

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

## Transition to Adulthood

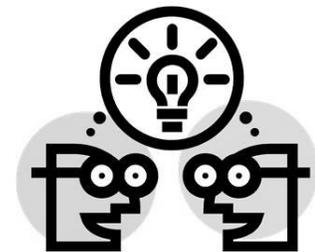
Planning early for the transition from home and high school to living and working in the community helps families to be better prepared for what lies ahead.

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 Youth Transition Counselor or a 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. Many transition experts recommend starting this process when the child is 14 years old.

### The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

When your son turns 16, his IEP should include measurable goals and objectives that address his 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 eight 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 her IEP meeting prior to the day of the meeting.

This documentation could include either:

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

2. If appropriate, a representative of a participating agency (e.g.: Vocational Rehabilitation) should be invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of you, as the parent, or your child if he is 18 or older.

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, the IEP team may feel it is not necessary to invite an outside agency yet.

3. Measurable postsecondary goal(s) (PSGs) 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 PSGs. 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 assessments are used in the development of your child’s transition IEP: PSGs, transition services, course of study, and annual goals.

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

PSGs 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 assessments. If no goal is needed for independent living skills, nothing needs to be written in this area. Any goal written must be measurable.

The PSGs 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. Words that are not measurable and therefore should not be included in the goal are: wants, wishes, hopes to, and other similar words.

The PSG must be an actual outcome and not an activity or process. Words like: 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 PSGs and transition services needs.

Annual goals state what your child will do or learn within the next year that will move her toward achieving her PSGs and should link to your child’s transition services.

6. The PSGs should be updated annually. The PSGs 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 PSG(s).

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities leading toward the measurable PSGs. Transition services are not annual goals; they are the activities, strategies, steps, and 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 her PSGs.

8. The transition services should include courses of study that will reasonably enable your child to meet his PSGs.

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 PSGs.

### Summary of performance

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



### Planning tools

There are tools or programs 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 help get more in-depth information about a student.

### MAPS

Using 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/daughter plan for the future. MAPS asks you to make a list of the young adult's personal history, including important milestones in her life.

- Current and future dreams and fears of the young adult, the family, and others.
- Who the young adult is in terms of her likes and dislikes, strengths and interests, and the important people in her life.
- 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 child'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 an IEP team member who is familiar with the process or another individual.



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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 child learn self-advocacy skills.

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.

### Connections

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.

### Resources

[Department of Health](#) provides specialized health care services, health insurance, and financial support.  
800-464-4343

[Department of Labor](#) provides job counselors, job training, and employment opportunities.  
802-828-4000

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

[Social Security Administration](#) provides income support through SSI and SSDI for youth with disabilities who qualify.  
800-772-1213

[Training and Resources for Interdisciplinary Professionals Serving Children and Youth](#) TRIPSCY program through UVM and CDCI.  
802-656-3131

[Traumatic Brain Injury Program \(TBI\)](#) helps with independent living skills, case management, employment support, counseling, and rehabilitation.  
802-871-3069

[Vermont Agency of Human Services](#) offers counselors, personal care support, respite, and employment services.  
802-871-3008

[Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired \(VABVI\)](#) is a transition program that helps visually impaired young people move smoothly from school life to the adult world.  
800-639-5861

[Vermont Center for Independent Living](#) offers peer mentoring, benefits counseling, living support, community-based learning (Bridges Project).  
800-639-1522

[Vermont Transition Learning Community](#) offers a wealth of information and resources on the topic of transition to adulthood for youth with special needs.

[Vocational Rehabilitation](#) offers transition counselors, benefits counselors, job training, driver education, and assistive technology.  
866-879-6757