



Competencies for Transition Specialists

Introduction

This document presents seven essential competencies and components that guide professional practice of secondary special education transition specialists and teachers in supporting successful and equitable transitions for students and youth with disabilities and their families (Scott & Shogren, 2023; Trainor et al., 2020). These competencies reflect a comprehensive, evidence-informed, and person-centered approach to transition planning, service delivery, and leadership that align with the in-school predictors of postschool success (Alverson et al., 2025; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Rowe et al., 2015). These competencies should guide practice for states, districts, schools, teachers, and adult service providers to help ensure (a) collaborative partnerships are in place to support students and youth with disabilities as they transition (Harvey et al., 2019; NTACTION, 2015); and (b) secondary special education and transition practices, services, and supports are aligned with research to support students and youth with disabilities in attaining positive postschool outcomes (Mazzotti et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2021.)

The CEC/DCDT Transition Competencies include seven broad competency areas: (a) *transition content knowledge*; (b) *transition assessment*; (c) *transition programs, services, and equitable outcomes*; (d) *transition research and adequacy*; (e) *transition leadership and policy*; (f) *transition professional and ethical practice*; and (g) *collaboration*. Together, these seven broad competency areas provide a comprehensive framework for equitable, inclusive, and effective secondary transition programs, services, and practices that empower students and youth with disabilities to achieve meaningful postschool success in the areas of education, employment/training, and community engagement.

Competency 1

Transition Content Knowledge

1	Provide colleagues (e.g., general educators, related service providers, outside agencies, employers) with evidence-informed instructional practices, links to community partners and agencies, and curricular resources to embed transition content into their relevant work with individuals with disabilities.
2	Understand and apply culturally responsive-sustaining transition evidence-informed practices in my transition planning; practices; instruction; and in collaboration with colleagues, community partners, and agencies.
3	Deliver comprehensive self-determination (e.g., goal setting, choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving) content.
4	Deliver transition-focused content on employment/career development.
5	Deliver transition-focused content on postsecondary education/training.
6	Deliver transition-focused content on adult living and community participation.
7	Align in-school transition goals, activities, services, and curricula/instruction directly to individually identified postsecondary goals.
8	Evaluate and monitor progress of individuals with disabilities' in-school transition, academic, and self-management goals, activities, services, and curricula/instruction to help ensure they meet their post-school goals.
9	Facilitate student-centered and family/caregiver-centered transition and IEP planning approaches to help ensure individuals with disabilities are provided instruction, related activities, and other curricular resources to support colleagues (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, guidance counselors) in providing transition instruction and programming.
10	Understand and connect the current implementation of transition services, practices, and curricula as it relates to equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities regarding federal reporting requirements for Indicators 1 (graduation), 2 (dropout), 13 (transition goals, services, and activities), and 14 (post-school outcomes) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).
11	Stay current on evidence-informed practices in transition instruction, curricula, strategies, and practices to improve my teaching and broaden my professional knowledge and expertise.
12	Work to implement transition discussions and activities in elementary and early middle school.

Competency 2

Transition Assessment

1	Use valid and reliable age-appropriate, unbiased, transition assessment practices to help individuals with disabilities and their families/caregivers plan for postsecondary goals.
2	Actively work to minimize bias for individuals with disabilities using a culturally-responsive and sustaining lens in transition assessment.
3	Use self-reflection and program evaluation procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of my transition assessment practices to help ensure individuals with disabilities identify their postsecondary goals and implement academic and transition practices that help them achieve those goals.
4	Use a variety of formal, informal, performance-based, culturally responsive-sustaining transition assessments on an ongoing basis to identify strengths, preferences, interests, and needs critical to develop transition services and improve individuals with disabilities' adult outcomes.
5	Modify transition assessments to identify individuals with disabilities' assets, including the assets of their communities, families/caregivers, and other cultural/linguistic/religious/gender affiliations.
6	Help individuals with disabilities and their families/caregivers understand transition assessment results and use those to develop postsecondary goals that are based on their assets, strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.
7	Use transition assessment results, including academic and behavioral assessment results, to develop measurable postsecondary goals based on the individual with disabilities' assets, strengths, preferences, interests, and needs for further development/support.
8	Regularly conduct ecological assessments within the community to determine the needs of the individual with disabilities in post-school environments to develop transition supports and services for them and to identify natural supports in those environments.
9	Empower individuals with disabilities to lead the transition assessment process by actively involving them and their families/caregivers, enabling them to monitor their progress in achieving their postsecondary goals.
10	Collaborate with colleagues, community partners, and agencies to gather relevant information about industry trends and employment demand within the community.

Competency 3

Transition Programs, Services, & Equitable Outcomes

1	Know how to find and share information about evidence-informed in-school and community transition services and opportunities with individuals with disabilities and families/caregivers.
2	Plan for and implement community-based training that aligns with individuals with disabilities' strengths, interests, preferences, needs, and postsecondary goals.
3	Align postsecondary goals with individuals with disabilities' individualized courses of study and transition services.
4	Collaborate with colleagues, community partners, and agencies to identify, develop, and coordinate work-based learning partnerships and agreements to prepare individuals with disabilities for employment in their community.
5	Collaborate with colleagues, community partners, and agencies to develop and monitor natural support networks to ensure individuals with disabilities successfully transition into adult life.
6	Align the range of post-school transition options including employment, postsecondary education/training, and community integration with my individuals with disabilities' goals, strengths, preferences, needs, and interests.
7	Develop and implement relevant transition services, course of study, and instructional activities in a culturally responsive-sustaining manner to support individuals with disabilities in achieving their postsecondary goals.
8	Implement individualized accommodations and instructional strategies to support individuals with disabilities' transition-related skill development in education, employment, and other community settings.
9	Collect and use student-level data to evaluate progress toward individuals with disabilities' postsecondary goals and make data-based instructional and service delivery decisions.

Competency 4

Transition Research & Inquiry

1	Can identify the evidence-informed transition services promote successful and equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities, and I apply these practices with individuals with disabilities.
2	Know how to find evidence-informed transition research that reflects culturally responsive-sustaining transition practices.
3	Know how to use evidence-informed models to develop transition services that are culturally responsive-sustaining and support individuals with disabilities in their classrooms, schools, and community contexts.
4	Critically evaluate my transition services to ensure an asset-based approach is implemented for all individuals with disabilities.
5	Use evidence-informed programming and transition curriculum to design context specific, culturally responsive-sustaining transition programming.
6	Translate interventions and practices within transition research into classroom practice, while critically evaluating how those interventions and practices apply to individuals with disabilities, classroom, school, and community contexts.

Competency 5

Transition Leadership & Policy

1	Take on a leadership role by formulating goals, setting and meeting high professional expectations, advocating for effective policies and evidence-informed practices, and creating positive and productive work environments as a special education specialist.
2	Understand current transition laws and policies, changes to transition laws and policies, and how they impact my diverse set of individuals with disabilities.
3	Understand and can explain national, state, and local legislative systems and know how to engage with each of these systems to affect change (e.g., give public comment or testimony on proposed regulations).
4	Advocate for changes to improve transition services and policies within my school, community, state, and/or nation.
5	Train colleagues, community partners, and agencies and/or other personnel, families/caregivers about the transition to adult life for individuals with disabilities.
6	Actively facilitate and participate in the preparation and induction of new colleagues by providing transition content knowledge, support, curriculum resources, and engage with professional organizations.
7	Coordinate and facilitate on-going transition planning during and after annual IEP meetings.
8	Ensure individuals with disabilities have the same education/training, employment, and community integration opportunities to support their transition into adult life as their peers without disabilities.
9	Understand and can explain the laws and mandates guiding agencies' priorities and funding (e.g., Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA], state-level Home and Community-Based Services [HCBS] Medicaid waivers) to individuals with disabilities and families/caregivers and how those different but complementary policies impact interagency collaboration in the transition process and afterwards.

Competency 6

Transition Professional & Ethical Practice

1	Use foundational knowledge of the field and professional Special Education Ethical Principles and Practice Standards to inform my practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities.
2	Hold high professional expectations for myself and others and create culturally responsive-sustaining environments that safeguard the legal rights and improve equitable outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families/caregivers.
3	Demonstrate and promote respect for all individuals and facilitate ethical professional practice that confronts systemic racism, institutional bias, disproportionality, and the prevalence of persistently poor post-school outcomes.
4	Plan, present, and/or evaluate professional development that focuses on both ethical and culturally sustaining transition practices.
5	Understand and can explain the scope, role, and responsibilities of a transition specialist.
6	Understand the scope, role, and responsibilities of community agency personnel related to transition services.
7	Participate in self-reflection and program evaluation activities to address my own personal implicit bias and/or expectations for my individuals with disabilities (i.e., listen to all voices, validate postsecondary goal choices, respect student and/or family/caregiver value systems).

Competency 7

Collaboration

1	Use collaborative skills to improve transition services and equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
2	Use evidence-informed strategies for collaborating with colleagues, community partners, and agencies to ensure and increase effective transition services, practices, supports, and equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families/caregivers.
3	Actively engage with individuals and families/caregivers, especially those from culturally, ethnically, linguistically diverse backgrounds, throughout the transition planning process and navigating agencies, organizations, services, and systems.
4	Engage and empower individuals with disabilities, families/caregivers, colleagues, community partners, and agencies to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus for improving transition services and equitable outcomes for individuals with disabilities through active listening, trust building, relationship development, perspective taking, problem solving, conflict resolution, consensus building, transparency of duties and responsibilities, and centering individuals with disabilities, their assets, and desired outcomes.