

Transition Planning/Services FAQ

Q. What is “Transition Services” and why is it important?

A. Transition services applies to the planning and skill develop that will help a student with disabilities be prepared for independent living, post-secondary education, and gainful employment once public education is over. Most of us often don’t consider how we learned many skills compared to those with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). Those with IDD need more explicit instruction in many functional life and employment skills in order to be successful. They also typically need more experience and better matching of skill strengths and accommodations for weaknesses than their peers.

Q. What is a “good” transition goal?

A. “Good” is whatever addresses the student’s needs in building skills that will lead to independent living, post-secondary education, and/or gainful employment. Self-advocacy and self-determination are the foundation pieces. Goals should focus on building these and related skills. Here are some guiding examples: [bad] “student will research what it takes to get into Stanford and write an essay”. While going to Stanford might be a great goal, the overall goal is vague and does not focus on transition skills. Essay writing is a great writing goal. But what about when the student has entrance interviews at the school? [good] “student will verbally demonstrate good interviewing skills, achieving 80% or better on a 1-5 scale rubric.” Or “student will advocate for at least 3 accommodations needed to be successful in (work, school, or living arrangements) in 3 out of 4 attempts.” The guiding principle here is that we focus on skills needed to be successful and not academic activities.

Q. How I can get other agencies involved at my school?

A. Vocational rehabilitation is a great place to start. They will be able to connect you with many other agencies willing to work with you. Connect with your district transition specialist or district special education department to get assistance with vocational rehabilitation. You can also invite agencies yourself to be part of a student’s IEP. However, please check with your district and the parents to make sure this support has the strength to last for an IEP year; we don’t want agencies to get overwhelmed or not understand commitments and then fizzle out.

Q. Does transition services start at 16 or 14?

A. Federal law states that a transition plan must be in place by the time the student turns 16. Therefore, if a student turns 16 in the middle of an IEP year and a transition plan was not already put in place, then an amendment must be done to include a transition plan. In the state of Utah, a transition plan must be in place once the student is 14; however, it does not specify that one must be in place by the student’s 14th birthday (although, that still wouldn’t be a bad idea).

Q. I work at an elementary school. I don’t have to worry about transition services; right?

A. While there is no federal or state law requiring transition services for a student under the age of 14, it is never too early to start transition planning and services. You can begin teaching a first grader self-determination skills (e.g., letting them pick which shirt to wear, or choosing between pizza rolls or chicken nuggets) or self-advocacy skills (e.g., letting the teacher know, in appropriate ways, when they need to use the bathroom, or saying yes/no to something and why). The earlier we start teaching these skills the better outcomes we will have because it isn’t a foreign concept that was never introduced until adolescence. [The Zarrow Center](#) out of the University of Oklahoma is a great resource for all ages, including how to teach students to be part of or lead their own IEP meetings.