DEVELOPING AN IEP TRANSITION PLAN

A Toolkit to Help Pennsylvania Youth in Foster Care and the Juvenile Justice System Prepare for IEP Meetings

What is an IEP Transition Plan (and why is it important)?

All students receiving special education are **legally entitled** to receive **transition services** as part of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) beginning at age 14. These services can include a wide array of activities designed to help the student achieve her **postsecondary goals**. If an activity is included in the IEP as a transition service, it **must** be provided by the school district at no cost to the student. The IEP Transition Plan can therefore be a valuable source of support and services for transition-age youth with disabilities.

Purpose of this Toolkit:

The purpose of this Toolkit is to help transition-age youth and their advocates prepare for IEP meetings and develop strong IEP Transition Plans. Although this Toolkit is aimed at youth in foster care or the juvenile justice system, who often lack engaged adults to advocate for them at IEP meetings, it can be used by any teenager receiving special education. The Toolkit helps these youth and their advocates actively engage in the transition planning process by allowing them to set goals, identify barriers, and brainstorm possible services in advance of the IEP meeting.

How to Use this Toolkit:

- Review the Toolkit *before* the IEP meeting. Fill in what you can. It's okay if you don't know all the information to fill it out entirely – that will help you ask questions at the IEP meeting.
- Complete the worksheets in order, starting with the "Before You Begin" checklist.
- **Engage the student in the process**. Using this Toolkit should be a collaborative brainstorming activity for the student and a supportive adult.
- The student's goals may change as you complete the worksheets – this is normal! The worksheets are a tool to help set goals and brainstorm activities in advance of the IEP meeting; they are not the final product.
- Revisit this process annually! Goals change and evolve as students get older and gain new experiences.

Who Can Use this Toolkit?

Anyone! Caseworkers, foster parents, biological parents, surrogate parents or Education Decision Makers, child advocates, social workers, friends, coaches – really any supportive adult or mentor. **The key is that whoever uses the Toolkit must do so in collaboration with the youth!**

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Before You Begin: Assessments and Information-Gathering Checklist

*The more information you know about the student's strengths, interests, and challenges **before** you begin setting goals and brainstorming services, the better. Below is a list of different documents, questions to ask, and other information that can help you and the student have a productive, informed conversation about the student's postsecondary goals and how to achieve them. **If you don't have access to all the documents listed, don't worry!** Get as much information as you can, and then ask about the additional records at the IEP meeting.*

Education/Employment Records:

- ☐ Most recent IEP and/or 504 Plan
- ☐ Transcript, report card, and/or progress notes
- ☐ Test scores in academic subjects
- ☐ Results of any transition assessments (**see the box to the right for examples**)
- ☐ Work samples or portfolios (from school or work)

Disability/Health Records:

- ☐ Most recent Educational Evaluation or Reevaluation
- ☐ SSI Award Letter
- ☐ Adaptive behavior/Independent Living Assessments (e.g., the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale)
- ☐ Intelligence or aptitude test results (e.g., Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children)
- ☐ Assistive Technology records or assessments
- ☐ Any other relevant health records or evaluations

Child Welfare and/or Juvenile Justice Records:

- ☐ Child Welfare Transition Plan and/or Independent Living (IL) Plan
- ☐ Other Child Welfare Documents (e.g., the Family Service Plan)
- ☐ Juvenile Court records and any probation documents

Possible Questions to Ask the Student:

- ☐ What jobs have you done in the past? Do you do any work around the house, for other family members, or in the community? What did you do last summer?
- ☐ What things are you particularly good at? Have you won any awards? Any project or accomplishment you are proud of?
- ☐ What do you like doing? How do you spend your free time?
- ☐ What jobs do you think seem interesting? Why? Do you know anyone who has that job now?
- ☐ What do you know about your disability or health needs?

EXAMPLES OF TRANSITION ASSESSMENTS

Formal Assessments:

Achievement Tests

Adaptive Behavior/Independent Living Assessments

Aptitude or Intelligence Tests

Interest Inventories

Personality or Preference Tests (e.g., Myers Briggs)

Career Development Measures

On the Job or Training Evaluations

Self-Determination Assessments

Assistive Technology Assessments

Informal Assessments:

Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys (e.g., "Student Dream Sheet")

Direct Observation (at school, at work, or in the community)

Environmental analysis of potential school or workplace (to identify needed accommodations or modifications)

Curriculum-based Assessments (e.g., work samples; portfolios)

School Performance Measures

Transition Planning Inventories

Worksheet #1: Employment

Employment/Career Goal:

How did you come up with this goal? What transition assessments were used?

What academic skills are needed to achieve this goal? (reading levels, math proficiency, etc.)

What career or technical skills are needed to achieve this goal? (e.g., driver's license, CPR certification, ability to lift 50 pounds)

What social and independent living skills are needed to achieve the goal? (e.g., able to use public transportation; able to sit still for 60 minutes)

Are there any specific barriers to achieving the goal (including juvenile records, immigration issues, or needed accommodations)?

In light of the skills and barriers above, what are 1 or 2 other possible employment goals to consider?

Based on the above information, brainstorm ideas for services and activities to be included in the IEP for this student. ***For examples, see the list in the box to the right.***

Additional Assessments or Evaluations (if you need more information):

Courses of Study:

Services/Activities:

Other Action Steps:

SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND COURSES OF STUDY TO BE INCLUDED IN THE IEP

Skills Attainment:

Direct instruction in specific academic skills

Soft skills/social skills training

Self-advocacy training

Email and social media etiquette

Career or Technical Training/Vocational Education

Obtaining any required licenses

Choosing a Field:

Job shadowing

Job search support

Mentorship opportunities

Application Process:

Resume/cover letter writing

Getting references

Interviewing practice

Obtain employment documents

Work Experience:

Apprenticeships/internships

Community work experiences

Services and Supports:

Connecting to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

Job coaching

Referral to an attorney (for expungement petition; immigration assistance; etc.)

Worksheet #2: Postsecondary Education & Training

Postsecondary Education/Training Goal:

How did you come up with this goal? Will this goal help the student achieve her employment goal?

What academic skills are needed to achieve this goal? (reading levels, math proficiency, etc.)

What social and independent living skills are needed to achieve the goal? (e.g., interview skills; budgeting; cooperating with a roommate)

Are there any specific barriers to achieving the goal (including juvenile records, immigration issues, admission requirements, and needed accommodations)?

Based on the above information, identify recommended services and activities to be included in the IEP for this student. ***For examples, see the list in the box to the right.***

Additional Assessments or Evaluations:

Courses of Study:

Services/Activities:

Other Action Steps:

SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND COURSES OF STUDY TO BE INCLUDED IN THE IEP

Skills Attainment:

Direct instruction in specific academic skills needed for program eligibility or completion

Standardized test prep

Soft skills/social skills training

Financial literacy programs

Choosing a Program:

College tours

Investigating eligibility requirements

Application Process:

Application/essay writing assistance

FAFSA/financial aid/scholarship assistance

Interview prep

Collecting documentation

Services and Supports:

Applying to supportive programs for postsecondary students

Updating evaluations

Developing a 504 Accommodations Plan

Applying for SAT/ACT accommodations

Connecting to OVR

Referral to an attorney (for expungement petition; immigration assistance; etc.)

Worksheet #3: Independent Living

Independent Living Goal(s):

What activities does the student plan to do on her own after graduation?

How did you come up with this goal(s)?

What social, practical, or other skills does the student need to achieve this goal(s)?

What post-transition supports will the student need to achieve this goal(s)?

Based on the above information, identify recommended services and activities to be included in the IEP for this student. ***For examples, see the list in the box to the right.***

Additional Assessments or Evaluations:

Courses of Study:

Services/Activities:

Other Action Steps:

SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND COURSES OF STUDY TO BE INCLUDED IN THE IEP

Skills Attainment:

Financial literacy programs

Computer literacy classes

Personal hygiene instruction

Parenting skills classes

Health education in specific topics (e.g., sexual health, diet/nutrition, etc.)

Disability awareness/self-advocacy skills

Community Experiences:

Setting up a bank account

Practice using public transportation

Practice grocery shopping/cooking

Volunteering experiences

Preparing for Adulthood:

Searching for housing

Obtaining a driver's license

Online voter registration

Registering for selective service

Obtaining childcare

Services and Supports:

Connecting to particular community organizations

Connecting to a mentor

Connecting to OVR

Applying for benefits (e.g., SSI)

Additional Information

This resource was originally created by Karen Lindell during her fellowship with Juvenile Law Center in 2016.

Education Law Center Pennsylvania
The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness.

ELC's publications provide a general statement of the law. However, each situation is different. If questions remain about how the law applies to a particular situation, contact ELC's Helpline for information and advice — visit www.elc-pa.org/contact or call 215-238-6970 (Eastern and Central PA) or 412-258-2120 (Western PA) — or contact another attorney of your choice.

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If you need help with a disability-related question or problem, contact DRP's Intake: 800-692-7443; Online Intake Form

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