

# Planning My Way to Work

A transition guide for students with disabilities leaving high school





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## Introduction

You are likely excited about your future career and adult life after high school. You may have questions about the services, supports<sup>1</sup> and resources that can help you reach your goals.

Each section of this manual has information to answer these questions. Your teachers and school staff will also help you sort out options.

The transition process supports you as you move from school to work, additional education or both. Transition involves you, your family, your school district and others.

During the transition process, you will carefully plan what you want your life to be like. Your parents, family and other people important to you will help you. We developed this guide to:

- Help you understand services and resources that can help you successfully transition from school to work and adult life;
- Emphasize that you direct your own transition;
- Create your transition plan with your education and work goals in mind.

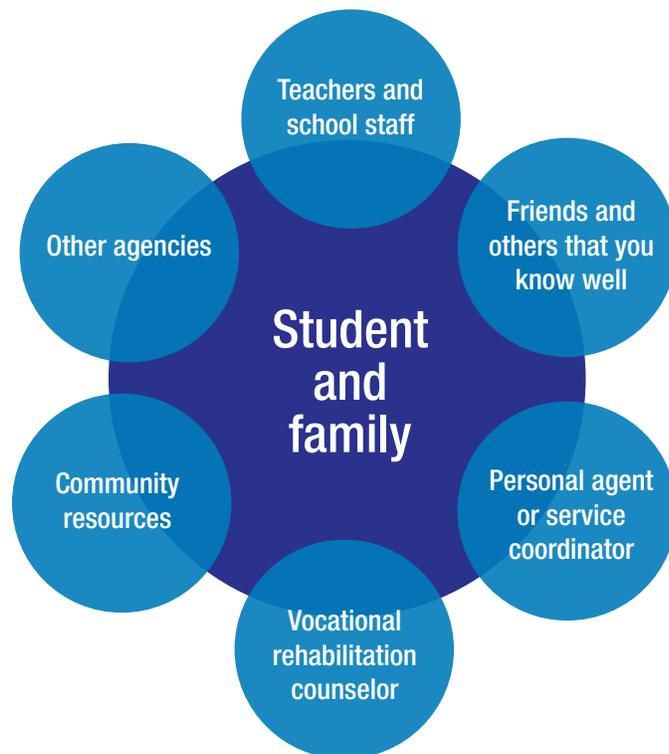


Figure 1. Your transition planning team

## Emphasis on employment

This guide focuses on the transition from school to “integrated competitive employment.” Having a job in the general work force helps you avoid poverty, earn an income and participate in your community. Transitioning directly from school to work is especially critical for students with disabilities that typically face barriers to employment.

Access to employment has long been a civil rights issue for people with disabilities. Other issues include:

- Low education and employment expectations for youth with disabilities;
- Misperceptions about people with disabilities; and
- Risk of being separated in day programs or sheltered workshops where people with disabilities earn less than minimum wage.

“Planning My Way to Work” addresses these issues by preparing you for the general work force and to contribute to your community.

### What is integrated competitive employment?

#### The worker:

- Has a full- or part-time job in the general work force;
- Earns minimum wage or better;
- Works alongside coworkers without disabilities;
- Accesses the same activities and benefits as employees without disabilities;
- Has equal opportunity for advancement and mobility;
- Can be self-employed.

<sup>1</sup> Supports is a broad term used to describe the help you need to reach your goals.



## How to use this guide

We organized this guide in 10 sections to help you go through the transition process. Read the entire guide or read the sections most relevant to you.

**Section 1** is an overview of the transition planning process and your planning team.

**Section 2** describes how to develop critical self-determination skills.

**Section 3** presents facilitated person-centered planning as a tool to identify your gifts, strengths and capacities.

**Section 4** details the contents of your individual education plan (IEP) as well as your rights, transition services and diploma options.

**Section 5** discusses finding your community's natural resources for work and community experiences.

**Section 6** talks about developmental disability services, how to apply for them, the eligibility process and the individual support plan (ISP) to receive these services.

**Section 7** describes Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, eligibility, steps to getting a job, and your rights and responsibilities in VR services.

**Section 8** summarizes Social Security benefits, benefits planning and programs to keep your benefits while you earn income.

**Section 9** explains what happens legally when you reach the "age of majority." This section helps you and your family prepare for this milestone.

**Section 10** includes resources to help you meet your housing and independent living goals, including transportation.

Most sections end with a list of resources. Each list includes websites and other Internet resources that have hyperlinks in that section.

An Appendix includes tools for noting information about your transition process.



## Section 1: Transition planning overview

### Section overview

- Transition planning
- Learn who is on your transition planning team
- Transition process map
- Resources

### Transition planning

You and your planning team (Figure 1) will talk about your goals and vision for the future. You will also plan the school, work and community experiences you need to reach your goals.

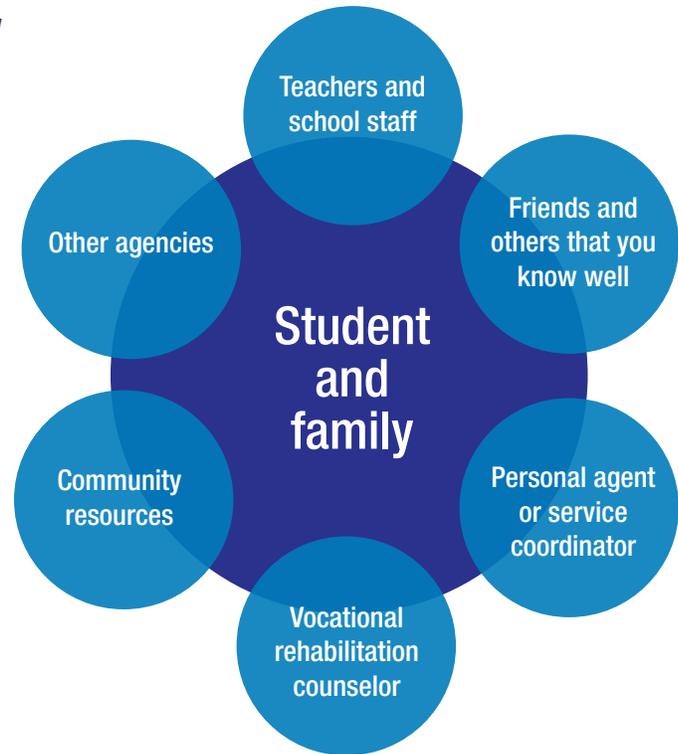
The Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act, or IDEA 2004, is a federal law enacted in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities can receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). It also involves transition services to help you move from school to work, further education, adult services, independent living or other types of community participation. Your school writes these services in your individual education plan or IEP.

For transition, your IEP must include:

- Appropriate measurable post-high school goals based on assessments of training, education, employment and independent living skills for your age;
- What you want to study and the transition services you will need to help you reach your goals;
- Other agencies' appropriate participation, with consent from your parents or you (if you are 18 or older).

Once you begin transition planning, your teachers will add a new transition information section to your IEP. Your IEP thus becomes your transition plan throughout your high school career. You and your team will update activities in your plan at least once a year. These activities will help you move from school to work and adult life. Your school must follow the activities identified in your IEP.

The IDEA 2004 requires that, by age 16, your IEP must include all the transition services you need. Your IEP must also note who or what organization is responsible for providing those services. Your transition planning may begin as early as age 14 at your request, or if deemed appropriate by your IEP team. We recommend transition planning begin as early as possible to give you plenty of time to plan and graduate with the appropriate diploma option (see Section 4). This will help you reach your work and post-high school education goals.





## Learn who is on your transition planning team

Your transition planning team includes you and your family, your teachers and school staff, and adult service agency representatives (see Figure 1).

The following people must attend your IEP meetings as IEP team members:

- **You, the student**, are the most important member of the IEP team – after all, it's your life! Your team must include you in planning your transition needs and services if possible. They must base any decisions about your transition needs or services on your preferences, interests, needs and strengths.
- **Parents and other family members** generally know you better than anyone else does. They know your family values, your interests and medical history. They also know when and where you are at your best.
- **Regular education teachers** must be present if you receive instruction in a regular education classroom. Regular education teachers are not required to attend all IEP meetings if you, your parents and the school district have signed a written agreement.
- **Special education teachers** or other specialists that support you, like a resource room teacher, speech therapist or occupational therapist, are part of your team.
- **A representative from your school district** must be present to supervise your education and transition services. The representative also can discuss the curriculum and available resources.
- **A person who can interpret evaluation results** is also on your transition team.
- **Representatives of adult service agencies** may be invited to connect you to adult services. You or your parents (if you are under age 18) must agree to the representative being on your team. The representative may include:
  - A services coordinator from a community developmental disabilities program (CDDP) or a personal agent from a brokerage to access adult services (see Section 6);
  - A Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor to create work options based on your skills, abilities and career interests. Learn more about VR services in Section 7.

**Others who know you well** can contribute to your plan. They may include close friends, coaches, teachers or church leaders.

In summary, members of your team collaborate to help with your transition. They take specific steps (both together and separately) to help you transition from school to work and community life with adult services you are eligible to receive. You and your family are at the center of planning and the most important members of your team!

## Adult services and eligibility

Explore a variety of agencies to find out which can offer support, services and resources to help you plan your way to work. In most cases, whether an agency can help you depends on whether you are eligible for its services and whether its services fit your needs. Your work and adult life goals also matter. We've included a summary in Appendix A (see A. Adult services and eligibility). This document provides a quick overview of services described in more detail in this manual.

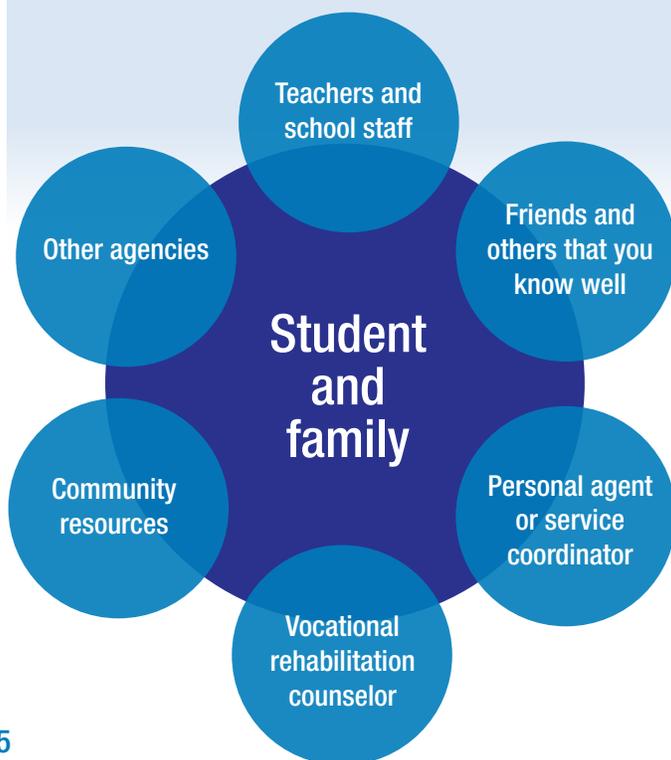
## Transition process map

It is OK to start your transition activities when it is right for you. This map shows key age-appropriate activities to do whether you start at age 14, age 16 or later. Use this map as a planning tool.

We encourage you to start as early as possible. Starting early will give you more time to discover your interests, and to plan and make decisions about your future.

### Work with your transition planning team

- You and your family are major players.
- Your teacher or school staff coordinates the team.
- Your friends and others that know you well share helpful information about you.
- Your service coordinator or personal agent connects you to ongoing services and supports.
- Your vocational rehabilitation counselor helps you plan for a job and connects you to employment service providers.
- Other members can represent therapists, adult service providers, employers and more.



### If you start your transition at age 14, consider these activities:

#### Teaming — Age 14+

- Set up how you and your team members will communicate. Ongoing communication is key!
- Participate in or lead your IEP meetings.
- Talk about your preferences, interests, needs and strengths (PINS) at your transition planning meetings.
- Plan high school course work to match with diploma requirements and your career interests.
- Plan school and community-based learning experiences to help you develop needed skills.
- Coordinate transition from school supports to ongoing adult services and supports.

#### Visioning — Age 14+

- Use the facilitated person-centered planning process to realize your dreams and discover your strengths. Create a one-page profile to use when you meet people for the first time.
- Share your vision for your future as an adult.
- Choose a diploma option that fits with your vision.

#### Discovering — Age 14+

- Explore the use of assistive devices, mobile technology, environmental supports and accommodations to help you be more independent.
- Plan transition assessments to help your team discover valuable information about you.
- Use interest inventories to learn about careers.
- Use job shadowing to help determine work skills, interests and appropriate supports.
- Visit places in your community that interest you for work, meeting friends, and doing fun things.

#### Skill building — Age 14+

- Develop skills you need in your adult life — self-determination, budgeting, cooking, shopping, chores, transportation, relationships, social, hygiene, health and recreation.
- Practice self-determination and other skills at school and at home.
- Participate in extracurricular activities both with peers that have and that do not have disabilities.

### If you start your transition at age 16, consider these activities:

#### Discovering—Age 16+

- Attend transition fairs and job fairs to learn about work, college and other opportunities.
- Talk to other young people that have successfully transitioned from school to work or college.
- Coordinate ongoing adult services and supports before you leave school. Maintain access to communication and other technology.
- If you have a job, plan school and time with friends around your work schedule for a balanced life.

#### Skill building—Age 16+

- Continue building self-determination and other skills you will need in your adult life.
- Learn how to talk about your strengths and your disability.
- Learn how ask for accommodations and tell others how to support you best.
- Ask for travel training with your local public transportation agency.
- Plan transportation to and from school and work.
- Get a driver's license or state identification card.
- Develop job skills participating in paid or unpaid school and summer work experiences.
- Build your resume or portfolio.

#### Connecting—Age 16+

- Prepare for how you will make decisions about your education when you turn 18. Decide how your family will be involved.
- Explore college, technical schools and training programs.
- Consider a special needs trust and whether guardianship is appropriate for you.
- Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) at your local Social Security Administration office.
- Apply for developmental disability (DD) services at your local community DD program (CDDP) office.

- Visit a CDDP and a brokerage to choose one to provide your case management services.
- Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services at your local VR office.
- Request benefits counseling to learn how your benefits are affected by income earned from work.
- Interview employment service providers that may help you get a job before you leave school.
- Open an individual development account (IDA) to save money for your education, employment, specialized equipment or housing goals.
- Apply for housing assistance programs to rent or own your own home.

### As you get closer to age 18 or leaving school, consider these activities:

#### Refining — After age 16

Explore multiple elements of adult life that require ongoing decision making and planning such as:

- Time and access to your family and friends;
- Community transportation options;
- Recreation activities you enjoy;
- Fitness activities to stay healthy;
- Volunteer opportunities that enrich your life;
- Your short- and long-term goals for where you want to live as an adult;
- Selecting adult health care providers including a dentist.
- Engage in your community through voting and advocacy groups. Register to vote!

## Section 1: Transition planning overview



Generally, team members work together to help you complete these activities. However, one agency may be responsible for helping you do an activity. It is especially important to know what to expect from each agency and when to expect it so you can plan and reach your goals. It is up to you and your family to:

- Ask questions about the process;
- Identify who and which agencies you want on your planning team;
- Request school services and community activities, including paid and unpaid work, to help reach your employment goals.

Several tools are included in the appendix to help you record important information:

- The adult services and eligibility document (Appendix A) summarizes services and eligibility requirements for programs that may help you reach your goals.
- Transition team contacts (Appendix B) is a place to keep team member contact information.
- The transition planning communication record (Appendix C) is a tool to record the results of conversations with your planning team members.
- The annual transition planning survey (Appendix D) is a place to save information you learn about your strengths, interests, skills and other things about you. You can update this form each year.
- The transition goal action plan (Appendix E) is a planning tool to focus on a goal; how it will be measured; the activities you will do to reach your goal; who is responsible for each one; and when each activity will be completed.

Finally, transition planning gives you powerful opportunities to practice skills that can help shape your future. Examples include setting goals, problem solving, decision making and communication. You may even lead your planning meetings. We talk more about this in the next section.

## Resources

### Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act, 2004

<http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>

### Oregon Administrative Rule 581-015-2000, Special Education

[http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars\\_500/oar\\_581/581\\_015.html](http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_500/oar_581/581_015.html)

### Oregon Employment First policy

[www.oregon.gov/dhs/employment/employment-first/Documents/policy.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/employment/employment-first/Documents/policy.pdf)

### MOU on Transition of Students with Disabilities to the Workforce

[www.oregon.gov/dhs/DD/rebar/Documents/MOU%20Transition%20Services.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/DD/rebar/Documents/MOU%20Transition%20Services.pdf)

### Executive Order 15-01

[http://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive\\_orders/eo\\_15\\_01.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive_orders/eo_15_01.pdf)