Life After High School:

Post Secondary Transition for Students with Developmental Disabilities

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES
EDUCATION • EMPOWERMENT • EQUITY

Family Resource Navigators

California State Council Developmental Disabili

Learning Objectives

- Review the required Transition Planning and Services components under state and federal law (i.e., IDEA 2004).
- Understand adult decision-making options (including supported decision making) and transition.
- Find out about life options – in adult education, independent living and work assistance programs – so you can find them in your area.

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In setting up the law that governs special education, the U.S. Congress declared,

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

Further Education

Employment

Independent Living

The Purpose of IDEA

34 CFR 300.1(a)

Purpose of Transition Planning

(Section 300.42 (a))

- Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a youth with a disability that—
- (1) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that 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, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

Purpose of Transition Planning

(Section 300.42 (a))

- Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a youth with a disability that….
- (2) Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes—
- (i) Instruction;
- (ii) Related services;
- (iii) Community experiences;
- (iv) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- (v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

TRANSITION TRACK RECORD is disappointing (after the student left the public system)

- The college enrollment rate for young adults aged 18-24 with disabilities in the U.S. was 27.5 percent, compared to the national average of 43.3 percent for young adults without disabilities (2022 Youth Transition Report).

- CDC reported in 2024 that 1 in 4 people with disabilities do not have a regular healthcare provider.

- According to the US Department of Labor, 37.1 of people with disabilities 16-64 were employed. This is the highest number since data collection began in 2008. According to the US Census, Individuals with a disability earned a median of $28,438 in 2021, compared with $40,948 among those without a disability.

TRANSITION TRACK RECORD is disappointing (after the student left the public system)

A national study finds housing choices are limited for people with developmental disabilities who often get little say about where they might live when they leave home. Disability Scoop reported in 2020 that about 75 percent of adults with developmental disabilities live with an aging parent or caregiver and most are not utilizing public supports or services.

More than half of families reported no plan for the future.

Planning and preparation for transition in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process are essential for achieving positive outcomes.

Quick Review of IDEA 2004 Requirements

Transition services and planning should be part of the IEP process starting when a child enters high school (or sooner), and a transition plan and services should be in place by the time a youth is 16 in CA.

IDEA emphasizes that education agencies will assist students to effective transition from school to post-secondary options.

The transition plan has two important pieces: measurable postsecondary goals and transition services and activities to support those goals.

Transition Goals

Just like annual IEP goals, transition goals must be written with a result in mind.

They must also be measurable. In other words, you must be able to know if the goals have been accomplished.

Transition goals must focus on what happens after high school.

Goals should be based on assessments

- Transition inventories identify strengths and needs in a variety of areas, such as independent living and work readiness.
- This can include measures such as direct observations, interviews, interest inventories, as on the job training and analysis, and preference inventories. It can also include formal measures such as academic achievement tests.
- While future planning is an important part of most children's lives, this may not be missed for students with IEPs.

Baselines and Goals

- Baselines should be based on assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate independent living skills.

- Transition Plans should include baselines and measurable goals and a statement of the needed special education and related services and supplementary aids and services (based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable) to be provided to the child.

Transition is NOT just the school or family

- Unlike in IEPs, where the services and supports are provided by the school district, transition activities may be the responsibility of other agencies. In such cases, the school's role is to facilitate their involvement and help coordinate the services.

- The financial responsibility for meeting a student's transition goals is not meant to apply solely to the education system but also to the agencies that the IEP team involves in meeting the transition objectives set out in the IEP.

Transition Services and Activities

- Based on student's individual interests, needs and strengths.
- Facilitates the move to post school activities.
- Designed to include instruction, related services, community experience and when appropriate activities of daily living.
- Results oriented designed to improve the academic and functional achievement of the student.

Transition plans provide the frame (around future education, career/vocation and independent(or interdependent living) that yearly IEP goals fits within and help move forward.

- For example, for students who want to attend college, the IEP goals might focus on study skills, prerequisites, or graduation requirements.
- For students who want employment as a more immediate goal, IEP goals might focus on their job readiness or vocational skills.

Transition plans should be in place and ready to be implemented on the student's 16th birthday.

- The school is required to invite a student of any age with a disability to attend the IEP meeting if the purpose of the IEP meeting will be the consideration of transition services.

- This may include discussing what the student wants for his or her future, what needs or challenges are perceived as barriers to reaching student goals, and what accommodations and supports will support student efforts.

- Parents must be notified that the purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop a statement of transition services needs for their child and who is invited to attend the meeting (as districts should invite other agencies such as regional center and vocational rehabilitation).

IDEA emphasizes the importance of self-determination for the student in transition – although for many interdependence be the goal rather than independence.

It is important to remember that at the age of majority (18), educational decision-making rights revert to the student (unless the student is conserved – a conservatorship is when the courts take away an individual's decision making rights).

Decision Making Choices

- But students can continue to get support from parents or friends on the IEP/special education process. There is a really simple form (click on the QR code to get it) that a youth can sign to authorize their parents to continue to make decisions (or speak for the student) – no conservatorship is needed.
- The difference between this agreement and conservatorship is that the student can change their mind at any time about involving their parents, as they retain decision making rights.

Supporting Student Participation

- Students can use supported decision-making in the IEP process to be part of this discussion. Supported decision making means that people with disabilities get to make their own decisions with the supporters that they choose.
- A California law called AB 1663 enables people with disabilities (PWD) to choose to use or formalize these kinds of decision-making supports for themselves in supported decision-making or SDM.

Support for a student using SDM in the transition process

Supporters can:

- Find or create meeting materials in a way that the person can understand.
- Present materials in an accessible format for this person.
- Build in extra time to talk about and think about choices.
- Act as a note taker and review with the decision maker later.
- Help with asking questions and understanding options.

See https://peatc.org/supported-decision-making/

Student Participation in Transition

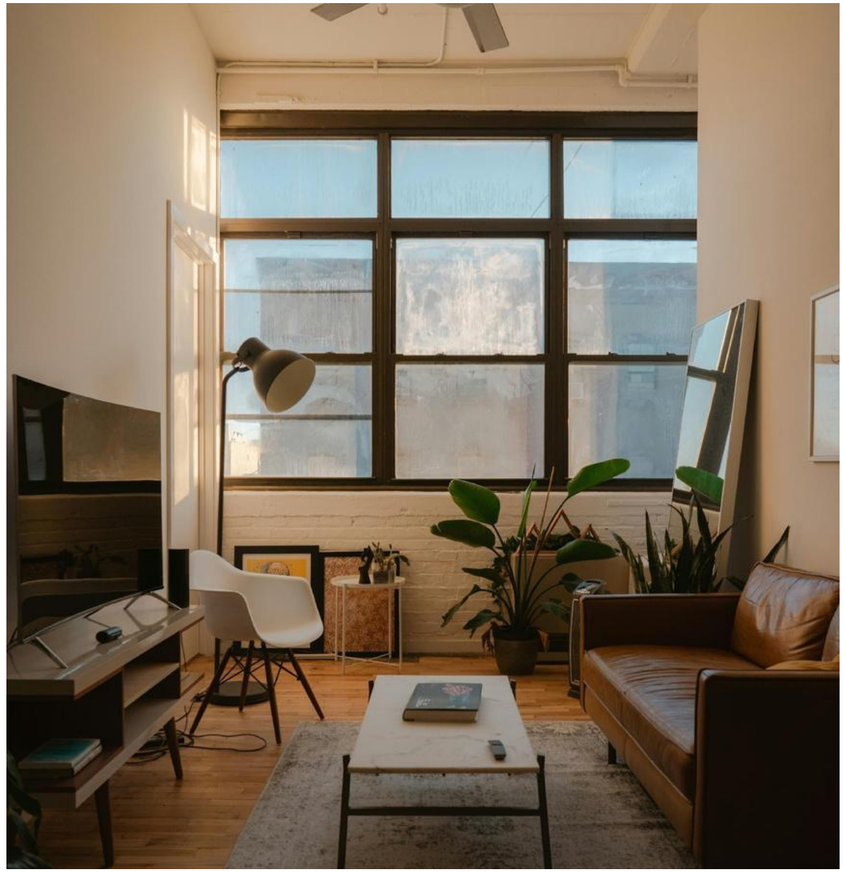
- Transition should be focused on that student and their future. Therefore, student participation is central to effective transition planning and decision-making.
- Gathering student information can also be done outside of the IEP meeting, in a person-centered plan, or in a series of conversations if that works better for the student.
- Goals/Activities can be built into IEPs in the years approaching transition around decision-making and self-advocacy to help prepare for adult life.

What are some of the post-high school options for transitioning students?

Living Options

Some adults want to live independently in an apartment or home. In addition to market-rate rentals, there are below-market-rate units for low-income individuals and students and section 8 housing vouchers for those who qualify.

For those looking for communal living experiences, regional centers vendorize with Family Homes and Community Care Facilities (some with medical or behavioral specialties). (There are also Intermediate Care Facilities for people with complex medical conditions, funded by MediCal)



Help living at Home

Support for daily living can be provided by the Regional Center through supported living services (SLS), coordinated family services (CFS) , and independent living services (ILS).

Eligible Medi-Cal recipients may receive In Home Health Supported Services (IHSS) and the Home and Community Based Waiver (HCBA) which can provide an assistant in the home.

Education Options

Assistance in funding education and vocational training may be available for eligible students from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

Graduating students may want to attend a four-year college or university. (There is a set of high school courses (A-G) that students must complete to be eligible for admission to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems – so preparation should start early.) Students will need to work with the disabled student services office to request 504 accommodations (as there are no IEPs in college).

Students may choose to attend a community college. California community colleges can meet a broad range of student goals, from personal growth to professional training, from associate degrees to university transfers.

Additional Education Options

- Attending a college that has enhanced supports for students with learning challenges.
- Using an external college support program can assist with various issues such as tutoring, executive functioning, and independent living.
- Allowing more students to have the experience of college life while obtaining training to improve employment outcomes.

And more education options

Students may also be interested in vocational or technical training in high school and beyond.

Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCPs). Students receive training at a variety of venues from regular classrooms on high school campuses to actual businesses and industry facilities.

Department of Rehabilitation cooperative programs are state and local agreements where the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and public partner agencies provide vocationally focused services to help individuals with disabilities obtain and retain competitive, integrated employment and maximize their ability to live independently in their communities.

DOR (Department of Rehabilitation Services)

“DOR administers the largest vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs in the country. Vocational rehabilitation services are designed to help job seekers with disabilities obtain competitive employment in integrated work settings. Independent living services may include peer support, skill development, systems advocacy, referrals, assistive technology services, transition services, housing assistance, and personal assistance services.” (https://www.dor.ca.gov/)

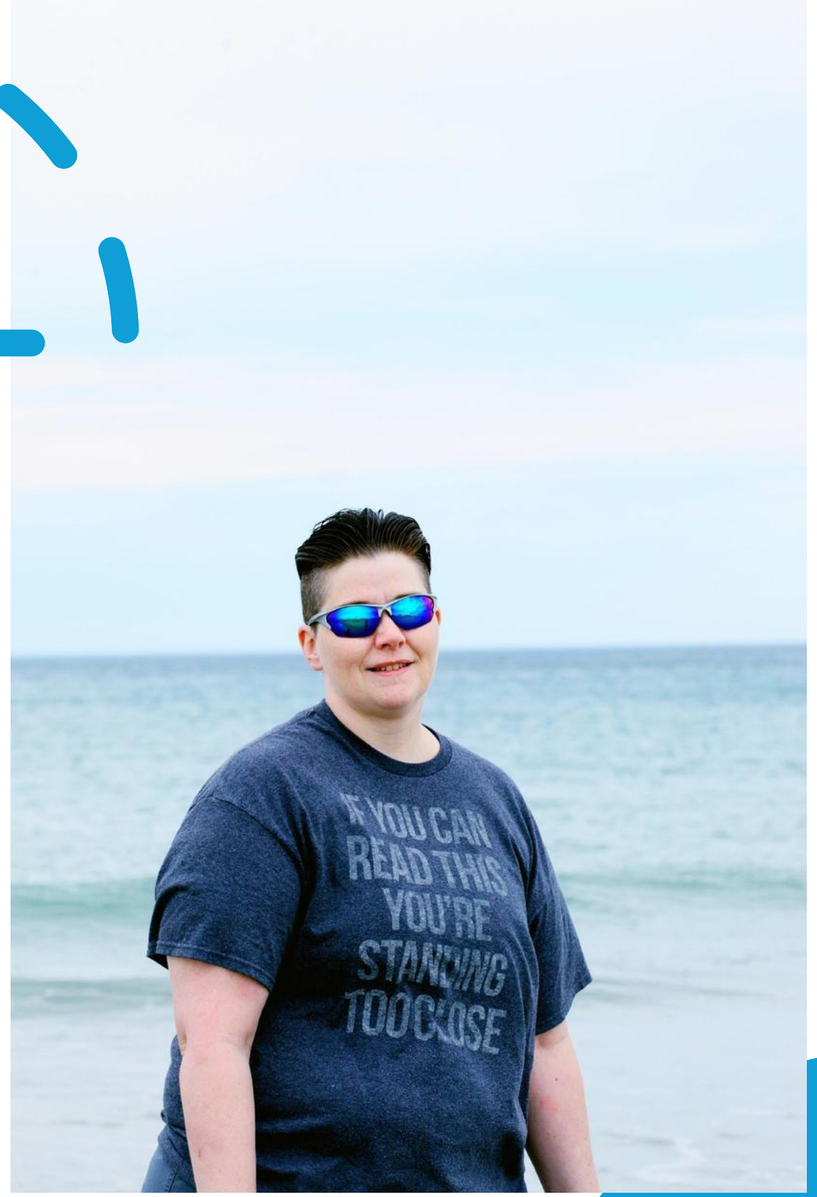
These services are available both before graduation (in the youth program) as well as after graduation for eligible recipients.

Employment Options

- DOR has a Supported Employment Program that provides activities and services, including ongoing support services, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability, including youth with most significant disabilities, in an integrated employment setting for the term of employment (typically 24 months in length).
- Regional Center can also offer job development, vocational training and employment support to eligible clients.

A few additional concerns for transition…

- Accessing Public Benefits and Financial Supports
- Transition to Adult Health Care Providers



Eligibility for Benefits

- An important transition issue for some students is finding out whether they are eligible for SSI (Supplementary Security Income). SSI provides eligible people with disabilities with a monthly benefit to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing.

- Receiving SSI can open access other benefits such as Cal-fresh food assistance, low income housing/section 8 and other benefits (some as low cost internet or discounted gym memberships for example).

MediCal coverage

Adults can often remain on their parent's insurance till 26, or get insurance from the college or university that they attend.
Some adults will get their health coverage from Medi-Cal. Medicaid provides health-related and medical services to eligible people with disabilities as well as access to certain adult services. Medicaid is usually linked to SSI eligibility for adults.
Adults will also need to find adult providers, which can be a challenge.

Post Secondary Transition

- Is a super complicated process for most young adults and their families.
- Depending on the PWD's needs and interests, there are services and programs available.
- Transition planning, which can give the PWD and their family space and information to make all this happen – is the most effective way to start the next phase of life.

QUESTIONS ?

California State Council on Developmental Disabilities

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