

Secondary Transition: What **Families** Need to Know

The challenge is to keep all students in school and engaged in meaningful educational experiences so they will be prepared for postsecondary education/training, employment, and independent living.

Effective transition planning . . .

. . . depends on looking at your child as he/she is today, and imagining what services and supports will be needed to achieve your child's dreams tomorrow.

Research shows that:

- School administrator support and solid communication among the student's team members (including educators, family members, the student, and perhaps community agency personnel) lead to effective transition planning.
- Students are more actively involved in transition-related activities when their school provides them with frequent opportunities to plan, express, and actively pursue their goals, as well as chances to evaluate progress and adjust their actions accordingly.
- Student, family, and school factors all influence student involvement in transition-related services.
- Students with disabilities are more actively involved in their own transition-related activities when they receive special education services in general education classes.
- Students are more likely to become employed after they complete school if they had work experience during high school.

What families can do to support their son or daughter:

- Talk with your child about the future and what he/she wants it to be. Help your child identify his/her own strengths. Information about your child's interests and abilities is important. Make sure your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed. Your child needs to have opportunities to plan for

himself/herself even if it means that your child sometimes chooses incorrectly. Your child will be making many choices after graduation and needs practice in weighing options available to him/her socially and educationally.

- Help your child learn about his/her disability and how to ask for the supports he/she needs. Provide opportunities for your child to express his/her desires, learn his/her strengths, and to advocate for his/her needs. These skills are important in both employment and postsecondary education settings.
- Offer information and assistance to your child's IEP team when they are determining your child's strengths and needs. You are a critical member of this team. . . no one knows your child as well as you do. Remember that you have the right to invite others to IEP meetings who have a special knowledge about your child. Help the IEP team to develop annual goals leading toward desired post-school outcomes.
- Teach your child social skills such as how to accept constructive criticism, how to be courteous, and how to respond appropriately to authority.
- Create occasions for your child to be socially active in your community, provide opportunities to make purchases, to use public transportation, and to do his/her own banking.
- Help your child learn job-related skills such as punctuality, dressing appropriately, and being interested in doing a good job.
- Find out everything you can about transition services in your school district. Know your rights and responsibilities and keep abreast of laws, regulations, and policies regarding transition and adult services. Learn about community agencies that provide services to support students including counseling, job coaching, and job training. The guidance counselor, the high school principal, and families of other students with disabilities are good resources for this information. Contact your Local Task Force or parent groups for information. Check the Procedural Safeguards Notice for names of other organizations and their phone numbers.

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- Learn about available supports. After graduation, available supports will probably be different from those your child experienced during high school. This is because your child was “entitled” to certain services while in school, and your child must become “eligible” for services after school. Learn the difference between the two and what you need to do by talking to those organizations mentioned above.
- Maintain copies of all school records and medical information. Keep lists of all contacts that you make with other agencies such as the Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

For additional information, visit PaTTAN online at: www.pattan.net or contact a secondary transition consultant at:

PaTTAN – Pittsburgh Office
412-826-2336 or 800-446-5607

PaTTAN – Harrisburg Office
717-541-4960 or 800-360-7282

PaTTAN – King of Prussia Office
610-265-7321 or 800-441-3215

Resources

Brinckerhoff, L. C., McGuire, J. M., Shaw, S. F. (2002). *Post-secondary Education and Transition for Students with Disabilities*. 2nd Ed. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Parent Education Network. (2005). *Transition: The Bridge to Adult Living - A Guide for Parents*. York, PA: Parent Education Network. (pen@parentednet.org)

Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Garza, N., and Levine, P. (2005). *After High School: A First Look at the Postschool Experiences of Youth with Disabilities. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. [Online]. Available: www.nlts2.org/pdfs/afterhighschool_report.pdf.

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