

FAQS

What is included in the transition component of the IEP?

Tennessee rules and regulations stipulate that prior to the 9th grade or age fourteen (or sooner if the IEP team determines appropriate), a student's IEP must include:

- An initial 4-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study
- Measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills and annual goals.

By age 16 (or sooner), student IEPs must also include transition services based on the individual student's needs, taking into account their strengths, preferences, and interests. Lastly, a student must be invited to his/her IEP team meetings beginning with the IEP during which the student will turn 14 or if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the postsecondary goals and transition services for the child.

What does a high-quality measurable postsecondary goal look like?

Consider this formula when writing your postsecondary goals:

_____ (After high school, after graduation, upon completion of high school) _____
(student) WILL _____ (behavior) _____(where/how).

Use the word “will” along with the behavior, (for example “will enroll,” “will work,” etc...) Orient your goals to the future. Postsecondary goals refer to outcomes, not activities, and should be measurable/observable.

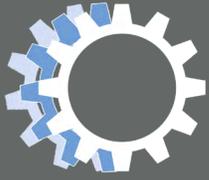
Example: After graduation, Paul will enroll in a computer-training course at the local community college to obtain a certificate of completion.

Non-Example: Paul will learn about computers (*not measurable-no criterion or timeframe for measurement*).

What are the differences between postsecondary goals, transition services, and annual goals?

Postsecondary goals identify post-school outcomes for the student. Transition services and annual goals align with postsecondary goals, and occur while the student is still in school. Transition services refer to transition activities. Annual goals address specific areas of need with specific criteria for mastery.

Example:



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Postsecondary Goal: After graduation, Paul will enroll in a computer-training course at the local community college to obtain a certificate of completion.

Transition Service: Paul will take a study skills training course offered in his high school.

Annual Goal: Provided a list of required materials for his study skills class, Paul will bring 100% of the materials (homework, pencil or pen, notebook, textbook) to class 2 out of 3 days for 4 consecutive weeks.

What do I do if my student's postsecondary goals change?

Goals can be edited and made more specific over time. Even if you believe your student's goals may change, you must write a goal that is specific and measurable for the first IEP to be in effect when the student is 14. Stating that the student is "unsure at this time" is not an appropriate goal. You can always start with a general goal and refine it over time as your student narrows his or her interests, or rewrite the goal if your student changes course.

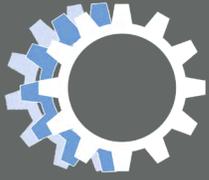
What do I do if my student is unsure of what they want to do after school?

If your student is unsure of what they want to do after school, here are some key questions to ask your students related to the postsecondary school domains:

- What kinds of things do you think you're good at? What are you not good at?
- What are your hobbies and interests that could be related to a job?
- What is important to you in a job (salary, transportation, schedule, environment, co-workers)?
- What kind of training or education will you need to get the job you want?
- Where do you want to live when you leave high school?
- How do you manage your money now? How will you manage it after you graduate high school?
- Are you familiar with SSI and Medicaid? Will you apply for those services?

How can I align transition services with my students' postsecondary goals?

Transition services begin at the first IEP to be in effect at age 14. Transition services are activities facilitating the student's transition from in-school to post school goals. Think about the services your students will need to meet their post-school goal, and take into account their preferences and interests. Use assessments as the foundation for understanding your students' skills, abilities, and needs. Look at the O*Net to identify what your students



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need to succeed in their chosen employment goal. Talk to colleges and training programs to identify skills for postsecondary environments.

Although many of your students might have overlapping transition services, remember that each student's services should be individualized. For example, if you have a student who has no idea what they want to do, their transition services would look very different than a student who already has a job lined at a local auto-body shop after graduation.

How do I write an entire course of study at age 14 if classes offered or my student's postsecondary goals change?

School systems change their course offerings frequently, so write your course of study based on *current* course offerings. The course of study can be edited and refined every year to ensure it remains accurate and appropriate. Another tip to keep in mind: if it's not possible to exactly match a student's postsecondary goals with a class offered by the high school, think about courses that address soft skills or secondary skills to help the student achieve their postsecondary goals. For example, consider a study skills class if your student is headed to college.

I want to involve my students in their own transition planning. Where do I begin?

Start small. Gradually introduce student participation one step at a time. This may mean selecting one section of the IEP for students to lead or implementing student-led IEPs with only one student at a time. Aim for some quick successes that will motivate you to continue.

I want to involve my students in their own transition planning. How can I fit this in with all my other responsibilities?

It may mean providing group instruction on the IEP process or one-to-one instruction and role-playing. Weave student involvement in transition planning into any self-determination curriculum you are already using. Figure out what works for you.

I teach elementary school. Isn't student involvement in transition planning something for high school teachers?

Even younger students with disabilities can learn to have a more active role in their own IEP meeting. And early experiences will make their involvement during the later years become the expectation.



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Will the transition planning meeting still be effective if the student is leading it?

You will still have time to present assessment findings and recommendations, but it is important to allow students this same opportunity. And the presence of students can help keep the focus on what's important – their vision for the future. You may be surprised at how having a student there can change the tone of meetings.

I want to involve my students in their own transition planning. Does this work for students with more complex disabilities?

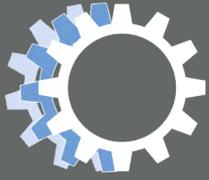
Every student can participate in leading transition planning meetings. Incorporate ways for your student to contribute to the meeting using their current mode of communication. That may include using a switch to activate a PowerPoint, gestures, or pictures of their strengths and goals. Find a meaningful way for them to communicate. It is usually as easy as adapting communication strategies already in place. Other communication technology, such as speech-generated devices (SGDs), could be programmed in advance. Pace the meeting so the student is provided time to participate, and communication with the student is structured in a way that he or she will be able to respond.

How do I collaborate effectively with all the members of the IEP team?

As a special education teacher, part of your responsibility is to facilitate connections between all the stakeholders in the transition plan. This will vary depending on the individual and his or her goals, but in general should include family members, general and special education teachers, and the student. Related service providers should also be included. Examples include job coaches, employers, vocational rehabilitation representatives, employment service providers, community living representatives, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, etc...

Here are some general tips for establishing a positive working relationship with your team:

- Clearly identify roles and expectations at the beginning of the meeting
- Carve out time during the meetings to clarify responsibilities
- Make sure all jargon is explained to all team members
- Communicate regularly outside IEP meetings
- Anticipate issues that might create conflict during an IEP meeting and be prepared to address them during the meeting



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How can I involve my families in developing transition components of their child's IEP?

Family involvement is an essential component to a student's successful transition. Give parents resources to get them familiar with the transition process and what they could expect once their child graduates. Clearly explain all the different transition components of the IEP. Encourage input before and after transition planning. Identify services and goals the student can work on at home. Respect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic culture of your students' families, and understand what parents could be going through during this time and the challenges they may face.