

## **The Resource Room- April 2024**

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### **Secondary Transition Planning: Self-Determination and Quality of Life**

Graduation for our Seniors is just around the corner and with it comes the hopes and plans of going to post-secondary school or finding a job or living independently. It is no different for our students with exceptionalities, our students that have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They too have goals, hopes, fears, and dreams of what life can bring on the other side of graduation. Transition planning is essential for the successful transition from K-12 education into adulthood. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states and school districts must make a free and appropriate education (FAPE) available to all eligible students with disabilities. In addition, each student that is eligible must be provided FAPE in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and to the maximum extent appropriate, must be educated with their peers that do not have disabilities. These FAPE and LRE requirements apply equally to the delivery of transition services within the IEP.

The IEP, developed under the IDEA and New Mexico statute, must address transition service requirements beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and must be updated annually thereafter. The transition service requirements dictate that the IEP must include:

- 1) appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills; and
- 2) the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student with reaching those goals.

The intent is to support students with disabilities, through an appropriate IEP development and transition plan and delivery of services, to access their post-secondary goals around education, employment, independent living, and ultimately quality of life. Successful transition planning fosters self-determination, self-advocacy, and an understanding of the student's vision of quality of life. Essential components of successful transition planning include the following:

- 1) Person-Centered Planning
- 2) Appropriate Assessments
- 3) Consideration of Domains and More
- 4) Identification of Services and Resources

## **Person-Centered Planning**

Person-Centered Planning is a process that is built on the premise that the student is at the center of and included in the development of the IEP and the transition planning. The planning centers on the students' interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. The process should involve a team, including the family, of people that know the student well. It should be guided with a person first perspective and with the objective of developing a truly individualized strength-based plan. A common protocol for facilitating this process is MAPS or Making Action Plans. It involves bringing relevant people together to look at the student's story and visually map out an action plan with and for that student. Participating in person-centered planning fosters self-determination and advocacy skills. It creates the space to discover and bring forward the strengths and voice of the student. Person-centered planning can begin at any age that the student can be included in the conversation and is a great way to guide transition planning within an IEP. It is also a great way to support families through difficult conversations and to address some common issues like the grief and fears that can be associated with intensive needs, and the steps such as applying for the DD waiver, and transfer of rights at age of majority. For more information and resources on how to implement MAPS or other person-centered processes visit Inclusion.com. [https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning/maps\\_planning/](https://inclusion.com/path-maps-and-person-centered-planning/maps_planning/)

## **Appropriate Assessments**

It is a requirement through IDEA that transition planning and services be based on appropriate assessments. There are many different types of assessment across multiple post-school outcome areas within transition planning, such as post-secondary education, employment, independent living, community participation, and social relationships. There are formal and informal assessments, each with their relevant purposes, but ultimately it is imperative to use multiple sources. Using person-centered planning, skill inventories, interviews, or other available resources can support an understanding of the student and support the student's self-determination. The earlier you can incorporate assessment in these areas into the conversation and development of the IEP, the more you will support the understanding of the student's story and goals. For more information on transition assessments, visit the following websites.

Council for Exceptional Children Handout

[http://project10.info/files/trans\\_fact\\_sheet\\_1.pdf](http://project10.info/files/trans_fact_sheet_1.pdf)

Edutopia article "Effective Transition Assessment for Students with Disabilities"

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/effective-transition-assessment-students-disabilities/>

"Age Appropriate Transition Assessment Guide" NSTTAC

[https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/2020/age\\_app\\_trans\\_assess.pdf](https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/2020/age_app_trans_assess.pdf)

## **Consideration of Domains and More**

Transition planning identifies three main domains: post-secondary education or training, employment, and independent living. Within and beyond those domains, if we take an ecological perspective or holistic view, we consider additional skills and areas. Transition planning involves assessing a student's interests, preferences, strengths, and needs towards the outcome of quality of life. In addition to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living skills, we consider community participation, recreation and leisure, social emotional skills and social relationships. These are considered to support the understanding of and planning for a student's post-secondary outcomes, for self-determination, and for quality of life.

## **Identification of Services and Resources**

Transition planning is complicated and involved. For every consideration, there are a variety of resources and community services or partnerships. It is helpful to build your knowledge of the resources available in the community around your school. An essential agency to invite to the IEP when appropriate is the local Vocational Rehabilitation. It is also important to research the procedures and services connected to the DD waiver. Being able to make connections to a student's strengths, needs, interests, and preferences is often based on the knowledge and connection to a resource in the school, district, or community. It is a good idea to start your research with the local division of vocational rehabilitation, local parent information or advocacy centers, and any transition or 18-21 programs that might exist within your district. Work to gain an understanding of what resources, agencies, groups, and services are available in the student's community so that you can make those connections and build them into the plan for action. There can be quite long waiting lists for the DD waiver and other services, so supporting the family and student through the steps to access those services can be quite important. Person-centered planning is a great way to open these conversations and to support the IEP development and compliance.

Some additional resources are listed below:

NM PED Technical Manuals on Developing Quality IEPs and Graduation Guidance  
<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/special-education/technical-manuals/>

NMDVR <https://www.dvr.state.nm.us/>

Family Guide to Transition Planning <https://osepartnership.org/pd/T225-Family-Guide%20to-Transition-Planning-508.pdf>

Center for Parent Information and Resources  
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/transitionadult/#>

NM Parents Reaching Out <https://parentsreachingout.org/>

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Department of Education and Rehabilitative Services “A Transition Guide: To Post-Secondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities”

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/postsecondary-transition-guide-august-2020.pdf>