

Special Education Transition Planning Factsheet

What is Transition Planning?

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognizes the importance of preparing students with disabilities for success after high school, and states that transition planning for students who receive special education services and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must begin by age 16 or younger. New York requires that transition planning begin by age 14. IDEA contains transition services requirements for students with disabilities, which must be addressed in the first IEP to be in effect when the students turn 16 or younger (14 in New York), if determined appropriate by the IEP Team. The transition services in the IEP must be updated annually. School Based Support Teams are in charge of working with students to create the Transition Plan. Transition planning means evaluating the needs, strengths, and skills required for students to move from high school to post-secondary life, by ensuring they are academically and functionally prepared.

Why is Transition Planning Necessary for Post-Secondary Life?

The transition from high school to post-secondary life is one of the most significant transitions in the life of students with disabilities. Early planning leads to higher rates of success. A successful transition supports students to obtain their goals in areas such as employment, living in the community, and obtaining further education or training after high school.

What is the Transition Evaluation Process?

- **Level 1:** All students must receive a Level I transition evaluation, which must be done when students turn 14, and includes a student interview, a parent/guardian interview, and a teacher interview. If Level 1 evaluations are not sufficient, parents may request a Level 2 or Level 3 evaluation.
- **Level 2:** A Level 2 evaluation, which is not mandatory, includes a specialized vocational evaluation that tests skills and abilities, and it includes 3-5 hours of hands-on evaluation activities.
- **Level 3:** A Level 3 evaluation, which also is not mandatory, is a comprehensive career evaluation that is performed by individuals with vocational evaluation experience, and it provides the opportunity to assess the students' social skills in the work environment.

For more information about the Transition Evaluation Process, click [HERE](#) and scroll to Section 7, Page 43.

What is the Transition Planning Timeline?

When planning for transition services, it is important to begin at an early age. This allows the school time to evaluate which services will be the most beneficial for the students, based on the students' lives and academic goals. **The transition process must be individually tailored to meet the needs of each student.** The following is the timeline for arranging transition services:

Ages 14-18

At this stage of the transition process, it is important to begin considering the students' goals and needs after high school, so that one can begin advocating for services that support the students in pursuing those goals. Involving the students in the process provides the students with a sense of independence and knowledge about their rights and responsibilities.

- Begin discussing transition plans in every IEP meeting
- Be aware of the students' evaluations and make sure they are up to date
- Look into high schools and special education programs that best fit the students' goals and needs
- Discuss with the School Based Support Team whether the students will receive a [diploma](#) and if so, which of the following types of diplomas the students are on track to receive:
 - **Regents Diplomas** are available to students who met or exceeded the Regents exam score requirements.
 - **Advanced Regents Diplomas** are available to students who have obtained additional skills in math, science, and languages other than English.
 - **Local Diplomas** require the same course credits as the Regents Diploma but allow students to graduate with lower exam scores or alternative exams.

For more information about diplomas, click [HERE](#).

- If the student will not receive a diploma, determine which of the following **Non-Diploma Options** (also known as the **Alternative Assessment Track**) the students are on track to receive:
 - **Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential** —can be earned by *all* students. The CDOS credential recognizes the students' preparation for entry-level work and may be awarded as the sole exiting credential, in addition to a diploma, or to fulfill one of the five Regents exam requirements for diploma graduation. **To learn more about the CDOS requirements, click [HERE](#).**
 - **Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)** — can only be earned by students with severe disabilities and it requires at least 12 years of education (excluding kindergarten), and it recognizes the students' skills, strengths, and levels of independence in academic learning, career development, and foundational skills needed for post-school living, learning, and working. **To learn more about the SACC requirements, click [HERE](#).**
 - Neither the CDOS nor the SACC are equivalent to a high school diploma. They do not require students to earn credits or pass exams. When students graduate with the CDOS or SACC as stand-alone credentials (and *not in addition to* a high school diploma), the students are not eligible for employment where a diploma is required, are not eligible to enter the military, and are not eligible to enter many colleges or other post-secondary institutions. However, students who receive these credentials are eligible to continue attending school until they earn a high school diploma or until the end of the school year in which they turn 21 (whichever occurs first).

Ages 18+

At this stage, programs, plans, and goals for the students should be finalized, in preparation for leaving high school.

- Ensure the students' evaluations are current and accurately reflect the students' needs and abilities
- Begin to make final decisions regarding the academic plan, career pathway, and essential life skills
- Explore concrete after-graduation options (See below for more information)
- Contact the programs the student is exploring post high school

For more information, click [HERE](#) or call 212-802-1500.

What are the Key Transition-Related Government Agencies?

- **ACCES-VR** — [New York's Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation \(ACCES-VR\)](#) office provides services to individuals who have a disability, other than blindness or another visual disability, that interferes with obtaining, retaining, or advancing in a job.
 - Click [HERE](#) for steps to apply.
- **NYSCB** — [The New York State Commission for the Blind \(NYSCB\)](#) provides services to individuals who are blind or have other visual impairments to enhance employability, maximize independence, and assist in the development of capacities and strengths.
- **OPWDD** — [The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities \(OPWDD\)](#) is responsible for coordinating services for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities. OPWDD services are provided through New York State's Medicaid program, which is jointly funded by the federal and state governments.
 - Click [HERE](#) for steps to apply.
 - **Access Services Through Front Door** — The Front Door is the way OPWDD connects individuals to services they need or want. Once individuals are found eligible for OPWDD services, a person-centered planning process begins, which helps the individuals learn about and access service options.
 - **Care Coordination Organization (CCO)** — Individuals with disabilities eligible for OPWDD services have the option to enroll with a CCO, which is designed to provide comprehensive person-centered care planning, using a network of care managers and providers. CCO agencies can coordinate and integrate primary care, acute and behavioral health services, and connect people to community services and supports, housing, social services, family services, and other services.
- **OMH** — [The New York State Office of Mental Health \(OMH\)](#) provides services, including recovery services, for individuals with mental health needs.
- **NYCMED** is the website point of entry to access information about New York City's public health services.
 - Click [HERE](#) for steps to apply for information and services.
 - Click [HERE](#) for a Mental Health Program Directory.
- **SSA** — [The Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#) provides the following cash assistance programs for individuals with disabilities.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** — Cash assistance for people with disabilities with limited income and assets who have a disability that affects their ability to perform “substantial” paid work.
- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** — Cash assistance for individuals who have paid into the Social Security system and who have a disability that affects their ability to perform “substantial” paid work.
- **HRA** — **The Human Resources Administration (HRA)** provides essential benefits such as food, cash assistance, rental vouchers, and Medicaid.
 - **Medicaid**
 - Children are eligible for Medicaid services if they receive SSI and/or if they meet income, resource, and disability requirements.
 - Children under the age of 18 may be eligible for Medicaid support and services that are not typically provided through regular Medicaid, under a Medicaid Waiver.
 - If a child was not eligible for Medicaid prior to age 18 due to family income, the family should reapply for Medicaid once the child turns 18.

What are Decision Making Options to Consider as Part of Transition Planning?

- **Health Care Proxy** — Allows individuals, while they are competent, to appoint an agent to make health care decisions once the individuals can no longer make these decisions for themselves.
- **Power of Attorney** — Allows individuals, while they are competent, to appoint an agent or an “attorney-in-fact” to make property, financial, and other legal decisions.
- **Supported Decision Making** — Allows individuals, while they are competent, to appoint a person, whom they would want to help them make decisions.
- **Guardianship** — Allows a court to appoint an individual (the guardian) to make decisions on behalf of individuals with disabilities, if those individuals are not capable of making decisions for themselves.

What are Financial Planning Options to Consider as Part of Transition Planning?

- **Supplemental Needs Trust** — Legal document that allows one to leave money and other financial assets for individuals with disabilities, while allowing the individuals to maintain eligibility for government benefits like Medicaid.
- **NY ABLE Program (529 ABLE)** — Allows individuals with disabilities and/or the individuals’ families to save, tax-free, for many daily living expenses, without interfering with the individuals’ eligibility for government benefits.