



# Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood

What parents can do to help plan for their child's transition from high school to adult employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living

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## Mapping Dreams: the Transition to Adulthood

### **What parents can do to help plan for their child's transition from high school to adult employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living**

The transition your son or daughter will make from being a child to becoming an adult member of the community is an important journey, one that requires a plan to pave the way to a successful future. With that successful future in mind, it's important to begin thinking about your child's transition to adult life as early as possible.

Your child will need to make many significant decisions during this journey to adult life. By using this booklet as a starting point, you can help your son or daughter make those decisions and plan for life after high school. The booklet provides:

- “Talk to Your Child” sections and checklists to help start discussions about your child's hopes and dreams.

- Checklists, activities, and resources to guide your child in mapping dreams for the future.
- The resulting information can also be shared at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting when discussing transition planning.

**Federal law supports early transition planning for children with disabilities.** In Minnesota, transition planning must begin at least during the ninth grade for each student with a disability who receives special education services (has an IEP). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) that provides special education and related services. These services are designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for:

1. Employment
2. Postsecondary education and training
3. Independent living (when appropriate) – this includes recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living

**In Minnesota, transition planning must begin at least during the ninth grade for each student with a disability who receives special education services (has an IEP).**

This booklet will briefly describe and explain each of these transition areas. It is not meant to be a comprehensive guide for the transition process, but rather a starting point for parents to begin to plan for their child's transition to adulthood.

This booklet contains suggestions for parents to use both at home and at school. One of the “tools” parents can use in paving the way to a successful future is to use the school transition process. Other “tools” are suggestions for parents to use at home.

### **How Does the Transition Process Work at School?**

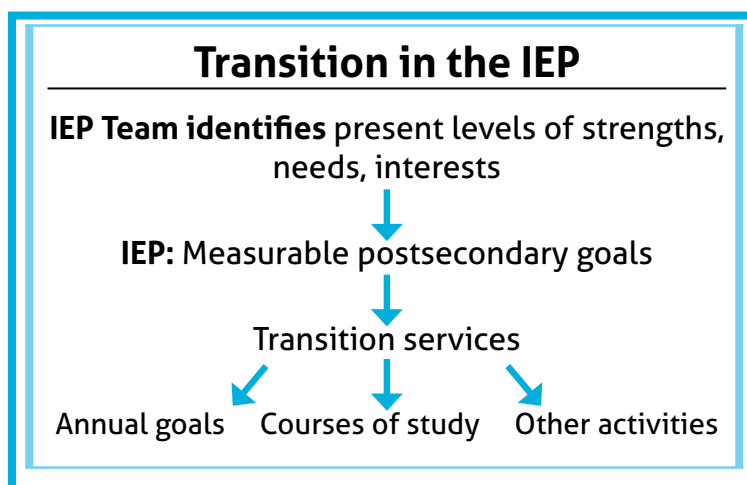
Using transition evaluation, the IEP team (including parents and child) will determine your child's:

- current skills and abilities
- strengths, interests and preferences

- academic and functional (activities of everyday life) needs
- long-term goals for adulthood
- impact of your child’s disability on reaching these goals

Using this information, the team will develop a program (the IEP) to help pave a path from where your child is now to where he or she hopes to be in the future. So it’s important for you to share what you know about your child with the rest of the IEP team.

The following graphic shows how the transition process begins with evaluation and leads to goals, services, and courses of study as steps to achieve long-term goals for adulthood. For more in-depth information on the role of the IEP in the transition process, you may want to watch the webinar, Transition: Pathway to the Future at <http://www.pacer.org/webinars/archive-listing.asp>



At the end of special education services, the school district must provide a Summary of Performance (SOP). The SOP includes a summary of academic and functional performance with recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals.

For more detailed information on the transition process, PACER Center offers a variety of planning resources for families of youth with disabilities, including print materials, webinars, workshops, and individual assistance. To learn more, call PACER at 800-537-2237 or visit PACER.org.

### How Do We Get “There” from “Here?”

Think of your child’s current skill and experience level as the “here,” and his or her hopes for further education or training, employment, and living situations after high school as the “there.”

### What will your child need to learn to move from “here” to “there”?

Parents of children with disabilities want to help their children achieve their own dreams. This requires early planning and the active involvement of your child as much as is possible in the process. As parents, your involvement in the transition process includes:

- becoming aware of options
- inviting new people into your child’s life
- staying flexible
- asking questions
- advocating for your child’s needs

As you plan and help define clear goals and dreams with your child, you will increase his or her chances of achieving them. This booklet is designed to help you do that.

**It’s good to know that preparing children to become independent, self-sufficient adult members of the community to the maximum extent possible is a shared goal of parents, the education system, and our society.**

### Who Plans and Why

Transition planning may include additional members at the IEP meeting. The following is a description of who is involved in the transition planning process and why their role is important:

**The student: The student’s role in the transition process is essential.** Although the student’s attendance at the meeting is not required, it is the student’s dreams and goals that guide decisions about which transition services are needed. If your child does not attend the meeting, the team still needs your son or daughter’s input. What can parents do?

- Have a discussion with your child about his or her hopes and dreams for the future. Ask, “What are your strengths? What skills do you think you still need to learn?” Either the parents or child may share this information with the team.
- Use the checklists in this booklet to identify your child’s strengths, needs, preferences, and interests before attending a meeting. Again, either parents or child may share this information with the team.



- Help prepare your child to attend the IEP meetings. It will be easier for your child to participate in the meeting if he or she is prepared ahead of time. Some students will be able to participate in their IEP meetings more than others. While some may choose to lead the IEP meeting, others may find it helpful to prepare a PowerPoint presentation with the help of school staff to communicate their strengths and goals to the team.

**Parents:** Parents must be invited to the IEP transition meetings and informed prior to the meeting that the discussion will involve transition issues. Parents provide knowledge about their child's interests and medical history, as well as information about their child's experiences at home and in the community.

### **Parents know their child best and remain equal members of the IEP team until their son or daughter reaches the age of majority at 18.**

Once the student turns 18, he or she assumes the rights of the parental role and can invite the parents to IEP meeting. The school is no longer required to invite the parents unless they have become the legal guardians of the adult child.

**School Staff:** The team must include at least one special education teacher and at least one general education teacher if the child participates in general education classes. The team must also include a school district representative with knowledge about the school's available resources. This person needs to be qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities and be knowledgeable about the general curriculum.

Additional people may be needed. When tests, assessments, or new evaluations are being discussed, a person who can interpret the results is required to be at the meeting. Other school staff may include transition staff, guidance counselor, work coordinator, and service learning coordinator. These staff will be determined based on the needs of your child.

**Others:** With the parent's permission (or student's permission after the student reaches 18 years old), the school must invite a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. This might include people such as a county social worker, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, postsecondary school staff, and medical or related service providers. Parents or the student may invite anyone to be on the IEP team with knowledge or special expertise about the student such as family, friends, a mentor, or people in the community.

At the end of special education services, the school district must provide a Summary of Performance (SOP). **The SOP includes a summary of academic and functional performance with recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals.**