



Transition Services

What are transition services?

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process. It is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities. These activities include post secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Services are based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests.

This may include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-

school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Who receives transition services?

Transition services are provided to each student with a disability beginning not later than the first IEP, to be in effect when the child is 16 (or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team) and updated annually thereafter.

Appropriate measurable post secondary goals will be developed based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills.

Transition services, including courses of study, needed to assist the child in reaching those goals will be identified in the IEP.

If appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages must be included on the IEP. Additionally, the IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of procedural safeguards that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority (age 18).

What can transition services do to help youth with disabilities?

Transition services help youth with disabilities develop the skills and plans to go to school, seek and keep a job, live more independently, and receive additional assistance. Making these connections before graduation is important.

How are transition services identified?

Identifying transition service needs begins with a conversation between the student, the student's parents, and school personnel about the student's career and adult

Planning for Success!

The key to a successful transition is early and thoughtful planning.
Students must be actively involved in the planning process.

living goals. Needed services and supports that will help the student obtain their goals are then determined. These services and supports may include:

- Assessments:
 - Vocational
 - Functional behavior
 - Interest inventories
 - Learning styles
 - Assistive technology
- Specialized instruction and/or training
- Community-based work experience
- On the job training

Who should be involved in transition planning?

The student, family, special educator, guidance counselor, vocational educator, vocational evaluator, therapists, adult agency service providers, and others that the family or school identify as members of the IEP transition planning team should be involved in transition planning. Students must be invited to participate in transition planning.

What agencies or organizations might be identified as transition service providers?

- Local school divisions
- Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
- Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
- Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Virginia Community College System
- State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- Student support services from colleges and universities
- Social Security Administration
- Independent Living Centers
- Virginia Department of Social Services- Division of Family Services
- Virginia Department of Correctional Education
- Local recreation departments
- Local associations for people with disabilities

What questions should be asked when planning transition services?

- What are the student's needs, strengths, interests, and preferences?
- What are the future hopes, goals, and dreams for independence after leaving high school?
- What activities and services are needed to prepare the student to reach those goals?
- Who should be involved in the transition planning?
- When should adult services and agencies be included in transition planning?
- Are specialized supports needed to achieve desired results?

How do I find out more about transition services?

Talk to the special education teacher or guidance counselor. Many school divisions have parent resource centers that provide needed information. The Parent Education Advocacy and Training Center (PEATC) is another organization to contact. Talk to the special education director in your local school division or your local Department of Rehabilitative Services office. For more information, contact your local the Virginia Department of Education.



Student and Family Empowerment

Leaving high school and entering adult life presents opportunities, challenges and major changes for all young people. This transition time can be especially complex for youths with disabilities. Virginia's Intercommunity Transition Council is committed to assuring that all young people with disabilities successfully move from secondary school environments into real-life, functional, and productive roles. Families (including foster parents, guardians, and extended family members) and youths with disabilities play the primary role in making decisions and plans about the future. Thus, it becomes essential to create communities that promote youth and family empowerment. Virginia's Intercommunity Transition Council believes that transition efforts can be most effective when individuals are empowered to make decisions about their lives, assume personal responsibility, and experience choice and control in their lives.

How does your community rank in promoting youth and family empowerment?

Do youth with disabilities lead or actively participate in their transition planning at an early age?

Do youth say that their opinions were respected while they were involved in transition planning? Is the youth able to understand, accept, and describe his/her disabilities, abilities, interests, and preferences?

Do youth know their legal rights and also accept personal responsibility?

Do youth have a variety of transition preparation experiences in integrated settings?

Do family members confirm the availability, accessibility, and quality of resources for transition?

Do family members confirm that they encouraged their sons or daughters to lead or participate in making transition planning decisions?

Do youth and family members know about transition and use this information in planning for transition and promoting services within the community?

Do youth and family members participate in local and regional transition service planning?

Do youth and family members confirm that their cultural values are respected and reflected in the transition planning process?

Do youth and family members access leadership training opportunities for transition planning and service?

Do youth, family members, and transition service providers identify realistic and attainable goals?

Do youth, family members, and transition service providers set high expectations and work to achieve them?

Do transition service providers prepare for, include, and promote active participation of family members and youth?

Planning for Success!

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Do administrators encourage, facilitate, and expect transition service providers to promote the active participation of families and youth in the transition planning process?

Do community members know about and support transition efforts?

For more information, contact your local special education director, local Department of Rehabilitative Services office, or the Virginia Department of Education.



The Student's Voice: Self-Advocacy and Decision Making

What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is:

- Taking responsibility for your own life
- Knowing your responsibilities
- Knowing your rights
- Making choices
- Asking for help when needed

With self-advocacy skills, students can make choices and decisions about their lives:

- At home
- In the classroom
- On the job
- In receiving medical attention
- In using transportation and other public services
- In leisure activities

Students with disabilities can be self-advocates!

All students can be self-advocates. All young people can make known their hopes and dreams and the kinds of support they need from:

- Family
- Friends
- Service providers

Students can express their choices using verbal and nonverbal communication.

Some may express themselves using sign language or communication devices. Others may need additional support through:

- Advocates
- Family, friends and community
- Person-centered planning activities
- Professional services

Students who are self-advocates can:

- Explain their disabilities to someone

- Be active in the IEP meeting
- Ask for more accommodations
- Communicate strengths and needs to an employer
- Make appointments
- Meet with a doctor alone
- Find volunteer opportunities
- Make plans with friends
- Learn about political issues and vote

What are some ways to support self advocacy?

Caring family, friends, and professionals are important to young people's hopes for today, tomorrow and the future. Self-advocacy doesn't mean living without support and guidance. Everyone depends on his or her family, friends and community.

Supporters can:

- Listen and respect differing opinions
- Encourage personal choices

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- Model appropriate social skills
- Provide information that helps in making a decision
- Support decisions to try something new
- Provide opportunities for financial awareness

Here are steps students can take to become self-advocates.

- Become aware of your strengths and weaknesses and what helps you learn or perform better
- Be an active member of your education planning team
- Communicate effectively
- Listen carefully
- Make decisions and take responsibility for those decisions
- Learn how to ask for help when it is needed
- Help others
- Learn about available resources
- Understand it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them
- Learn to solve problems effectively
- Finish your education

- Learn strategies to manage the challenges of a disability
- Set personal goals
- Develop a positive attitude, be flexible, and have a sense of humor

Organizations that can help students learn self-advocacy skills are:

- Your high school
- Advocacy and self-help groups
- Clubs
- Independent Living Centers
- Support services at colleges and universities
- Parent Resource Centers
- Adult education programs
- Public library programs
- Assistive technology centers
- Organizations for people with disabilities
- Religious programs
- Virginia Department of Rehabilitation
- Community Services Board
- Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
- Department for the Rights of Virginians with Disabilities
- Virginia Department of Education

- Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
- Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

How will we know when students are gaining self-advocacy skills?

Students will demonstrate skills (or know how to access support) in:

- Communicating with others
- Identifying needed accommodations and supports
- Expressing hopes and wants
- Relating to people in authority
- Relating to peers
- Solving problems
- Controlling anger
- Finding out about jobs and careers
- Finding a job
- Getting an education or training
- Taking care of oneself
- Getting around in the community

For more information, contact your local Special Education Director, local Department of Rehabilitative Services office, or the Virginia Department of Education



Education Options After High School

Students continue to learn after high school. With support from parents, teachers, and employers, students can continue their education in programs that match their interests, abilities and needs. Students receiving special education services must have transition goals in their IEP. This IEP should be written no later than the IEP in which the student turns 16 years of age or earlier if appropriate. They must be actively involved in the planning process.

Education options include:

- Community colleges
- Four-year colleges
- On-the-job training
- Apprenticeships
- Military service
- Adult education
- Technical schools
- Independent living skills

What are accommodations for students with disabilities?

Many continuing education programs, colleges and universities have Disability Support Services (DSS) staff. These people can help students access the accommodations that they are entitled to use. Some colleges have programs specifically for students with disabilities

Two federal laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, require schools to provide all students equal access to education opportunities. Students with disabilities may receive certain accommodations that give them equal opportunities to participate and learn. The need for the accommodation must be documented. Call the DSS office at the postsecondary school to find out what documentation they require.

Accommodations for post secondary students may include:

- Wheelchair accessible buildings
- Textbooks on tape, in Braille, and digital
- Extra time for assignments or tests
- Assistive technology

How should you plan for technical school or college?

In addition to questions about the type of program and costs, students may want to ask:

- What are the admission requirements?
- Are there specific technical skill requirements?
- What support services are available?
- How do you get support services and are any fees charged?

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- Are there course waivers or substitutions, e.g., foreign language?
- If there are disagreements about accommodations, how are they resolved?
- What documentation of disability is required?
- Do you offer an orientation program for new students?

How can you plan for employment training or an apprenticeship?

- Who will be the direct supervisor?
- How long will the program last?
- Is union membership required?
- How many continuing education classes are required?
- Are salary and benefits such as insurance offered?
- Do you help trainees find permanent jobs?
- Is there a proficiency test requirement?

What school records do you need?

Most programs require proof of a student's abilities and disabilities. It is important to have copies of the most recent test reports, IEP and eligibility papers, and the secondary transcript. Letters of reference from teachers, and a student profile or resume might also be required.

When should you begin planning?

Students should start planning in middle school and take courses that prepare them academically for college or technical training. Students will need independent living skills, and self advocacy skills, to be successful in postsecondary education. Students can work with their teachers and counselors in high school to develop a plan for achieving their goals. Transition planning as required in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the ideal way to plan for student educational choices.

Some things to discuss/think about are:

- Program requirements
- Proficiency tests
- Program length
- Continuing education classes
- Counseling
- Job placement
- Peer support groups
- Tutoring
- Housing assistance

Here are some resources to help you plan.

- Teachers
- Guidance counselors
- Federal, state and local agencies, departments and programs
- Disability Support Staff
- Technical schools
- State Employment Commission
- Employment training programs
- College and career fairs
- Parents and family members

For more information, contact your local Special Education Director, local Department of Rehabilitative Services office, or the Virginia Department of Education



Living Independently

What can adult life include?

Young people with disabilities look forward to adult lives in the community that include:

- Friends and family
- Relaxation and fun
- A home of their own
- Work or volunteering
- Lifelong learning

This is a good picture of the future. It can happen when young people have a team planning with them.

What can students do?

Students are the most important part of the team. Their hopes and dreams are at the center of planning. Young people can be leaders in making decisions that affect their lives.

Students can:

- Share their interests, abilities and goals
- Identify the supports they need to participate in the community

- Decide where to live
- Choose their friends
- Let others know when they need help, encouragement and support
- Learn skills of independence
- Explore ways to have fun

How do families fit in?

All families hope their children will have the right skills, knowledge, friends, common sense, and determination to be successful in the world. Families must find the balance between protecting their children and allowing them to be independent young adults. This can be a tough job. Families may have concerns about the guidance and support their sons and daughters need for adult life.

To help, families can:

- Be role models
- Provide opportunities to learn skills of independence
- Provide opportunities for choices

- Listen to what students have to say
- Organize family resources
- Teach practical life skills
- Plan for future legal and financial needs
- Serve as a link between school and agencies
- Learn about community resources
- Identify supports that work for the student
- Be active team members

What is the professional's role?

Professionals know about skills students may need to live in the community. They know about resources, accommodations, and organizations. By sharing this information they help the team develop a plan that supports students' choices.

Professionals can:

- Promote experiences that build students' confidence as members of the community

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- Encourage students to share their dreams and goals for the future
- Ask families to express their hopes and concerns about their children's future needs
- Identify team members' roles, responsibilities and time schedules
- Coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate to find services and supports

What makes a successful transition?

- Active student involvement in making decisions.
- A transition plan that includes participating in work and community life.
- A transition plan that links the young adult with needed services and supports.
- Participation in regular classes and school activities.
- Work experiences in the community.
- Access to transportation
- Opportunities to relax and have fun
- Coordination among school, family and adult service agencies
- A network of family and friends

- Job shadowing
- Person-centered planning

What are some important questions to ask?

- What are the student's interests, abilities, and choices for recreation?
- What are the student's interests, abilities, and choices for work?
- What are the student's interests, abilities, and choices for education?
- Where will the student live and with whom?
- Are supports needed? What are they?
- What programs and services are available that match the student's interests, abilities, and choices?
- What transportation needs and options exist?
- How might technology help?
- How will information be shared with current and future providers, the youth, family members, and others who will be involved?
- What other information will help the team create a successful plan?
- What happens if the plan does not work?

- How can the youth continue to find out about services and supports after graduation?

Who can help?

- Local schools
- Federal, state and local agencies, departments and programs
- Advocacy and self-help groups
- Independent Living Centers (ILC)
- Parent Resource Centers (PRC)
- Organizations for people with disabilities
- Attorneys
- Estate and tax planners
- Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO)
- Others parents of youths with disabilities

For more information, contact your local Special Education Director, local Department of Rehabilitative Services office, or the Virginia Department of Education



Employment

Why work?

People work because it gives meaning and value to their lives. Some of the rewards of work are:

- Earning money
- Being independent
- Receiving benefits, such as medical coverage
- Feeling good about what you do
- Making a difference
- Having friends
- Being creative
- Being productive

What are some work choices?

After high school, some people begin work right away. Others choose to work and to go to school. Some people try many different jobs to find out what they like to do and don't like to do. Few people work at the same job all their lives.

What job options exist?

- Full/part-time jobs

- Supported employment
- Volunteer jobs
- Apprenticeships
- Military service
- Job sharing

Almost all people with disabilities can work. Some may need accommodations or supports to do the job. A federal law, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), protects job applicants from discrimination because of their disabilities. Qualified workers can receive reasonable supports and accommodations in the workplace

Examples of supports and accommodations on the job include:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Work schedule modifications
- Equipment modifications
- Job coaching
- Assistive technology
- Employee mentors

What are the skills needed to get and keep a job?

Young adults who have had some work experience while in high school have a better chance at getting and keeping a job that those who have no previous experience.

While in school, students can prepare for work by learning in school and on the job to:

- Be on time
- Be responsible
- Take directions from supervisors
- Respond appropriately to constructive criticism
- Get along with co-workers and supervisors
- Follow directions
- Solve problems
- Perform specific job tasks
- Be persistent and willing to work

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What can families and teachers do?

Families and teachers can:

- Set examples through work habits
- Help students understand how people communicate with and without words
- Respect all kinds of work
- Support creativity
- Encourage students to fully participate in meetings
- Teach coping skills
- Help students explain their disabilities and needed accommodations
- Help students explore interests
- Arrange work experiences
- Encourage students to work part-time or volunteer in the summer
- Help students identify the courses that will prepare them for employment
- Teach students job seeking and job keeping skills

- Encourage independent decision making

Here are some things to consider when choosing a job.

- What are the job duties?
- Is this job a good match for my abilities and interests?
- Is this a work environment for me?
- Do I need any accommodations on the job?
- Do I need to tell the employer about my disability?
- Will this job improve or stop any of my disability or medical benefits?
- What are the salary and benefits?
- What transportation do I need?
- How does this job fit with my previous work experience?
- Is there a training program?

Who can help?

- Previous employers
- Friends and family
- People who know the student's abilities and interests
- Guidance and career advisors
- Teachers
- Department of Rehabilitative Services
- Social Security Administration
- Community Services Boards
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Local job fairs

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Virginia's Intercommunity Transition Council
A Community of Practice

VITC

Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

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