



IEP

A PEATC
Do You Know
Factsheet for Virginia's
Parents

Local educational agencies (LEAs) should begin no later than the first individualized education program (IEP) to be in effect when the student is 14 because high school diploma options and courses of study discussions beginning earlier than the 8th grade will enable the student to access high school courses needed for graduation. When the IEP team members discuss diploma options, they should refer to the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia.

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Do You Know

The Top 10 Ideas Families, Professionals and Self Advocates Need to Know about Transition?

The following suggestions are the top ten ideas PEATC and a panel of experts has developed in response to the question, "What is the most important thing people need to know about transition?" We hope this list encourages families, students, and transition professionals as they work toward the successful transition of youth with disabilities.

Let's Get Started...

1) Start Early

As soon as students are identified as having a need for service, people need to look ahead. At the moment, he may have none on his own; this is where our dreams, as families and caregivers, begin until our children can begin to dream on their own. Establishing good relationships with caring adults early on will aid in more effective transitions down the road.

2) Use a Common Language

What is a diploma? What is an assessment? For different agencies, these mean different things. When looking at the maze of transition possibilities, it is confusing enough without the "language barrier." Building a foundation of common language and making sure that all understand the words being used will help to ease understanding of roles, reviews and responsibilities.

3) Ask questions. Then ask them again! (Continual Self Assessments)

While Virginia requires a formal organized approach to transition be in place by age 14, it is never too early to start planning. It is important to remember there are a number of diploma options. Decisions about diplomas are often made before a student goes to high school. Yet, the discussion about where a student is headed is not a one-time deal. Though students may not know where they want to go in the future, the adults in their world need to help direct them to academic outcomes that are both ambitious and realistic. On an ongoing basis, key adults support students as they conduct their own reality checks about their futures. Encourage the student to take the lead on this discussion. These continual assessments empower students to build self-determination skills, enabling them to move forward with confidence.

4) Be clear on Entitlement vs. Eligibility

The lines between *Entitlement* and *Eligibility* can be confusing. Students, who are eligible for services under IDEA, are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This is the most profound entitlement afforded to children in our nation. However, once students leave the safety net of IDEA-funded services, accessing publicly funded **adult** services may be elusive. Though young adults may be found eligible for services under the requirements of adult serving agencies, there is no entitlement provision mandating those

services be provided. “Eligibility” does not equate actual “availability” of service. Many services have waiting lists and limited funding streams.

5) Find out what exists and what doesn’t exist

Parents need to be savvy about what help will be there when IDEA services end. When we look honestly at services to help facilitate a smooth transition into life for our children, there may be gaps. There is not much we can do individually to ensure community services are funded. So make sure the student is acquiring skills that will carry into adulthood, while still in school.

6) Is transition a time of crisis or opportunity?

Transitioning from high school is a time of great opportunity for a young person. It is a time to explore strengths and interests and begin to piece together a life that enhances personal fulfillment, while contributing to the greater good of society. Transition is a time of terrific change and unknown growth for the whole family. Fear of the unknown may make parents reluctant participants in the process, but transitioning youth with disabilities need encouragement to seek post-secondary education, or apply for a job, or even dream of a future that is independent from their family.

7) Take a look at what has worked (and what hasn’t)

Met with the obstacle of providing positive experiences for their children in transition, many parents and educators have created incredible opportunities for skill acquisition and life preparation. Looking into examples of what has worked in your own child’s school career and what has worked for adults with disabilities currently living in your community may be the key to opening doors for successful transitions to life. What successes has he or she accomplished in school and life? How can we blend those successes with practical experiences to create a foundation of knowledge and skill development to successfully transition to adult life?

8) Redefine the concept of seamless transitions

The ability to transfer experience and information from one place to another without any “hitches” seems unachievable. For students with disabilities who are in the transition process there are some things we can do to ease the way.

9) View families as assets

Families are valuable members of the team having the most fundamental information about their youth with disabilities. Families motivate and encourage their children to become self-advocates and directors of their own futures. Until the youth with disabilities learns how to take the lead, families are **THE** experts on their youth with disabilities. Their active involvement can make the difference between success and failure.

10) Youth with disabilities are not the only ones who are in transition

As I stood at my oldest son’s high school graduation, a film reel of flash backs ran rampant through my mind. Who was this young man standing where my little boy should be? My role changed that day and it is an adjustment. He is taking the reins and I am learning how to let go. Parents may only see a child though they are peering into the face of a young adult. Though acceptance may come easily to some parents it may take a lifetime for others. Transition is a time of change for the whole family.



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