

What should the IEP meeting look like?

For all students, beginning at age 16, transition must **always** be discussed at every IEP meeting. Below is an example of an “ideal” meeting agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions (preferably done by student).
2. Discuss and identify the student’s post-school desired goals or vision based on his or her preferences and interests. Life planning outcome statements on **employment** and **living** should be written, preferably using “I statements” from the student.
3. Discuss the student’s present level of educational performance and transition assessment results. In other words, identify where the student is functioning in relation to where he/she wants to go and what he/she wants to do beyond school. Discuss student strengths, relevant weaknesses or challenges.
4. Develop a statement of transition service needs, a “course of study” that:
 - ◆ is a long range plan listing all the courses he/she will be taking from now until they exit school,
 - ◆ is meaningful to the student’s future and will motivate them to complete school, and
 - ◆ directly relates to the student’s post-school goals, preferences, and interests.
5. Develop a statement of needed transition services. Design services/activities in the following areas: employment, independent living, community participation, adult services, post-secondary education, and if appropriate, functional vocational evaluation. List services/activities that include adult services, supports or programs as needed, and that promote movement from school to post-school goals.
6. Develop IEP goals and short-term objectives as needed.
7. For students who are 17, discuss transfer of rights. Parents and the student must be notified of any transfer of rights that will take place at least one year before they reach the age of majority, which is 18 years old in SD. If the rights do transfer to the student at age 18, the school must provide any notice required by law to both the student and parents. All other rights accorded to the parents transfer to the student, unless the student is determined incompetent under state law. If they have been determined incompetent by a court, then the rights remain with the person identified by the court.

As you can see, a coordinated effort is needed to implement a successful transition to adulthood for students with disabilities. No one agency can provide all services a student may need. It will benefit *everyone* to plan ahead. Involving adult service agencies while the student is still in school enables the family to become familiar with the providers and their eligibility requirements. It also prevents the student and family from “wandering aimlessly” when school is completed, wondering where to go next. If transition team members cultivate relationships early, coordinate efforts, and collaborate with others, the student’s transition is sure to be a success!!

"Preparing your child with a disability for the transition to adulthood is very similar to planning your other children's college education. It takes time, research, effort, and planning. The process is overwhelming, frustrating, exhausting, worrisome, and all consuming. But it is essential and necessary for the success of your child."

-Parent, Brookings

PARENT BRIEF

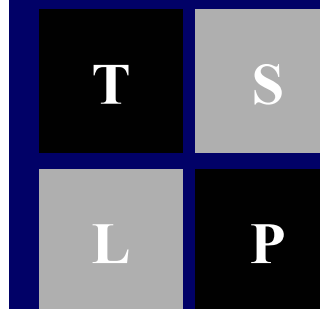


TRANSITION PLANNING:

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

“The beginning of knowledge is the discovery of something we do not understand.”

-Frank Herbert



Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP)
221 S. Central Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501
1-800-224-5336
www.tslp.org

Completion of high school – the beginning of adult life – these are exciting times for you and your son or daughter! You have likely spent countless hours learning how the system works and ensuring your child receives the supports and services necessary to succeed in school. It’s finally time to sit back and relax, right? Well...not exactly! For students with disabilities and their parents, the adult service delivery system is like a whole new world. Entitlement to receiving a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) ends, and the world of “eligibility” and “waiting lists” begins. The student and family are expected to take an active role in preparing the student to take responsibility for his or her own life once school is finished. Up to this point, school provided a central source of education, guidance, transportation, and even recreation. However, after students leave school they will need to organize their own lives and navigate among a variety of adult service providers and federal, state, and local programs.

The choices for students with disabilities may require a great deal of planning and may be more complex than for the typical high school graduate. Transition planning is required by law to begin at age 16, beginning no later than the first Individual Education Program (IEP) to be in effect when the child is sixteen. This plan becomes part of the student’s IEP. Transition services are intended to prepare students to make the transition from school to the adult world. The IEP team considers whether services are needed in each of these transition areas: employment, independent living, community participation, adult services, and post-secondary education.

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that are based on the student's needs, taking into account their preferences and interests. Services can include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational assessment. The idea behind this requirement is that beginning at age 16 or younger, if agreed upon by the IEP team, a long-range plan for adult life will be developed.

An effective transition plan requires that the IEP actively involve the student, family and representatives from various adult services, supports or programs that will be necessary in order for the student to be successful when he/she exits school.

There should be a direct relationship between:

- a) the student's desired post-school outcomes,
- b) the classes and services the student will be taking in school, and
- c) the long range plan for post-school adult life.

IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) law requires that parents and students be involved in all aspects of transition planning and decision making. To be an active and effective participant in this process, the student must become familiar with the transition requirements of the law. It is important to understand an individual's rights and responsibilities during the transition process.

No matter what or how significant the disability may be, STUDENTS are the most important people in the transition process. They should be as actively engaged in all aspects of the process. The IEP team must invite the student to attend any IEP meeting in which the team will be considering transition needs or services. The IEP transition long-range outcomes must be based on the student's preferences, choices, needs, and strengths. If the student does not attend the meeting, the school must ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered when developing the transition plan.

Who may be part of the transition team?

- 1) The student and family are core members of the team. The student must be invited to attend, and should actively participate in the meeting.
- 2) Other typical IEP team members are special education teachers, at least one regular education teacher, service providers, administrator, and others as appropriate.
- 3) Representatives that may provide post-school services to the student.

Transition planning advice from a parent:

- **Have open, ongoing communication starting early.**
- **Be creative and open minded when thinking about post high school.**
- **Have a vision: let them know early what both you and your child's dreams are.**
- **Think big: Your initial idea may not be where you end up, but it gives everyone a starting point, and with creative thinking you may be closer to your goal than you envisioned.**



Examples of student participation:

- ♦ *address/send invitations for the IEP meeting to teachers and other participants*
- ♦ *talk about what happens at the IEP meeting – that they will be asked what their long-range goals are, etc*
- ♦ *introduce everyone at the meeting*
- ♦ *facilitate the meeting to the best of their ability*

Examples of common community and state agencies in South Dakota and the transition services they may offer include:

- Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). DRS has traditionally been a primary player in transition meetings. DRS is an eligibility based program that assists people with disabilities to obtain employment. DRS provides individualized vocational services to assist people to get and keep jobs compatible with their disability. In South Dakota, one way DRS works with high school age students is through a program called "Project Skills." This is a paid work experience opportunity for students with disabilities age 16 or older. It provides students an opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements with the assistance of a job coach.
- Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI). SBVI is a sister agency to DRS, and provides similar services; however, SBVI works with individuals who are blind or have visual impairments. SBVI can provide guidance and counseling, funding for training, assistive technology services, and numerous other services that specialize in vision services.
- Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). The mission of DDD is to support people with developmental disabilities and their families. The DDD is responsible for the oversight of the Adjustment Training Centers. DDD also administers the Family Support Program, Respite Care, and the PLANS program. Resource Coordinators are available throughout the state to assist families with planning and accessing services.
- Independent Living Centers (ILC). ILCs are located throughout the state to help people with disabilities achieve and maintain self-sufficient lives within the community. Some services that are provided include community living services, independent living skills, peer support, advocacy, and more.
- Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA provides benefits to people of any age who are unable to do substantial work and have a severe disability. Some programs that are offered for people with disabilities include Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Medicaid, Medicare, and Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO). SSA also has created many work incentives for beneficiaries. These incentives can be an important part of transition planning.
- Assistive Technology (AT) Programs. DakotaLink is the AT program for South Dakota. DakotaLink can help schools and families locate, acquire and use the latest available assistive devices that best meet an individual's needs. DakotaLink has AT Specialists statewide who can meet with IEP teams or individuals.
- South Dakota Advocacy Services (SDAS). South Dakota Advocacy Services provides advice, information and referral regarding disability concerns, laws and rights, and legal representation.

REMINDER –Each of these agencies has their own definition of disability, as well as eligibility requirements and possible waiting lists. That is why it is so important for IEP teams to discuss the services and programs well in advance of the student's exit from school. Teams should invite representatives from these agencies to attend the IEP meeting to explain the services they have to offer. The list above is not all-inclusive. There are numerous other agencies that might be able to provide services to young adults as they leave the high school setting. For further explanations of these agencies and services, see "Resource Guide for People with Disabilities." To request a free copy, call 1-800-658-3080.