

Transition Planning



It's important to include transition goals in the IEP. Adulthood's ahead!

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Transition planning is a gigantic topic and a very important one for youth with disabilities, their families, and IEP teams. NICHCY has devoted an entire section of its website to the subject, including articles written expressly for students themselves, school personnel, and parents.

IDEA's Exact Words

IDEA's provisions requiring transition statements in the IEP are found at §300.320(b) and read as follows:

(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. [§300.320(b)]

This means that the IEP team must develop measurable goals for the student that are focused on the postsecondary world and specify what transition services are needed to help the student reach those goals.

Defining "Transition Services"

Transition services are intended to help youth with disabilities make the transition from the world of secondary school to the world of adulthood. That said, it helps to know how IDEA *defines* transition services. You'll find the definition at §300.43, as follows:

§300.43 Transition services.

(a) **Transition services** means a coordinated set of activities for a child 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 child with a disability to facilitate the child'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 child's needs, taking into account the child'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; and

(v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

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

If you take a moment and think about what's listed in this definition, you'll see that it includes the domains of independent and adult living. The community... employment... adult services... daily living skills... vocational... postsecondary education. This definition clearly acknowledges that adulthood involves a wide range of

skills areas and activities, and that preparing a child with a disability to perform functionally across this spectrum of areas and activities may involve considerable planning, attention, and focused, coordinated services.

Note that word—**coordinated**. The services are to be planned as a group and are intended to drive toward a result—they should not be haphazard or scattershot activities, but coordinated with each other to achieve that outcome or result.

What result might that be? From a federal perspective, the result being sought can be found in the very first finding of Congress in IDEA, which refers to “our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.” [20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(1)] **Preparing children with disabilities to “lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible” is one of IDEA’s stated objectives.** [20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(5)(A)(ii)]

Involving the Student in Transition Planning

For the students themselves, the outcome or result sought via coordinated transition activities must be personally defined, taking into account a child’s interests, preferences, needs, and strengths. This is why **the public agency must invite the child with a disability to attend the IEP team meeting “if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the postsecondary goals for the child** and the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals under §300.320(b)” [§300.321(b)].

And if the student is not able to attend or doesn’t attend? Then, the public agency “must take other steps to ensure that the child’s preferences and interests are considered” [§300.321(b)].

Conclusion

It’s easy to see how planning ahead in the domains of adulthood, and developing goal statements and corresponding services for the student, can greatly assist a student in preparing for life after high school.