

THE TRANSITION PLAN

Characteristics of a Sound Transition Plan

IDEA specifies that transition planning is a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that is:

- ▶ **Outcome-oriented** – a process with clear goals and measurable outcomes
- ▶ **Student-centered** – based on the specific skills that the student needs and reflective of the student's interests and preferences
- ▶ **Broad-based** – including instruction and related services, community experiences, development of employment and post-school living objectives, and acquisition of daily living skills and vocational evaluation
- ▶ **A working document** – outlining current and future goals, along with the specific strategies for achieving these goals, and changes over time

What the Plan Should Include

Your child's transition plan will be customized based on their needs. In particular, a solid transition plan will include many of the following elements:

- ▶ Assessment of your child's needs, interests, and abilities
- ▶ Statement of preferences for education, employment, and adult living
- ▶ Steps to be taken to support achievement of these goals
- ▶ Specific methods and resources to meet these goals, including accommodations, services, and/or skills related to the transition goals
- ▶ Instruction on academic, vocational, and living skills
- ▶ Identification of community experiences and skills related to future goals
- ▶ Exploration of service organizations or agencies that provide services and support
- ▶ Methods for evaluating success of transition activities (e.g., a video portfolio)

Additional Logistical Information in the Plan

In addition to stating the goals for your young adult, the transition plan should include logistical information on how the plan will be implemented and monitored, such as:

- ▶ A timeline for achieving goals
- ▶ Identification of people or agencies to help reach these goals
- ▶ Clarification of how roles will be coordinated
- ▶ A plan for identifying post-graduation services and supports and obtaining the necessary funding



Handout 2-1: *Sample IEP Transition Plan (on page 34)* offers an example.

Measurable Goals Allow You to Evaluate Success

Ideally, all of the above goals should be measurable to ensure you have a precise way to determine when the goals have been reached.

EXAMPLE OF A MEASURABLE TRANSITION GOAL

Overarching goal: The student will have an appropriate work environment post-high school.

Measurable goal: Together with the school guidance counselor, transition coordinator, or vocational rehabilitation counselor, the student will explore options for employment post-high school. The student will complete a vocational assessment and participate in a minimum of one unpaid internship, volunteer experience, or after-school job in an area of interest over the next 6 months. This participation is defined as a minimum of 5 hours/week for no less than 12 weeks. This will help the student determine further needs for vocational training.

Another way of describing strong IEP goals is using the acronym SMART. SMART goals are:

- S** – **Specific** – the goal is specific in naming the skill that will be targeted and the desired result.
- M** – **Measurable** – the goal is stated in such a way that progress can be measured.
- A** – **Attainable** – the goal represents reasonable progress for your child.
- R** – **Results-Oriented** – the goal clearly lays out what will be done to accomplish it.
- T** – **Time-Bound** – the goal includes a timeline by which the child will achieve it.



See examples of SMART goals in **Handout 2-2:** *Example SMART Goals (on page 36)*.

Who Is Involved

THE TRANSITION PLANNING TEAM	
Key Members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You and your autistic child and interested family members ▪ Your young adult's transition coordinator ▪ Your young adult's general education teachers, when applicable ▪ Your young adult's special education teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DVR or ADD representative ▪ Administrators ▪ Psychologists ▪ Speech and language pathologists ▪ Other related service providers

>>

>>

Optional and Helpful Team Members

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy organization representative ▪ Business education partnership representative ▪ Guidance counselor, when appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential services representative, when appropriate ▪ Mental health agency representative ▪ Postsecondary education representative, when applicable |
|---|---|

Transition planning should help you and your young adult connect with the adult service system. Representatives from adult services organizations that may provide or pay for post-transition services must be invited to participate in the development of the IEP transition plan. If they are unable to attend, the school must find alternative ways of involving them in planning any transition services they might pay for or provide. It is important that each transition activity include someone who consents to monitor the provision of that service as outlined in the IEP.

Guidance counselors, related service providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and administrators all have a potential voice in designing transition plans for students. The specific roles of participants may vary, depending on the goals and needs of your young adult.

There is one major difference between transition planning and the IEP meetings you may be used to – **your autistic young adult must be actively involved!** The next chapter, Student-Centered Transition Planning, will assist you in preparing your young adult for the process so that it is as fruitful and stress-free as possible.

Your Role as a Parent

As a parent, you play a critical role in the development of the transition plan. Specifically, you will need to:

- ▶ Be your child's primary advocate in the absence of their ability to do so, with an emphasis on fading their dependency to allow ongoing growth to the best of their ability
- ▶ Provide unique and personal information about your child that is not otherwise reflected in the school's or agency's records
- ▶ Ensure the transition plan is meaningful, practical, and useful for your child
- ▶ Monitor transition planning in the IEP to ensure agreed-upon activities are implemented; frequent communication with your child and other IEP team members will help keep the plan a working document
- ▶ Promote your young adult's independence, self-advocacy, and decision-making
- ▶ Plan for future financial and support needs, such as guardianship, estate planning, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and related work incentives, along with other sources of financial support (Center for Autism Research (CAR, 2014)).

The IEP team relies on your knowledge of your young adult. Effective transition planning adopts an approach that is sensitive to the culture and context of the family, thus empowering your family's role in guiding your autistic learner.



For more on advocacy, see OAR's *Life Journey Through Autism: Navigating the Special Education System* at <https://www.researchautism.org/resources>.

Families must be notified ahead of time when an IEP meeting includes development of a transition plan. Special education case managers often identify the purpose of the meeting and can provide draft goals ahead of the meeting, if requested.

IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE TRANSITION PLAN

You will work with the transition team during a series of meetings to develop a comprehensive transition plan for your young adult. During the process, it is important to record important details at all planning meetings. Once the actual plan is completed by the team, it is a living, evolving document that should be reviewed and updated several times a year to ensure it continues to reflect and meet all of your young adult's needs and that adequate progress is being made to that end. Each team member is responsible for implementing the specific transition tasks, together with your autistic young adult.

By creating a document with outcome-oriented goals that can be measured, you can more efficiently and effectively monitor your young adult's progress. It is important to work with the transition planning team to periodically update this plan as your child continues through school to ensure a successful transition to adulthood.

What to Do If You Don't Agree With the Transition Services Provided by the School

Hopefully, the transition process will be a smooth, collaborative effort among all team members supporting your young adult. Nonetheless, it is important to know your rights as a parent if you cannot come to an agreement with the school regarding your child's education:

- ▶ **You have the right to ask for an impartial due process hearing.** A hearing may be held on any matter related to the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child or the provision of a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE). Hearings are to be held by either the State Department of Education or the school personnel directly responsible for your child's education. To obtain a hearing, make a written request to the person who is responsible for the education program your young adult attends.
- ▶ **If you believe your child's educational rights are being violated by non-implementation of the IEP,** make a written request to the person who is responsible for the education program your child attends or your state's Department of Education. IDEA affords parents procedural safeguards if agreement cannot be reached regarding

the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or FAPE for their child. If you do not feel appropriate transition services are being provided, you may exercise your rights as explained in the *Procedural Safeguards for Children and Parents*, which can be obtained from your state or local districts. Professionals and volunteer advocates who know how to navigate the special education system can help you ensure your child's rights are being enforced.

For more information, see OAR's *Life Journey Through Autism: Navigating the Special Education System* at <https://www.researchautism.org/resources>.



Early Planning Leads to Success

Planning for your autistic young adult's future and exploring the world of postsecondary education or employment can seem daunting or even a distant prospect. However, starting to plan early and building goals related to particular life skills, postsecondary education, or employment into your young adult's transition plan/IEP breaks the process into manageable steps and helps engage an accessible, ongoing support system of transition team members.

The chapters that follow review important information related to the transition process and will help you maximize your planning:

- ▶ Student-Centered Transition Planning
- ▶ Postsecondary Education
- ▶ Vocation and Employment
- ▶ Life Skills

As you read this information, remember that you are your young adult's best advocate for their future. Tailoring the approach to your young adult's specific needs will lead to success.

RESOURCES

- ▶ Autism Self Advocacy Network & Family Network on Disabilities. (n.d.). *Roadmap to transition: A handbook for autistic youth transitioning to adulthood*. <http://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Roadmap-to-Transition-A-Handbook-for-Autistic-Youth-Transitioning-to-Adulthood.pdf>
- ▶ Center for Autism Research (CAR) at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. (2014). *Turning 18: Options for when your child needs decision-making help*. <https://www.carautismroadmap.org/turning-18-options-for-when-your-child-needs-decision-making-help/?print=pdf>

- ▶ OCALI. (n.d.). *Evolving postsecondary goals*. <https://www.ocali.org/project/transition-planning-and-the-iep/page/examples-of-evolving-postsecondary-goals>
- ▶ OCALI. (n.d.). *Transition to adulthood guidelines*. https://www.ocali.org/project/transition_to_adulthood_guidelines
- ▶ The UNC Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: <https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/families/supporting-transition>
- ▶ The VCU Autism Center of Excellence: <https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/adolescence.cfm>

KEY POINTS – CHAPTER 2



Starting the transition planning early helps to create more manageable steps to achieve goals.



Your autistic child's Individualized Transition Plan will become part of their IEP.



Work together with your autistic young adult to brainstorm future dreams and goals.



A transition plan is outcome-oriented, measurable, student-centered, and adaptable.

Chapter 2: Handouts/Activities ▷