

Integrating Transition Planning Into the IEP Process



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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Transition

Lynda L. West

When students receiving special education services leave the supportive environment of high school behind, they enter a new and challenging world. These young adults with disabilities need assistance to be prepared to fully participate in the postsecondary education, employment, and social and leisure opportunities offered by their communities. The extent to which youth with disabilities succeed depends on the effectiveness of cooperative planning by the individualized education program (IEP) team which represents the school, the community, private organizations, and their families.

The purpose of this guide is to assist educators, parents, professionals, and others involved in the transition planning process to work with and guide students with disabilities in their efforts to achieve a smooth transition from school to adult life. This guide recognizes all of the participants in the transition process as *transition personnel*. Transition personnel can include, but is not limited to, parents or guardians, special educators, general educators, career-technology educators (formerly referred to as *vocational educators*), social service professionals, rehabilitation professionals, employers, postsecondary support service providers, residential providers, medical providers, guidance counselors, mental health providers, rehabilitation technology providers, and other family members. All of these individuals can contribute in some way to the IEP team's efforts to plan transition to postsecondary settings and adulthood. Reality tells us that even in the best of circumstances this is a complex and challenging process, yet full of rewards if approached with persistence, focus and determination.

Educators, transition personnel, agency and community representatives, families, and individuals with disabilities need to focus not only on present educational needs but also on needs and goals for the future. Focusing on the future helps IEP teams to design instructional programs that reflect the skills needed



Chapter 2

Self-Determination

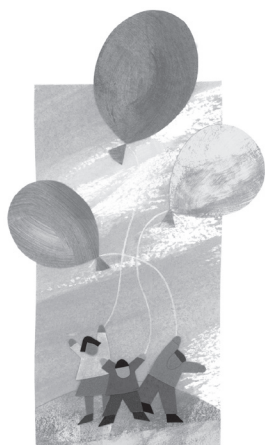
Stephanie Corbey

One goal of the transition planning process is for all students to have a role, to the greatest extent possible, in determining and reaching their desired post-high school outcomes. For this to occur, students need to be empowered with knowledge, skills, and resources, and then know when and how to use them. Self-determination results when individuals are empowered by knowing themselves, feel comfortable in expressing their views, and make choices in their lives. State and national organizations such as People First have been founded for the purpose of affirming individuals with disabilities in self-advocating for their rights. Students in transition from school to adult life begin to realize the power of speaking on their own behalf by acquiring and using self-determination skills.

What Is Self-Determination and Why Is it Part of Transition Planning?

In 1998, the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) published a position paper endorsing the following definition of *self-determination*:

Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. Self-determination is an understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the roles of adults in our society. (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998)



Chapter 3

The Role of Assessment in Transition Training

*Susan King, Lynda West,
Pam Leconte and Arden Boyer-Stephens*

Assessment of students with disabilities can take many forms, depending on the information needed for planning and instruction. Both short- and long-range planning should begin early in the student's education program. Ongoing assessment is critical to ensure appropriate planning and programming for a student with disabilities.

What Is Transition Assessment?

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition position paper (Sitlington, Nuebert, & Leconte, 1997) considered *transition assessment* as an umbrella term that covers career assessment, which relates to lifelong career development for all life roles; vocational assessment, which relates to work and employment; and ecological or functional assessment, which involves assessing student in the environment where the skill typically occurs (Test, Aspel, & Everson, 2006).

Assessment is the process of collecting data to make informed decisions (Kritikos, E., 2009; Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2007). Miller, Lombard, and Corbey (2007) defined *transition assessment* as

the process of determining a student's abilities, attitudes, aptitudes, interests, work behavior, levels of self-determination and self-advocacy skills, interpersonal skills, academic level, and independent living skills over an extended period of time for the purpose of planning an appropriate individual education plan [IEP]. (p. 5)

Once the relevant data are collected, the information is reviewed in order to develop a profile of the student's current status in the areas of transition. This profile



Chapter 4

Transition Planning for the IEP

Cindy Miller and Michelle Sarkees-Wircenski

In the past several decades there has been a growing interest in broadening the postschool outcomes for individuals with disabilities through increased access to the general education curriculum and involving the student and family in the transition process (Neubert, 2003). The inclusion of transition services in the individualized education program (IEP) process promotes longer range goals for students in special education. There is a significant relationship between an individual disability, level of education, and employment outcomes (Izzo, Hertzfeld, & Aaron, 2001). Individuals with disabilities are the most unemployed and underemployed segment of the population, which is why it is so critical for IEP team members to prepare for the transition from school to postsecondary and work options (Graham, 2005).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that student IEPs address the transition services necessary for them to access postschool environments. The IEP is an annual planning document listing goals to be mastered for the year; goals must be selected based on current levels of performance and anticipated future environments. This is a “results-oriented process” for the improvement of “the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability” for the facilitation of transition from school to employment and postsecondary options (20 U.S.C. § 1401(34)).

In addition to basing the transition services on each child’s individual needs and strengths (see Chapter 3), the IEP must include “appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills...and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching these goals” (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)).



Chapter 5

Curriculum for Successful Transition Planning

Juliana Taymans

Considerations for implementing transition curricula have changed since the reform enactments of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). The purpose of these reforms was to provide all students with educational environments that offer high expectations and hold both general and special educators accountable for serving all the students in their charge. IDEA clearly specifies that schools must ensure that students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum offered all students.

The *general curriculum* is based on state content standards and associated state-mandated tests. Standards make explicit what all students are expected to learn across grade levels. The underlying mandate of IDEA is that individualized education program (IEP) teams should plan based on a student with disabilities' engagement with the general curriculum. Access to the general curriculum can be represented as a four-point continuum (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005):

- Point 1** Students with disabilities are able to engage with one or more general education content curriculum areas without additional support. These students are fully integrated in general education classes without special education or related services aimed at specific content areas.
- Point 2** Students are learning the same curriculum but with supportive accommodations aimed at how they interact with the content and/or how they demonstrate their competence.



Chapter 6

Support Services

Donna Martinez and Arden Boyer-Stephens

Many elementary and secondary school systems and institutions of higher education have developed ways to provide the support necessary for students to achieve academic, social, and career goals. Schools offer an array of services from individual tutoring to resource rooms to full inclusion in the general education classroom. However, federal legislation has added special significance to the types of support services students need. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) address the need for support services for students with disabilities.

The expanded definition of *transition* under IDEA challenges educators to think into the future and to prepare students for a number of different settings, including adult education, adult services, postsecondary education, career-technical education, integrated employment, independent living, and community participation. Student individualized education programs (IEPs) must establish measurable postsecondary goals. Perkins IV requires career-technical programs to provide equal access to activities and to design programs that enable special populations to meet or exceed state-adjusted levels of academic performance—as well as to prepare these individuals for high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand occupations. Both laws speak to the need to fully prepare students for adult roles. As discussed in Chapter 1, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) also offer protection and accommodations for students with disabilities at all levels of education, and students will need to know their rights and responsibilities under each of these laws (See Chapter 1's Table 1.1 for comparison of legislation).



Chapter 7

Transition Planning and Interagency Cooperation

Robert Miller and Stephanie Corbey

Transition planning is a collaborative effort between the student, family, community, and educators with the express purpose of identifying and attaining short-term goals (e.g., academic year) as well as developing and implementing a long-term plan for the student (i.e., all of high school and beyond; Miller, Lombard, & Corbey, 2007). The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that the individualized education program (IEP) team develop appropriate measurable postsecondary goals for each student based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to his or her training, education, employment, and independent living skills, and that the IEP must include the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals (34 C.F.R. § 300.320(b)(1)&(2)). The student's IEP should contain a statement of interagency responsibilities and linkages required to ensure that the student has the transition services needed from outside community agencies. Also, representatives from those community agencies must be invited to attend IEP meetings to the extent appropriate and with the consent of the family and student of majority age (34 C.F.R. § 320.321(b)(3)). Inviting representatives from community agencies to participate in the long-term planning for students of transition age is always appropriate with family and student approval—interagency collaboration and linkage with necessary adult services is a critical component of successful transition planning.

What Is Interagency Collaboration?

Kochhar-Bryant (2003) suggested that *interagency service coordination* might be described as a strategy for mobilizing and organizing all the appropriate resources to link the individual with needed services in order to achieve IEP goals and successful transition outcomes. Interagency cooperation has proven



Chapter 8

Program Evaluation and Follow-Up

Robert Miller and Stephanie Corbey

Among the overriding themes of public education in our time are *excellence* and *accountability*. Is public education meeting its obligation to educate students and to prepare these students to be successful in life after high school? There are indicators that public education is struggling to prepare all children to be successful in life after high school, such as the high dropout rate and criticism by employers that students are leaving high school without the necessary skills to find and maintain meaningful work (Luecking, 2009). Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was one attempt to address the need for accountability and excellence in public education. Ryan (2005) suggests that educational accountability is a fundamental right of citizens in a democratic society serving the public interest and that NCLB is structured to hold states, school districts, public officials, educators, students, and parents accountable through auditable performance standards.

The Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) is consistent with the focus of NCLB on excellence and accountability. IDEA requires that transition planning and transition services be provided for all students with disabilities 16 years and older. Transition planning and transition services are the bridge between the education system and successful student outcomes. *Outcomes* are defined by the United Way of America (n.d.) as “benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities.... They are what participants know, think or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program.” Program evaluation and follow-up are vehicles for determining if programs in public schools have successfully achieved the dual missions of providing students high quality education and preparing students for success in life after high school.



Chapter 9

Considerations for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Transition

Christine Pilgrim

Articles in research literature and popular press abound with information regarding the changing demographics of the United States. As a result of this demographic shift, educators across the nation are searching for the best ways to meet the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997–2006), over 5 million children (ages 6–21) are currently served under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) within the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data show 42.32% of those students come from diverse backgrounds. Other statistics cite that by the year 2040 it is estimated that half of the nation's public school population will be from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds (Leake & Stodden, 2002). With these statistics in mind, it is important for educators to be prepared to meet the needs of a constantly changing student demographic if we are to ensure that all students with disabilities experience positive outcomes.

Students and families with values and traditions that differ from mainstream culture are considered to be from CLD backgrounds, and for many of these students English is not the first language (Valenzuela & Martin, 2005). This definition is more encompassing than just identifying students born in other countries, or families who have a different primary language, as culturally diverse. Students and families who were born in the United States and are from minority backgrounds can also fit this CLD definition, as their culture may differ from the mainstream.

How Do Different Cultures Define Disability?

The concept of disability is a socially constructed one. Simply put, there is neither a single definition of disability nor a specific category of disability that crosses