

10 STEPS TO TRANSITION

A RESOURCE DEVELOPED
BY

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#10

Pay Attention!!!

No one can maneuver the transition from school to adulthood without support! It's important for students who have disabilities and their families to consider how they can build in activities and relationships to enjoy this time, as well as activities and relationships to support themselves in the future.

PAY ATTENTION to the things that will encourage and support the student. This seems like a no-brainer, but in order to get your child excited about the future, you need to pay attention to and incorporate things, people, places that are of interest to them.

#9

Tackle Transportation

So your child may already have a plan that involves going on to college, or maybe they will be working towards a goal of getting a job. Maybe you have found an awesome day program they can attend after they graduate!!!

Question: how will they get there and back? Are you going to drive them every day? Most families aren't prepared to start providing transportation to and from their adult child's daily activities, whatever they may be.... But transportation is one of the TOP ROADBLOCKS to pursuing goals after graduation. If you live in a rural area, it gets even more challenging!

Research all the potential transportation options in your community. Also be advised that counties sometimes have their own door to door transportation options BUT there are eligibility guidelines and also they may only run a certain route during very limited times. Medicaid offers free non emergency medical transportation for doctor's appointments, etc. and will accommodate a personal assistant to ride along

#8

Visit / Gather Info

When your child is around their Junior year, they may work with Vocational Rehabilitation and their school to visit certain work programs and/or work sites. But it really is up to the parents to work with their children to visit a wide variety of places... whether it be colleges, day programs, supported employment programs that go beyond vocational rehabilitation. Once you find some places that are a good fit you need to start working on the eligibility guidelines and ask questions as to how they are funded. Many times there are huge waitlists that go for years to enroll in these programs. Many times the state and federal government fund these programs, so you know there will be mucho hoops to jump through!!! The earlier you tackle it, the better! And that is my motto through all these steps!

#7

The Guardian Glitch

So, the school legally has a responsibility to inform your child of their rights at age 18, and during transition planning with the IEP team there usually is a very brief discussion regarding guardianship. I have found that many IEP teams are not giving the correct information and it is very outdated.

Do your research on what is entailed in order to obtain full guardianship of your adult child. Not to mention the COST!!! It is VERY expensive and honestly may not be the best option for you and your child. DO NOT wait until they are nearing 18 to have this conversation! Don't necessarily take the school's information as 100% final either. There is nothing wrong with exploring other options, and many states are recognizing less restrictive options.

#6 Student Self Advocacy

I am a firm believer in having students participate in their own IEP meetings as early/young as possible . When your child is very young, they don't necessarily need to sit in on the ENTIRE meeting. However, the earlier they take part in the process and voice their opinion, feelings, goals and dreams, the more chance they will have strong self determination as the years go on.

If your child is in transition age, it is IDEA law that they play a part in their future planning. This can be done in conventional and not-so-conventional ways. Get creative! If the school is just doing the cookie cutter assessments and options for them to give input— take it upon yourself to encourage them to take it a step further! This is another one of my strong beliefs in transition planning (and life in general!) is that to sit back and allow someone or someplace else to make all important life decisions for your child is a HUGE disservice to your child. Be thinking about things that you can do at home and in the community to teach your child self advocacy. If they struggle in that area and it is NOT a transition goal in their IEP.... it SHOULD BE, and you will need to advocate on your child's behalf for that!

#5 (halfway there!)

Parent Training

Knowledge is power! The more you equip yourself with the ins and outs of transition planning and adult services after high school, your child's transition plan is more apt to be a successful one with few roadblocks (notice I didn't say no roadblocks). You and your child will feel much more empowered to make the decisions that are best for everyone involved!

Not all parent trainings are equal.... Make sure you seek out a comprehensive program or multiple trainings that cover different areas of transition. Hop on Facebook and search groups that offer resources and opportunities to share thoughts and ideas with fellow parents, educators, and professionals. Check out your state's Department of Mental Health (named different things in different states), to see what is offered in terms of training and resources.

Podcasts are another GREAT resource to help guide you through the process and information of transition planning and adult services.

#4

Transition Assessments

As part of IDEA, the school will incorporate specific assessments into their transition plan in order to gather data on where support needs, interest areas, strengths, and abilities are most prominent. As a member of the IEP team, you should be asking what assessments are used.

In addition to the school's assessments it is HIGHLY recommended that you or a professional outside of the school also complete your/their own assessments to get a very well rounded idea of where you child really thrives and would thrive in the future. Sometimes the school and vocational rehabilitation's assessments are fairly general and cookie cutter. There are a lot of really cool assessments that are not complex that can be implemented outside of school. The data collected from these assessments can MOST DEFINITELY be used to collaborate with the IEP team to assist in decision making. The team should appreciate the extra information!

#3

Community Based Services

When your child is in high school, the IEP will lay out community agencies to start contacting, gathering information from, etc. My advice to you..... DO NOT WAIT UNTIL HIGH SCHOOL TO DO THIS!

Depending on parent income, your child may be eligible for local, state, or federal funding for services BEFORE they turn 18. Even if they do not qualify for Medicaid, there are other funding streams out there that can offer payment for services that can get them transition-ready!

A lot of parents are told to wait until they need the services to apply... But I am here to say the opposite! Do not feel guilty, like you are taking away from someone else who needs it. That is not the case and your child needs any resources and support they can get! No matter how young, or how old!

Be familiar with all the agencies and programs that are or will be available once your child turns 18. Build relationships with these agencies that stand out to you as a good fit! BE PROACTIVE!!!!

#2

Eligibility

As mentioned before, many adult services are not entitlement based. It differs a lot from school where IDEA law rules the roost, and by law your child has the right to a lot of specialized services while they are in school. That all changes once they graduate and the services and supports become eligibility based. They are not entitled to receive anything honestly! It takes a lot of navigating the system to ensure they have the supports they need, not to mention the life they want. There are government benefits that should be applied for and can be somewhat complex in terms of eligibility guidelines.

I sound like a broken record... But I am going to keep preaching!!! **DO NOT WAIT** until your child has almost graduated to look into eligibility for services, benefits, and funding. If you feel your school is not doing enough in supporting you and your child in applying for these services and funding streams you will need to take the bull by the horns and either 1. Tackle it yourself with the information and knowledge you have... or 2. Seek outside assistance with A professional who has extensive knowledge in this area and can help you and/or your child apply for what they need!

#1

Person Centered Plan!

In my opinion this is something that everyone should do... Any age, young or old! This is above and beyond an IEP at school. In person centered planning, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. This is a fluid plan that will change through all stages of a person's life. If receiving State Funded case management services, there is a plan written and put into place. If this is the case, make sure that your child is taking an active role (according to their abilities) in the plan meetings. Progress towards goals should be assessed just like in IEP's. Again, this is something that can be done independently, but it's strongly recommended to have someone who is trained in person centered planning to facilitate the process and provide ongoing support in the process. This plan can also be used to share with the IEP team at any time, and also shared with family, friends, and agencies. This is a HUGE part of ensuring that information doesn't slip through the cracks in transition from school to further employment, education, and independent living. It fills the gaps that IEP's do not cover!