



POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION

By Ivette Sarkar

How time flies! It seems like yesterday when we sent our children off to kindergarten, and now we are approaching high school and transition planning. For parents/guardians and teachers, it's a time to reflect on the progress, growth and challenges our children/students have made through the years. We ask ourselves which career will best fit their talents and interests.

The objective of this newsletter is to describe in detail how a successful postsecondary transition plan works. Resources and information for students, parents and educators are included to assist in preparing and implementing an effective plan.

Students are the heart of their transition plan. Their participation and input, if possible, is critical. For educators, time is of the essence. It won't be long before these students graduate. There is much preparation, planning, and collaboration that needs to be done in working on academic and functional life IEP goals.

The Special Education Agency (SEA), the Local Educational Agency (LEA), and the Vocational Rehabilitation program (VR), and in some cases, the local county Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD), work together with parents to support and guide students through the transition process in order to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Transition Services

"Transition Services" are a coordinated set of activities for a student or youth with a disability designed within a results-oriented process that facilitates the child's movement from school to post-school activities. To see the entire definition, go to the following link: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/increasimg-postsecondary-opportunities-and-success-09-17-2019.pdf> (See Pg. 2)

Starting at the age of 14, the IEP must include independent living skills, when assessment data supports the need; and appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to integrated employment in a competitive environment.



"Transition services" are defined to include other post-school adult living objectives. When assessment data supports a need, a functional vocational evaluation is required. Transition services shall be provided by individuals who have the competencies, experiences, and training required to meet the individual student's transition service needs.



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Individuals coordinating transition shall either obtain the Transition to Work endorsement, or possess the skills and knowledge to:

- Facilitate a planning process among multiple agencies, students and families to support a student's secondary transition process;
- Plan for the collection, sharing and utilization of student's transition data that is relevant to the student's post-school outcomes, environment and support needs;
- Communicate a student's individual transition plan to the student, family, educators and agencies;
- Coordinate the implementation of research based practices that lead to effective postsecondary transition services and outcomes;
- Utilize methods to engage students and families in the secondary transition process;
- Assist in the coordination of the referral process from school to adult services systems;
- Link appropriate course of study and instruction strategies to secondary transition related goals; and
- Create strategies that support the career development pathways of students with disabilities leading to career and college readiness.

Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Operational-Standards-and-Guidance>

The purpose of transition services is to meet the students' unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. Parents/guardians should begin researching and planning for transition to adult life.

The following questions will help you to be prepared for IEP transition meetings:

1. Which high school (HS) will your child attend?
2. Does the HS offer technical training and, if so, in what areas? How long are the programs, 2 or 3 years?
3. When is the enrollment to sign up? Is there a waiting list?
4. Does the HS have a relationship with an outside vocational school and what are the course offerings?
5. Does the school district have a dual or concurrent relationship with a community college or university?
6. Are Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or College Credit Plus courses offered at the HS or off school campus?
7. What personal and independent life skills must be developed at home and in the community?



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If postsecondary education is the primary goal, then the transition team needs to know the necessary coursework to take in HS that meets college admission requirements. While colleges will support an accommodation plan, they do not provide IEP services. For this reason, students need to become more independent and self-directed, if the goal is college.

Once the student turns 14 years old, the IEP team will meet to review data, progress reports, and academic and/or functional life goals. They will collaborate with outside agencies and provide supports, if necessary, to develop social, emotional, mental health, behavioral, and social skills.

It is recommended that the school team connect the student and family, when appropriate, with outside support agencies such as the Center for the Deaf and Blind, Ohio Center on Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), Autism Society of Ohio, Down Syndrome Association, and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). These and other support agencies will be of value post-graduation.

The school's IEP transition team will explore the student's interests through age appropriate career assessments and determine if other services and supports are needed, such as, mobility and assistive technology. The school team will network with appropriate agencies to develop necessary skills that will lead to postsecondary education or competitive employment. The transition plan will focus on all

areas that will support the student before and after graduation.

For students that may require supported employment, the school district and parent/guardian should work closely with the local County Board of DD transition coordinator in order to discover available options and necessary skills to help the student thrive in the work place.

Parents/guardians also need to investigate guardianship, Social Security Income (SSI), housing, and health care.

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD) reports that the value of a work experience, whether paid or unpaid work, helps students acquire jobs at higher wages after they graduate. It also promotes students who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings to be competitively employed more than students who have not participated in such activities. To learn more, please refer to: www.ncwd-youth.info.

Parents/guardians should inquire as to what types of community-based work experiences are offered whether internships, mentorships, apprenticeships, paid employment, career pathways, or self-employment.

If parents/guardians are interested in their child taking college courses while in high school as part of the transition plan, it may be funded by IDEA Part B funds, consistent with applicable state law and the student's entitlement to FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education).



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A Transition Guide from Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services:
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ose/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-2017.pdf>

Mentorship website:
www.businessdictionary.com/definition/mentoring.html

Career Pathways website:
www.ncpn.info/2016-downloads/cp-jointletterfinal-4-22-2016.pdf

College Credit Plus:
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-Education-Options/College-Credit-Plus>

Summary of Performance (SOP) “is required for each student with an IEP whose eligibility for services under IDEA terminates due to graduation from secondary school with a regular high school diploma or due to exceeding the age of eligibility for FAPE under State law.”

This includes recommendations for how to assist the student in meeting their postsecondary goals and allows for access to education and employment.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-2017.pdf> (Pg. 3)

Once students receive their high school diploma, the school district is no longer able to support IEP goals. In some cases, “Social Graduation” may be an option. This occurs when a student is on track to graduate, due to completing all required coursework and exams, but needs more time to work on IEP independent life skills and transition to

college or career goals. This allows students to walk the stage proudly with their classmates and defer receiving diplomas. If students participate in the social graduation option and want to terminate IEP services, they will be eligible to receive their deferred diploma. It is important that students be active participants and informed of these options.

Special education students may receive IEP services and supports until their 22nd birthday.

Age of Majority: Parents/guardians must be informed by the IEP team that their parental rights transfer to the student at the age of majority, which in Ohio is 18 years old, unless the child has been determined incompetent under state law. It is important for parents/guardians to understand that all decisions related to medical, financial, educational, employment and independent living will be the exclusive and legal right of the student. It is their decision who to include or exclude (including family). Options to consider before they turn 18 are:

- Power of Attorney or supported decision making arrangements
- Trust
- Conservatorship
- Guardianship

Additional information can be found at the following websites:

www.supporteddecisionmaking.org

www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/age-of-majority-parentguide



Personal Testimonial from Ivette Sarkar, OCECD Information Specialist/Trainer

I had an opportunity to witness a student's transformation during the transition process. What made this transition successful was that the school district and family united as the process evolved. The district hired an Autism Coach (long term) to provide personalized 1:1 support on IEP and transition goals, after school and on weekends. Other local agencies like Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), the County Board of DD, the Educational Service Center (ESC), and the local State Support Team (SST) also participated.

Based on this positive collaboration, the student excelled at school, actively participated in all educational planning and employment related meetings and willingly explored new interests and adventures (previously outside his comfort zone). In fact, his first boating and fishing adventure resulted in a 28-inch catch, a state-record!



I asked him if his active participation in school IEP meetings helped him feel more in control of his goals and future. He responded that because meetings can be stressful and sometimes overwhelming, it is helpful when school personnel guides and prepares students in advance by providing useful information like attendees, the meetings purpose, and any questions the student may need to answer.

I also asked him what have been the most valuable skills he learned in high school. He answered that arriving on time for school and work, plus improving communication and problem-solving skills.

After seeing how this young man evolved, I am convinced that to be truly effective, this process must be a rigorous group effort where the student is at the center and actively engaged.

Model Vocational School Program Example

I have been impressed and inspired by a local vocational school program. Their high standards, best practices and student-centered model allows the student to evolve at their own pace, while being continually supported by a staff of compassionate and dedicated professionals.

The process begins with age appropriate transition assessments. A uniquely tailored plan is developed, taking into consideration the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths, as well as their aptitudes and talents. Students have the opportunity



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to experience several job interests with many different businesses.

There are several schools in the network that allow the student to benefit from trainings and provide access to enrollment. Students have the choice of half or full day programs. The team takes every student's success to heart and continually expose students to new areas of career interests. A team of experts continually support the functional and academic IEP goals, while the students continue to develop their career interests.



Further challenges regarding transition to career planning exist in both urban and rural communities. There is no perfect system. Obstacles, while not necessarily insurmountable, exist in many forms and settings. Urban areas are rich in resources. Yet, due to a higher number of special education students, and a lack of staff and funding, this environment creates challenges for each student to receive a rigorous and individualized transition plan. That is why parents/guardians must be well informed and prepared.

In rural areas, similar outcomes may occur. While there may be fewer special education students, they have less access to resources. Therefore, students may be trained in jobs they have no interest in doing. OCECD's staff collaborates with both urban and rural community IEP transition teams to

collaborate together and become more creative in building and developing business and professional connections. These collaborative efforts help all students, regardless of where they reside, to have the opportunity to work in a career that nurtures their talents and maintains their interest.

In conclusion, for transition planning to be successful, it must be collaborative and rigorous. The plan must be student-centered and incorporate the student's career and life goals.

Besides working on self-advocacy goals, personal financial planning, safety and mobility, students also are taught when it is appropriate to share information related to their disability, social security number, and other personally identifiable information.



OCECD developed a board game, *It's My Turn*, to increase students' knowledge about changing from student to adult learner, worker and citizen. Students ages 14 - 21 who are in a secondary educational setting will benefit from this game. The game can be played by up to four students and a facilitator can be added to read cards, to assist discussion about concepts and to foster role play. However, the facilitator is not required.

Cost is \$27.95, includes shipping and handling. To order, contact us directly at 1-740-382-5452, or order online at www.ocecd.org.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ohio Means Jobs is a wonderful resource for students and parents. There one can explore, plan, fund and find career information. Students can click on the cardinal icon with the graduation hat and that will help navigate your options. The career interest assessments chart the students' results in the 16 different career clusters in order of interest. While answering questions the student may find other areas of potential interest to research and explore. Although these assessments are not a substitute for the age appropriate assessments initiated by the school district, they provide additional information for the IEP team to consider. Ohio Means Jobs website: <https://jobseeker.k-12.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/seeker.asp>
[X](#)

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) serves all 88 Ohio counties. They have a network of employer partnerships and college/ university connections throughout the state. They offer a myriad of services and supports for students with disabilities which includes, but is not limited to, career exploration and counseling, resume and interview preparation, internships and permanent employment, mobility orientation and navigation, and assistive technology. School Districts work together with OOD to implement the postsecondary transition plans for students. OOD website: <https://ood.ohio.gov/>

Milestones Autism Resources

provides autism strategies for life, offering guidance to individuals to get them through the day and help them plan for the future.

Milestones understands the challenges and needs of the autism community because they live it every day. They improve lives through education and evidence-based strategies for school, home, community, and at work.

Milestones website: <http://milestones.org>

Autism Personal Coach (APC) -

So often teens and adults with Autism struggle with anxiety and as a result, don't have success in their lives. Autism Personal Coach is a unique service that helps individuals with Autism by working on meaningful, individualized goals in the setting in which they will be used, so they can become more independent and successful. APC website:

<http://autismpersonalcoach.wordpress.com>

Ohio Association of County Boards of DD (OACB)

provides advocacy, communications, professional development, and technical assistance to all 88 of Ohio's county boards of developmental disabilities. A county board of DD may provide or arrange for service and support administration, early childhood services, educational services supported living and other residential services, family support services, job training and employment services, among others. OACB website:

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



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State Support Teams of Ohio (SSTs) are local and regional Ohio educators with a history in school improvement, preschool and special education. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) coordinates 16 regional teams that cover Ohio and can respond to your call today. There is no cost to use their services. To locate a local SST, visit: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/District-and-School-Continuous-Improvement/State-Support-Teams>

Wrightslaw - Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys go to Wrightslaw for accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities. Begin your search in the Advocacy Libraries and Law Libraries. Find thousands of articles, cases, and resources about dozens of topics at: <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>



For further information including statistics, please reference the following websites:

Ohio Department of Education – Study <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Special-Education-Data-and-Funding/Ohio-Longitudinal-Transition-Study-OLTS>

National Center for Educational Statistics
<http://nces.ed.gov/>

United States Department of Education
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/increasing-postsecondary-opportunities-and-success-09-17-2019.pdf>

Ohio Department of Education
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Secondary-Transition-and-Workforce-Development>

Helpful websites to navigate financial aid:

Federal Student Aid
<https://studentaid.ed.gov>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid
<https://fafsa.ed.gov/help.htm>

Websites that help navigate choosing college:

Federal Student Aid: College/Career
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools>

U.S. Department of Education: College Scorecard
<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/supporting-your-teen.asp>



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PACER – Postsecondary Transition
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary/preparing-for-postsecondary.asp>

PACER – Assistive Technology for Transition
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/assistive-technology/>

PACER – Independent and Community Living
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/independent-community-living/>

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) – It's My Turn & GPS Transition Training
<https://www.ocecd.org/TransitionItsMyTurn.aspx>

Ohio Department of Education
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Secondary-Transition-and-Workforce-Development>

Websites for Educators:

Ohio Department of Education – Secondary Transition for Students with Disabilities
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Secondary-Transition-and-Workforce-Development/Secondary-Transition-for-Students-with-Disabilitie>

Wrightslaw – Accommodations for College Students
<https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.college.accoms.brown.htm>

For additional information, go to our website at www.ocecd.org and download our publication, Postsecondary Transition.

Postsecondary Transition



Building the Future

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD)

We also offer a free training for parents and professionals on postsecondary transition. In this training, participants will gain an understanding of the importance of transition planning for youth with special needs. Discussion will focus on the requirements under IDEA 2004 for writing a transition plan, when the process should begin, timelines, and who is involved in writing the transition plan.

Please contact OCECD to schedule a training in your area.



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January – March 2020

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To remove your name from our mailing list, or if you have questions, please contact kellyb@ocecd.org or call 1-844-382-5452.

OCECD is the Ohio Parent Training and Information Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, Grant #H328M150052. The content of this newsletter and any documents cited herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

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