

Transition Goals in the IEP

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First, What IDEA Requires

Let's start by revisiting IDEA's provisions at §300.320(b) regarding what must be included in a student's IEP no later than when that student turns 16:

(b) **Transition services.** Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include—

(1) Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and

(2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

Breaking the provisions at §300.320(b) into their component parts is a useful way to see what needs to be included, transition-wise, in the student's IEP. For example, consider:

Postsecondary goals must be...

Appropriate, measurable

Postsecondary goals must also be based on...

Age-appropriate transition assessment

Transition assessment and what...?

Training, education, employment, independent living skills, where appropriate

Transition services include...

Courses of study

Transition services for a student as those that the student needs...

To assist the child in reaching those goals

What goals?

The postsecondary goals

The discussion below is intended to illuminate how these provisions are to be implemented in the real world, with real students.

NSTTAC's Checklist of Questions to Ask

NSTTAC is the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, an OSEP-funded project whose expertise is... obviously... secondary transition. As part of its work, NSTTAC has developed extensive training materials to help states collect data about the transition services they provide to youth with disabilities (called Indicator 13). Those materials are also useful for our purpose here, which is to look closely at the type of transition information to include in a student's IEP.

NSTTAC's materials include a checklist of questions to ask, which are adapted here for use by IEP teams as they plan a student's transition services and craft statements to include in the student's IEP.

- Is there a measurable postsecondary goal or goals for the student?
- Can the goal(s) be counted?
- Does the goal(s) occur after the student graduates from school?
- Are the postsecondary goals based on an age-appropriate transition assessment?
- Are there annual IEP goals that reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goal(s) or make progress toward meeting the goal(s)?

- Are there transition services (including courses of study) in the IEP that focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his or her movement from school to post-school?
- Do the transition services listed in the IEP relate to a type of instruction, related service, community experience, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives (and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills), and provision of a functional vocational evaluation?
- Are representatives of other agencies invited (with parent consent or the student's) to IEP meetings when transition services are being discussed that are likely to be provided or paid for by these other agencies?

NSTTAC also provides real-life examples that are as illuminating as they are helpful, especially since examples are included for three key domains of transition planning:

- education/training,
- employment, and
- independent living.

We'd like to share some of NSTTAC's examples with you. Again, we've adapted them a bit, to make them more appropriate for use by IEP teams, but all the credit goes to NSTTAC for this work. The material is cited as: National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2009). *Indicator 13 training materials*. Charlotte, NC: Author. You can find it online (and share it as widely as you like) at: <http://www.nsttac.org/content/nsttac-i-13-checklist>.

NSTTAC Example: Education/Training

Here's an example of a measurable postsecondary goal in the domain of ***education/training***.

- Upon completion of high school, John will enroll in courses at Ocean County Community College.

This goal meets NSTTAC's standard because of specific reasons:

- Participation in postsecondary education is the focus of this goal.
- Enrollment at a community college can be observed, as in John enrolls in courses or he does not.
- The expectation, or behavior, is explicit, since John enrolls at the community college or he does not. Enrollment at a community college occurs after graduation, and it is stated that this goal will occur after graduation.

NSTTAC also generously provides *nonexamples*. For the goal statement above:

Nonexample:

- Upon graduation, John will continue to learn about life skills and reading.

NSTTAC says that this statement does not meet the standard, because:

- Participation in learning is the focus of this goal, but no specific place or program is specified.
- The expectation for learning, or behavior, is not explicitly stated.

Helpful, eh? Also consider these two NSTTAC comments about the writing of education/training goals:

- There would likely be less specificity in the postsecondary goals articulated by younger students, than those in their last years of high school. John's goal could be made more specific by including a phrase such as "will enroll in the general Associates Degree program at...."
- It is not necessary to specify the student's major for the goal to be measurable. However, increased specificity in postsecondary goal statements (when the student articulates this information) can improve the relevance of services provided during high school.

If you'd like to see more examples (and nonexamples!) of postsecondary goals for education/training, you can find them at: <http://www.nsttac.org/content/nsttac-indicator-13-checklist-form-b-enhanced-professional-development>.

NSTTAC Example: Employment

Now let's look at an example of a measurable postsecondary goal in the domain of **employment**.

- John will work in an on-campus part-time job while in college.

This goal is well-crafted, because:

- Obtaining employment is the focus of the statement.
- Working part-time is an explicit outcome that can be observed.
- The phrase "while in college" indicates that the goal will occur after John has graduated from high school.

Would you like to see the *nonexample*? Here you go.

Nonexample:

- John will attend a job fair on the college campus.

Why doesn't this goal meet the standard and, so, is used here as a nonexample?

- While "attending a job fair" is measurable, this statement suggests an activity toward a postsecondary goal.
- This activity could occur while John is still in high school. (Thus, it's not a *postsecondary* goal.)

Find more examples and nonexamples of postsecondary goals in the domain of employment at:

<http://www.nsttac.org/content/nsttac-indicator-13-checklist-form-b-enhanced-professional-development>

NSTTAC Example: Independent Living

Now for an example of a measurable postsecondary goal in the domain of **independent living**.

- Upon completion of high school, Lissette will learn to use public transportation, including the public bus and uptown trolley.

This goal statement is acceptably crafted, because:

- Participation in independent living skill development, specifically community participation, is the focus of this goal.
- Use of the bus can be measured, as in Lissette performs the necessary activities or does not perform the activities.
- The expectation, or behavior, is explicit, as in Lissette performs the required activities or she does not.
- It is stated in this goal that the instruction will occur after graduation.

And the *nonexample*:

- Lissette will learn to use the bus system.

This goal is not acceptably crafted, because:

- The expectation for learning, or behavior, is not explicitly stated.
- It is not stated that the goal will occur after high school.

Find more such examples and nonexamples in the domain of independent living, at:

<http://www.nsttac.org/content/nsttac-indicator-13-checklist-form-b-enhanced-professional-development>

IEP Goals to Help the Student Achieve Postsecondary Goals

All right, so the IEP team (including the student) has crafted statements that describe the student's postsecondary goals—what he or she is going to do or achieve after leaving high school. These goals pertain to the domains of education/training, employment, and (as appropriate for the student's needs) independent living. Now it's time to write corresponding **IEP goals** that will reasonably enable the child to meet the postsecondary goals.

IEP Goals: Education/Training

Continuing with John as our example, remember that his postsecondary goal for education/training was: Upon completion of high school, John will enroll in courses at Ocean County Community College.

An appropriate IEP goal to help John achieve the postsecondary goal might be:

- Given Ocean County Community College information, John will demonstrate knowledge of the college's admission requirements by verbally describing these requirements and identifying admission deadlines with 90% accuracy by November of this year.

This annual goal meets standards, because:

- Participation in education is the primary focus of this objective.
- Learning about the college's admission requirements is a step that will help John meet his goal of attending Ocean County Community College.
- The criterion for meeting the goal is clearly stated ("...with 90% accuracy").

Now for the contrast of a *nonexample*:

- Given an Ocean County Community College Undergraduate Handbook, John will choose and participate in two intramural sports that interest him.

Are there problems with this statement? Yes, according to NSTTAC—two.

- The behavior of choosing and participating in two intramural sports is not considered a step in helping John reach his post-secondary goal of attending Ocean County Community College.
- This nonexample is also considered to be a short-term objective because the behavior described in this annual goal will not take a year for the student to accomplish.

IEP Goals: Employment

Good old John, again the example. Remember that John's postsecondary goal for employment was: John will work in an on-campus part-time job while in college.

An appropriate IEP goal to help John achieve this postsecondary employment goal might be:

- John will be able to report 3 possible occupations for part-time employment, based on the results of career assessments through career counseling with the guidance counselor.

This IEP goal is acceptably written, because the behavior of assessing job interest is a step in helping John determine jobs in which he would be most successful during college.

How about a *nonexample*?

- John will attend the annual job fair and participate in mock interviews with prospective employers.

This nonexample does not reach acceptable standards for goal-writing, because:

- While this is an appropriate activity in preparation for employment after high school, it is not relevant to John's postsecondary goal of working part-time on campus while attending the community college.
- This goal statement indicates an activity that John could complete, but does not clearly indicate what knowledge or skill will be developed.

IEP Goals: Independent Living

Now the example will relate to Lissette (John is quite relieved to get off the hot seat). Recall that Lissette's postsecondary goal in the domain of independent living was: Upon completion of high school, Lissette will learn to utilize public transportation, including the public bus and uptown trolley.

NSTTAC's example for an appropriate and corresponding IEP goal is:

- Given travel training situations, Lissette will demonstrate sitting quietly and refraining from talking to strangers while utilizing public transportation at least two times across three opportunities.

The reasons that this goal meets the standard and is acceptably written are:

- The annual goal describes a skill Lissette would need to have in her repertoire of skills in order to travel using public transportation.
- The annual goal is a skill that will be worked on during high school.

And, keeping with our pattern here (NSTTAC's, actually), here's the *non*example for contrast:

- Given several coins, Lissette will match the coin with its amount six out of eight times by November 3 of this year.

Here are the reasons why this serves as a nonexample of an IEP goal to help Lissette toward achieving her independent living goal:

- According to Lissette's present level of performance, Lissette already knows the value of coins.
- Therefore, it is not necessary to include this as a goal to help her meet her post-secondary goal of using public transportation.

Matching Transition Services to the Postsecondary Goals and the IEP Goals

You'll recall that transition services are determined by the combination of a student's stated postsecondary goals, corresponding IEP goals, and what he or she needs, support-wise, in order to move toward achieving those goals.

By definition, transition services can include:

- Instruction;
- Related services;
- Community experiences;
- The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation. [§300.43(a)(2)]

The IEP team's task is to identify and specify the transition services that a student will receive in order to support him or her in reaching the shorter-term IEP goals and the longer-term postsecondary goal. How does the IEP team do that? Let's look at some examples, again from NSTTAC.

Transition Services: Education/Training

Let's call John back to the hot seat. His education/training goal is: John will enroll at Ocean County Community College.

What transition services could be provided to support John in reaching that goal?

- Instruction related to word processing / keyboarding skills
- Tutoring (peer or teacher) in reading comprehension strategies
- Self-monitoring instruction related to on-task behavior
- Self-advocacy training

*Non*examples might include:

- Filling out an application
- Touring a community college campus
- Adapted physical education course

- Paid work
- Field trips to the grocery store
- Volunteer experiences at the local elementary school

Transition Services: Employment

Here's an interesting example from NSTTAC that looks at what transition services would be appropriate for a young adult named Jodi. Jodi's postsecondary goals for education/training and employment are:

- Jodi will enroll in courses (non-degree) at Gaston Community College.
- Jodi will attain a part-time position in a community retail environment independently.

What transition services does Jodi need to support her in reaching these two goals?

- Travel instruction
- Instruction related to hygiene
- Instruction related to functional math skills
- Personal banking instruction
- Community based instruction at Wal-Mart to introduce to retail employment skills
- Instruction related to social skills in school and work settings

What would qualify as a *nonexample*—in other words, a transition service that would not be appropriate support for Jody in reaching her postsecondary goals?

- Instruction related to janitorial skills
- Community-based instructional experiences in restaurant settings

Transition Services: Independent Living

Working with Lizette as our example this time, recall that her independent living goal reads: Upon completion of high school, Lissette will successfully utilize public transportation, including the public bus and uptown trolley.

Her IEP team decides that Lissette will need specific transition services to help her move toward achieving that goal after she completes high school. The services they specify are:

- Instruction on community safety skills
- Travel instruction
- Math instruction related to money usage
- Literacy instruction related to sight word identification
- Instruction related to community safety and self defense at the YMCA
- Math instruction related to telling time on a variety of watches and clocks

Nonexamples, on the other hand, might include such transition services as:

- Instruction related to life science
- Intelligence testing
- Job shadowing with school bus driver
- Participating in chorus

In Conclusion

Pshew. That was a lot of reading, wasn't it? Hopefully, NSTTAC's excellent work, adapted here, will help you when it comes time to help students plan for transition to life after high school and especially to write an IEP that will:

- capture the student's postsecondary goals in concrete, measurable terms;
- write corresponding IEP goals to support and prepare the student to achieve the postsecondary goals after leaving high school;
- reflect the IEP team's decisions about the transition services the student needs (including what the student will study while still in high school) in order to achieve the postsecondary goals.

Transition planning is complicated and involved. There are so many dimensions of adulthood to consider! That's why, for students with disabilities, planning ahead is critical. The more significant the disability is, the more imperative it is to prepare, plan, specify, investigate, coordinate, and support. Adulthood's coming.

NICHCY would like to express its deep appreciation to the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center for the thoroughness and insightfulness of the materials we've so freely used and adapted here. Great job, NSTTAC! Thanks.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities