



NASET Q & A Corner

Issue #5

Questions and Answers About Transition Services from School Age to Adult Life

What are Transition Services?

Transitional services are a coordinated set of activities monitored by the school that are designed to prepare the student for positive experiences in adult life. According to IDEA 2004:

(a) Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

(1) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation

(2) Is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences and interests; and includes:

- (i)** Instruction
- (ii)** Related services
- (iii)** Community experiences
- (iv)** The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives
- (v)** If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

(b) Transition services for students with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(34))

Who is Entitled to Transition Services?

As part of the student's Transitional IEP, secondary education students with disabilities, ages 15 through 21, are eligible to receive transition services. This transitional process could be initiated earlier for students younger than age 15, who are considered to be at risk of dropping out of school. Cultural and linguistic backgrounds of disabled students must be taken into consideration when delivering transitional services. While guidelines are provided in Federal legislation, there may be some variation in the start of these services in some states.

What areas are Included under Transitional Services?

These activities may include:

1) Occupational/Vocational Education

Participation in occupational education programs can provide important experiences and specific vocational training.

2) Post Secondary/Continuing Education

Starting in junior high school, the student's IEP should include educational goals which prepare him/her for further education or vocational training.

3) Legal/Advocacy

Advocacy is speaking up for oneself and working with others to make systems work for the individual. People with disabilities have the right to an opportunity for working, living, and socializing in the community.

4) Transportation/Travel Training

The ability to use transportation options is crucial for independence. Inability to use transportation, or the lack of accessible transportation can seriously limit social and work opportunities.

5) Financial/Income

Planning in advance is the best way to avoid difficulty at a latter time. The school district may be able to provide information on how to get assistance pertaining to financial matters.

6) Personal Independence/Residential

Independence is about self-determination. An individual with disabilities can be independent while living with family or friends. He/she may even choose to live alone and have support staff to assist him/her.

7) Medical/Health

Maintaining good health allows one to focus on life activities and goals that have been set have set. Specific areas include the following: Medication Ongoing medical care Fitness and nutrition Insurance Medicaid/Medicare Management of personal assistance.

8) Employment

It is important for one to consider all the work experience options when selecting a career. Specific areas include the following: Competitive employment Enclave Job seeking skills Job coach Job related social skills Supported employment Sheltered work Employer support Volunteering.

9) Recreation/Leisure

Everyone needs a break from work and school. Having fun is an important way to get mental and physical exercise. It is also a good way to meet people and to make new friends. Specific areas include the following: Community recreation activities Leisure time activities Special interest areas Explore hobbies.

10) Assistive Technology

Devices that play an important part in the lives of individuals with disabilities and the thousands of available types of technology available.

11) Social and Sexual Issues

Today, because of the work of advocates and people with disabilities over the past half-century, American society is acknowledging that those with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens to contribute to and benefit from our society. This includes the right to education, employment, self-determination, and independence. We are also coming to recognize, albeit more slowly, that persons with disabilities have the right to experience and fulfill an important aspect of their individuality, namely, their social life and sexuality.

12) Self Determination

What it means and how to help the student develop self determination is the topic of this section. One of the most significant concepts to emerge in the last few decades is the awareness of the importance of self-determination in the life of an individual with a disability. For too long, professionals made decisions for people with disabilities with little input from the individual or parent/guardians. While these decisions were motivated by good intentions, they may have overlooked the desires, hopes, and aspirations that remained hidden within the person with disabilities. As our society has become more sensitive to the needs and rights of the disabled, we have moved to the concept of self-determination as a crucial element in the design of a life plan.

What is the District's Role in Transition Services?

Districts are required to develop a strategic plan for incorporating transition services within the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. They will need to implement transition planning and services. The Eligibility Committee will need to identify post-school outcomes for the student and will need to include activities in the transitional IEP that prepares the participation in adult community.

The intent of transition process provided by the district is to enable the student with a disability to live, work, and continue to learn in the community with supports if necessary as adults. The process of developing transition plans involves the following:

- Active student participation
- Active family member's participation

- Active community service agency's participation
- Active participation by school district personnel

A documented, sequential transitional process should include services that are provided for students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, a focused plan that is measured in terms of the student's ability to successfully achieve in the transition to adult life, and timely support and services that are agreed upon in the Individualized Transition Education Program (ITEP) by the parent/guardian and his or her student.

What is an Individualized Transition Education Program (ITEP)?

The TEP or ITEP is that part of a student's IEP that deals with Transition Service goals and experiences. The ITEP should include long-term adult outcomes from which annual goals and objectives are defined. Transition services should prepare the student to pursue his/her desired long-term adult goals through a variety of activities including:

- instruction
- community experiences
- development of employment
- post-school adult living objectives
- activities of daily living
- functional vocational evaluation

The following should be addressed in the ITEP:

******A statement of transition services should be responsive to the student's preferences, interests and needs. The beginning date for the service should be provided.

******Annual goals and objectives should include the following 10 areas:

- education i.e. college
- legal/advocacy i.e. guardianship
- independence/residential i.e. private residence vs. group home
- recreation/leisure i.e. joining sports activities
- financial/income i.e. banking and checking accounts
- medical/health i.e. health insurance, physician selection
- employment i.e. sheltered workshop vs. competitive employment
- transportation i.e. public vs. private
- post-secondary/continuing education i.e. college vs. vocational training
- other support needs. i.e. clergy, fraternal organizations

******Long-term adult outcomes in the IEP should include statements on the student regarding his/her performance in employment, post-secondary education, and community living.

******A coordinated set of activities must be included on the ITEP. They must demonstrate the use of various strategies, including community experiences, adult living objectives, instruction. If one of these activities is not included in the IEP in a particular year, then the IEP must explain why that activity is not reflected in any part of the student's program. Activities of daily living and functional vocational evaluation activities should also be included.

Under existing regulations, the committee on special education must notify the parent/guardian when an initial evaluation, review or reevaluation is being conducted.

What should the Student and Family Participation be in the Transition Process?

Listed below are steps that the family can take to assist in the transitional process:

- Explore their community for useful community resources
- Discuss transition options with other families
- Provide peer support to other parent/guardians
- Seek out information about occupational, educational, and living options
- Work along with the school finding ways to increase their student's academic, career, and personal independence skills
- Set achievable goals for their student
- Help their student develop the ability to communicate his/her needs, preferences, and interests to school staff, and other professionals
- Observe the kinds of things their student can do independently and the areas in which he/she may need assistance
- Participate actively in meetings with the school and other professionals
- Make sure they plan and prepare well in advance for their student's future financial, medical, and housing resource needs, as appropriate by: (a) assisting with application for Social Security Disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits; (b) developing a will; (c) determining guardianship; (d) applying for financial aid for post-secondary education or training
- Help their student obtain key identification documents, as a social security card, driver's license or non-driver identification card
- Help their student develop independent decision-making and communication skills
- Help their student explore options, set realistic goals for the future
- Enhance their student's positive self-esteem and assist him/her to develop independence, including self-reliance, self-advocacy, and self-management skills
- Use actual home-life opportunities to teach their student daily living skills: e.g., banking, shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry
- Promote good money management, budgeting, and savings
- Encourage their student to become aware of the world of work, such as by talking with neighbors
- Helping their student to locate and obtain a part-time job
- Reinforce work-related behaviors at home (grooming, etiquette, following directions, completing chores, etc.)
- Provide opportunities for leisure time activities i.e. sports, daily exercise, or hobbies
- Encourage their student to participate in social activities with peers
- Teach their student how to utilize community-based resources (library, recreation, transportation, stores, etc.)
- Work actively with their Eligibility Committee to make sure the plan is successful
- Stay in close contact with their student's teachers.

What is a Vocational Assessment?

A vocational assessment is the responsibility of the districts special education program. They begin by assessing referrals for special education services and continue throughout subsequent annual reviews. The planning of transitional services includes the IEP Committee's development of transitional employment goals and objectives based on the student's needs, preferences and interests. These will be identified through the student centered vocational assessment process.

A good vocational assessment should include the collection and analysis of information about the student's vocational aptitudes, skills, expressed interests, and occupational exploration history (volunteer experiences, part-time or summer employment, club activities). The collection of this information should also take into account the student's language, culture and family.

A Level I vocational assessment is administered at the beginning of the student's transitional process and is based on the student's abilities, expressed interests and needs. This Level I assessment may include the review of existing school information and the conduct of informal interviews. A Level II vocational assessment usually includes the administration of one or more formal vocational evaluations. A Level III vocational assessment usually involves the analyses of the student's success in a real or simulated work setting. This is usually reported by a job coach, employer or vocational evaluator. The transitional process should not be used to limit student's educational or career aspirations.

Instead, it allows districts to provide opportunities at an earlier age.

The Level I takes a look at the student from a vocational perspective. A trained vocational evaluator or knowledgeable special education teacher should be designated to collect the Level I assessment data. The information gathered for analyses should include existing information from:

- cumulative records
- student interviews
- parent/guardian/guardian, and teachers interviews
- special education eligibility data
- a review of the student's aptitudes
- achievements
- interests
- behaviors
- occupational exploration activities.

The informal student interview involved in a Level I assessment should consider the student's vocational interest, interpersonal relationship skills, and adaptive behavior.

A Level II assessment follows and is based upon the analyses obtained from the Level I assessment. This may be recommended by the IEP Committee at any time to determine the level of a student's vocational skills, aptitudes, and interests but not before the age of 12. The same knowledgeable staff members involved in prior assessments should be used. Collected data should include:

- writing
- learning styles

- interest inventory
- motor (dexterity, speed, tool use, strength, coordination)
- spatial discrimination
- verbal reading
- perception (visual/auditory/tactile)
- speaking numerical (Measurement, money skills)
- comprehension (task learning problem solving)
- attention (staying on task)

A Level III vocational assessment is a comprehensive vocational evaluation that focuses on real or simulated work experiences. This assessment is the basis for vocational counseling. Unlike a Level I and Level II assessment, a trained vocational evaluator should administer or supervise this level of assessment. Level III assessment options include:

- Vocational evaluations including aptitudes and interests which are compared to job performance to predict vocational success in specific areas. Work samples must be valid and reliable.
- Situational Vocational Assessments which occur in real work settings. This on-the-job assessment considers what has been learned and how.
- Work Study Assessments are progress reports from supervisors or mentors that provide information on the student's job performance. A standard observational checklist may be utilized.

If the student plans a postsecondary educational program, he/she may benefit from two types of assessments:

1.) General Assessments of Post-secondary Education Skills are necessary to determine the student's academic skills, critical thinking skills, requirements for reasonable accommodations, social behaviors, interpersonal skills, self-advocacy and self-determination skills, learning strategies, time management or organizational skills. This information is usually obtained consultation with peers or teachers, or a self-evaluation.

2.) Assessments Specific to Field of Study or Setting-are necessary to assess the student's needs in relation to daily living skills that may be experienced in a classroom setting or college campus. The parent/guardian may need to identify additional skills that his or her student must plan for to be an effective member of a postsecondary educational setting including:

- dormitory living vs. commuting
- lab work
- large lecture vs. seminar courses

The parent/guardian may wish to visit campuses that provide supportive services for students with disabilities. Sources of information regarding colleges that provide these services can be obtained in a local library or bookstore.

In order to involve the expertise of community based non school personnel in the transitional planning process the matter of confidentiality must be addressed. Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) AKA, Buckley Amendment, the parent/guardian's rights to confidentiality must be maintained. The parent/guardian may need to sign releases to get written

consent during the transition process to benefit from the resources available to him or her in the community. This does not commit the parent/guardian or the student to a specific service if the parent/guardian(s) later feel he or she does not want or need them. Have the parent/guardian ask the district about the rules of confidentiality regarding the release of information, the use of information by community agencies and the storage of information once it is released by the district.

What Concerns should the Parent/guardians be Aware of if Their Student will be Entering a Work Situation After Aging Out?

The student who will be facing an employment situation after aging out will be facing transition from school to work in the near future with increasingly difficult barriers. Two specific problems currently facing students are those who serve them may lack effective, community-based transition programs from school-to-work and secondly not have the experiences of a tested coordinated service. There is no process that enables education, rehabilitation, and business professionals in local communities to have effective services to meet the needs of these youths and employers who will help them coordinate the process of transition.

In the workplace, students with disabilities may also have more problems. Beyond High School they have problems learning new skills, and be less able to adapt to change. They may exhibit difficulties with interpersonal relationships in the workplace as well as difficulties in work habits, initiative, reliability are also deficient skills necessary in the work force. Employers today need self sufficient people who can think for themselves, people who can show initiative. Is the student a self starter who can fend for himself or is he/she dependent on others to complete a task?

What are the Different Types of Work Situations Available to Students with Disabilities?

When speaking to students about work situations you can inform them of the following:

Option I-Competitive Employment

This road to employment involves competing with other people to get and keep a job. This may sound scary, but it's how most people get their jobs, including the family and service providers. Being employed competitively means that you are working in a regular work setting, alongside coworkers who aren't mental health clients, and you're working for an hourly wage, usually at or above minimum wage.

Doing it on the own means that you conduct the own job search using newspaper Want Ads, asking people you know if there are openings where they work, or looking for Help Wanted signs at local businesses. You handle problems at the job on the own, or by discussing them later with the friends, family, or service providers. The manager judges how good of a job you are doing, and tells you what you are doing right and wrong. Both you and the boss decide how long you keep the job.

Option II- Supported Employment

This road to employment also involves getting competitive employment (a job that is open to any applicant). But you don't do it entirely on the own. Supported employment helps individuals with any type or degree of disability look for, get, and keep a job. A service provider (also called an employment specialist or placement specialist) helps you decide what you'd like to do and then helps you find that job. If you need special training or support, that person provides it after you get the job (sometimes the employer does this instead). The job you get is a competitive job, as described above.

You work in places and positions that match the preferences and abilities. Supported employment will help you every step of the way in deciding what you want to do, how to deal with any problems you encounter, and whether to tell the boss and coworkers about the mental health difficulties. You also receive help deciding how to coordinate working with receiving social security disability benefits. This is especially important if you decide you want to work, but you still want to continue to receive the benefits. Also, with supported employment, the assistance you receive has no time limit. You can continue to have help available after you've been on the job for a while, or if you decide to look for a better job while still holding the old one.

Option III: Transitional employment

On this road, you get the assistance of an employment specialist and you work in a real job setting for mini-mum wage or above. But the job you hold is temporary and does not belong to you. It is called a transitional placement, and it belongs to the service delivery agency that helps you. You work at this job for a period of time (usually 6 months) and then move on to another transitional placement or perhaps to competitive employment. You usually have fewer choices about what kinds of work you do in transitional placements since they are designed to give you experience, not to be the permanent job. If you want to choose the kind of work that you do in a job that you can keep as long as you want, transitional employment is not for you.

Option IV: Sheltered employment

This is a very different road, and one you should take with caution. On this road, you work in a sheltered workshop, where the coworkers all have disabilities and you make less than minimum wage. Often, you do a small part of a larger job, called "piece work," and you are paid according to how much work you finish, not according to an hourly wage.

Most sheltered workshops are run by social service agencies, and little or no assistance is offered to help you get a better job after you've done sheltered work. On the other hand, you can receive a lot of help from staff inside the workshop whenever you have difficulty. Most people don't make much money in a sheltered workshop, so their benefits are not affected. However, sheltered workshops are not the only way to work and keep the benefits. You can keep the SSI and SSDI checks on the supported employment road, too.

What Should a Parent/guardian or Student with a Disability Consider with Post-Secondary Education?

- 1.) What are admission requirements?
- 2.) What is the grade point average? ACT? SAT?
- 3.) Are there special accommodations for the student to take entrance exams?
- 4.) Do they have special incentive programs?
- 5.) Is there a disabled student service office on campus?
- 6.) Does it have a full-time person there or is it part-time?
- 7.) What kind of documentation is required to verify disabilities?
- 8.) Is there a disabled student organization on campus? How to contact them?
- 9.) How are the faculty informed of the necessary accommodations if needed?
- 10.) Is tutoring available? Is it individualized or group? Is there a cost involved?
- 11.) Are note takers and readers available? Is there a cost involved? How are they trained?
- 12.) Is it possible to arrange for tape recorder classes, computers, untimed testing, test readers?
- 13.) Is it possible to relocate classes to more accessible sites?
- 14.) What is the college's policy regarding course substitutes or waiver of curriculum requirements?

The parent/guardian will need to work closely with his or her student to prepare them for post secondary education. It is important that the parent/guardian investigate several college programs to find a good fit for his or her student.

Parent/guardians, Counselors, Teachers and students with disabilities may use the following as a reminder of helpful skills and necessary steps to take as a high school student with a learning disability and begin to make the transition to college. Insure that the psychological testing is up to date.

Many students with disabilities will look towards vocational and second year colleges close to home. The parent/guardian, student and his or her teachers may wish to use the following helpful hints as the begin the transition to college.

When the student is accepted into a post-secondary school, responsibilities that he/she needs to take in order to become successful is to learn skills to communicate their needs to their friends, to their instructors, to the clerical and clinical staff in their school.

Some basic clues to relationships with instructors and professors are:

- They are a key part of the education.
- They are paid to teach you.
- Like you they will expect to be treated with respect.
- Instructors expect you to be an adult.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Accept responsibility for mistakes you make
- Don't think you can fool the professor. It doesn't work; sooner or later you will get caught. Make up the own mind about a teacher. Some instructors are good for you but not for others.
- Get to know the instructor first-hand. Talk to them. They are also human. Sometimes they look intimidating but don't judge a book by its cover. The instructor may be a real nice person and wants to help you succeed.
- Arriving early for class is a good habit. You can relax and speak to the instructor or classmates or just sit and review notes.
- Always be ready with paper, pencils and any reading materials needed for that particular class. Being prepared makes you feel good and shows commitment on the part.
- It would be a good idea if you sit in the front of the class, close to the professor and to the blackboard. If you are a distance from the front of the room, you may have a tendency to daydream. This will only get you into trouble.
- Remain focused, it can be hard, but if you keep doing it things will come easier and in the long run everyone will be happy and you will be learning the materials and text to help you succeed in life.
- Always ask questions, participate in class, but don't interrupt the lesson, wait for the professor to stop and then raise the hand. Also, if you do not understand him, make him repeat himself. If you do not understand the lesson, speak to the professor after class. This way he gets to know you and can feel the interest in his class. Don't be adverse to criticism. That is another way of learning, it is not a personal insult. It is the teacher's job to correct you.
- Submit the work as you would to an employer.
- Be proud of the work. Do not be discouraged if the work needs revision, the teacher will know you are trying.
- If you are having problems with a particular subject or need answers and want some privacy with the teacher, the best rule is to set up a meeting. Keep the appointment. Be there early or at least on time. It is common courtesy. If you must cancel, do it as early as you possibly can and only if you have no choice.
- The best way is to leave a phone message or note taped on the mailbox for door. Give the teacher an idea of what the meeting is about. If you do this, he will probably have the answer to most of the questions. Remember instructors are real people and are there to help you.

Here are the most common questions a student should ask him or herself at this time:

- Why do you want college?
- How do the parent/guardians feel about you going to college?
- What would you like to major in?
- What is the learning disability? Know how it affects you.
- What are the weaknesses?

- What things are easy for you to learn?
- What things are difficult for you to learn?
- What helped you learn in the past?
- What help do you need from our program to make it in college?
- Will you spend extra exam time and effort to be successful in college?