



Transition in the IEP

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Transition Plan?

In Tennessee, at age 14, and annually thereafter, transition plans are added to students' Individualized Education Plans. The transition plan is designed to help students prepare for life after high school. It helps students identify their preferences, interests, needs, and strengths (PINS), so that they can set attainable post-school goals for themselves. Using this information, educators and students can identify short-term goals and activities to assist the students in moving closer to meeting their post-school goals.

Why is transition instruction important?

Students with disabilities are less likely to access postsecondary education/training and to obtain work than peers without disabilities. Transition instruction focuses on equipping students with the knowledge and tools to be successful in postsecondary education/training and workplace environments. Research has shown that students who receive explicit instruction in transition are more likely to successfully access postsecondary education/training and employment (Wehmeyer, 2020).

What are transition assessments and why are they important?

At least once annually, special educators, counselors, and/or other education professionals are required to administer transition assessments to gather data from students that will drive the transition plan. Assessments should always be completed by the student when possible as well as other IEP stakeholders who know the student well. IEP stakeholders could include, the student's family, teachers, related service providers, and employers. By collecting data from several perspectives, educators are able to gather a more complete picture of the student's preferences, interests, needs, strengths, and future goals.

Assessments can be formal or informal. Formal assessments are those commonly completed by a school psychologist or other related service providers. Formal assessments are typically norm referenced and are both valid and reliable for certain populations of students. Formal assessments should be conducted each year the student is reevaluated for special education services. Informal assessments can include things like questionnaires, checklists, or career cluster inventories. Informal assessments can be administered by anyone. There is no required number of assessments an educator must give when writing a transition plan. However, educators should administer as many

assessments as needed to write a meaningful, data-driven transition plan that covers the areas of employment, education/training, independent living, and community involvement.

Where can I find transition assessments?

Visit the [Transition Tennessee Assessment Database](#) to find several transition assessments covering a range of topics (e.g., postsecondary readiness, career exploration, financial literacy, independent living skills, self-determination)

Can I get assessment data from other school staff?

Yes! Special educators should collaborate with general education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, school counselors, and others to collect meaningful transition data from students. General education teachers can fill out a teacher observation form about how the student functions within their classroom and accommodations that have been useful. Paraprofessionals can take anecdotal notes on students in diverse settings (e.g., the lunchroom, specials classes, transitioning between classes, etc.). Related service providers often take notes during each session with the student, which can then be used as informal assessment data. Finally, school counselors often administer career assessments to all students and may already have useful data to share.

What is the difference between measurable postsecondary goals, transition services, and annual goals?

Measurable Postsecondary Goals (MPSGs)

Measurable postsecondary goals are goals that students set for themselves after high school. They are not goals students will reach while in high school. In Tennessee, all students must have MPSGs in Employment and Education/Training. If the student is obtaining the Alternate Academic Diploma (AAD) or they have identified needs in this area, they will also have MPSGs for Independent Living and Community Involvement.

What happens if students' goals change each year before they graduate?

It is expected that students' MPSGs will change over time as their PINS evolve. Therefore, MPSGs must be updated annually to reflect their transition assessment data (collected annually).

What if a student doesn't know what they want to do after high school?

Many students don't have a clear idea of what they want to do after high school. That's why assessing students is critical, as it helps students start to narrow down their career interests or learn about careers that they are unaware of. Narrowing their career focus will assist the student in identifying what type of postsecondary

education or training is preferred or required to work in their career field.

Is the school liable if a student doesn't meet their MPSGs?

No. IDEA requires that the school's education supports prepare students to meet their outcomes. However, IDEA does not hold schools accountable if students do not meet their postsecondary goals. In many cases, students change their mind about their future plans as they begin working or start postsecondary education/training.

Measurable postsecondary goals follow a specific written format. See the format and examples below:

After graduation, After high school, Upon completion of high school,	Student name	Will	Behavior	Postsecondary outcome

Examples:

- Upon completion of high school, Quinn will work full-time as a bank teller.
- After high school, Alicia will enroll in and attend a four-year college/university and major in writing.
- Upon the completion of high school, Hugo will work as a stock person at a store with the support of a job coach.
- After high school, Jahmauri will complete a culinary arts program through a community college.

Transition Services

Transition services, sometimes referred to as the Coordinated Set of Activities, are activities, lessons, experiences, or community-based trips. These services are included in students' IEPs to act as steppingstones to help students meet their MPSGs. They can happen both inside school and outside of school but will not take the entire IEP year to accomplish. Transition services can fall under any of the following domains: Instruction, Related Services, Community Experiences, Employment and Postsecondary Living Objectives, Daily Living Skills, and Functional Vocational Evaluation.

How many transition services are required?

In the State of Tennessee, there is no required number of transition services. However, the IEP should include as many transition services needed to master skills that will set a student up to successfully meet their measurable postsecondary goals.

Can all my students have the same transition services?

Transition services should be individualized to align with students' MPSGs. While some activities and lessons are important for all students to access (e.g., developing self-advocacy skills, obtaining a driver's license or state ID), one should be able to clearly identify how each transition service directly aligns with a student's measurable postsecondary goals.

Who is responsible for making sure transition services are completed?

Any IEP team member can provide transition services. For example, Quinn, our case study student has the special education teacher, CTE instructor, school counselor, and parent listed as providers for different transition services.

Example Transition Services:

- Quinn will receive soft skills instruction within her Career Tech I course.
- Alicia will explore and visit postsecondary placements and visit the Office for Students with Disabilities.
- Hugo will meet with his speech language pathologist to expand his use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).
- Jahmauri will get experience as a prep and line cook at his work-based learning placement.

Measurable Annual Goals (MAGs)

A least one measurable annual goal related to transition must be included in a student's IEP when they turn 14. MAGs are goals that a student will meet within the IEP year (12-month period). MAGs must follow the format outlined below:

Condition	Student Name	Measurable & Observable Behavior	Performance Criteria		
		<i>Will do this...</i>	<i>Level of mastery</i>	<i>Number of times needed to present mastery</i>	<i>Evaluation schedule, method, and mastery date</i>
<i>Condition/ materials/ setting/ accommodations</i>					
-Given... -After...			% mastery	-Trials -Attempts	-As measured by -By date

Example Measurable Annual Goals:

- After receiving self-monitoring instruction on utilizing a vibrating timer, Hugo will independently check his picture schedule to see if he is on the correct task when the vibrating timer goes off with 100% accuracy on 4 out of 5 days as measured by a teacher-created chart with data taken by a teacher, paraprofessional, or job coach by the end of the IEP year.
- With the use of screen reading software, Alicia will open Word documents, navigate, edit, and save with 80% accuracy and fewer than 2 prompts, on 4 out of 5 attempts, documented through weekly teacher observation sheets, by the end of the school year.

What is a 4-year Course of Study and why is it required?

Each year, a 4-year Course of Study is included in the transition plan. The Course of Study lists all current and projected classes the student will take while enrolled in high school. The coursework should build upon itself to ensure students meet their graduation requirements, while also ensuring the student has the opportunity to gain the skills that will help them meet their MPSGs. It's important to note that as students' MSPGs change, the IEP team should review the course of study and adjust students' coursework to fit their changing interests.

What happens if the school's courses change?

The Course of Study is updated annually. When writing the Course of Study, educators should write courses based on what diploma pathway each student is pursuing. For more information on course codes, refer to the Course Code FAQs document in the Additional Reading section of this course.

Example Measurable Postsecondary Goals aligned with the Course of Study for Jahmauri:

MPSGs

Employment: After high school graduation, Jahmauri will obtain full-time employment as a chef in a restaurant.

Education/Training: After high school graduation, Jahmauri will complete a culinary arts program through a community college.

Independent/Supported Living: After high school graduation, Jahmauri will create and balance a monthly budget.

Community Involvement: After high school graduation, Jahmauri will participate in running races in his community.

Course of Study

Grade 9 Course of Study: English I, Algebra 1A, US History, Physical Science, Culinary Arts I, Wellness, Spanish I, and Study Hall

Grade 10 Course of Study: English II, Algebra 1B, Spanish II, Chemistry, World History and Geography, Culinary Arts II, and Study Hall

Grade 11 Course of Study: English III, Geometry, US Government and Civics, Physical Education, Physics, Culinary Arts III, and Study Hall

Grade 12 Course of Study: English IV, Algebra II, Earth Science, Psychology, Work-Based Learning Career Practicum-Culinary Arts, and Study Hall

Why are students invited to their IEP meetings?

IEPs and transition plans are written to prepare students for adult living. It's important for them to know what information is included in their IEP, so they are empowered with this information when seeking out adult services. Moreover, students should go to their IEP meetings and actively participate to the greatest extent possible so that they can be a part of the conversation about their PINS, postsecondary goals, annual goals, and transition services.

How can I prepare my students for their IEP meeting?

There are a variety of resources and curricula to teach students self-determination skills that will be helpful to students as they increase their active participation at their IEP meetings. Visit the [Curriculum Database](#) to find self-determination curriculum.

How might student involvement at an IEP meeting vary?

Just as students have differing needs, student involvement may vary. Special educators should work with students to identify how they can be as involved and active at the IEP meeting as possible. Remember, student involvement can look like any of the following:

- Student leads their IEP meeting
- Student records parts of the IEP meeting ahead of time
- Student asks questions and makes comments at the IEP meeting
- Student shows agreement and/or disagreement at the meeting by activating a switch(es)

How will the transition planning meeting be effective if it is student-led?

During IEP meetings, special educators present assessment findings and recommendations to the team. It's important to give the student the same opportunity so that they can have an active role. Moreover, the presence of a student can help keep the focus on what is important—the student's vision for the future.

When can student involvement begin?

Students are required to be invited to their IEP meeting starting at age 14. However, they can be invited any time beforehand. This means special educators can start inviting students to their IEP meeting as soon as they have an IEP.

Why are adult agencies invited to IEP meetings?

Special Education services under IDEA end when the student receives their high school diploma. This means students no longer have an IEP that entitles them to receive instruction and direct services from qualified school professionals. Adult agencies can pick up where school leaves off. Agencies are invited to the meeting so that the student and their family can make connections and begin the process of identifying who they will work with to ensure the student has access to adult services after graduation. Making these introductions early will assist the student and their family in having a seamless transition from high-school to the adult world.

How do I ensure a collaborative and effective IEP meeting?

Special educators are responsible for facilitating connections between IEP team stakeholders. By connecting all stakeholders and regularly communicating with them, the team will feel empowered, and it will establish a rapport. Below are some tips for establishing a positive IEP planning process amongst multiple stakeholders:

- Clearly identify roles and expectations at the beginning of the meeting
- Carve out time during the meetings to clarify responsibilities
- Avoid use of jargon, and if used, ensure it is explained to all team members
- Communicate regularly outside of IEP meetings
- Anticipate issues that may create conflict during the meeting and be prepared to address them

How can I involve my students' families in the transition planning process?

Family involvement is an essential component to a student's successful transition. Special educators should:

- Give families resources to help them understand the transition planning process and what they could expect once their child graduates
- Explain the different transition components of the IEP
- Encourage input before and after transition planning
- Work with families to identify services and goals that the student can work on at home
- Respect the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic culture of students' families
 - Understand the obstacles families may face during the transition planning period

How do I make sure my students and their families have the information and contacts they need after graduation?

Special educators should regularly keep in contact with students' families about agencies and services the student has access to now, and what services they may be eligible for in the future. Moreover, all students must have an exit IEP meeting and Summary of Performance document completed during their last year of school. The Summary of Performance Document outlines the students' strengths, areas of need, functional skills, and potential accommodations they may require in the future. In addition, the Summary of Performance document lists contact information for various agencies students may consider working with in the future. Educators should ensure that the agencies they list on the document would likely serve the student and their needs. Additionally, educators should ensure that the contact information is accurate.

References

- Wehmeyer, M. L. (2020). Self-determination in adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 33(2), 81–85. <https://doi.org/10.1097/yco.0000000000000576>