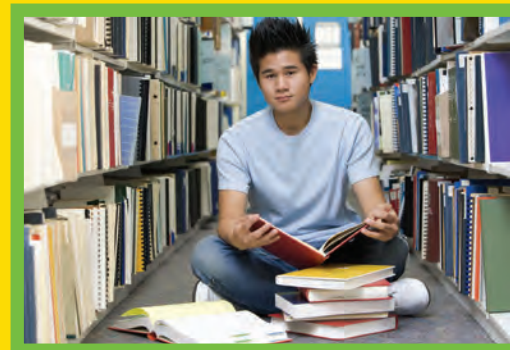


A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School



Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families

A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School

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PACER Center
8161 Normandale Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55437

952-838-9000 (voice)
952-838-0199 (fax)
1-800-537-2237 (toll free in Minnesota)

PACER@PACER.org
PACER.org

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Introduction

The opportunity to acquire a quality education is one of the most exciting advantages any young person could ask for. That's why we send our children to school — so they can make the most of that opportunity and prepare themselves to become productive adults and valued members of the community. School is the place where children learn academic and social skills that can help them build a satisfying and independent life. No matter what environment that education takes place in — public (including charter schools), private, or home schooling — the purpose remains the same.

For youth with disabilities, additional planning is needed as they prepare to leave school, move into adulthood, and meet their employment, educational, or independent living goals. This process is often referred to as “transition.” For many families, planning for transition can be daunting. Some are just trying to make it through the day-to-day challenges often posed by having a youth with a disability and might not feel they have the time or energy to think about what happens after high school. Others may want to plan for transition, but are confused by unfamiliar language, complex steps, and many community partners. If that describes you, be encouraged.

The “Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families” was created to make transition planning easier and help you approach this phase of life with your child one step at a time. The toolkit offers easy-to-understand information about the purpose of transition planning, the goal and importance of age-appropriate assessments, and the required rules that are used by schools. It also includes information on the community partners that can provide your youth with supports as an adult. Most

importantly, this guide explains the vital role families play in each step of the transition journey. With this toolkit at your side, you can confidently take the first step in exploring and planning for your child's future.

Use this guide to gain an overview of the transition process and the specific resources on individual topics that may benefit your son or daughter. This toolkit touches on topics such as healthcare and health maintenance, benefits planning, postsecondary education and accommodations, recreation, social resources, transportation, and housing, which all play a part in a successful transition to adulthood. We encourage you to explore these topics in more depth using the resources identified at the end of the guide.

Advice from an advocate: *Transition is about youth moving into life after high school. It is important for parents to help their youth visualize their own hopes and dreams. Transition is about youth having choices and options as well as acquiring the skills needed to be successful as adults in the community.*

It's never too early to think about transition



Parents of youth with disabilities should begin thinking about transition as early as possible. Many parents believe that transition planning takes place during the teenage years and doesn't need to be considered until then. Although the formal process of transition — planning for life after high school — starts in ninth grade, it makes sense to begin acquiring needed skills and identifying possible community supports much earlier. It is important that youth and their parents begin building a vision of the future, based on interests and strengths, long before the ninth grade.

Think of it this way: If you were planning to relocate from one town to another after you finish college, when would you begin the preparations? Would you wait until the last minute to decide which town you might move to or would you explore the options now? Chances are you would compare locations, look at different neighborhoods, consider the possibilities, and think about the information. It pays to plan ahead, even if the event is well into the future.

The same holds true for transition planning. Even though your child might not leave high school for several years, he or she will still benefit from early planning, assessment, and exploration of interests. For example,

in elementary school, your child can begin learning basic interpersonal and communication skills, which are essential for social and employment success as adults. These are called “soft skills.” Parents do not need to wait until their child is a teenager to begin understanding and exploring options for community supports or possible accommodations used in postsecondary education.

The fact is many parents feel like transition sneaks up on them, leaving them unprepared to deal with a new world of adult services (or lack of them) and not equipped to make many of the important decisions that are required. Parents who begin thinking about transition early will probably feel better prepared to help their youth achieve his or her goals.

“I thought we had plenty of time to worry about what happens after high school, but these things come up faster than you think. My advice would be to begin thinking about your child’s adult life as early as possible.”

~Minnesota parent

“”

What is the transition process?

Prior to grade 9, the Individualized Education Program (IEP)* of a student with a disability will focus primarily on the student’s educational and functional needs, and what services the school will provide to help the student make educational progress. In the ninth grade (or earlier if the IEP team decides it is necessary), a student’s IEP changes to include long-range planning to meet goals for a student’s life after high school. This process is what is commonly called “transition planning,” which continues to include a focus on education and functional needs.

Parents need to be aware that the transition process is guided by federal and state special education law. This means that there are specific requirements for IEP team participation, assessment, creation of measurable postsecondary goals, and links to adult services that might benefit a student. The process involves helping students identify their vision for their future, and it expands the role of parents and families.

What do they mean by “functional”?

As a parent, you will see the word “functional” used in relation to evaluations, assessments, or performance. It may sound formal, but it’s simply a term used to describe how a student is doing with everyday, non-academic skills. For example, “functional performance” refers to a student’s current ability level on such skills as requesting accommodations, navigating the school building, or getting to the bus on time. Parents should be aware that functional needs are unique to their individual student.

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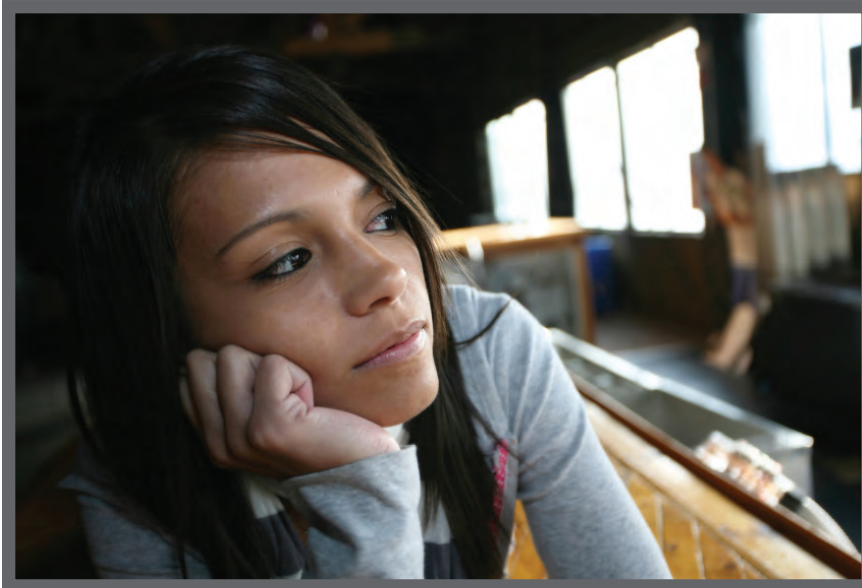
**Please note: All references in this publication to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) also includes the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP). Specific information on the IIIP can be found on page 25 of this toolkit.*

What does the law say about transition?



The purpose of special education is to prepare children to lead “productive and independent adult lives to the maximum extent possible.”

~Findings, IDEA 2004(c)(5)(A)



Transition services in Minnesota are governed by both federal special education law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA) and by Minnesota Statute and Special Education Rules. Minnesota Statute requires transition planning to begin during a student's ninth grade year. Under special circumstances — if a student is in danger of dropping out of school, for example — transition planning can start even earlier.

During grade 9, a student's IEP will continue to address needs in

education and functional performance, but it will also include activities associated with postsecondary education and training, employment, and independent living (which may include recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living).

The IEP is a required document that provides a commitment to the student and family that the school will provide services and supports to a student with a disability. During grade 9 and beyond, the IEP focus is on preparing a student for life after high school. The student identifies measurable postsecondary goals in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and, where appropriate, independent living. The IEP team uses age-appropriate transition assessment data to determine needs, in addition to how that student will participate and make progress in the general education curriculum. The team coordinates “transition services” needed to assist the student in meeting an identified need.

What are “transition services”? Federal law (IDEA) requires that the IEP team has to coordinate the youth's academic activities, such as classroom activities, assessments, and educational support. It must also include other activities, as appropriate, such as building skills for independent living — vocational skills, speech and language, recreation and leisure, and home living. These activities need to be:

- Designed for inclusion in a results-based process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability, in order to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities;

- Based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, interests, and preferences;
- Designed to include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In Minnesota, the focus of the IEP during grade 9 and moving forward is to prepare the student to meet graduation requirements and develop the needed skills to work and be a lifelong learner.

Federal law requires that at age 16 the student's IEP be updated annually and include:

- Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills (postsecondary refers to anything that happens after high school);
- Transition services, including the classes a student will take (referred to as "courses of study") to reach his or her goals;
- A statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights that will transfer at the age of majority. In Minnesota, students are recognized as adults at age 18, giving them the right to make their own educational decisions, unless they have a guardian.

The IEP team is comprised of individuals who care about the child's education, not just special educators. The law refers to this as the "IEP team" and requires that it consist of the following:

- The child
- The parents of the child
- At least one regular education teacher (if the child is, or may be, participating in regular education)
- At least one special education teacher or, if appropriate, one or more special education services providers
- A qualified representative of the local school district (a person within the school district with knowledge of and authority over regular and special education; this might include a principal, special education director, or transition specialist)
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results
- Other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; this could include additional family members, adult employment programs personnel (such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services), school transition specialists, advocates, school work-study coordinators, or representatives from a college's Disability Student Services office

Parents should view the IEP team as the group that will help plan how the student is going to make the transition from where they are now to where they want to be. Parents have the right to ask anybody with useful knowledge about a student to attend the IEP team meeting. It should also be noted that the school has to invite the student to the IEP meeting starting at ninth grade.



Transition is not just added on to the IEP/IIP. Transition is NOT a service added on at the end of a student's high school career. Secondary Transition Planning is the focus of the IEP/IIP beginning during grade 9 and addresses both academic and functional skills.

~Minnesota Secondary Transition Compliance Toolkit

Personal Learning Plan legislation

Minnesota school districts are now required to assist all students beginning no later than ninth grade to “explore their educational, college, and career interests, aptitudes, and aspirations, and develop a plan for a smooth and successful transition to postsecondary education or employment.” Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.125 describes the required components of a comprehensive plan that must be reviewed and revised at least annually by the student, the student's parent or guardian, and the school district. The law states that if a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that meets all of the components of the Personal Learning Plan, no additional transition plan is needed. Parents will want to be sure the IEP addresses all of the required components and that the student has access as needed to Personal Learning Plan resources available to all students in the district.

For more information, see Minnesota Department of Education's Personal Learning Plans Information (education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ccs/plp).

Age of majority

Parents will have an impact on the life of their son or daughter long after he or she becomes an adult. However, there is generally a point when youth are recognized as adults and expected to take responsibility for making decisions about their future. In Minnesota, this takes place when a youth turns 18, and is referred to as “age of majority.” Minnesota state law calls for the transfer of educational rights at age 18 for students with disabilities who have IEPs and who are not under guardianship.

The law requires the following:

- At least one year before a student turns 18, the student's IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of the rights that will transfer to him or her upon reaching age 18.
- The school must notify both the student and the parents of the transfer of rights. Parents must be given a copy of the IEP that documents the transfer of rights to the student.
- After the transfer of rights occurs, special education notices will be provided to the student. These will continue to be provided to the parents as well. For parents, notice will be given that an IEP meeting is to be held, but it is not an invitation to attend the meeting.
- If the school receives notice that the student is under guardianship, no rights transfer will take place, and the IEP does not need to include a statement regarding transfer of rights.

- The student or the school district may invite the parent to attend IEP meetings.
- Minnesota state law states that if a student is still claimed as a dependent on the parent's income tax form, then the parent continues to have legal access to the student's educational records.

Parents are strongly encouraged to include their youth in the IEP process at the earliest age possible so they can experience how the process works. Federal law requires that a student be invited to his or her IEP meetings in which transition services are discussed. Many youth may not feel completely comfortable with being the sole decision maker on their education, and may wish to have their parents remain involved. Students can invite their parents to their IEP meeting when they reach the age of majority.

High expectations: Your most valuable tool

Every parent has hopes and dreams for their child, even if those dreams aren't always openly expressed. Making a successful transition from school to adult living often includes fulfilling those hopes and dreams, as well as those of the youth. When parents have a child with a disability, goals might need to be modified. This doesn't mean expecting less of your child, but it may mean expecting something different than what you had envisioned. It's important to understand the critical influence of having "high expectations" for your child, even if the goals have shifted. You need to instill those expectations in your youth and advocate for those expectations throughout the secondary transition process.

Why is this so important? It is important because high expectations lead to positive transition outcomes. Nobody else is likely to expect more from a child than his or her family. If the family conveys low expectations for achievement in education, employment, or social interactions, then it is unlikely that anyone else will hold higher expectations. Families that consistently set high expectations have a better chance of creating that same vision in the people who educate, employ, and socialize with their child. Research has shown that families of youth with disabilities who maintain higher expectations will see their child achieve greater academic success. Higher academic achievement is tied to better outcomes in postsecondary education, employment, and financial self-sufficiency.

In contrast, the impact of having low expectations for youth with disabilities can be profoundly negative. It wasn't that long ago that this society believed people with disabilities were unable to be educated, employed, or live independently. These perceptions are gradually changing, but many of the same negative assumptions remain. Youth with disabilities who have little expected of them run the risk of living isolated lives where they are not free to strive for their own hopes and dreams. They may be resigned to limited educational opportunities or a lifetime of low-paying jobs that fail to match their abilities and interests.



When my daughter was first diagnosed with autism, the focus was on all the things she couldn't do and may not be able to do in the future. Instead of dwelling on the negative, I soon realized the importance of focusing on the things she could do. Celebrating small victories soon led to greater victories, and she was able to accomplish more than what was predicted early on. By having high expectations, a lot of patience, and finding needed support, I quickly learned to never underestimate my child.

~Minnesota parent

“”

Parents of youth with disabilities are encouraged to explore what is possible for people with disabilities. There are many government and community programs that offer the supports necessary for a person with a disability to earn postsecondary degrees, be successful in the job of their choosing, and live independently. Exploring these options (and speaking to other parents who have been in the same situation) can help families create a vision for their youth of a life filled with possibilities and achievements. More information about various community supports is included in Section 4 of this guide on page 41.

Cultivating and maintaining high expectations is just part of the challenge for parents. Not everyone involved may share the same vision of a bright future for the child. Parents may need to convince others (including professionals) and make it clear that the whole team needs to help that child achieve his or her dreams. Families may be put in the position of having to advocate for increased expectations and more challenging academic programs. Here are some ideas that can help parents work with schools to ensure the family's goals are met:

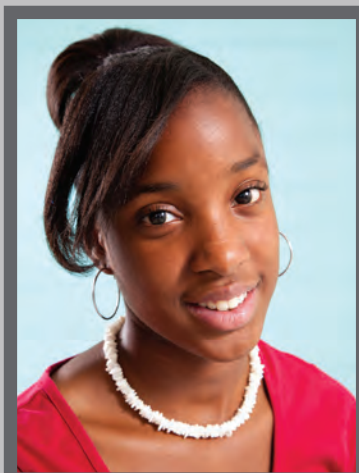
- Expect your child to be valued as an individual whose rights are respected.
- Appreciate those who provide services for your child, and actively participate in planning those services.
- Know your child has a legal right to an appropriate public education where he or she can make meaningful educational progress.
- Show the school what the child can do at home or in the community. Schedule a home visit, videotape your child displaying a particular skill, or explain how you have modified an activity so your child can succeed.
- Describe why and how your vision for your child makes sense to you.
- Share your ideas with the school and be open to their ideas.
- Educate yourself about the special education process, and learn how to turn your child's needs into measurable goals for the IEP.
- Be willing to try something for a given amount of time and measure its effectiveness.

The stories of Ashley and Mason

Every youth — including those with disabilities — is unique. While two youth may experience the same or similar disabilities, those disabilities will impact each of them differently. For example, not everyone with learning disabilities will function the same way. Not all youth with autism will have the same experiences. It is important for families to recognize that their child has unique needs, strengths, and interests on which transition planning should be based.

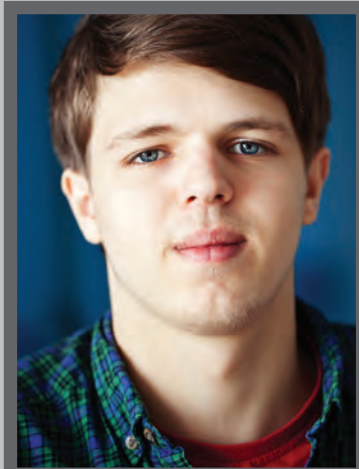
A child with a specific learning disability may have difficulties with reading or math, but may not need support with communication or mobility. Another youth may have an intellectual disability that results in severe learning and communication challenges. To illustrate how the transition process works for families and youth with a wide range of disabilities, this guide includes personal examples.

Meet Ashley and Mason.



Ashley

Ashley is a 17-year-old with a specific learning disability. She receives special education services, but she has the majority of her classes in the same setting as her peers. She has difficulty with reading and requires supports and accommodations that help her understand classroom materials and allow her extra time for tests. Ashley is reluctant to admit she has a disability because she doesn't want to be seen as different from her peers. She loves anything to do with nature and has identified a goal of working as a professional in a park setting. Ashley gets good grades and she intends to graduate on time and attend a state university with a strong natural sciences program.



Mason

Mason is a 16-year-old with a developmental cognitive disability. He receives special education services and spends much of his day in a classroom that provides increased academic and behavioral support. Mason's family has high expectations for his future and they are considering becoming his legal guardians. They realize that Mason will likely require a good deal of support to live independently and be employed, and are researching adult services that can provide those supports in the community. Mason has many interests, including working with computers and traveling. He is a hard worker and very personable, but needs to build his skills in functional math, reading, and appropriate social skills.

Look for Ashley and Mason throughout this toolkit as they help provide examples for transition planning for students with disabilities.



Section 1: Families Play a Vital Role

Families are the most important people in the transition planning process. Families have been there for their child from the beginning and have the most knowledge of the child's individual needs. It makes sense to take advantage of this expertise and support when planning for a student's transition to adulthood. All youth with disabilities need support from their families. How much support and what type of support they need will vary from one individual to another.

Fortunately, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognizes the pivotal role families play in the lives and success of their students. IDEA states clearly that families are a required part of a student's IEP team and a partner in the secondary transition planning process. Families should embrace this opportunity to take a major role in helping their youth realize his or her goals, hopes, and dreams.

Research supports this approach. When families stay involved in their child's education in middle school and high school, for example, the student is more likely to attend school regularly, maintain a positive attitude about school, earn higher grades, graduate from high school, and enroll in postsecondary programs. Some parents believe high school is a time to foster independence and become less involved in their youth's schooling. Although encouraging independence is important, late adolescence is also a time when children learn skills for adult living from their parents.

Parents of youth with disabilities are often very good at advocating for their child in a variety of settings. They may not be as familiar with the importance of transition planning, or what they can do to help their youth be better prepared for the adult world of employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. Here are some tips that can help you maximize your role as a parent and partner during secondary transition planning:

- **Consider yourself a partner, not an observer, on the IEP team.** Ensure that your voice is valued and take responsibility for supporting the IEP in any way possible.
- **Understand your child's disability.** You may know your child, but do you know how your child's disability specifically impacts him or her in the areas of learning, communication, or mobility? During transition planning, seek to better understand your child's disability and how it may affect the pursuit of postsecondary education, employment, or independent living.
- **Encourage your child to create a vision of his or her future.** Help your child research options to realize that vision and to expand his or her base of experiences. This will allow your youth to take ownership of the transition planning process while building in the freedom to change course if necessary.
- **Convince your youth that he or she can realize that vision.** Youth take their cues from parents on what to expect of themselves. Instill in your child that the IEP is the pathway to his or her dreams, and that it is an opportunity to receive the help needed to reach those dreams.
- **Build the belief in high expectations for your youth.** You may have high expectations that your child can achieve to his or her maximum ability. Now you need to advocate for an IEP and transition plan that reflects those expectations. If you convey low expectations for your child's future, what will keep others from doing the same?
- **Share what you know about your child by communicating strengths, interests, and needs during IEP meetings.** Teachers value this type of information from parents because it helps provide details that assessments and school observation cannot. This information may also help the IEP team avoid academic and services decisions that don't address a student's interests or areas of need.
- **Keep essential education records throughout your child's education.** Good record keeping is an essential part of the special education process. Parents should save important records in an organized way to use for special education planning. For example, keep copies of report cards, current and past IEP documents, Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs), and district-wide assessment scores.
- **Build self-confidence and self-determination in your youth.** Not all youth will feel comfortable participating



in their IEP meetings or voicing their goals. Help them find an effective way to express themselves. They might speak at the IEP meeting, construct a PowerPoint or video about themselves, or write a letter to the IEP team.

- **Help your youth develop independence in learning, studying, and living skills.** Positive traits, such as being eager to learn new things, effectively managing time, and taking responsibility for doing a good job, will serve youth well in the adult world, especially when it comes to employment and postsecondary education.
- **Understand the impact of “soft skills” on employment and educational success, and use activities in the home to build those skills.** Soft skills, interpersonal communication, and personal responsibility are tools everyone needs to be successful. Teach your child how to communicate appropriately with others, maintain personal appearance, take work direction, and resolve conflict.
- **Help identify potential community supports and work opportunities for your youth.** Many youth will utilize some form of community support that can enable them to live, learn, and work as adults. This may include employment assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, postsecondary education supports obtained through a college’s Student Disability Services office, or independent living skills taught by a community-based organization. Parents should become familiar with available options and ask representatives of these services to be present at the IEP meeting or to provide information for the team.

Know the laws, rights, and responsibilities

Graduation from high school triggers many changes for students with a disability and for their parents. This guide can help you successfully navigate these unfamiliar waters. Once your child graduates, the regulations and protections found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer apply. Students now enter the world of adult services, which may have unique eligibility requirements, unfamiliar language, multiple entry points, and the possibility of long waiting lists. In preparation for transition, both parents and their youth need to become familiar with disability rights laws and responsibilities that might impact postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

The “responsibilities” part is important. Many civil rights laws require a person with a disability to inform others of their disability before protections are put into place. For example, a person must disclose a disability to an employer at, or before, the point of a job offer if he or she wishes to be protected from unlawful firing. Students with disabilities should be given opportunities to learn about the laws that protect them and to practice disclosing their disability when appropriate.

Numerous laws provide rights and protections in the United States in such areas as employment, postsecondary education, independent living, health care, housing, communications, and transportation. Here are some of the most significant:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is the most comprehensive federal civil rights law protecting the rights of people with disabilities. It impacts access to employment, state and local government programs and services, and

telecommunications. It also requires that public spaces, businesses, and transportation be accessible to people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

This milestone federal disability rights law authorizes state vocational rehabilitation programs, client assistance programs, independent living centers, and civil rights protections. It also makes it unlawful for entities receiving federal funding to discriminate against a person based on a disability. This is commonly referred to as “Section 504.”

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

This federal law authorizes the operation of the state’s many Workforce Centers, which house a variety of job training and public assistance programs under one roof. Parents should be aware of youth and adult employment programs funded by WIOA, as well as the provisions regarding pre-employment transition services.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act

This federal law helps individuals with developmental disabilities live in their communities as independently as possible. It provides for access to home care and personal care assistance, support in applying for public benefits, and some housing and employment assistance.

Social Security programs

Youth and adults who are not able to support themselves through employment may be eligible for assistance from the federal Social Security Administration (SSA). Social Security programs provide a limited amount of financial assistance and health care coverage to individuals with disabilities who meet eligibility requirements.

The Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988

This is the primary federal law that covers housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin against a tenant, potential tenant, or potential housing buyer.

Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA)

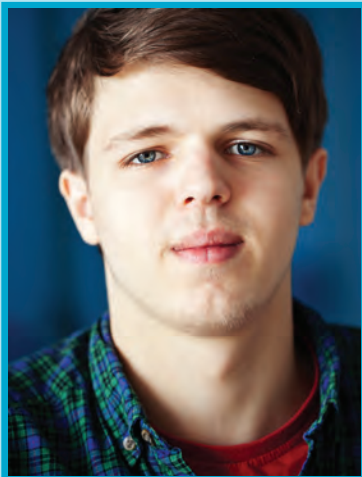
Enacted in 1967, MHRA is a Minnesota state law that protects people against disability discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public services, public accommodations (including private businesses, commercial facilities, and transportation companies), education (including public and private schools), credit, and reprisal or retaliation.



Ashley

Ashley's parents have researched her learning disability and understand its potential impact on her educational achievement. During IEP meetings they encourage Ashley to communicate her goals for the future, but they also share what they know about her strengths and needs. Ashley's parents want to encourage her to be independent, but realize that she may need help accepting her disability. They know she will have to ask for academic accommodations in college. As a result, they have requested that a goal be included in her IEP requiring Ashley to research her disability and list accommodations she might require. Ashley's parents have also helped her choose high school classes that will give her the skills to enter a college program in the natural sciences. At first they were unsure how involved they should

be in her transition planning. Ashley's parents now see that they play a role as partners who will support their daughter and help her shape her transition plan.



Mason

Mason's parents have tried to ensure that everyone who works with their son holds high expectations for his future. This has not always been easy. Many times they have had to demonstrate just how much he can do, while acknowledging the work needed to build skills in other areas. Based on his interests in computers and travel, Mason's parents have suggested a postsecondary goal of working at the airport. They have asked that his IEP include career exploration activities to help him identify the different types of jobs there. In addition, they want his computer skills to be seen as an asset that will help him reach his goals. Mason's parents have spoken to other parents about available community rehabilitation programs that provide employment support to adults with disabilities and have

invited a representative of one program to attend Mason's IEP meetings.

Additional considerations for charter school, private school, and out-of-home placement students

Parents sometimes seek alternative educational program options for their youth. You need to be aware that these options may not provide the same special education or transition services as local school districts. Parents should be aware that there are many different ways in which transition services are delivered, regardless of which type of school the student attends.

Charter schools are public schools and are mandated by law to provide special education services as outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Private schools are not mandated to provide IDEA special education services and don't usually offer transition services for older students. (In Minnesota, home-schooled students are considered private

school students.) However, some private school students do receive special education services from the local public school district. Contact your local special education director for more information.

If a student is in an **out-of-home placement** (such as incarceration or a chemical dependency program) and has previously been identified as a student receiving or needing special education services, he or she may be entitled to special education transition services. Contact your local special education director for more information.

Keep in mind:

Students who have been identified by their IEP to continue receiving educational services beyond age 18 may wish to participate in graduation ceremonies with their same-age peers. In Minnesota, the decision about graduation participation is a local school district decision so be sure to ask. In some districts, students take part in graduation activities and ceremonies but do not actually receive the diploma from the school. The signed diploma is provided upon completion of identified programming.





Section 2: Assessment — What is Included?

What is the “transition assessment process?”

The “transition assessment process” is the method schools use to determine how a student currently functions in relation to future working, educational, and independent living environments. The assessment process also helps inform the development of measurable postsecondary goals for a student. If transition is a process of getting from “here” (where the student is currently) to “there” (achieving future goals), then transition assessment deals with the “here.”

Transition assessment is intended to include your child’s hopes, dreams, and goals for the future. Prior to the transition years, some of the information parents have received from schools is about what a student cannot do, or what the deficits are. The transition assessment process is an excellent opportunity to focus on what students can do, what they are interested in, and what they want for themselves. It’s OK if a student answers “I don’t know” to questions about what kind of job he or she would like to have because that answer may reveal areas in which the student needs help. When the student answers “I don’t know,” the answer might be activities for further career exploration.

The transition assessment process is a crucial part of the transition planning process because it offers information to help build the transition plan. Transition assessment helps ensure that the

student is working on skills that will help the student identify and meet transition goals for the future. Assessment results must be integrated within the **evaluation report** and the **PLAAFP** (Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance) in the IEP/IIP. There is more information on these later in this guide.

Formal vs. informal assessments



No single assessment can give a complete, accurate picture of a youth's strengths, interests, and needs. Schools are encouraged to use a combination of formal and informal assessment tools to collect information about a youth's current functioning, strengths, and needs as they relate to adult living.

Formal assessments are standardized instruments performed by trained personnel, such as school psychologists and special education teachers. These can include interest tests, aptitude

tests, and hands-on work samples. Examples might include:

- Curriculum-based assessments
- Transition skill inventories
- Learning style assessments
- Work samples
- Interest inventories

Informal assessments lack standard reliability and validity measures and tend to be more subjective, meaning that the results may be heavily influenced by the person conducting the assessment. However, informal assessments are helpful because they allow for a student to be observed in a natural environment. Informal assessment consists of gathering existing information about a student and reviewing that data to help make decisions about future goals. This information may include academic data, previous testing, observations, and interviews. Informal assessment methods might include:

- Observation checklists
- Career exploration activities
- Student self-evaluations
- Interest surveys
- Academic data, including previous testing

What should formal or informal transition assessments accomplish?

Every child with a disability is unique; each has natural abilities and areas of aptitude to build on, as well as skill areas that need to improve. When planning for an adult life, the individual student's desires and interests need to be considered. Federal law requires that schools use this approach so the youth's individual personality and desires are taken into account and not missed in the process. The transition assessment should:

- Provide relevant information about the student in key areas for transition planning
- Provide information about the student's current levels of functioning
- Identify appropriate accommodations to support student success
- Provide a basis for a student's measurable postsecondary goals
- Provide a basis for measurable annual goals in the IEP

It should also include the following pieces of information based on the four key transition areas:

Educational

- Individual classroom-based assignments
- Grade-level or school-wide assessments
- Formal academic assessments (reading, written language, mathematics)
- Observations made by teachers, employers, parents, or school personnel

Employment

- Ratings of employability
- Vocational interest inventories
- Functional skills assessments
- Structured assessments in the work setting
- Interviews
- Work skills assessments (e.g., punctuality, work completion, social skills, soft skills, ability to take criticism, maintaining personal appearance)
- Employer references

Training

- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)
- Computerized skills assessments
- Minnesota Career Information Service (MCIS)
- Self-determination scales
- Vocational readiness ratings



Independent living skills

- Daily living skills assessments
- Assistive technology evaluations
- Independent living skills assessments

How can families participate in the assessment process?

Parents may better understand the purpose of transition assessment by thinking of it as a series of questions about a youth's future. Think about the following questions and bring your thoughts and questions to the transition evaluation planning meeting.

- "What are my child's strengths?"
- "What is my child interested in doing now and in the future?"
- "What is my child good at doing?"
- "In what areas does my child struggle?"
- "What are my child's academic, employment, and independent living goals?"
- "What is the gap between what my child wants to do and how he or she currently functions?"

Transition assessment is a good tool to identify ways to build on existing strengths and find ways to improve in areas of need. For example, a young person may have good mechanical skills, such as an understanding of how machines work and how to repair them. His parent might say, "My son is good with mechanical things. What assessments will help determine how to capitalize on that talent and find jobs he may excel in?"

Another youth might struggle with nonverbal communication. Her parent may say, "My daughter has needs in the areas of social skills and communication. What assessments are available that can help pinpoint her needs so we can find ways to improve that skill?"

The team planning the transition evaluation will choose appropriate assessments to gain needed information for transition planning, including IEP development. Parents, and their questions and suggestions, are an essential part of this team planning.

Understanding the role of transition assessment and evaluation can help parents be better advocates for the needs of their child. Parents should be aware that the transition assessment, or Three-year Evaluation for Special Education, should be informative and identify areas of need for the student. Parents sometimes request specific services or interventions based on their knowledge of the student, without first seeing if that need area was identified in the assessment data.

How can students participate in the process?

The student may be the most important participant in the transition planning process. After all, it is designed to help plan his or her life, taking into account the individual's hopes, dreams, and goals. Students should contribute and be responsible for activities and outcomes as much as they can. Every youth should be encouraged to participate in the transition planning and assessment process. This will look different for each youth. Some may be able to verbally express their long-term goals in an IEP meeting. Others may rely on parents or technology to communicate for them. To the extent that they are able, youth can participate in the planning and assessment process by:

- Developing an understanding of their disability, including its impact on learning, living, and employment
- Acquiring the ability to think about a long-range vision for their life
- Acquiring the ability to discuss their strengths, abilities, and needs
- Striving to understand educational and job accommodations, and how to ask for them
- Developing personal qualities, such as a willingness to take risks and be a self-advocate
- Developing and using appropriate social skills
- Acquiring effective studying, test-taking, and time-management strategies
- Maintaining ongoing personal information, such as school and medical records, IEP/IIP, resumes, and work samples
- Learning about civil rights laws that provide protections in employment, postsecondary education, and community living

How do transition assessments fit with comprehensive special education evaluations?

Students who receive special education services must have a comprehensive evaluation done at least every three years to determine educational needs and the continuing need for special education. Because transition services are a component of a student's overall education plan, all aspects of the youth's development must be considered to gain the most accurate picture of the student. As transition age requirements approach, the IEP team should discuss the appropriate timing of the evaluation that includes transition and the identification of corresponding activities.

Keep in mind:

The school must do a comprehensive evaluation only if there is a need for it. When determining if a new evaluation is necessary, parents are encouraged to consider how the needs of their youth have changed since the last evaluation. A school can propose a "records review" in lieu of a full evaluation. The school would then review existing assessment and evaluation data to determine educational needs to be addressed in the IEP. Parents should carefully consider what new or updated information may be needed for transition planning.



Special education evaluation and transition assessment: The foundation of the IEP

The Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) is an important part of creating a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) because it establishes what a student needs, and it forms the basis for the services and supports the student needs. The ESR lists what evaluations were done with a student and what the outcomes were of those evaluations. The ESR should reflect the IEP team's decision on what a student's educational needs are based on the evaluations.

If the IEP team determines that a new evaluation is needed — either because of changes in the student's program, performance, or behavior, or because the law mandates periodic re-evaluation — the parents must grant permission. After permission has been granted, the school has 30 school days to complete the evaluation and provide the parents with a copy of the ESR. Parents need to know that the ESR can help determine what will be included in an IEP. As a result, they should play an active role (as part of the IEP team) in reaching agreement on their child's needs.

Advice from an advocate: *Some parents may wonder why one of their child's needs is not being addressed by the IEP. Usually, it is because that need area was not identified in the evaluation data. If something is missing in the IEP, it is important to go back to the evaluation summary report to see if the specific need area was actually identified and agreed upon by the IEP team. Parents can request additional evaluations be done if there are concerns that areas of need are not being identified and addressed.*

How will we use the assessment data?

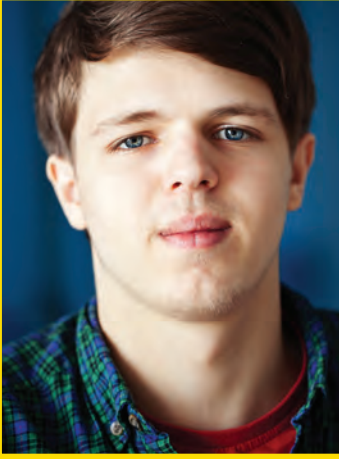
Assessment data is the key to identifying a youth's long-term goals as well as the annual goals (the steps needed to achieve the long-term goals) and other necessary IEP services. Here is how part of the evaluation report might look for Ashley and Mason.



Ashley

Ashley has a reading disability and struggles with organizational skills and testing anxiety. The interest inventory and interview both show that Ashley has a high interest in nature. She plans to attend a four-year college and major in biology in preparation for work in the natural environment. Even though she sometimes struggles with reading and organizational skills, she is highly motivated to succeed. Notice that:

- areas of need include reading, organizational skills, and anxiety
- strengths include motivation
- interests reveal a high priority in the area of nature
- long-term goals include a plan to attend college



Mason

Mason shows significant needs in the areas of reading, motor task planning, and asking for help; he reads at the second grade level, has trouble coordinating both sides of his body, and waits for others to offer help rather than asking for it himself. He has successfully participated in several work experience programs. He is willing to work, try new things, and has shown a positive attitude on job sites. Mason shows a strong interest in the areas of travel and computers.

Notice that:

- areas of need include reading, motor task planning, and asking for help
- strengths include willingness to work
- interests include travel and computers
- long-term goals include working in a travel-related field

Section 3 of this manual will show how the process of using data such as this is used to build the IEP.

What can I do if I disagree with the results of a transition assessment?

A parent may sometimes disagree with the findings of a comprehensive evaluation or transition assessment. For example, a work readiness skills inventory may indicate that a student is proficient in interpersonal communication, but the parent believes that the youth still has needs in that area. The comprehensive evaluation might indicate a need in math when the parent sees none. Parents can follow these simple steps to address the issue:

1. Read the evaluation report, and ask yourself if the information is complete or the data is accurate.
2. Clearly outline the areas of the evaluation or assessment with which you disagree.
3. Request an IEP meeting to discuss the issue, and work toward a common understanding and resolution.

Advice from an advocate: *Parents have the right to disagree with the evaluation and request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). Parents can also contribute private or outside assessments for the IEP team to consider. The IEP team may consider suggestions made by an outside assessment but is not required to implement these.*



Section 3: The Process — How is it Done?

As described in the previous sections of this guide, “transition” is the period when a young person’s special education program begins to focus on what that student’s life will look like after leaving high school. The purpose of the planning process is to:

- Identify the youth’s goals, hopes, dreams, and interests
- Assess current functioning
- Identify areas where the youth needs to gain skills to accomplish goals

The student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) is what drives and documents this process. The following section of the guide contains important information families need to know: the main components of the IEP, their purpose, how they link together to paint a picture of a student’s current academic functioning, and the steps needed to reach his or her goals.

The IEP and IIP: What are they? What is the difference?

The IEP outlines the special education and related services that a school district will provide an eligible student with disabilities at no cost to the parents. The IEP is considered the cornerstone of the special education process and the key to services a child will receive. It also provides a written record

of decisions made at IEP meetings. It is important to know that the IEP is a school document that details what activities and interventions are being used to achieve stated IEP goals. Although outside agencies may participate on an IEP team, the program goals and outcomes of those agencies will not be included in the student's IEP. (The makeup of the IEP team was outlined earlier in this guide, along with the purpose of the IEP in transition planning and the content required in a transition IEP. Please see pages 4-5.)



Keep in mind:

Not all IEP forms in the state of Minnesota look the same. A sample IEP form can be found in the appendix of this guide. School districts are free to purchase IEP forms provided by vendors. Parents who are unsure about anything on the IEP form are encouraged to seek clarification from their school district.

Certain students with disabilities in Minnesota have another option available to help plan for transition. Those students with disabilities who are receiving special education services and services from at least one other public agency may also choose the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP).

Some youth receive special education services along with services from at least one other public agency — Vocational Rehabilitation Services, juvenile corrections, or mental health, for example. The IIIP was created as a way to coordinate all services under one plan. Communication and behavior goals are examples of areas where school and county services may be working toward the same outcome in different settings. From age 3 to age 21, children and students with disabilities who are receiving services from special education and one public agency can use the IIIP process.

Using an IIIP does not change the special education services a student receives. While IEP meetings are for planning educational services only, IIIP meetings include representatives of other public service providers as well. Families retain the same rights to participate in the IIIP process and in decision making on behalf of their youth. If a student's needs in the home, the school, and the community overlap a great deal, and the student would benefit from those needs being addressed in a coordinated, comprehensive way, the IIIP process may be a good choice.

Measurable postsecondary goals: What does your youth want to do after high school?

Through effective secondary transition planning, students with disabilities identify their goals and work on building skills in needed areas so those goals can be reached. This guide's introduction covered the role of the IEP team in this process, and Section 2 explained how assessment helps define a student's strengths and interests, and how a youth's current functioning level is factored in. This section will explore how the student's long-range goals are documented in the IEP.

"Measurable postsecondary goals" is the official term for statements that reflect what a student plans to do after he or she receives a diploma and graduates from school. Federal law requires that an IEP

include measurable postsecondary goals in the following areas:

- **Employment** — What type of employment is the student interested in? In what setting (paid/competitive, with/without supports, unpaid/volunteer) will the work take place?
- **Postsecondary education/training** — Will the student pursue education or training after high school? In what subject and in what setting (two- or four-year college or university, vocational training, trade school, apprenticeship, military, etc.)?
- **Independent living** (when appropriate) — Where is the student going to live? How will he or she travel from one place to another? Will the student require supports to live independently in the community? Will he or she need help with finances? How will the student access healthcare? What recreation and leisure opportunities can the student access in the community?



How many adults end up working in the exact profession they dreamed of and planned for while in high school? Some do follow that path or work in a related area. Others ultimately do things they never imagined while in high school, a time when hopes and dreams are not or may not be clearly defined and may shift frequently. The IEP process uses transition assessments, planning, and appropriate instruction to help youth develop long-range goals and establish plans to achieve them. Because the student's goals may change, the measurable postsecondary goals in the IEP must be reviewed annually and revised as needed.

Measurable postsecondary goals should be stated in the IEP using results-oriented terms (“enrolled in,” “participate in”) and descriptors (“full-time” or “part-time”). Here are some examples of how measurable postsecondary goals can be stated for each transition area:

Employment

- When I graduate, I will be employed full-time as a construction worker building houses.
- After high school, I will continue working in part-time jobs that involve animals.
- When I complete high school, I will volunteer part-time at my local senior center.
- After graduating, I will work part-time in the community, with supports provided by a community-based employment provider.

Postsecondary education/training

- After graduation, I will attend a state university to obtain a degree in the natural sciences.
- After graduation, I will take computer classes through Community Education.
- Upon graduation, I will enroll part-time in the Local 98 apprenticeship program training to be a sheet rocker.

- After graduation, I will participate part-time in on-the-job training at the site of my employment.
- Upon graduation, I will attend technical college full-time to become a graphic artist.

Independent living (when appropriate). This may include recreation and leisure, home living, and community participation.

- When I graduate, I will access community services using para-transit on a weekly basis.
- After graduation, I will join the YMCA to access recreational services.
- Upon graduation, I will live in the community in an apartment, with support from a disability housing provider.
- After high school, I will join a social support group for young adults with disabilities.

Keep in mind:

While measurable postsecondary goals should reflect a student's personal objectives, the goals must also be based on an age-appropriate transition assessment. Expectations for high achievement are important, but the goals have to be attainable. This may cause an issue when a youth expresses a goal such as "After graduation, I will become a professional basketball player." Unless the youth has shown legitimate potential to reach that level of achievement, the goal may need to be rephrased. This doesn't mean a youth can't work toward being a professional basketball player. The goal could be, "After graduation I will attend a four-year college and participate on the college basketball team to explore a career in professional basketball." In this way, the goal is more attainable; it could include careers in team management or athletic medicine, for example.

How families can help youth shape their future

The measurable postsecondary goals outlined in an IEP should reflect as accurately as possible, the type of life a young person desires after high school. Accuracy is important because many of the activities listed in the IEP will focus on meeting those stated goals. If the goals are constructed without much knowledge of (or input from) the student, they may fail to serve their purpose: Documenting the desired outcome of transition planning.

Families play a significant role in creating measurable postsecondary goals and in helping their child contribute to the process. Parents know their children well, and goal-setting is the time to put that knowledge to good use. Here are some ideas on how families can help youth do research and gain experience that leads to meaningful, obtainable goals.

Employment

- Have a conversation with your youth to discuss his or her likes, dislikes, and thoughts on what types of careers he or she is interested in exploring. Every career requires employees to have certain skills, so it is important to help your youth choose jobs that match his or her skills and strengths.

- Help your son or daughter explore different career areas that relate to his or her interests and strengths. For example, a youth might be interested in working on cars. Can that interest be narrowed down to related occupations? This process helps youth realize that there are many diverse job possibilities that match each personal interest.
- Will your youth need extra supports to maintain a job? If so, you can help your son or daughter research what public and private programs provide those services and how to access them.

Postsecondary education/training

- Reinforce the importance of gaining skills through postsecondary education and the impact of that education on your youth's ability to earn money as an adult. Most of today's new jobs require some level of additional education beyond high school.
- Postsecondary education is often thought of as attending a two- or four-year college or university, but these are not the only options. Students can attend trade schools to learn specific skills, business schools to learn business technologies, take Community Education classes to build on a specific interest, or attend college online. Parents can help their youth make choices that work best for him or her.
- Opportunities for students with disabilities to attend postsecondary education are growing rapidly. Many youth who never thought college was an option can be successful with the appropriate academic accommodations and supports. Parents can help their son or daughter understand what academic accommodations work best and practice requesting these.

Independent living

- For some youth, living independently in the community may require additional supports such as Medical Assistance, housing programs, and transportation. Parents should seek information about what is available so they can help their youth identify what they'll need as adults.
- In addition to community supports, independent living also requires certain skills such as the ability to manage finances, make healthy food choices, and maintain a living space. Parents can help build skills while their youth is still in high school and work with their son or daughter to identify resources that provide supports to adults in these areas.
- Social and recreational outlets — an important part of successful adult living — are an aspect of transition planning that is sometimes overlooked. Parents can help find social and recreational resources and opportunities that will help build a strong connection to a youth's peers and community.



Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): The launching pad



A student's IEP is intended to identify special education services that will lead to improved performance in school and help that student achieve his or her goals. To do this, the IEP team needs to identify **a student's current level of learning or performance** and **the impact a student's disability is having on learning**. In other words, the team must find out where the student is starting from and what obstacles might hinder the student's ability to reach transition goals.

During a student's comprehensive special education evaluation, his or her unique areas of educational need are identified. The number of needs varies greatly from one student to another. On the IEP, a PLAAFP statement is written to document each need in terms of current functioning and impact of the student's disability. The PLAAFP statement must include data from various sources that supports the validity of each area of need. Data sources may include:

- Most recent comprehensive evaluation
- Ending levels of performance on last year's goals
- Any new special education or transition assessment results
- Performance on district and statewide assessments, including identification of skills and knowledge already attained in relation to grade-level standards
- Classroom grades and observations, including behavior data
- Input from the student and his or her parents
- Interests and strengths, including non-curricular areas
- Any strategies, accommodations, or assistive technology devices or services that have already been successful for the student

To collect this information, the IEP team has to answer several important questions:

- What are the disability-related challenges affecting a student's learning and involvement at school?
- At what academic and functional level is the student performing right now?
- Is there any other information we need in order to have a complete picture of the student?
- What strategies, accommodations, and/or assistive technology have already been successful in helping this student learn?

- What are the grade-level academic standards for this student's current grade, and how do the student's skills compare to those standards?
- Where does the student stand in comparison to his or her peers? Are there any gaps between his or her ability to perform academically with grade-level skills or behave with age-appropriate developmental skills?

The answers to these questions will be documented as the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statement on a student's IEP. The PLAAFP offers a snapshot of a student at the current moment and helps shape annual IEP goals that guide a student from the current level of performance to a higher level.

The PLAAFP can appear on an IEP as "PLAAFP," "Present Level(s) of Academic and Functional Performance, Goals and Measurement of Progress," or a similar heading. The information in the PLAAFP section should be written in clear, specific, accurate statements with enough detail to describe the student's current skill levels in objective, measurable terms. If scores are reported, they should either be self-explanatory or be clearly spelled out. Here are some examples:

- Kendall has a reading disability. He is in the ninth grade and reads independently at a third-grade level. He has grade-level comprehension of materials read to him. Kendall needs to improve his reading skills.
- Lisa has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Her organizational skills are not well developed. She loses assignments and notes for her academic classes approximately 75 percent of the time and, as a result, comes to class without necessary materials. Due to these behaviors, Lisa is not able to complete grade-level work. She needs instruction on organizational skills.
- Angela is 16 years old but performs academically at fourth-grade level in reading and third-grade level in math. Although she benefits socially from being in mainstream classes, her class work in reading, math, science, and social studies needs to be modified. Angela needs to increase her academic skills.
- Connor has autism. His academic skills are at grade level, but his social and communication skills are at least two years behind those of his grade-level peers. Connor needs instruction to understand nonverbal social and communication cues.

Keep in mind:

The PLAAFP section of the IEP provides a snapshot of your youth at a particular point in time. While you have valuable information to share about your child, school staff may see the student differently than you do. It is important to reach agreement with the school team on your child's needs so that appropriate instruction to meet those needs can be identified. The PLAAFP is updated each year to reflect new data and student progress.





Ashley

Ashley's most recent comprehensive special education evaluation continued to identify areas of need in reading and organizing information. In addition, Ashley and her family expressed concern that she is experiencing test anxiety when taking tests that require reading and processing of information. The IEP team agreed that these are Ashley's need areas that must be addressed so she can reach her stated goal of attending college. On her IEP, these needs were expressed in the following PLAAFP statement:

"Ashley has a reading disability. She is a junior and reads independently at a seventh-grade level. Ashley misses assignment deadlines approximately 20 percent of the time. Ashley also reports

experiencing anxiety 75 percent of the time when taking tests that involve reading written test questions. As a result of these behaviors, Ashley works hard to maintain grade-level work. Ashley needs to increase her academic skills and needs instruction on organizational skills."



Mason

Mason's PLAAFP was written from his perspective, and with his input, by his special education case manager. Mason's comprehensive special education evaluation continued to show significant needs in key transition areas and in reading. The IEP team (including Mason's parents) agreed that these are all areas of need that should be addressed in the IEP, and they have chosen to do that using three separate PLAAFP statements:

Employment

"I worked with Tree Trust last summer and Valley Ventures during school. My supervisor said that I was always willing to work and

try new things, and I have a positive attitude, although many of the janitorial and clerical tasks remain difficult. I have difficulty with planning and practicing of motor tasks, including activities that involve fine motor tasks, gross motor skills, and coordinating both sides of my body. This may affect activities in daily living and vocational tasks. When I learn a skill, I need to systematically practice on a consistent basis, or use it in my daily life to maintain the motor patterns. Verbal cues and repetitions help me to learn and begin to generalize the skill."

Independent living

"In my Living Skills and Foods classes, I participate in activities that involve multiple-step instructions. I do a nice job at following them if they are written for me and I am able to look at them as I go through the activity. If the teacher asks me to do multiple steps without providing written instructions, I have a hard time remembering what step comes next.

When something goes wrong, I have difficulty knowing what I need to do to fix the problem independently. I am able to correct the problem with verbal prompts from my aid or the teacher. I

need to work on independently asking for help instead of just stopping and waiting for someone to ask me if I need help.”

Reading

“I can read second-grade reading level books by myself. I read an average of 59 correct words per minute. My high frequency sight word recognition is 207 of the 300 words in the ‘Fry’s List.’ I am improving my inflections and becoming better at following the text. In the regular classroom, I need to have grade level tests read to me or provided on tape. My oral comprehension is almost at grade level. I independently write email once a week to family and friends, and write a summary of the stories I read each month from the ‘Start-to-Finish’ books.”

Once the IEP team knows where the student wants to go (the measurable postsecondary goals), and where the student is now (PLAAFP), the team will develop the rest of the IEP. For transition, this will include courses of study, transition services, and annual goals.

Courses of Study: How the goals will be reached

Almost all high school students attend classes during the day. These classes may be chosen because they are requirements for graduation, are advanced placement courses, are part of a career and technical training track, or simply because the student is interested in a given subject. Ideally, students choose classes that lead to graduation and skill building for postsecondary education, employment, or living in the community.

Transition-age students who are in special education select their high school classes for many of the same reasons, but they also need to make choices that help them reach their long-term goals as stated in the IEP. This long-range planning of a student’s high school classes is referred to as “Courses of Study.” Documented in the IEP, Courses of Study is a year-by-year description of what classes a student plans to take so they can reach their post-high school goals.

Courses of Study may include regular education, career and technical education, advanced placement, or modified or specially designed instruction, as well as other educational experiences, such as work-based learning. There should be a direct relationship between a student’s measurable postsecondary goals and the courses a student plans to pursue. For example, if a student has a measurable postsecondary goal of enrolling in a college computer science program, then that student should pursue as many computer-related classes as possible.

Considering the Courses of Study allows the youth and the IEP team to think ahead so classes and activities can be planned for and completed within allocated timelines. Schools are required to list courses for the current year but are encouraged to plan at least two years in advance. Courses of Study are addressed every year, and revised as needed, to reflect changes in the student’s future plans.

Parents take note: The team may suggest class substitutions based on student needs as documented in evaluation data. For example, if a student struggles with language comprehension, the IEP team may choose to substitute another class instead of a foreign language curriculum. The IEP team can

do this even if a particular class is required by the district for graduation. Parents should be aware of the impact substitutions can have on a student's long-range transition planning. For example, if a student is planning to enroll in a specific college program that requires the student to have taken a foreign language in high school, then efforts should be made to meet that requirement.

Ashley (sample Courses of Study)

- Courses indicated in bold type represent general education requirements

Upon graduation, Ashley will enroll in a state university to study natural sciences.

School Year	Grade Level	Courses
2016-17	9	Business Basics, Integrated Math 1 , Communications , Physical Education, Environmental Science , Civics
2017-18	10	Business Basics 2, Algebra , Speech and Drama , World History, Employability Skills, Biology
2018-19	11	English for Work, Geometry , Chemistry , Graphic Design , Art , Work-Based Learning: Seminar
2019-20	12	Communication and Writing Skills , Essentials of Business Operations , Physics , Computer Applications , Entry-Level Forestry (at Community College)

Anticipated month and year of graduation: **June 2020**

Mason (sample Courses of Study)

Within four years of graduation, Mason will live in the community in an apartment with the support of a disability house provider.

School Year	Grade Level	Courses
2016-17	9	Everyday Math, Foundations of Communication, Science, Family and Consumer Science 1, Art
2017-18	10	Social Studies, Communications, Everyday Math II , Budgeting, Adapted Physical Education
2018-19	11	Biology for Living, Art, Family and Consumer Science 2, Communications
2019-20	12	Work Experience, Seminar Class, Math of Everyday Living 2, Health
2020-21	12+	Seminar II, Internship, Ethics, Communications for Employment

Anticipated month and year of graduation: **June 2021**

Transition services: The extra help your youth needs

Once a student's measurable postsecondary goals have been identified, the IEP team determines which services will be necessary for that student to accomplish those goals. On the IEP, this is referred to as "transition services," but parents may also see the term "coordinated set of activities" because this is how they are referred to in federal law.

Transition services can be carried out by the school, families, a partnering agency, or by the student themselves, and do not have to include specialized instruction. For example, a youth with the long-term goal of attending college may need the transition service of visiting with a college's Disability Student Services staff person to discuss potential academic accommodations. The student or family would likely be responsible for ensuring that this happens, and it would not require any specialized instruction from school staff.

Keep in mind:

Transition services can be provided to youth prior to ninth grade if the student is at risk of dropping out of school before age 16, or if the services would enhance employment or educational outcomes.



Transition service areas include:

Instruction: This can be specialized instruction, regular education, career and technical education, or an arrangement to learn a particular skill somewhere else. For example, a youth may take a class from a Center for Independent Living to learn how to use public transportation.

Related services: These are services that will not necessarily be provided by the school. This might include exploring the acquisition of personal attendant services, speaking with a counselor from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, receiving services from a county social worker, or having therapeutic recreation services. Some IEP-related services are provided by the school, including transportation, assistive technology, and speech and language services when needed for the student to make progress on his or her IEP goals or activities.

Community experiences: This includes any services that help a student participate in his or her community. Examples include working in an after-school job, using a public library, finding recreation opportunities, reading and using a bus schedule, or preparing to earn a driver's license.

Development of employment and other post-school goals: These services are intended to help students prepare for employment or postsecondary education. They might include participation in work experience programs, resume writing, money management, understanding college entrance requirements, and memorizing Social Security numbers.

Acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation (if appropriate): Students may need other activities to improve daily living skills and identify work ability.



These might include developing a personal fitness routine, learning how to eat healthy meals, and taking assessments to determine strengths and needs for employment.

The IEP team should take many things into account when it considers which services a youth needs to reach his or her postsecondary goals. Every student with a disability is unique. What might be appropriate for one student could be inappropriate for another – even if they have the same disability. Academic course planning may benefit one student, while facilitating relationships with adult community service providers could be more important for another. Listed below are some questions the IEP team can ask when considering which transition services a student may need.

Do we expect the student to:

- Pass district and state graduation requirements?
- Take some or all regular education classes?
- Be eligible for support from adult community service providers?

- Complete alternative state assessments?
- Use modified curricula?
- Need special education to age 21?
- Go on to college or other postsecondary training?
- Need assistance to live independently?

Consider the example of Ashley, who has a learning disability. It would be important for her IEP team to know that:

1. Ashley expects to graduate on time, take state assessments with accommodations, and accomplish IEP goals, including those for transition by the end of grade 12.
2. She takes all regular education classes and receives limited special education support.
3. She is not likely to be eligible for county social services or Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Mason has a developmental cognitive disability so the IEP team may take these factors into consideration:

1. Mason will take the alternative state assessment.
2. He will continue special education services in a transition program after grade 12. He will not accept a diploma at 12th grade but will participate in high school graduation ceremonies with his same-age peers.

3. He is likely to be eligible for county developmental disability services and Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Keep in mind:

Parents should play an active role in determining which transition services will help their youth achieve his or her post-school goals. Parents can also take direct responsibility for making sure some of these services are completed.



Pre-employment transition services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) includes requirements to ensure that students with disabilities gain skills and have experiences that lead to success in competitive integrated employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) in collaboration with local education agencies must provide access to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities in 9th grade through age 21 based on individual need.

Pre-ETS include the following activities:

- job exploration counseling
- work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills
- instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

Pre-ETS are intended to supplement rather than take the place of special education transition services that are necessary to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

WIOA also places limitations on subminimum wage employment for students and requires a series of action steps toward integrated, competitive employment that must be taken for youth with disabilities who are 24 and younger.

For more information, see “A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities,” from the U.S. Department of Education (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-may-2017.pdf>) or go to PACER’s website (PACER.org/transition/learning-center/laws/workforce-innovation.asp).

Annual goals and objectives: How progress is measured

This guide has already explored how the secondary transition process is used to evaluate and document a student's current level of functioning, how a student's vision for his or her life as an adult is translated into measurable postsecondary goals, and how courses of study and transition services are charted to help make those goals a reality. In addition, the IEP team will break postsecondary goals into smaller, more manageable pieces by using annual goals and objectives.

For example, a student may need to increase reading skills so he or she can attend a specific college or live independently. This student would then have an annual reading goal on his or her IEP that is listed under the transition areas of postsecondary education or independent living. Another student might have a postsecondary goal to attend a vocational college. His or her annual goal might be to explore which vocational colleges offer degrees in that student's areas of interest. In this way, parents will know if a student is actually making progress in working on skills to achieve long-term postsecondary goals.

Advice from an advocate: *Be aware that the addition of transition need areas in the IEP often brings a reorganization of how annual goals are listed within the IEP. This can be confusing to parents who may be used to seeing goals listed a certain way. In an IEP that includes transition, related goals are often documented under the transition need area. The IEP broadens to include employment, postsecondary education, and independent living goals, while continuing to address ongoing educational needs.*

Annual goals are statements in the IEP, written in measurable terms, that describe what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish in a 12-month period. Objectives are measurable intermediate steps that will be taken to accomplish the annual goal. For example, if Mason has an annual goal of improving the use of appropriate social skills, then his objectives could include "verbalizing what is appropriate social interaction" or "greeting adults and peers appropriately four out of every five times."

As members of the IEP team, it is important that parents help identify their youth's annual goals. Parents know their student better than anyone, and this knowledge can help shape annual goals by identifying areas of need for a student to work on. It may be helpful for parents to look at it this way: "My son can do this now. In one year he should be able to do that. How do we help him move from here to there in the next 12 months?" To determine if progress is being made, annual goals need to be measurable. When annual goals are being discussed in IEP meetings, parents should ask if a particular goal is measurable and, if so, how will it be measured?

Annual goals, activities, and services



Sometimes terms can be confusing. An earlier section of this toolkit explained that “transition services” in the IEP might also be called “coordinated set of activities.” This area of the IEP will list services and activities, some carried out by the school and some by others. When the service or activity is the responsibility of the school, it will be developed into an annual goal or objective that can be measured. Sometimes the school will highlight the activity or service in bold to indicate that this activity or service is also an annual goal.

For more information about annual goals and objectives see PACER’s “A Guide for Minnesota Parents to the Individualized Education Program (IEP)” guide.

What if I disagree with the proposed IEP?

School districts are required to implement the IEP as soon as possible following the meeting. The IEP must be written and provided to parents within 14 calendar days of the proposed start of the IEP services. Parents then have 14 calendar days to agree or disagree with any proposed services. Parents are encouraged to read the IEP and ask, “Is this IEP an appropriate step toward a productive and independent life for my child?” Your answer to this question will guide your decision to agree or disagree with the IEP.

Summary of Performance (SOP): Achievements and recommendations

Once a student “ages out” of special education services, or accepts a diploma, the school is required to provide a “Summary of Performance” (SOP) that spells out the youth’s academic achievement and functional performance at the time of graduation. This document is designed to provide information to other professionals who may work with the student after high school. It should also include recommendations on how a student can reach his or her stated postsecondary goals.

The SOP has to be completed during a student’s final year of school. Ideally, construction of the SOP will take place during the final transition IEP meeting. This enables students and parents to provide input on what areas still need work and what accommodations may be beneficial in a postsecondary educational or work setting. The SOP is an important document to those who provide services after school. Colleges may use it to determine eligibility for Disability Student Services or to help



identify academic accommodations. State agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services or county Developmental Disability services, may use the SOP to help determine eligibility or guide programming. A well-written SOP provides an excellent snapshot of where the youth is at graduation and what still needs to be addressed so a student can realize his or her goals as an adult.

Two routes, one diploma

All students who graduate high school in Minnesota earn the same diploma, but the route students with disabilities take to graduation varies. One of the IEP team's duties is to determine whether a student will be able to graduate by meeting the usual credit requirements and taking necessary exams with accommodations. If not, the team can decide that it would be more appropriate for the student to graduate by meeting selected IEP objectives and participating in modified or alternate state assessments.

There may be other consequences of not having completed standard high school courses. For example, a student's IEP might not specify certain foreign language or math courses, but these may be required to enroll in some forms of postsecondary education. These and other issues need to be considered by parents who are helping their youth decide which diploma route to take.



Section 4: Community Resources and Partners — Who is Able to Help?

Entitlement vs. eligibility: The big shift

What happens when the school bus stops coming? This is a question many parents of youth with disabilities ask themselves as their child nears the end of his or her high school years. There are other common questions, too:

- How will my son or daughter spend his or her days?
- What supports are available in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, or housing?
- Whose responsibility is it to investigate and access resources my son or daughter might need as an adult?
- Will my child be able to use adult services in the same way he or she did in special education?

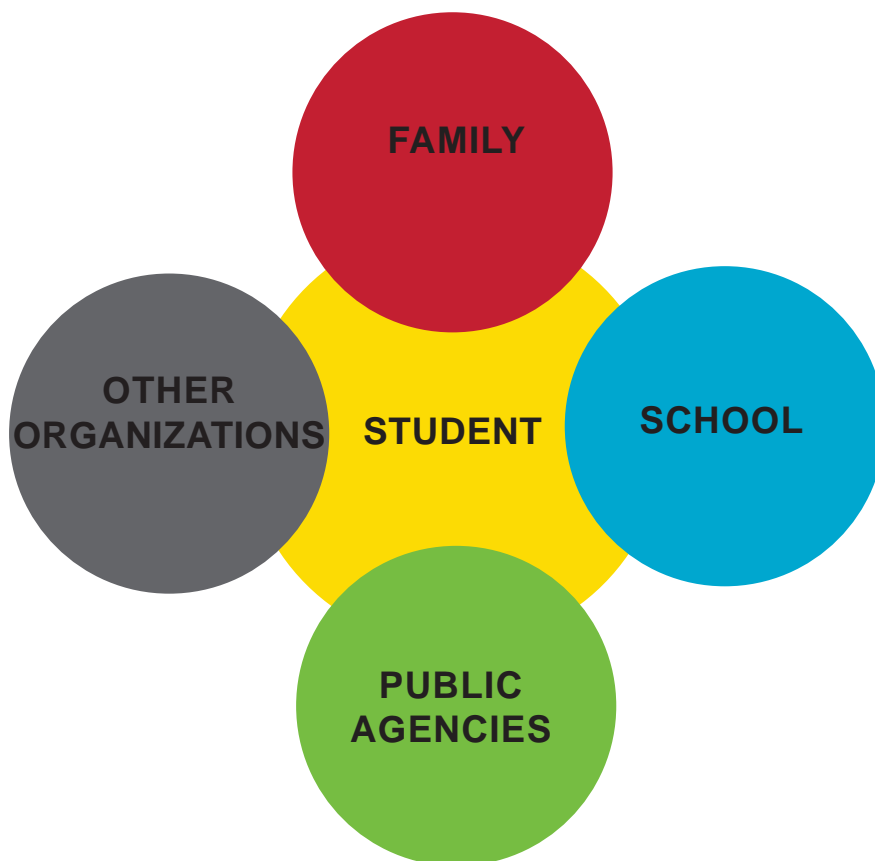
These are all important questions and parents of youth with disabilities need to find the right answers. That's why transition planning is so valuable. When parents begin to think about what community

resources might be available for their youth, they need to know that **there is a significant difference between mandated special education programs and adult services based on eligibility.**

A qualifying youth with disabilities is entitled to a free and appropriate public education under federal law. In fact, school districts are required to identify youth with disabilities who they feel may benefit from special education services. This is called “Child Find.” After high school, however, services provided by organizations such as the county or Vocational Rehabilitation Services are based on eligibility. Each program has established criteria that dictate if a person will be eligible for services. In most cases, eligibility is based on the severity of the disability and its impact on a person’s ability to find employment or live safely in the community without supports. **Not all youth will qualify for adult services, even if they have a disability and have received special education services in school.**

Parents may be accustomed to the intense level of support and participation that is part of special education. It can come as a surprise when they learn that adult services need to be accessed separately, and that each service or program has its own plan, eligibility criteria, and intended outcomes. In many cases, it is the family’s responsibility to coordinate adult services on behalf of their youth. Parents who understand this shift in how services are accessed, and strive to learn the various options for community support, will be better positioned to help their youth navigate the complexities of adult services.

The role of community partners in transition planning



When students and their families are able to effectively collaborate, communicate, and cooperate with schools and community agencies during the transition process, everyone wins. Teamwork and group effort among those involved will go a long way toward helping a youth reach his or her goals. Students with disabilities often require extra collaboration and support — even into adulthood — to help them live independently in the community. Fortunately, there are many different partners that can help families achieve a smooth transition into adult living.



Not all youth with disabilities need support to live in the community.

Some will find employment or move on to postsecondary education with little or no additional support. Many teens, however, will require some level of support to meet their goals of getting a job or living outside of their parent's home. Support comes in the form of involvement from various community agencies, with each organization offering one or two pieces of the puzzle.

During transition planning, these key questions need to be answered:

- Where will the student live as an adult?
- What will the student do for employment?
- Will the student pursue some form of postsecondary education?
- What does the student want to do for fun and recreation?
- How will the student travel from place to place?
- How will the student's medical needs be taken care of?
- Does the student currently have the skills to do the things he or she wants to do?

Effective collaboration and coordination with community agencies can help provide the answers. It is during transition planning that adult supports, based on a youth's individual needs, are identified and accessed. These supports may come in the form of disability-specific programs, such as county developmental disability services, or as general programs, such as Workforce Centers or community education classes.

This chart may clarify what the coordination of adult services looks like. For example, here is what adult services look like for Ashley and Mason.

Ashley

Service	Activity	Agency Providing Service on the IEP
Instruction: (i.e. specialized instruction, regular education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability awareness • Money management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Independent Living • Community Education class
Community Experiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit a Workforce Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Related Services:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a “benefits” analysis using DB101 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Employment and other post-school adult living objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor market information • Job accommodations for learning disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAREERwise.mnscu.edu • Job Accommodation Network • Workforce Center
If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation:		

Ashley’s identified needs are in the areas of accommodating her disability in a postsecondary education setting, understanding her disability and its impact, and identifying possible supports she will need to find and maintain a job. Her IEP team has helped identify several possibilities from community agencies, existing college supports, and web-based resources.

Mason

Services	Activity	Agency Providing Service on the IEP
Instruction: (i.e. specialized instruction, regular education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education
Community Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported housing • Independent living skills • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County social services • Community housing provider • Metro Mobility
Related Services:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete application for county services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County social services
Employment and other post-school adult living objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work readiness skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County social services • Community employment provider
If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent living skills provider • Social recreation and travel group

Mason will likely require an intensive level of support to be able to work and participate in his community. County social services will be the main access point for many of his supports, but he could also benefit from family involvement, as well as community and consumer groups that provide social outlets for people with disabilities.

Who are the most common partners?

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a state-run, federally funded program designed to help qualified people with disabilities prepare for, locate, and maintain employment. To be eligible, a person has to qualify for services based on the presence of a disability, the impact of that disability on finding and maintaining employment, and the ability of the individual to benefit from services. A VRS counselor is assigned to every high school in the state, and students with disabilities can have their school's VRS person participate in IEP meetings. A good time to connect with VRS is at the beginning of the student's junior year. VRS staff can assist students with identifying career interests, employment programs, and accommodations on the job. They can also help students identify which postsecondary programs might be a good fit.



In some cases, VRS can even help with the cost of attending college if the postsecondary program is closely linked with identified career goals in a person's Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). For example, if a student is interested in becoming a welder, VRS might pay for some postsecondary training to help the youth reach that goal. There are limits on who can qualify for postsecondary financial assistance as well as what types of programs VRS will finance.

It's a good idea to inquire about VRS services while the student with a disability is still in high school. Parents can make a request to the IEP team leader that a VRS counselor takes part in an IEP meeting, or they can contact VRS directly (toll free: 800-328-9095). VRS counselors are also assigned to the state's Workforce Centers. (Find the nearest location at: positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/WorkForce_Centers/See_All_WorkForce_Center_Locations/index.aspx.)

Please note: Minnesota has a separate Vocational Rehabilitation Services agency that provides employment services for people who are blind or visually impaired. State Services for the Blind provides blindness adjustment training; assistive technology; and help exploring, finding, and keeping employment. SSB has offices statewide (telephone: 651-642-0500).

County social service programs

The Developmental Disabilities (DD) Act requires that states provide services and supports to people with developmental disabilities and their families. The law defines a "developmental disability" as a lifelong disability that affects people before they reach age 22 and substantially limits functioning ability in three or more life activities: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living, or employability. Services and supports for people with developmental disabilities are provided by county agencies.

Many youth with developmental disabilities are assigned a county social worker who helps facilitate services such as assistance in applying for Social Security benefits, medical assistance, Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS), supported employment, housing, and help with social and recreational needs. Parents may also be familiar with the term “Day Training and Habilitation Services” (DT&H), which are designed to provide vocational, independent living, and supervision supports. County services may also be available for people with mental health needs. Parents need to provide documentation of their child’s disability and must be able to describe why county services are needed to help their youth live independently in the community.

County Developmental Disability Services are the most common funding mechanism for vital adult supports for people with significant disabilities. Parents of youth who qualify are encouraged to request that a county social worker be part of the child’s IEP team. Parents should contact their county of residence to inquire about the availability of services.

Community employment providers

County social services, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and State Services for the Blind do not generally provide direct employment services and supports. Instead, they contract with community-based employment agencies to deliver these. These are often referred to as Community Rehabilitation Providers. Although parents can pay privately for agency services, most services are paid for by the county or Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

These agencies do not provide identical services. Programs vary in size, service area, clientele served, and quality. Employment services range from support in finding and maintaining competitive jobs in the community to offering enclaves at local businesses or sheltered work at a specific site. The benefit of these types of services is that they provide ongoing employment support, most often to people with significant disabilities.

Counties have lists of licensed providers in their area and parents are strongly encouraged to interview the agency before their child begins receiving services. Ask potential providers if they offer jobs in the community, if they can provide testimonials from others who have used their services, and if they offer tours of their facility (assuming the work is facility-based). Families who reside in rural communities will likely have fewer choices of providers than those in larger cities.



Community Rehabilitation Providers can be invited to a student’s IEP meeting and can provide valuable insight into work readiness and employment for transition planning. Parents are encouraged to work closely with providers to address problems that arise, and assist in the career exploration and job placement process. If things are not working out, it is the parents’ right to request a change in job coach, case worker, or provider agency.

Workforce Centers and federally funded employment programs

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 is federal “umbrella” legislation designed to enhance America’s workforce. WIA led to the creation of Workforce Centers and a continuation of certain types of adult and youth employment programs. Both are possible resources for youth and parents.

Minnesota has 49 Workforce Centers statewide. These are “one-stop shops” that house a wide variety of employment and public assistance programs under one roof. Workforce Centers may offer resource rooms featuring local job listings, job search assistance (such as job clubs and help with writing résumés), dislocated worker and unemployment programs, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The centers are a good place for youth to do career exploration, and such visits can be listed as activities on a student’s IEP.

Workforce Centers are mandated to serve all customers who come through the doors, including those with disabilities. Centers may have designated spaces for young adults to search for jobs or receive assistance with work readiness and career exploration. To locate the nearest Workforce Center, visit: mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/workforce-centers.

The Workforce Investment Act also authorized the creation of youth and adult employment programs, which are available statewide. Youth employment programs are designed for low-income youth (ages 14-21) who are among certain targeted groups, including those involved with the juvenile justice system, homeless youth, teen parents, school dropouts, or those whose basic skills are deficient. Minnesota’s WIA youth programs serve many youth with disabilities. These programs offer summer employment opportunities, alternative high school choices, leadership development, and employment skills training. They can also help with secondary transition planning, especially if the youth is considered at risk of dropping out of school, living in poverty, or being incarcerated. For information on Minnesota youth program providers visit: apps.deed.state.mn.us/assets/youth/services/providers.shtml.

Note: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act replaces the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Social Security programs

The Social Security Administration operates the two largest federal programs that provide assistance for people with disabilities: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These are widely used and often provide vital income support to people with significant disabilities. Parents need to learn the program rules, eligibility requirements, and application processes, which can all be complicated. It is also important to understand the financial implications of accessing these benefits.

SSDI is an insurance program that provides monthly cash benefits to eligible people with a disability who have work history and have paid Social Security/FICA tax. If a person’s disability occurs prior to age 22, he or she may also qualify for benefits when a parent dies, retires, or is diagnosed with a disability. This benefit is referred to as Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI). There are currently work incentive programs for individuals on SSDI or RSDI that allow them to be employed while maintaining Medical Assistance (MA) coverage.

SSI is a needs-based benefit paid to people with significant disabilities who are not otherwise able to support themselves financially. SSI is not paid by FICA taxes but through federal general revenue

tax dollars. It is designed to help people with disabilities who have little income, and provides cash for basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. SSI eligibility criteria limit the amount of personal assets applicants may own. The amount of employment income earned while receiving SSI impacts the value of benefits received. Recipients of SSI are eligible for Medical Assistance at no cost.

Eligibility for SSDI and SSI is based on impact of the disability, previous work history, and personal assets. Parents can visit a local Social Security office to learn more or begin the application process online at ssa.gov.

The rules for Social Security programs vary, so parents need to know what benefits a youth is receiving. The amount of benefits paid is not substantial, and SSDI and SSI do not provide enough monthly income to allow for financial flexibility or freedom. Parents are encouraged to engage in benefits planning (described on the next page) to establish the right level of benefits support and earned income that allows a person the highest level of financial independence possible.



Centers for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are nonprofit community-based programs that are professionally staffed and managed by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. Reflecting the philosophy of the independent living movement, a minimum of 50 percent of CIL decision-making staff and board members must be people with disabilities. There are eight centers across Minnesota, but not all areas of the state are covered.

CILs offer a wide variety of services and programs for all ages, and the only eligibility requirement is being a person with a disability. Core services include systems and individual advocacy, peer counseling, information and referral, and independent living skills training. Each CIL is independently operated and may offer additional services, such as nursing home relocation, PCA services, ramp building programs, support groups, housing assistance, and programs for transitioning youth. A list of Centers for Independent Living in Minnesota is located at www.macil.org.

Postsecondary education

“Postsecondary education” includes any type of education after high school, and it is becoming increasingly important in today’s society. Many emerging career fields require workers to have skills that can only be obtained through further education. There are many opportunities that enable students with disabilities to be successful in postsecondary education. Parents and students should incorporate into transition planning the academic, organizational, and interpersonal skills needed to pursue these options.

Traditionally, postsecondary education has meant attending a four-year college or university, but the scope of educational choices is much broader than that. Many students opt for two-year programs at community or technical colleges. Some prefer the focus of a trade school. Others like the flexibility of taking courses online. Whichever option a student pursues, it is necessary to use the high school years to make sure he or she is prepared for postsecondary education.

Most postsecondary institutions have a Disability Student Services (DSS) office — the exact name varies by institution — that helps students with disabilities to secure academic accommodations and provides other services. Students with disabilities and their parents are encouraged to visit prospective campuses while still in high school to meet with staff at the college's DSS. This will help students understand what is and is not offered at a particular school.

CAREERwise Education: Minnesota's **comprehensive** resource for exploring careers, planning education, and finding employment. Students can use CAREERwise Education to better understand what skills are needed for certain jobs, to find colleges that offer programs in desired job fields, and to learn about projected future demand for workers in various kinds of careers. It takes the right information to plan for success in postsecondary education and employment. CAREERwise is a great place to find that information and a valuable tool for transition planning. careerwise.mnscu.edu

Other options

Benefits planning

Some youth with disabilities qualify for income support through Social Security programs (such as SSI or SSDI) or health care support, such as Medical Assistance (MA). These “benefits” programs are crucial in helping many people with disabilities live independently in their communities, but people who rely only on benefits often live close to the poverty line. In addition, a lack of understanding of program eligibility requirements sometimes prevents people from exploring meaningful careers or working towards financial self-sufficiency. To make informed choices, it is important for individuals with disabilities and their families to know how benefits and work can be successfully combined.

“Benefits planning” may be an informal or formal process that helps people better understand benefits and available work incentives (programs that support work). Ideally, benefits can be a bridge toward work and independence for people with disabilities. They provide needed income and health care coverage while a person is leaving school, exploring careers, or becoming established as an adult. All too often, people receiving benefits fear that they will lose medical and income support if they are employed, so they avoid exploring work opportunities altogether. These people may find themselves in the so-called “benefits trap,” where they lack sufficient income to cover basic needs. Youth and families who understand the role of benefits can successfully use benefits planning as a transition planning tool, leading to a healthy balance between needed support and meaningful employment.

Minnesota has multiple sources of information on benefits planning for youth and families. The Minnesota Work Incentives Connection and Disability Benefits 101 each offer support and valuable web-based information.

Disability Benefits 101: DB101 is part of the Disability Hub MN system that helps individuals learn how income from work may impact eligibility for benefits so they can make informed decisions. The service is free, it's private, and it will not affect benefit eligibility. When using DB101 during regular business hours, individuals can use the Talk to an Expert option to chat online or by phone (1-866-333-2466) with a specialist who can provide assistance. All information shared is kept private, and the people providing help will not attempt to sell users products or ask them to do anything uncomfortable. **db101.org**

Strategies for working with community partners

- Families hold a wealth of information about their youth that adult service providers will find useful, especially when creating program plans. Work closely with service providers and help inform the process. Feel free to suggest possible areas of interest, as well as areas you might be concerned about.
- The county where you live will have a list of licensed employment agencies and housing providers. You have the right to interview these providers before agreeing to have your youth work with them. Doing this can help avoid mismatches in program components and personalities.
- Involve adult service providers in the transition planning process while your youth is still in high school. Providers may or may not be able to provide services at that time, but the process of building relationships and understanding program components and outcomes will still be valuable.
- Educate yourself on each adult service provider's "protection and advocacy" options. Find out the process to follow and who to call with questions, concerns, or complaints.
- Families can learn a lot by talking with other families. Connect with parents who have youth of similar age and disability to discuss what services they have used, what was successful, and what they might have done differently.
- Remember to let your youth take a leadership role (to the greatest extent possible) in selecting a program or service provider. Transition is about planning and supporting your youth in the future, and he or she should be part of the decision-making process. Keep in mind that at age 18 (unless legal guardianship has been established), he or she will be the decision maker and will be able to determine the parents' level of involvement.
- Collaboration with adult service providers often requires effective communication skills and the ability to compromise. It is possible to maintain high expectations for adult life while working within the processes that adult services use.

- Finally, remember the key transition questions that need to be answered:
 - Where will my youth work?
 - Where will he or she live?
 - How can my son or daughter access appropriate social and recreational outlets?
 - How will he or she travel from place to place?
 - How can my son or daughter continue learning new skills beyond high school?



Use these core questions to guide what service providers you use and what the expected outcome of their services should be.

Conclusion



I wish I would have heard it when my son was in middle school. We could have been better prepared for transition.

~Minnesota parent after attending a transition workshop

For youth with disabilities, the transition to adulthood is an exciting time when they can explore their interests and think about their hopes and dreams for the future. The “Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families” was created to help families understand the various aspects of transition as well as provide information so that youth can achieve the type of future they envision for themselves.

Every student’s journey through the process of transition from school to community is unique. Some students with disabilities may require minimal academic or community supports, while others might have to rely more on modified curriculum and community partnerships. Despite the individualized nature of the secondary transition process, this toolkit has highlighted five main themes that every family of a youth with disabilities should keep in mind:

1. **Put your youth first during transition planning.** It is your son or daughter’s adult life that is being discussed and prepared for, and it is important to make sure that the transition process is driven by his or her unique hopes and dreams.
2. **Get involved in the transition planning process.** Family participation is critical even though it can be intimidating at times. Don’t be passive. You are a valued and essential partner in the process, and you need to advocate for your youth so he or she can be well-prepared for adult life.
3. **The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is incredibly important.** It establishes what happens with your youth’s special education program. Parents need to understand the various parts of the IEP, how it drives academics and related services, and how decisions made during the IEP process can impact how well prepared a youth is for life as an adult.
4. **There is a whole new world of adult services out there.** Your son or daughter may benefit from these services, which need to be explored while your youth is still in high school. Remember, it is often left up to parents to research and coordinate adult services.
5. **Don’t let the secondary transition process sneak up on you.** It’s never too early to begin thinking about what your youth’s life will look like once he or she becomes an adult. Families who are aware that the transition process is on the horizon will be better prepared to help their youth achieve great things as an adult.

Good luck! The time and energy you invest today in transition planning will be well worth the effort as your youth with disabilities moves into a successful adult life.



Appendix

1. **Transition at a glance**
2. **Resources to help plan for your child’s future, from “Mapping Dreams”¹**
3. **IEP Form Example**
4. **Minnesota State Recommended Parental Consent/Objection Form**

¹ Please Note: “Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood” includes talking points to help parents plan with their child for the future. Free to Minnesota parents of children and young adults with disabilities. Order by calling PACER at 952-838-9000. ©2016, 2012, PACER Center.

Transition at a glance

Where Am I Now?

*Identify strengths, needs, interests, and preferences
through assessment*



Where Do I Want To Go?

Postsecondary expectations



How Do I Get There?



Annual goals



*Course of Study,
activities*



*Supports, services,
linkages*

Resources to help plan for your child's future

Employment and career planning resources

Career guidance: Most schools have guidance counselors and access to computerized career information.

CAREERwise Education: Provides information on Minnesota careers, education, jobs, and self-employment. careerwise.mnscu.edu

Disability Benefits 101: Offers tools and information on employment, health coverage, and benefits, including how work and benefits go together. db101.org

Friends and relatives: People close to you can also be good resources for finding a job. The most important tool you have in helping your child find a job is networking.

Minnesota Work Incentives Connection: Provides answers about the impact of work on benefits, so people with disabilities can see their choices and take advantage of life's opportunities. Call (651) 632-5113 voice; (651) 632-5110 or MN Relay-711 TTY; or (800) 976-6728 toll free. goodwilleasterseals.org/services/WIC

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth: Works to ensure that transition-age youth are provided full access to high-quality services in integrated settings to gain education, employment, and independent living skills. Also offers a range of technical assistance services. ncwd-youth.info

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment: Provides information and training on transition planning, the adult service system, and strategies that prepare youth for successful employment, postsecondary education, and independent living outcomes. PACER.org/transition

State Services for the Blind (SSB): Offers services for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind by fostering the achievement of vocational and independence goals. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: (651) 539-2300 TTY; (800) 652-9000 toll free. mnssb.org

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS): Provides vocational rehabilitation services for those with disabilities. Most of these services are located at a WorkForce Center. A counselor is assigned to each high school and may be able to provide information on the current job market, referrals, job coaching, and partial funding for assessments or assistive technology. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: (651) 259-7366; (800) 328-9095 toll free. mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities

Workforce Centers: These centers are designed to provide job training, education, and employment services at a single neighborhood location. To locate a Workforce Center, call (888) 438-5627. mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/workforce-centers

Postsecondary Education and Training Resources

ACT Assessment: Information about online test preparation, dates, how to apply for accommodations, and more. act.org/content/act/en/students-and-parents.html

Collegeboard: Provides information about advance placement and PSAT/NMSQT and SAT assessments for students with disabilities, including test preparation, dates, and how to apply for accommodations. It also provides information about the ACCUPLACER® test to determine a student's academic skills in the areas of math, English, and reading. collegeboard.org

DO-IT Program: Serves to increase the success of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. It promotes the use of computer and networking technologies to increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment. (888) 972-DOIT (3648) toll free voice/TTY. washington.edu/doit

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: Provides online registration or downloadable application to apply for federal grants and loans. fafsa.ed.gov

The Heath Resource Center at George Washington University: An online resource that provides information on financial aid, scholarships, and student services that help students with disabilities successfully transition into college, university, career technical schools, or other postsecondary programs. heath.gwu.edu

Minnesota Programs of Study: A sequence of courses both required and elective. They begin in middle or high school and progress throughout postsecondary education. The information on this site is intended to help you understand the combinations of courses currently available at your school that will give your child the best preparation for the education/career direction he or she would like to explore. It also offers some idea of programs and majors in the pathways at various colleges and universities. mnprogramsofstudy.org/mnpos

Minnesota Department of Education: Provides resources and tools to help students, parents, and educators plan for transition using both federal and state requirements. Information about Personal Learning Plans is also included at this page: education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ccs/plp

Minnesota Office of Higher Education: Provides information about preparing for college, financial aid, entrance requirements, and evaluating colleges. ohe.state.mn.us

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities: Offers information about admissions, programs, campuses, and careers at Minnesota state colleges and universities. minnstate.edu

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment: Provides information and training on transition planning, the adult service system, and strategies that prepare youth for successful employment, postsecondary education, and independent living outcomes. PACER.org/transition

State Services for the Blind (SSB): Offers services for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind by fostering the achievement of vocational and independence goals. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: (651) 539-2300 TTY; (800) 652-9000 toll free. mnssb.org

Student Financial Assistance: U.S. Department of Education resource that provides free information about preparing for and funding education beyond high school. Call (800) 433-3243; (800) 730-8913 TTY. studentaid.ed.gov

Teens Succeeding with Technology (TeST): A collection of four video trainings. Each training incorporates innovative, web-based technologies, and resources to help high school students with disabilities transition successfully to postsecondary training and careers. More information about this replicable model can be found online at PACER.org/stc/videos

Think College: Provides resources, tools, and a database for students, families, and professionals who are interested in inclusive postsecondary options. thinkcollege.net

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights: Provides a guide with answers to questions that students with disabilities may have as they prepare for postsecondary education options. View "Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators" at ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS): Provides vocational rehabilitation services for those with disabilities. A counselor is assigned to each high school and may be able to provide information on the current job market, support for postsecondary education and training for career goals, and partial funding for assessments or assistive technology. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: (651) 259-7366 or (800) 328-9095 mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities

Independent living resources for recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living

ARC Minnesota: Advocacy, resources, and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities. (651) 523-0823 or (800) 582-5256. thearcofminnesota.org

Centers for Independent Living: Nonprofit organizations that advocate for the independent needs of people with disabilities; identify and provide access to existing resources, such as transportation; provide peer support; and offer opportunities for people with disabilities to acquire the necessary skills to become more independent. There are eight Centers for Independent Living across Minnesota. Call the Disability Linkage Line to find one in your area: 1 (866) 333-2466. macil.org

Community Education programs: Offers lifelong learning for people with disabilities. These programs can provide classes in various areas of interest, such as cooking, sports, money management, art, drama, music, computers, and a variety of other activities. Contact your local school district and ask for the community education coordinator.

Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC): Identifies current local services, programs, and funding sources within a community for transition-age youth and their families. Contact your county or school district to locate your area CTIC.

County Human or Social Service Departments: Provides programs that promote independence, productivity, and community inclusion, as well as services, such as semi-independent living services and medical assistance. The Minnesota Department of Human Services can be reached at (651) 431-2000 or (800) 627-3529 TTY. mn.gov/dhs

Disability Hub MN: Offers up-to-date information about community resources related to people with disabilities. Inquiries include requests for information and referrals on disability benefits programs, home modifications, assistive technology, personal assistance services, transition services, accessible housing, employment, social activities, and disability rights. (866) 333-2466 toll free. disabilityhubmn.org

Medicaid: Also called Medical Assistance, Medicaid is a government-run health insurance program that can pay health care expenses, such as doctor appointments, therapy, hospitalization, prescription drugs, and personal care assistance. Contact your county Department of Human Services to determine eligibility.

PACER Fun Times: A social program that connects high school teens and young adults with and without disabilities to build relationships that benefit all participants. Visit the website for additional links to recreation and leisure resources. PACER.org/funtimes

PACER's Housing Project: Includes information and resources to help parents of children and young adults with disabilities understand their options for independent living and housing. (952) 838-9000; (800) 537-2237 toll free. PACER.org/housing

PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC): Helps make the benefits of assistive technology available to parents and professionals through workshops, webinars, trainings, services, and projects. The STC includes a software and device lending library. (952) 838-9000; (800) 537-2237 toll free. PACER.org/stc

Social Security Administration (SSA, Federal Government): Offers programs that pay cash benefits to people with disabilities based on eligibility criteria. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) pays monthly benefits based on financial need to people who have disabilities and have limited income and resources. This financial support can be very helpful as youth with disabilities transition from school to adult life. Receiving SSI provides you with Medical Assistance/Medicaid health insurance. (800) 772-1213 voice; (800) 325-0778 TTY. ssa.gov/disability

Special Olympics Minnesota: Offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round sports training and competition. Locate your local chapter at (612) 333-0999 or (800) 783-7732. specialolympicsminnesota.org

State parks: Offer outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and cross country skiing. Inquire about programs and services for individuals with disabilities. To locate a state park near you, visit dnr.state.mn.us.

YMCA: Provides a variety of community-based programs and offers access to those with disabilities. YMCA.net

Learning about disability rights as an adult

ADA Minnesota (Americans with Disabilities Act): Gives civil rights protection to people with disabilities. (651) 603-2015 voice; (888) 630-9793 toll free. adaminnesota.org

The Minnesota Association of Centers for Independent Living: Provides contact information on the eight Centers for Independent Living that serve the state of Minnesota. www.macil.org

Minnesota Disability Law Center: Provides legal help for Minnesota residents with disabilities. (612) 334-5970. mylegallaid.org/about/our-work/disability-law

Minnesota State Council on Disability: Provides information to expand opportunities, increase the quality of life, and empower all persons with disabilities. Services are provided to individuals with disabilities and their families, the governor and Legislature, government and private agencies, employers, and the general public. (651) 361-7800 voice/TTY; (800) 945-8913 toll free voice/TTY. disability.state.mn.us

Office of Civil Rights, Region V, U.S. Department of Education: Provides information about federal civil rights laws and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule, which together protect your fundamental rights of nondiscrimination and privacy. (800) 368-1019 or (800) 537-7697 TDD. hhs.gov/ocr/office/index.html

PACER Center: A parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth through 21 years old. It expands opportunities and enhances the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. PACER provides individual assistance to families and offers more than 30 programs for parents and professionals. (952) 838-9000; (800) 537-2237 toll free. PACER.org

PACER Center's National Bullying Prevention Center: Unites, engages, and educates communities nationwide to prevent bullying through creative, relevant, and interactive resources. PACER.org/Bullying

Resident district: _____	IEP meeting date: ____/____/____	INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)
Date of last comprehensive evaluation: _____		

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION	
Child's name: _____	Parent/guardian name(s): _____
MARSS ID#: _____	_____
Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	Relationship to child: _____
Date of birth: ____/____/____	Address: _____
School: _____	_____
Grade: _____	Phone (day/evening): _____/_____
Providing District (Name/number): _____	Phone (cell): _____
School address (provide mailing address and street address if different): _____	Email: _____
_____	_____

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION	
Name of team member in attendance: _____	Title: _____
_____	Parent(s)
Phone: _____	IEP Manager
_____	Qualified District Representative
_____	Special Education Teacher
_____	Regular Education Teacher
_____	_____
_____	_____

STUDENT/FAMILY INFORMATION

Student's primary disability category:

- ☐ Autism spectrum disorder
- ☐ Deaf-blind
- ☐ Deaf or hard of hearing
- ☐ Developmental cognitive disability
- ☐ Developmental delay
- ☐ Emotional or behavioral disorder
- ☐ Other health disability
- ☐ Physically impaired
- ☐ Severely multiply impaired
- ☐ Specific learning disability
- ☐ Speech or language impairment
- ☐ Visually impaired
- ☐ Traumatic brain injury

Home primary language: _____

Child's primary language: _____

Interpreter required for service delivery?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Interpreter required for due process?

☐ Yes ☐ No**PROGRESS REPORTING**

When and how will progress toward the annual goals be reported to the parents?

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEARAre extended school year services required for this student? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More data needed

If yes, services must be described within this IEP or in attached documentation.

**PRESENT LEVEL(S) OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE,
GOALS, AND MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS**

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) is an integrated summary of data from all sources, including parents.

- For preschool children, describe how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.
- For K-12 students, describe how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- In addition, for students grade 9 to age 21, address the present level of performance in each of the transition areas.

____ of ____ measurable annual goals, including academic and functional, with benchmarks or short-term objectives:

Progress toward meeting this annual goal:

Progress as of _____ (date)

____ of ____ measurable annual goals, including academic and functional, with benchmarks or short-term objectives:

**PRESENT LEVEL(S) OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE,
GOALS, AND MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS**

____ of ____ measurable annual goals, including academic and functional, with benchmarks or short-term objectives:

Progress toward meeting this annual goal:

Progress as of _____ (date)

____ of ____ measurable annual goals, including academic and functional, with benchmarks or short-term objectives:

Progress toward meeting this annual goal:

Progress as of _____ (date)

TRANSITION SERVICES
(Transition information is to be updated annually)**A. Measurable Postsecondary Goals**

Postsecondary education and training:

Employment:

Independent living (where appropriate; may include recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living):

B. Courses of Study

School Year	Grade Level	Courses
	9	
	10	
	11	
	12	

Anticipated month and year of graduation: ____/____

TRANSITION SERVICES (Transition information is to be updated annually)		
C. Transition Services		
Service	Activity	Agency Providing Service on the IEP
Instruction (i.e. specialized instruction, regular instruction, career and technical education)		
Related services:		
Community participation:		
Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives:		
If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation:		

TRANSFER OF RIGHTS AT AGE OF MAJORITY
All of the rights enjoyed by the student's parent(s) under Part B of IDEA and related state law will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority (18), unless a legal guardian or conservator is appointed.
The students was informed of the rights that will transfer on _____ (date).

SERVICES AND MODIFICATIONS					
Special Education and Related Services (primarily direct instruction and services)					
Statements of special education and related services	Start date	Frequency per week/month/other	Minutes per session for services	Location (e.g. regular classroom, special education room, home)	Anticipated duration
Supplementary Aids and Services (accommodations, assistive technology, paraprofessional support, etc.)					
Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel (modified instruction delivery or other regular program component, indirect services, specialized training for staff, behavior interventions, etc.)					

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) EXPLANATION

Explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in the regular classroom and other activities. (See 34 C.F.R. §300.320(a)(5).)

STATE ASSESSMENTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**Reading** (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10)

The student will participate in:

- ☐ MCA without accommodations
☐ MCA with accommodations listed:

Explain how accommodations selected are representative of those used in the classroom.

Math (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11)

The student will participate in:

- ☐ MCA without accommodations
☐ MCA with accommodations listed:

Explain how accommodations selected are representative of those used in the classroom.

Science (Grades 5, 8, and High School)

The student will participate in:

- ☐ MCA without accommodations
☐ MCA with accommodations listed:

Explain how accommodations selected are representative of those used in the classroom.

- ☐ Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards

Document IEP team decision: Explain why this assessment option is appropriate.

- ☐ Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards

Document IEP team decision: Explain why this assessment option is appropriate.

- ☐ Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards

Document IEP team decision: Explain why this assessment option is appropriate.

DISTRICT-WIDE ASSESSMENTS

Date form given or mailed (circle one) to parent: _____	PARENTAL CONSENT/OBJECTION FORM
--	--

Student Name: _____ This form pertains to the prior written notice dated: _____

Dear Parent(s): Please check one of the options below, sign and date this form, and return the original of this page. If your consent is sought for an evaluation or initial placement, the school cannot proceed without your written consent. For other proposed actions, if you do not return this page or otherwise respond in writing within 14 calendar days, the school will proceed as indicated in the attached Prior Written Notice. If you object to specific parts of a proposal, the district will proceed with the parts you do not object to.

- ☐ I agree with the proposal, and I give permission to the school district to proceed.
- ☐ I do not agree with the entire proposal, and I do not give permission for the school to proceed.
- ☐ I agree with some proposals and object to the following (specify your objections):
 - *If you object to a proposal, the school will contact you to offer a conciliation conference, mediation, facilitated team meeting, or other alternative to a due process hearing. You (or the school) may request a due process hearing in order to resolve the disagreement.*

Parent signature (or student, if age 18 or older) Date

Return this form to: _____

District Use Only

Date received: _____
Date evaluation to be completed: _____



8161 Normandale Boulevard | Minneapolis, MN 55437
952.838.9000 | 952.838.0199 FAX | 800.537.2237 TOLL FREE IN MN
PACER@PACER.org | PACER.org