabilities. Beginning for students with disabilities at age 12 and students referred to special education for the first time who are age 12 and over, these assessments must include a review of school records and teacher assessments and parent and student interviews to determine vocational skills, aptitudes, and interests. A variety of additional transition assessments should be considered, and selection of assessments should be based upon each student's current learning needs and future considerations in the areas of independent living, employment and education/ training. Information gathered in these areas assists the CSE to determine what skills need to be taught and what services need to be provided to allow a student to make progress. The use of age-appropriate transition assessments helps ensure that the student is an active participant in the development of the IEP and provides the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding programming and appropriate linkages to community agencies and/or other postsecondary services and environments. Assessment options may include reviews of student records; interviews with the student, parents and teachers; paper-pencil assessments; situational assessments; academic or work experience progress reports; or postsecondary education assessments.

What is the role of the student in the transition planning process?

Students should actively participate in planning their educational programs leading toward achievement of postsecondary goals, including the development of their postsecondary goals. Students must be invited to CSE meetings when transition goals and services will be discussed. If a student does not attend, the school district must take steps to ensure the student's preferences and interests are considered.

What is the definition of a participating agency?

Participating agency means a State or local agency, other than the public agency responsible for a student's education, which is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student. These agencies may include, but are not limited to, State agencies such as Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and the New York State Commission for the Blind, as well as other local community-based organizations.

When the purpose of the meeting is to discuss transition services, a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services must be invited to the meeting to the extent appropriate. Consent from the student's parent (or from the student who is 18 years of age or older) must be obtained prior to inviting a participating agency to the meeting. Written consent is needed because personally confidential information about a student will be shared at the CSE meeting. If an agency invited to send a representative to a CSE meeting does not attend, the district must take steps to involve the other agency in the planning of the student's transition services.

Where should transition services be documented in the IEP?

The IEP of a student who is transition age must, under the applicable components of the student's IEP, include:

- under the student's present levels of performance, a statement of the student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences, and interests as they relate to transition from school to post-school activities;
- appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments relating to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills;
- annual IEP goals related to the student's transition service needs;
- statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's courses of study, such as participation in advanced placement courses or a vocational education program;
- needed activities to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation; and
- a statement of the responsibilities of the school district and, when applicable, participating agencies for the provision of such services and activities that promote movement from school to post-school opportunities, or both, before the student leaves the school setting.

The State's mandated IEP form provides for the appropriate documentation of specific transition content information to meet the transition requirements (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/formsnotices/IEP/home.html>).

What are the key elements of successful transition plans and services?

In the development of transition service plans, school districts should consider the following key factors to ensure the most successful transition for students with disabilities to adult life:

- The results of age-appropriate transition assessments provided to the student.
- Engagement of the parent and student as partners so that the parents' concerns for the education of their child and the student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests are considered and documented.
- Collaboration with participating State and community agencies to provide the student with appropriate services that will assist the student to meet his or her post-school goals.
- Instruction toward the career development and occupational studies (CDOS) learning standards.
- Opportunities for career development activities, including in-school and out-of-school job training and career and technical education (CTE) coursework to enhance employment opportunities and outcomes for the student.

What is a Student Exit Summary?

Federal regulations require school districts to provide a student with a disability with a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance, which must include recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals. This Student Exit Summary must be provided to a student whose eligibility for special education services terminates due to graduation from secondary school with a regular diploma or due to exceeding the age eligibility for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under State law. This includes students exiting school with a local or Regents diploma, the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential, and students exiting with the CDOS Commencement Credential as their only exiting credential. It is recommended that students with disabilities exiting with a High School Equivalency Diploma also be provided this summary. The purpose of the Student Exit Summary is to provide the student with a written report that provides essential information to consider as the student transitions from secondary school.

Where can I find more information on transition planning?

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has established State and regional resources to provide professional development and technical assistance to school districts to improve transition planning. Schools are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these technical assistance resources to ensure that they are appropriately developing IEPs.

- NYSED Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC). Each RSE-TASC has one or more Transition Specialists who can assist school districts with professional development and technical assistance for effective transition practices and strategies.

- <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/rsetasc/tslist.htm>

 - The State's Transition Services Professional Development Support Center (PDSC). PDSC's TransitionSource website is designed to support educational programs and agencies across New York State, to advance the post-school outcomes of secondary students with disabilities.

<http://www.transitionsource.org>
<http://www.transitionsource.org/map>

- NYSED's Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) helps to ensure that all youth with disabilities are prepared for employment, postsecondary education, and community living when they leave school. ACCES-Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Community Employment Specialists provide technical assistance to school districts to better identify individuals for referral, understand the VR referral process, availability of ancillary community supports and systems of care. For additional information, see <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/transition-and-youth-services>
- ACCES Independent Living Centers (ILC) provide an array of services that assist New Yorkers with all disabilities to live fully integrated and self-directed lives. ILCs assist with all aspects of living, learning, and earning. For additional information, see <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/independent-living-centers>
- NYSED's Transition from School to Post School for Students with Disabilities website
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/transition/>
- NYSED's mandated *Individualized Education Program Form and Guide to Quality Individualized Education Program Development and Implementation*
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/formsnotices/IEP/home.html> and
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/iepguidance.htm>
- Student Exit Summary
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/exitsumm.htm>
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SACCdirections-att3.htm>
- Safety Net Options Available to Students with Disabilities to Graduate with a Local Diploma
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/gradrequirements/documents/safety-net-options-available-students-with-disabilities.pdf>
- Office of Career and Technology Education
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/home.html>
- NYS Department of Labor's Career Zone
<http://www.nycareerzone.org/>
- The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)
<http://transitionta.org/>

Legal Reference

8 NYCRR - Sections 200.1(jj) and (fff), 200.4(d)(2)(ix) and 200.4(d)(4)(i)(c)

NOTE: Please reference the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulation of the State of New York (8 NYCRR) for regulatory language. An unofficial compilation of these regulations can be found at: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/info/nycrr.htm>.