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## Introduction

Transition services for students with disabilities are required by a federal law called The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, commonly referred to as IDEA. Transition services are to be a part of every student's Individual Education Plan beginning at age 14 and, if necessary, earlier. A well designed transition plan addresses all aspects of a student's post-school life. Common considerations often include:

1. Where is the student going to live?
2. What will the student be doing during the day?
3. What will the student be doing for fun?
4. How much and what type of involvement will the student have in his or her community?
5. How will the student support himself or herself financially?
6. Will the student need help making important decisions?
7. Who will help the student be successful in these areas?
8. How will medical expenses be covered?

This manual will serve as an introduction to the world of "Adult Services" and will hopefully answer these questions and more. Our goal is to provide you with information that will address some of your concerns about what life will be like for your student when he/she has completed schooling. All students are different, as are all families. There is no single 'right plan' in transition planning and what another family wants for their student may or may not be what you want for yours. The best planning occurs when it considers contributions from a variety of sources: the student, the family, the school, and representatives from adult service agencies. It is meant to improve a student's employment ability, housing options, and to develop a social and recreational network that continues after high school.

## **Federal Definition of Transition Services**

From the 1997 revision of the federal law called IDEA:

The term 'transition services' means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

(A) Is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

(B) Is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and

(C) Includes 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.

SEC 602 (30)

(vii) (I) beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program);

(II) beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages; and

(III) beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under section 615(m) (of IDEA)

SEC 614 (d) (1) (A) (vii)

## **Transition Goals and Objectives**

IEP Goals, during the transition phase, need to teach the skills your child will need to function in the adult world. These goals need to be a part of the IEP throughout high school. The closer your child is to completing his/her education, the more you will realize the importance that these types of goals have been addressed. It is important to set priorities about what you want your child to learn. It is not important to have the IEP with the most goals. Try to write only as many as can realistically be worked on. The best transition planning will result in IEPs whose goals are most suited to learning the skills one will need to function after high school. Most likely, these transition goals will encompass aspects of the following areas:

- Academic
- Employment
- Independent Living
- Social/Recreational
- Medical/Health
- Legal

On the following pages are more details about these areas, but, remember, it is the entire team's responsibility to ensure they are addressed, not just yours.

# Transition Considerations

## Academic:

- Identify individual learning styles
- Become aware of career and employment interests
- Focus on what you will need to survive in the community
- Reinforce what the schools are teaching at home
- Foster a lifelong love of learning
- Learn about post-secondary educational opportunities:
  - Adult education
  - Technical Schools
  - Community Colleges
  - Colleges and Universities

## Employment:

- Visit various employment sites
- Job Shadow an employee at these sites
- Work at home (summer job, chores, etc.)
- Become aware of career and employment interests
- Develop transportation options (driver's license, public transportation, etc.)
- Apply to Vocational Rehabilitation
- Visit local programs that provide vocational services.

## Independent Living:

- Develop good personal care
- Develop housekeeping, budgeting, and cooking skills
- Know how to handle emergencies and how to live safely
- Visit local providers of residential services
- Learn to access key parts of your community (bank, post office, doctor's office, grocery store etc.)
- Assess vulnerability status
- Obtain ID cards

## **Transition Considerations**

(Continued)

### **Social / Recreational**

- Arrange ongoing social activities
- Establish exercise routines
- Join community sports teams or a health club
- Join organizations (religious, fraternal, social clubs, etc.)
- Invite others to activities
- Maintain an active relationship with family

### **Health**

- Discuss health issues with your student
- Learn what they think and feel about their own health needs
- Inventory what they can and can't do for themselves
- Institute learning objectives to teach personal health care
- Assess the impact of health care issues on post school plans (job, living, recreation, etc.)
- Plan for medical insurance

### **Legal**

- Assess decision making competency
- Inform student of newly obtained rights and responsibilities at age of majority (18)

## **Preparing For Your First Transition Meeting**

1. Talk to your child about his or her hopes, dreams, and plans for the future. Review the transition planning checklist together.
2. Meet with your child's teacher prior to the first planning meeting to:
  - review your child's post-school goals
  - discuss realistic timeframes for attaining goals
  - determine who should be invited to the meeting
3. Prepare to share what you know. Information about living skills, special interests, hobbies, community volunteer experiences, summer or after-school jobs, individual strengths, etc, as well as the results of formal evaluations are very important for the team to know.
4. Be prepared to discuss your expectations for your child.
5. Prepare your own questions. What information do you need from the various members of the transition planning team?
6. Talk to other parents who have children who are going through or have gone through the process for support and ideas.
7. Identify resources, information, and technical assistance related to transition.
8. Encourage your child to attend the transition planning/IEP meeting.
9. Keep a file of all your communications.
10. Remember that teamwork is an absolutely essential element of transition planning. Don't hesitate to call any member of the team to exchange information.

## **Age 18 Checklist**

(not all may apply)

### Financial

- ❑ Apply for SSDI\* and/or SSI\*  
(2-3 weeks prior to 18th birthday)
- ❑ Apply for APTD\* (after applying for SSI)
- ❑ Research appropriateness of a special needs trust

### Health Insurance

- ❑ Apply for Medicaid (part of APTD application)
- ❑ Determine upper age limits on eligibility for children with disabilities on your personal insurance policy

### Selective Service

- ❑ Register for the Draft (Males only)

### Guardianship

- ❑ Petition court for Guardianship (if necessary)  
(2-3 weeks prior to 18th birthday)

### Vocational Rehabilitation

- ❑ Ensure application for Vocational Rehabilitation services has been submitted

To speed up the process for applying for both SSI and APTD/ Medicaid, bring the following to your appointment: Social Security Card, Birth Certificate, Updated bank account records, School Records (IEP and Assessments), Medical Records, and Names, Addresses, and Phone #'s of doctors who treat your child.

\* (See page 17 for definitions)

## Guardianship

Coming of age at 18 for a student with a disability poses many new issues that a family needs to consider. For students either with or without disabilities, the age 18 affords all the rights and responsibilities normally associated with adulthood. For our students, this would include approving their own IEP, making decisions about and authorizing medical procedures, registering for the draft (if male), authorizing the release of confidential records, and applying for any services that may be appropriate (such as SSI, etc.)

For many students, this is just as it should be as they are relatively capable of making informed choices when presented with complex issues. For others, there may be some parts of their life that they can make decisions for themselves and some parts where they need guidance (Partial Guardianship). For others, another adult may need to be appointed by the court to make virtually all decisions on the student's behalf.

Guardianship is a legal arrangement whereupon an individual (or ward) is formally declared by Probate Court to be 'incompetent' or unable to make certain decisions. The court then appoints another adult to make such decisions. The appointed guardian is often a family member, but, if necessary, the guardian can be from a public guardianship agency. Guardianship can be shared between co-guardians and it can also be temporary. Guardianship can be full (covering most aspects of the ward's life) or partial (covering the aspects spelled out in the court decree).

Regardless of the severity of disability, your family member will reserve all the rights and responsibilities afforded to other American citizens at age 18, unless a court has declared differently. If you feel your child will need assistance making decisions, you should consider apply for guardianship just prior to age 18.

## **When Does Special Education End?**

Special education services are available to New Hampshire students with disabilities until they turn the age of 21. Some school districts end services exactly on the student's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, others will extend them until the end of the school year that the student turns 21. Be sure you are aware of your district's policy and, if services are planned beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, have it a written part of the IEP.

If a student with a disability earns a full high school diploma prior to the age of 21, services generally end with the award of the diploma. For some students, this is just as it should be (such as for students going on to post-secondary education); but for others, it may not. Because of having a strong academic focus, some students may have had limited vocational education and experiences prior to graduation. Families could consider 'post-grad' education through the high school to help the student learn the skills to be better prepared for employment. Discussion with your school representatives is key, as some districts will allow this only if the diploma is blank or unsigned upon presentation. For other districts, the IEP team recommendation is all that matters. Any decisions reached concerning services after graduation should be addressed in writing in the IEP as personnel can change from one academic year to the next.

## Transition Checklist

The following is a checklist of transition activities that you and your son or daughter may wish to consider when preparing transition plans with the IEP team. Your student's skills and interests will determine which items on the checklist are relevant. Use this checklist to ask yourself 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. Timelines are approximate.

### Four to Five Years before Leaving the School District

- Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker.
- Identify career interests/skills, complete interest/career inventories, request a vocational assessment.
- Identify needed community support services and programs.
- Explore options for post-secondary education admission.
- Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports.
- Learn to communicate your interests, preferences, and needs.
- Learn to explain your disability and needed accommodations .
- Learn and practice informed decision making skills.
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities.
- Broaden your community activities and friendships.
- Use local public transportation options.
- Investigate money management and identify necessary skills.
- Acquire identification card and the ability to communicate personal information.
- Identify and learn skills necessary for independent living.
- Learn and practice personal health care.

Continued.....

## **Transition Checklist**

(continued)

### Two to Three Years before Leaving the School District

- ❑ Ensure contact has occurred with community support services and programs.
- ❑ Invite adult service providers, peers, and others to the IEP transition meeting.
- ❑ Match career interests and skills with vocational coursework 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.
- ❑ Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal communication, and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, with peers, etc.).
- ❑ Explore guardianship prior to age of majority.
- ❑ Begin a resume and update it as needed.
- ❑ Practice independent living skills, e.g., budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping.
- ❑ Identify needed personal care attendant (PCA) services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and manage these services.
- ❑ Register to vote (all) and for selective service (if male).
- ❑ Apply for financial support programs (SSI, APTD etc).

### One Year before Leaving the School District

- ❑ Identify the post-secondary school you plan to attend and arrange for accommodations.
- ❑ Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying necessary accommodations at post-secondary 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.
- ❑ Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions etc.).

## **Adult Services**

For students who are not planning to attend post-secondary education, there are several other services available locally. Developmental Services of Strafford County, Inc. (DSSC) offers residential, vocational, day, and case management services. Residential services can be provided along the continuum from apartment services that offer support on a weekly basis, to fully supported, 24-hour care when necessary. Opportunities to live with families looking to share their home are also available. Community-based day and vocational programming is available through one of three community offices located in Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth. (DSSC also can fund other agencies to provide these services.) Finally, Case Management provides individualized advocacy and program monitoring to adults receiving these services as well as to adults living at home. It is important to remember that access to these adult services can be subjected to waiting lists until funding is available.

Vocational Rehabilitation is a service funded through the Department of Education that may also be appropriate for your graduate. They provide vocational assessments, as well as funding for job placement and short term on-the-job support. They typically hire vocational vendors who specialize in providing these services. Current vendors in the Strafford County area include Coastal Employment Services, Work Opportunities Unlimited, Easter Seals, as well as several others. Long-term vocational support is typically offered through natural co-worker support or through the area agency (DSSC).

## **Medicaid**

### **Healthy Kids Gold:**

Medicaid for children ages 0 to 19 has been renamed Healthy Kids Gold. This health insurance program is available for children in families with income of up to 185% of the poverty level.

### **Healthy Kids Silver:**

Healthy Kids Silver is a new program of low cost health insurance for uninsured children ages 0 to 19. Premiums for this program depend on the families income and start as low as \$20.00 per month per child.

### **Katie Beckett:**

The Katie Beckett Program provides Medicaid coverage to individuals ages 0 to 19 who have a significant level of disability. While family income is not a factor in determining eligibility, there are strict medical criteria for eligibility.

### **Medicaid for Adults (over 18):**

Medicaid is also available to adults with disabilities through the APTD program. In order to be found eligible, the individual applying (not the family) must meet income guidelines as well as be determined to have a disability that meets New Hampshire's disability standard.

To apply for any of the above programs, residents of Strafford County should contact:

Dept. of Health and Human Services  
150 Wakefield St. Rochester, NH  
(603) 332-9120

## **Local Contact Information**

- Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities:  
Developmental Services of Strafford County, Inc  
603 749-4015
- Services for Individuals with Mental Health needs:  
Strafford Guidance Center  
603 742-0630
- Social Security Administration:  
1 800 772-1213
- New Hampshire Department of Human Services:  
603 332-9120
- NH Department of Vocational Rehabilitation:  
603 436-8884
- Strafford County Probate (Guardianship):  
603 742-2550

## Definitions

- **IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:  
The federal law that sets the standards for educating students with disabilities. Part of the law addresses transition services.
- **IEP** Individual Education Plan  
The annual plan agreed upon by a team that outlines the services the school will provide for the coming year.
- **ISP** Individual Service Plan  
This is the adult services equivalent of an IEP.
- **SSDI** Social Security Disability Insurance  
A program administered by Social Security that pays a money payment to qualified recipients. One is eligible if one meets the disability definition and has sufficient work history (earned credits). One can also be eligible without the work credits, if as a child, one of your parents is also disabled and eligible for SSDI.
- **SSI** Supplemental Security Insurance  
Another program administered by Social Security that pays a money payment to qualified recipients. One is eligible if one meets the disability definition and is either under 18 and the family meets the income requirements; or is over 18 and individually meets the income requirements.
- **APTD** Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled  
A program administered by the State of New Hampshire through the Department of Human Services. One is eligible if one meets the disability definition and is over 18 and meets the income requirements. Medicaid is also available through this program.
- **IWRP** Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan  
An employment plan that is developed between a client and his or her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor that specifies services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation

## **Transition Related Internet Websites**

(accurate at time of printing)

Transition for Students with Learning Disabilities

[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/transition/transition.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/transition/transition.html)

The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities:

<http://www.nichcy.org/index.html>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights :

<http://www.pacer.org>

Financial Aid (Post Secondary):

<http://www.finaid.org>

IDEA 97:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/>

Inclusive Education

<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/>

Kids Together (Inclusion)

<http://www.kidstogether.org/>

New Hampshire Challenge

<http://www.nhchallenge.org/>

Developmental Services of Strafford County, Inc.

<http://www.dssc9.org>

Web addresses can be upper and lower case sensitive  
enter exactly as written.

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