

## Transition to adulthood

*Planning early for the transition from home and high school to living and working in the community helps families to be better prepared for what lies ahead.*

*While in high school, youth have opportunities to prepare for the future.*

As children move to adulthood and advance through school, it's essential to help them identify and realize their hopes and dreams for the future. The process for planning the transition from school to adult life can be confusing for all families, but it is particularly complex for youth with disabilities and their families.

While in high school, youth have opportunities to prepare for the future and connect to support services that will further their work, education, and independent living goals. To plan and get the services and support that will be needed, it's important to start the process early. You and your child may be working with new service providers, such as a vocational rehabilitation or supported employment counselor. It may take longer to put in place services for students who have complex needs or those who can't use services in a typical way. Transition planning sometimes means a lot of trial and error,

so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to try things out.

### *The IEP*

When your son or daughter turns 16, the IEP should include measurable goals and objectives that address transition needs such as training, education, employment, and independent living skills. The IEP will also describe the frequency and duration of services as well as who will provide the services.

### *There are 8 key elements of the transition plan in your child's IEP.*

1. Your child needs to be invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services were discussed.

### *How will I know if my child was invited?*

There should be documentation in the IEP file that your child was invited to participate in his/her IEP meeting prior to the day of the meeting. This documentation could include:

- The “Notice of Meeting” form addressed specifically to your child (this may be co-addressed with your name as the parents); or
- Copy of a separate invitation to your child; or documentation of a verbal invitation.

2. If appropriate, a representative of a participating agency (example: Vocational Rehabilitation) should be invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of you, as the parent or your child (if they are 18 or over).

The school must have written consent from you before inviting an agency representative to attend any IEP meeting. This written consent must be obtained each and every time they invite an outside agency.

It must be clearly written how this outside agency was invited. If your child is several years away from graduation and the IEP team may feel it is not necessary to invite an outside agency yet.

3. Measurable postsecondary goal(s) need to be based on age-appropriate transition assessment(s).

The assessments are used to provide information on your child’s strengths, needs, preferences, and interests regarding postsecondary goals. At least one specific transition assessment must be listed. Best practice would be to have multiple transition assessments administered over time and/or a review of existing assessments. Best practice would also include documenting the date the assessment was administered, who administered it, and a brief summary of the results.

The results of transition assessment are used in the development of your child’s transition IEP—postsecondary goals, transition services, course of study, and annual goals.

4. There should be appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that cover education or training, employment, and, as needed, independent living.

Postsecondary Goals (PSG) are required in the areas of education/training and career/employment. The decision as to whether or not to include a PSG in the area of independent living skills rests with the IEP Team, which includes you as the parent, and should be based on transition assessment. If no goal is needed for independent living skills, nothing needs to be written in this area. Any goal written must be measurable.

The PSG must focus on what your child will do after leaving the public school system.

It is important that the word “will” is used when describing the PSG. —Wants,—wishes,—hopes to, and other similar words are not measurable and therefore should not be included in the goal.

The PSG must be an actual outcome and not an activity or process. —Seeks,—pursues,—continues,—learns, and —applies are processes, not outcomes. —Applying to a college or —seeking employment is therefore not considered a measurable postsecondary outcome.

5. There should be annual IEP goal(s) related to your child’s postsecondary goals/transition services needs.

Annual goals state what your child will do or learn within the next year that will move him/her toward achieving their postsecondary goals (PSG) and should link to your child’s transition services.

6. The postsecondary goal(s) should be updated annually.

The postsecondary goals for education/training, career/employment, and as needed, independent living skills, should be documented in your child’s current IEP and updated annually.

7. There should be transition services in the IEP that will reasonably enable your child to meet his or her postsecondary goal(s).

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities leading toward the measurable postsecondary goals. Transition services are not annual goals; they are the activities/strategies/steps/actions that the community of adults, including special/general education teachers, counselors, school club advisors, outside agencies, parents, community members, etc., provides to help your child achieve his/her postsecondary goals.

8. The transition services should include courses of study that will reasonably enable your child to meet his or her postsecondary goal(s).

A course of study must include a multi-year description of coursework from your child's current year through the anticipated year of graduation. It should be specific and individualized to your child taking into account your child's preferences and interests, and relate to the postsecondary goals.

#### *Summary of Performance*

When your student graduates or ages out of special education at age 22, the school will provide your son or daughter with a summary of performance. This written summary describes your student's academic achievement and functional performance and includes recommendations to assist in meeting employment, postsecondary education, and independent living goals.

#### *Planning tools*

There are tools available to help families identify their child's goals, strengths, and needs and take steps toward planning what will happen after high school. The McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) and Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children (COACH) are two programs that can be used to get more in-depth information about a student.

#### *MAPS*

Using the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) you can develop a personal profile that will help you and your young adult get a clear picture of likes and dislikes, daily activities, friendships, personal traits, and hopes for the future. Family members,

friends, professionals, and others join together to help your son or daughter plan for the future. MAPS asks you to make a list of the young adult's personal history, including important milestones in his or her life.

- Current and future dreams and fears of the young adult, the family, and others.
- Who the young adult is in terms of their likes and dislikes, strengths and interests, and the important people in their lives.
- What the young adult needs now and in the future and the steps to be taken to meet those needs.

After writing down this information, you will develop a plan of action that addresses your son or daughter's immediate needs and describes what will happen next. This plan should include action steps, people responsible, and timelines for accomplishing future goals. To request a MAPS, contact your child's IEP case manager or the special education director.

#### *COACH*

The COACH process helps teams plan a student's IEP and effectively include students in the regular classroom and their neighborhood schools. COACH is designed to assist in identifying IEP goals and objectives and to provide information about a student's present level of performance. COACH may be used with students ages 3-21 with significant disabilities who are in school.

The COACH process includes several steps and the first step is a family interview. The interview can be facilitated by a team member who is familiar with the process or another individual. Other steps in the process include looking at learning outcomes, general support, and annual goals for the student. Information is then summarized for use by the IEP team and others involved in the student's education.

#### *Self-advocacy*

Learning how to speak up and advocate are skills that teenagers with disabilities should learn while they are in school and throughout adult life. The IEP can include goals and activities to help your son or daughter learn self-advocacy skills.



To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VFN's materials and services, contact the Vermont Family Network  
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You can also contact us via e-mail at [info.vtfn.org](mailto:info.vtfn.org). And don't forget to visit our website at [www.vtfn.org](http://www.vtfn.org)

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Here are activities for your teenager that will help build confidence and promote self-advocacy.

- Get to know yourself.
- Identify the help you need and the people who can help you.
- Play an active role in your IEP meetings.
- Practice speaking up when you don't like something.
- Get to know your communication style.
- Find out what happens when you turn 18.
- *Continue to be a self-advocate after you finish high school.*

### Resources

Linking youth to resources in their communities is a critical part of the transition process. From schools to adult service agencies, it's important to identify what's available in your community and statewide and who the people are that can help youth and their families.

Vermont Transition Learning Community offers a wealth of information and resources on the topic of transition to adulthood for youth with special needs. This website is maintained by the Transition Specialist at the Vermont Department of Education and is updated frequently. Videos, webinars, links, and a host of other information can be found here. <http://tlcworkshops.pbworks.com/>

Vermont Family Network website contains family-friendly information and resources on many topics, including the transition to adulthood. VFN staff is available to talk with you about what to expect throughout the transition process as well as to help connect you to local resources that can offer further support and guidance.  
[www.vermontfamilynetwork.org](http://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org)

Vocational Rehabilitation offers transition counselors, benefits counselors, job training, driver education, and assistive technology. 1(866) 879-6757 or 1(800) 361-1239  
<http://vocrehab.vermont.gov/>

Local Mental Health/Developmental Disability agencies offers counselors, personal care support, respite, employment services. Contact the Vermont Agency of Human Services. 1(802) 241-2244  
<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/services>

Department of Labor provides job counselors, job training, and employment opportunities. 1(802) 828-4000 [www.labor.vermont.gov](http://www.labor.vermont.gov)

Vermont Center for Independent Living offers peer mentoring, benefits counseling, living support, community-based learning (Bridges Project). 1(800) 639-1522 [www.vcil.org](http://www.vcil.org)

Department of Health provides specialized health care services, health insurance, and financial support. 1(800) 464-4343  
[www.healthvermont.gov](http://www.healthvermont.gov)

Social Security Administration provides income support through SSI and SSDI for youth with disabilities who qualify. 1(800) 772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

Green Mountain Self-Advocates is a self-advocacy group for people with developmental disabilities and other conditions. 1(800) 564-9990

The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program helps with independent living skills, case management, employment support, counseling, and rehabilitation. 1(802) 241-3624  
<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/tbi/programs-tbi-default-page>

Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) has a transition program that helps visually impaired young people move smoothly from school life to the adult world. 1(800) 639-5861 [www.vabvi.org](http://www.vabvi.org)

TRIPSCY website on transition  
<http://www.uvm.edu/cdci/tripscy/?Page=TransHome.html&SM=TnsSubmenu.html>