

# Transition Planning and Processes

## Key Components

Successful transition from school to adult life, which includes competitive integrated employment, requires ongoing and collaborative planning among students, their families, school, and adult service personnel. Setting high expectations and providing relevant,

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*Competitive integrated employment is a term we use to describe jobs, usually in your local community, paying wages at or above the minimum wage in workplaces that include people with disabilities as well as people who don't have disabilities.*

individualized learning experiences in inclusive community and employment settings are essential elements of the transition planning process.

The essential components described below will help your student gain the knowledge and skills they need to experience a successful transition from school to work.

## The Components of Exemplary School-to-Work Transition

### **Engage in ongoing, student-centered, collaborative planning among all key team members.**

- Start with the end in mind. Collaborate with your student's IEP team to plan both school and community learning experiences from a young age. Be sure your student's plan provides experiences that lead to competitive integrated employment and adult lifestyles in the community.
- Be an active member of your student's IEP team. Talk with your student and your fellow team members to ensure that your student can be an engaged, equal partner in the meeting. Prepare students to lead as much of their IEP plan and meetings as possible, beginning in elementary and middle school and continuing through high school.
- Discuss supported decision-making early. Learning about the continuum of available supports and alternatives to guardianship will help you and your student make the best, informed decision possible. If you haven't already talked about supported

decision-making in elementary school, be sure to add it to the agenda for your next team meeting and keep talking about decision-making and supports at each of your team meetings throughout high school.

- Promote meaningful, student-centered Transition IEP goals and objectives that enhance student knowledge, skills, and independence in inclusive school, home, work, and community settings.
- Communicate regularly with IEP team members. Team meetings should occur at least annually to review progress toward desired outcomes and plan next steps, but more frequent communication is necessary to ensure the IEP is being implemented properly and sufficient progress is being made. You can request meetings at any time.
- Help transition team members know your student. With your student's input, share information related to the racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious beliefs and backgrounds of your family, as well as other values and traditions related to the education of your child.
- Ask that relevant adult service personnel be included as part of the transition IEP team. If you are unsure of who that is, connect with your student's teacher of record to learn more about available service agencies in your area that assist with transition from school to postsecondary education, training, employment, and independent living.
- Request definitions of any acronyms and jargon, especially in relation to special education. It is important that you understand the terminology used in your student's IEP meetings.
- Inquire early about transition. School personnel provide a timeframe and a list of "To Do's" that will help you better understand the yearly progression toward transition from ages 14 to 22.
- Familiarize yourself with person-centered planning tools. Families are central to helping educators and adult service personnel get to know their child. Person-centered planning is a process for identifying student strengths, interests, preferences, needs, goals, and dreams, as well as student knowledge, skills, learning preferences, values, personality traits, likes and dislikes, life experiences, support systems, support needs, and accommodations. There are a variety of approaches and tools that can be used to gather and document this information in a Transition Portfolio and use it to plan and implement Transition IEPs.

Person-centered planning tools include:

- Positive Personal Profile
- Transition Assessments/Discovery
- LifeCourse Framework
- Making Action Plans (MAPS)
- Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)
- Essential Lifestyle Planning
- Personal Futures Planning

### **Provide activities and experiences that lead to competitive integrated employment outcomes.**

- Advocate for inclusive education from a young age.
- Support increasing levels of independence and self-determination as your student moves through elementary, middle, and high school.
- Incorporate “functional” life skills in real-life (authentic) contexts daily.
- Apply academic (math, literacy, etc.) knowledge and skills in real-life situations during and outside of the school day.
- Assist your student in gaining an array of work-based learning experiences prior to transition to adult life, e.g., community-based instruction, job exploration and training, internships, work-study programs, and school-supported community-based programs for students ages 18-22.
- Be sure your student has full access to opportunities that prepare them for postsecondary education and training leading to competitive integrated employment and careers.
- Seek out job placements prior to completion of high school and use personal and professional networks to connect students with jobs and businesses of interest.
- Enroll your student in an array of individualized and integrated Pre-ETS (Employment Transition Services) provided by the school district, including instruction in self-determination/self-advocacy.
- Talk to people you know for employment connections, including co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family.
- Connect with state advocacy organizations and school personnel who can explain the transfer of rights at age 18 and alternatives to guardianship.

- Request clear information about Indiana’s Medicaid Waivers from as early as elementary school. Information should include what each waiver provides, eligibility, and when and how to apply.

### **Understand adult services and state and federal benefits.**

- Connect with an area benefits specialist to help you understand benefits and how your student can get the most out of work.
- Request information about community services (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation, employment service providers) available post-school. Your student should be connected to needed services prior to exiting school.

### **Be familiar with common terms and language related to school-to-work transition.**

- **Positive personal profile** summarizes an individual’s strengths, interests, and personal preferences. The profile can help build meaningful community connections and target employment opportunities.
- **Discovery** is a process employment service professionals and others use to find out as much as possible about a job seeker and their strengths, preferences, interests, and needs in order to create an effective plan for employment. It is similar to the school’s process to help students identify their job goal.
- **Job seeker** refers to the person looking for employment in the adult service world.
- **Individualized services** means that services should focus on each person and what they need rather than just what programs offer.
- **Competitive, transferable, and marketable job skills** are skills that translate into real jobs in the community with living wages leading to careers.
- **Asset-based (vs. deficit-based) approaches** refer to approaches that build on a person’s skills, talents, and interests, as opposed to identifying and trying to fix a person’s limitations.
- **Meaningful goals** refers to goals directly connected to a person’s long-term goals for employment, independent living, and community participation.
- **Support networks** are people and resources available to a person to enable their success in life.

- **Natural supports** are unpaid relationships (for example, friends, family, neighbors, community members) who support people with disabilities in their communities and natural environments.
- **Self-determination/self-advocacy.** Self-advocacy involves speaking up for yourself and your wants, needs, and interests. Self-determination is the ability to make decisions for yourself.
- **Employment specialist** is an adult service professional who supports a job seeker to find, get, and keep community integrated employment.
- **Customized employment** is a strategy for achieving competitive integrated employment or self-employment. By developing and facilitating a relationship between the employee and employer that is focused on meeting the needs of both, an employment specialist can identify customized employment solutions.
- **Transition-aged** refers to the age when students with disabilities are mandated to engage in planning for postsecondary school outcomes (age 14 years old), including competitive integrated employment, independent living, and community participation.
- **Work-based learning** involves learning technical, academic, and employability skills by working in a real work environment. Through work-based learning, job seekers learn first-hand how to succeed in the workforce, discovering what it takes to be successful while gaining both an education and valuable technical skills in their chosen pathway.
- **Pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS)** provide resources for students with disabilities to gain and/or enhance work skills, explore employment and education options, and participate in on-site job training. The services are provided during school, funded by Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation, and delivered by an adult service agency.

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*Produced by*

