

THE TRANSITION PROCESS

What is Transition?

Transition is a process, a service, and a right.

A Process:

Transition is a process in which a student with a disability participates with parents, educators and others to create a long-range plan preparing the student for life after high school.

A Service:

The process of transition is closely intertwined with the provision of services that will prepare students for their future. These services vary from student to student, and range from teaching vocation and employment skills to daily adult living skills. Such services also include keeping students and parents informed about the agencies and options available to assist students further in the transition process. (e.g. VESID – see below)

A Right:

Transition is a right. It is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”). The IDEA requires that schools assist and prepare students with disabilities for their transition from high school. A student's Individualized Education Plan (“IEP”) is where a specific transition plan will be created, recorded and annually reviewed. Schools should begin working with students and parents on the transition process when the students reach the age of 15 years old.

Why is Transition Important?

Transition is important for a variety of reasons, which include:

1. Transitioning from high school can be especially challenging regardless of an individual’s abilities. Yet, it has been shown that the earlier individuals begin planning for their transition the more successful they will be.
2. The transition from high school is perhaps one of the most significant transitions in the life of a student with a disability. It is the first time that a student will be leaving a system where s/he was entitled to receive a range of services and supports. Once students leave high school they will no longer have these entitlements. Rather, they need to request or apply for services.

3. Statistically speaking, proper transition planning is vital: fewer than half of the individuals with disabilities graduating school today are employed. Transition services help individuals with disabilities make this vital link.

Who are the key players in the Transition Process?

A student's transition plan is documented on page 10 of the student's Individual Education Plan. Therefore, all the individuals who are normally required to attend a student's IEP meeting will be present and important to creating the student's transition plan. However, the individuals who are vital to the creation as well as the implementation of the plan include:

- The student
- The parents
- School administrators
- Agencies that provide services to adults with disabilities (examples: VESID, OMRDD or OMH – see below for a further explanation)
- **The Student:**
It is vital to encourage all students with disabilities to play an active role in their transition planning. Students should be invited to their IEP meetings and encouraged to express their ideas and wishes for their future. In addition, the interests and strengths of the students are key to creating IEPs that will not only interest the students, but that they will also be successful with.
- **The Parents:**
Just as the parents of students with disabilities play a critical role in creating their children's IEP, parents should play the same role in establishing transition plans. Parents bring a unique perspective to the IEP meeting in their ability to speak about their child's capabilities outside of school. In addition, parents can speak to their child's possible need for independent living skills and other supports.
- **The School:**
Administrators within the school play the role of coordinating and implementing the student's transition plan's goals and services. It is also the responsibility of the school to ensure that parents and students are aware of the vocational agencies that can assist in the transition process while students are in school and after they have graduated.

Agencies that play a key role in the Transition Process include:

1. **Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)**
VESID is a NY State agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals. The goal of the agency is to prepare individuals with disabilities for various employment settings keeping in mind the strengths, abilities and interests of the individuals.

Who is eligible for services?

VESID services are available to all individuals with disabilities who are considered employable with or without some degree of training. In other words, services can be available to those individuals whose physical or mental impairments create barriers for them to be employed, as long as the individuals would benefit from some degree of vocational training.

How can individuals establish eligibility for VESID Services?

Students are not automatically entitled to receive services from VESID simply because they have a disability. Rather, students need to apply to VESID and be accepted in order to receive their services.

How does an individual apply for VESID services?

With the assistance of school Transition Linkage Coordinators, students should be preparing to apply to VESID early in their junior year of high school. In order to apply, a student needs to complete a VESID application and submit it to his/her local borough office along with other documentation regarding the individual's disability. VESID will most likely also require a student's recent educational information.

What happens when VESID agrees to offer me services?

Once accepted to VESID, a student will work with a VESID counselor to create an Individual Plan for Employment (“IPE”). Similar to an IEP, an Employment Plan is created with the student's strengths and interests in mind to reach the goal of employment. The plan will outline the specific steps and services VESID will provide in order for the student to reach his/her ultimate goals.

What types of Services can a student receive from VESID?

VESID has a number of different program available to students to help them prepare for various employment settings. Programs are available to help students prepare for sheltered employment, supportive employment, and competitive employment. The agency will also assist individuals in gaining livings skills and homemaking skills, or skills that an individual with a disability can use to keep up a home so that another family member can seek employment.

Do VESID services cost money?

No, the services that are provided to students with disabilities cost no money to the individuals or their families.

How can VESID be contacted?

There is a VESID office in each borough of New York City. School Transition Linkage Coordinators should help individuals contact their local VESID office.

To find out about the VESID office in your borough, call the Albany office at 1-800-272-5448 or find VESID on the web at <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/>

2. Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)

OMRDD is a NY State agency that assists individuals with developmental disabilities and mental retardation. The agency provides eligible individuals with a variety of services, from assisting individuals in supportive employment to funding individuals' attendance at day programs.

Who is eligible for OMRDD services?

Individuals who have a developmental disability or have mental retardation can be eligible for OMRDD services. A person with a developmental disability is a person who has a neurological impairment, which developed before the age of 22.

In addition, the condition must be indefinite and have a significant impact on the individual's abilities.

How can OMRDD services be accessed?

Similar to VESID, an individual needs to apply to OMRDD in order to obtain services. An application to OMRDD would include various documentation with regard to the individual's disability. For individuals with mental retardation, the individual would need to supply an up-to-date psycho-educational evaluation. In addition, OMRDD may request to see a student's educational records. A school's Transition Linkage Coordinator should assist students with their applications.

When should an individual apply to OMRDD?

OMRDD provides services to individuals of all ages. A student can even receive OMRDD services while in school. However, if students have not been receiving OMRDD services, they should consider applying in their junior year of high school.

How can OMRDD be contacted?

There is a Developmental Disabilities Service Office (DDSO) in each borough of New York City. The phone number for the Manhattan DDSO is 212-229-3028. School Transition Linkage Coordinators should have the phone numbers to other DDSO offices. To get more information about OMRDD visit <http://www.omr.state.ny.us/>

3. Office of Mental Health (OMH)

OMH is a third NY State agency that can assist individuals with disabilities who are making the transition from high school. The services OMH provides include mental health counseling as well as supportive service to assist in making a transition to an employment setting.

Who is eligible for OMH services?

OMH provides a variety of services to individuals who have mental health disabilities.

How can a student receive OMH services?

In order to receive services from OMH, a student needs to apply, similar to the way in which s/he would apply to VESID or OMRDD. However, when applying to OMH a school's

label of “emotionally disturbed” is not sufficient. Rather, a student will need to be evaluated by medical physicians who can diagnose the student with a psychiatric disorder.

How can OMH be contacted?

For questions about mental health services, call OMH Customer Relations at 1-800-597-8481. A school Transition Linkage Coordinator should also have information on contacting and applying to OMH. OMH can be found on the internet at <http://www.omh.state.ny.us/>

For more information or any questions about the information provided in this packet, please contact **Jaelyn Okin** at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest at 212-244-4664.

<p>DUE TO THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE INFORMATION PRESENTED, THIS FACT SHEET SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS LEGAL ADVICE.</p>
