

Secondary Transition: What Administrators Need to Know

What is secondary transition?

Secondary transition services can be thought of as a bridge between school programs and the opportunities of adult life. In the federal law (IDEA 2004) it is defined as “a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed within a result-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.” Secondary transition activities facilitate the change from special education services provided by the local school district to adult life for youth with disabilities.

What does transition planning accomplish?

Studies have shown that a large number of students receiving special education services do not pursue education or training beyond high school and are not as successful as adults in the workplace when compared to the general population. Transition planning and programming helps to close this gap. Transition planning is required by federal law (IDEA 2004) and by Pennsylvania regulations (Chapter 14). Transition planning helps students and their families think about the future and jointly plan with school and supporting agencies to make the school experience contribute directly to achieving necessary skills for a successful adult life.

For whom is transition planning required?

Transition planning is required for all students with disabilities, at the time the student turns 14 (or sooner if appropriate), who qualify for special education services.

When does transition planning begin?

As part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, transition planning (including a course of study) must be addressed in the IEP of a student in late middle school or early high school. The course of study is a list of the rigorous academic classes, activities, and services that support the student’s post-school outcomes in the areas of education/training, employment, and independent

living. Transition planning may begin earlier if the IEP team decides that such planning is appropriate.

How do we determine what a student needs for good transition programming?

Transition planning begins with good assessment. This assessment should be completed before developing the IEP. Assessments might include interest inventories, vocational assessments, and career planning tests, as well as opportunities for students to participate in job shadowing or mentoring to assess their interests, aptitudes, and abilities. The assessment data should guide the transition planning.

Who is involved in transition planning?

Transition planning involves the student, the family, school staff, and personnel from outside agencies. Career and technical education programs can be part of the transition plan to help prepare a student for work after school. If a student with a disability is considering career or technical education, a representative from that program should be present at the IEP meeting.

How important is the participation of outside agencies?

In order to support the post-school outcomes of the student, collaboration with outside agencies is crucial. If an adult and/or community agency is likely to be responsible for providing a program for transition services, the school must invite an agency representative to the IEP meeting. This includes agencies such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR) agencies, and other community agencies providing services to people with disabilities.

What are the components of transition planning?

After gathering information about the transition needs of the student regarding where the student would like to live and work in the future, an IEP team meeting is held to develop a program that incorporates transition services and activities. These 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 functional vocational evaluation.

How can administrators support secondary transition?

Administrators must be sure that their staff has the expertise, the programmatic and fiscal resources, and the time to properly assess students, plan with families and outside agencies, and implement individualized programs that support students in achieving their desired post-school outcomes. Administrators must make certain that school personnel know about and can utilize appropriate assessment instruments and techniques so that they have adequate data upon which to base good transition planning.

Where can administrators get assistance in collaborating with outside agencies or help with other aspects of transition planning?

Local Transition Coordinating Councils (LTCCs) exist in many communities in Pennsylvania. They provide a forum for school districts to learn more about community agencies, find out about the services they offer, and make valuable contacts with agency personnel. Administrators can contact their local intermediate unit (IU) or regional Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) office for information and/or technical assistance about secondary transition.

Resources

deFur, S. H., & Patton, J. R., Eds. (1999). *Transition and School-based Services: Interdisciplinary Perspectives for Enhancing the Transition Process*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Storey, K., Bates, P., & Hunter, D., Eds. (2002). *The Road Ahead: Transition to Adult Life for Persons with Disabilities*. St. Augustine, FL: Training Resource Network, Inc.

Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching Self-Determination to Students with Disabilities: Basic Skills for Successful Transition*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

For additional information, visit PaTTAN online at: www.pattan.net or contact a secondary transition consultant at:

PaTTAN – Pittsburgh Office
412-826-2336 or 800-446-5607

PaTTAN – Harrisburg Office
717-541-4960 or 800-360-7282

PaTTAN – King of Prussia Office
610-265-7321 or 800-441-3215

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