



ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER, OFFICE OF P-12 EDUCATION: Office of Special Education
Tel. (518) 473-4818 Albany
(718) 722-4558 New York City
Fax (518) 402-3534 Albany
(718) 722-4793 New York City

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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Superintendents of State-Operated and State-Supported Schools
Superintendents of Special Act School Districts
Executive Directors of Approved Private Schools
Principals of Public, Nonpublic and Charter Schools
New York City Department of Education
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Impartial Hearing Officers
Community Dispute Resolution Centers
Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers
Special Education Parent Centers
Other State Agencies
Organizations, Parents and Individuals Concerned with Special Education

From: Rebecca H. Cort 

Subject: Transition Planning and Services for Students with Disabilities

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to school districts regarding transition planning and services for students with disabilities and information about resources that can assist school districts to meet their responsibilities in this area. Appropriate transition planning for students with disabilities is essential to prepare them for post-school living, learning and working.

For the past few years, New York State (NYS) has conducted annual monitoring of school districts to ensure that they are appropriately developing students' individualized education programs (IEPs) in the area of transition planning. Last year, NYS reviewed 3,321 IEPs and found that, of the IEPs reviewed, only 2,232 were in compliance with all IEP transition requirements. School districts must take steps to ensure Committees on Special Education (CSEs) have the knowledge and skills to ensure appropriate transition planning.

NYS has established State and regional no-cost resources (listed on page 4 of this memorandum) to provide professional development and technical assistance to school districts to improve transition planning. In addition, the State's IEP form, required for use by all districts beginning with IEPs to be in effect for this school year, should result in improved documentation in IEPs to meet the transition requirements.

Upon a finding by the State that a school has an IEP that does not meet the transition requirements, the district will be required to convene another meeting of the CSE to revise the student's IEP and take corrective action steps to ensure all students' IEPs are appropriately developed. Therefore, schools are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these technical assistance resources to appropriately develop IEPs in the first instance.

Transition Requirements

Measurable post-secondary goals and recommendations for transition services and activities must be included in each student's IEP beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student is age 15 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate), and updated annually. The IEP must include:

- measurable post-secondary goals in the areas of training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills. These goals must be based on age-appropriate transition assessments¹;
- the student's needs as they relate to transition from school to post-school activities, including the courses of study to be provided to the student to reach those goals;
- annual goals that document the knowledge/skills the student is expected to achieve that will incrementally prepare him/her to meet the post-secondary goals; and
- transition services/activities the student will need to facilitate his/her movement from school to post-school activities. Transition services are a coordinated set of activities developed for a student with a disability, designed to improve his/her academic and functional achievement in order to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities. Coordinated means the CSE has recommended a combination of activities that will lead the student to reach his/her post-secondary goals, including instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and a functional vocational evaluation.

Students must be invited to CSE meetings when transition goals and services will be discussed. If a student does not attend, the district must take steps to ensure the student's preferences and interests are considered. The school district must also invite a representative of a participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. Parental consent (or the consent of the student who is age 18 or older) must be obtained prior to inviting other agency representatives. If the

¹ For information on age-appropriate transition assessments, see <http://www.nsttac.org/content/age-appropriate-transition-assessment-toolkit>

invited agency does not attend, the school must take steps to involve the agency in the planning of any transition services.

Student Exit Summary

Federal law requires that the school district provide a student with a disability a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance prior to school exit for a student whose eligibility for special education services terminates due to graduation from secondary school with a regular diploma or due to exceeding the age eligibility for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under State law. A student with a disability exiting with an IEP diploma prior to the end of the school year in which he/she turns age 21 must also receive the student exit summary and it is recommended that students with disabilities exiting with a High School Equivalency Diploma also be provided this summary.

The purpose of the Student Exit Summary is to provide the student with a written report that provides essential information to consider as the student transitions from secondary school. The Student Exit Summary should be a useful and relevant document that summarizes individual student abilities, skills, needs and limitations and provides recommendations to support successful transition to adult living, learning and working. The Student Exit Summary should be designed to assist the student in establishing eligibility for reasonable accommodations and supports in postsecondary settings, the workplace and community and to aid the student in accessing adult services as appropriate. It should help the student better understand the impact of his/her disability and articulate individual strengths and needs as well as supports that would be helpful in post-school life.

Information on the Student Exit Summary can be found at:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/studentexit.htm>

Key Elements of Successful Transition Plans and Services

The **goal** of transition planning is to identify and provide students with opportunities and necessary supports while they are in school that will lead the student to achieve his/her post-secondary goals for lifelong learning, community participation, and work for pay. The **process** of transition planning requires a partnership among the student, family and school, and, as appropriate, other agencies that can provide transition activities for the student. By its very nature, transition planning is a collaborative effort and must be thought of as an on-going process across multiple school years. The **provision** of meaningful and effective transition services requires the district to have appropriate instructional, career and work-related and community experiences available to students.

In the development of transition service plans, schools should consider the following key factors to ensure the most successful transition for students with disabilities to adult life.

- The results of age-appropriate transition assessments provided to the student.
- Engagement of the parent and student as partners so that the parents' concerns for the education of their child and the student's needs, strengths, preferences and interests are considered and documented.
- Collaboration with participating State and community agencies to provide the student with appropriate services that will assist the student to meet his or her post-school goals.
- Instruction toward the career development and occupational standards (CDOS).
- Opportunities for career development activities, including in-school and out-of-school job training and career and technical education (CTE) coursework in order to enhance employment opportunities and outcomes for the student.

Resources

There are numerous resources schools can turn to for more information about IEP planning and instruction and activities that lead to student post-school success.

Technical assistance is available through the State Education Department's (SED) Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC). Each RSE-TASC has one or more Transition Specialists who can assist districts with professional development and technical assistance for effective transition practices and strategies.

Contact information for the RSE-TASC Transition Specialists can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/rsetasc/tslist.htm>.

The State's Transition Services Professional Development Support Center (PDSC). PDSC's website is devoted to information relating to effective transition planning, including a web-based planning tool based on five quality indicators of effective transition planning.

See <http://www.transitionsource.org>.

SED's website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/transition/>.

SED field memorandums and guidance documents:

- IEP Diploma Memo - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/iepdiploma.htm>
- Student Exit Summary - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/exitsumm.htm>

- Transition Services Planning and Implementation Guide - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/transition/guide.htm>
- IEP form and guidance - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/formsnotices/IEP/home.html> and <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/iepguidance.htm>

SED's CTE website - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/home.html>

NYS Department of Labor's Career Zone website – <http://www.nycareerzone.org/>

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) - <http://www.nsttac.org/>

Questions relating to this memorandum may be directed to SPECED@mail.nysed.gov or by calling Ms. Sophie McDermott at 518-486-7462. To ensure dissemination to appropriate individuals within a school district, I ask Superintendents to please share this memorandum with individuals such as Building Principals, Directors of Special Education, School Psychologists, Guidance Counselors, Directors of Pupil Personnel and Parent Teacher Associations.

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