

IEP Components Series

Adults Services: What Are They? Where Are They?

Many different individuals come together to help the student plan for transition. Typically, transition planning is handled by members of the IEP team, with other individuals becoming involved as needed. It's important to involve a variety of people, for they will bring their unique perspectives to the planning table. The team draws upon the expertise of the different members and pools their information to make decisions or recommendations for the student.

In addition to the regular players at the IEP table (parents, student, special education and general education teachers, related service providers, administrators, others), when transition is going to be discussed, *representatives of outside agencies may be invited*, especially those who are well informed about resources and adult services in the community. Here's a list of four different agencies to consider, plus the ever-useful "Other" category. Each is discussed in some detail further below.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (VR);**
 - **Service agencies** operating programs and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities or mental health concerns;
 - **Independent living centers (ILCs);**
 - **Social Security Administration (SSA);**
 - **Others** to consider involving.
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The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency

The VR agency has traditionally been a primary player in determining the way transition services are delivered. Typically, VR helps persons with cognitive, sensory, physical, or emotional disabilities to find employment and achieve increased independence. Funded by Federal and state money, VR agencies typically operate regional and local offices. VR services usually last for a limited period of time and are based on an individual's rehabilitation plan. If needed, an individual with disabilities can request services at a later time, and a new rehabilitation plan will be developed.

VR has its own eligibility requirements. Therefore, not all students receiving special education services can receive VR services. You will need to check with the VR agency in your own area to learn what eligibility requirements apply. Identify your VR agency at:
<https://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902>

Examples of **employment services** that may be available through VR include:

- vocational guidance and counseling
- medical, psychological, vocational, and other types of assessments to determine vocational potential
- job development, placement, and follow-up services
- rehabilitation, technological services and adaptive devices, tools, equipment, and supplies

Examples of **postsecondary education services** that may be available through VR include:

- apprenticeship programs, usually in conjunction with Department of Labor

- vocational training
- college training towards a vocational goal as part of an eligible student's financial aid package

Examples of ***independent living and adult services*** that may be available through VR include:

- housing or transportation supports needed to maintain employment
- interpreter services
- orientation and mobility services

To learn more about VR, try these two on-target resources:

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Can It Help You? | An online module @ the HEATH Resource Center

http://www.heath.gwu.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1059&Itemid=65

Getting the Most from the Public Vocational Rehabilitation System

http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=129

Service Agencies for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or Mental Health Concerns

Depending on the student's individual needs, it may be important for the transition team to include representatives from service agencies addressing intellectual disabilities or mental health. These agencies provide a comprehensive system of services responsive to the needs of individuals with mental health concerns or intellectual disabilities. Federal, state, and local funding are used to operate regional offices; local funding is often the primary source. Services are provided on a sliding payment scale.

Examples of employment-related services often available through these service agency include supported and sheltered employment, and competitive employment support for those who need minimal assistance.

Examples of independent living and adult services you may find available include:

- case management services to access and obtain local services
- therapeutic recreation, including day activities, clubs, and programs
- respite care
- residential services (group homes and supervised apartments)

The services provided by these agencies, however, vary greatly from community to community due to differences in local funding and priorities. Again, you will need to check with your state's agencies that offer such services. To see what's available in your state, visit the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, at:

<http://www.acl.gov/Programs/AIDD/Index.aspx>

Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

ILCs are nonresidential, community-based agencies that are run by people with various disabilities. ILCs help people with disabilities achieve and maintain self-sufficient lives within the community. Operated locally, ILCs serve a particular region, which means that their services vary from place to place. ILCs may charge for classes, but advocacy services are typically available at no cost.

To find out more about ILCs in your area, here are two national-level organizations that can put you in touch with state and local info:

Independent Living Research Utilization Project

(where you can find contact info for your Statewide Individual Living Council (SILC))

<http://www.ilru.org>

National Council on Independent Living

(to find contact info for local-level ILCs)

<http://www.ncil.org>

Social Security Administration (SSA)

The **Social Security Administration** operates the federally funded program that provides benefits for people of any age who are unable to do substantial work and have a severe mental or physical disability. Several programs are offered for people with disabilities, including:

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI);
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS);
- Medicaid; and
- Medicare.

Examples of employment services that may be available through SSA work incentive programs may include:

- cash benefits while working (e.g., student-earned income)
- Medicare or Medicaid while working
- help with any extra work expenses the individual has as a result of the disability
- assistance to start a new line of work.

With respect to adult and independent living services, SSA programs may support medical benefits, as well as allow the individual to use income as basis for purchase or rental of housing.

SSA can be a great source of support and assistance to youth with disabilities as they leave high school and move into adulthood. It's very important for a student's transition team to investigate whether or not the student is eligible for any of SSA's programs and, if so, to involve SSA as part of transition planning.

Others to Consider Involving in Transition Planning

Other individuals or agencies may serve as one-time or ongoing consultants to the team, sharing a particular expertise or insight, while others may be valuable sources of specific information that helps the team plan and make decisions (see **Potential Consultants to the Transition Team**). Consider the useful information to be gained from any of the following:

Postsecondary education and training providers such as representatives from colleges, or trade schools, who can help the student explore types of training available as well as remind the group that lifelong learning for all individuals is important.

Department of Labor job services agencies, which offer transition services and employment programs, many of which are meant for individuals with disabilities (although others may not have a disability focus).

One-Stop program representatives, who can tell the team about job training available under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to help students prepare for their first job or further education and training.

Community leaders such as religious leaders, directors of recreation programs, and county extension agents, who may help the team address a particular need that a student has;

Community recreation centers such as Boys Clubs, YMCA, or 4-H Clubs, which may provide job counseling and youth development activities.

Employers, who can provide training and job opportunities and who can explain the expectations that the business community has for future workers.

Team members do not necessarily have to come from social service agencies. Students and their families may also invite a relative, friend, or advocate who can provide emotional support, access to their personal networks, or other unique expertise. If possible, it is also helpful to have team members from similar language and cultural backgrounds as the student. These members can help the team understand how cultural or language issues impact the transition process. Some typical transition outcomes, such as going away to college, getting a paying job, moving out of the family home, and making decisions independently of the family are valued differently by different cultures.

It is very important to invite service representatives and other individuals identified as transition consultants to IEP meetings that will be focused on only transition. They do not need to be at every IEP meeting of the student. If they cannot attend the meetings focusing on transition, talk to them about the IEP and bring their ideas or comments to the meeting.