

## Transition Planning That Works

*A Practical, Ready-to-Implement Guide for Educators and Teams*

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### Purpose and Legal Requirement

Transition planning is a required part of the IEP process that prepares students for life beyond high school. Under IDEA, transition services must be in place no later than the first IEP in effect when the student turns 16 (age 14 in many states) and must be reviewed and updated annually.

Effective transition planning provides a roadmap for postsecondary education, employment, independent living, and self-advocacy.

This worksheet offers a step-by-step structure to ensure every transition plan is actionable, student-centered, and aligned with the student's goals and abilities.

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### Transition Planning Timeline

Age	Transition Planning Focus
12–13	Begin informal career interest inventories and life skills assessments
14	Initiate formal transition planning; develop measurable postsecondary goals
15–16	Expand career exploration, connect with community resources, and introduce self-advocacy instruction
17	Strengthen agency connections; review decision-making options and transfer of rights
18–21	Implement final transition services, confirm post-school supports, and coordinate handoff to adult service agencies

## **Core Components of a Strong Transition Plan**

### ***Postsecondary Education & Training***

- Identify preferred education or training programs (college, trade school, cert).
- Link current coursework and accommodations to postsecondary requirements.
- Introduce student to disability services at target institutions.

### ***Employment & Career Development***

- Identify career interests through assessments and experiences.
- Offer job shadowing, internships, or work-based learning opportunities.
- Develop workplace readiness skills (resume, interview practice).

### ***Independent Living Skills***

- Teach budgeting, meal preparation, and personal organization.
- Provide transportation training and community navigation skills.
- Connect with housing support services as needed.

### ***Self-Advocacy & Social Skills***

- Support students in leading portions of their IEP meetings.
- Teach students how to explain their accommodations to others.
- Facilitate practice in requesting help and resolving conflicts.

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## **Annual Transition Planning Checklist**

- Postsecondary goals are updated and measurable.
- Transition services align with goals in education, employment, and independent living.
- Student has completed at least one interest or career assessment this year.

- Family has been provided with information on relevant adult services.
- Community/agency connections are documented in the IEP.
- Student is actively participating in planning discussions.

## **Sample Transition Goals and Service Linkages**

### *Example 1: Postsecondary Education Goal*

**Goal:** Student will enroll in a two-year culinary arts program within one year of graduation.

**Service Linkages:** Arrange campus visit; connect student with disability services office; enroll in high school culinary electives.

### *Example 2: Employment Goal*

**Goal:** Student will secure part-time employment in a retail setting by the end of senior year.

**Service Linkages:** Partner with local workforce board; provide job coaching; offer mock interview practice.

### *Example 3: Independent Living Goal*

**Goal:** Student will live in supported housing within two years of graduation.

**Service Linkages:** Apply for housing assistance; teach budgeting; connect to local independent living center.

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## **Common Community and Agency Connections**

- **State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:** Job training, placement, & career counseling.
- **Centers for Independent Living:** Skills training, housing assistance, advocacy.

- **Social Security Administration:** SSI and SSDI benefits.
  - **College Disability Services:** Postsecondary accommodations and support.
  - **Medicaid Waiver Programs:** Healthcare and personal assistance supports.
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### Student Conversation Starters

- *What kind of job would you like to have after high school?*
- *Where do you want to live, and what support might you need?*
- *What skills do you want to get better at before leaving high school?*
- *What classes or activities do you most enjoy right now?*
- *Who do you trust to help you make decisions about your future?*

### Action Starter:

- Choose one student aged 14 or older and review their transition plan. Identify one area that could be more specific or better aligned with their goals.
- Schedule a brief meeting with the student to discuss one conversation starter question from this worksheet.
- Identify one new community partner to invite into the transition planning process.