

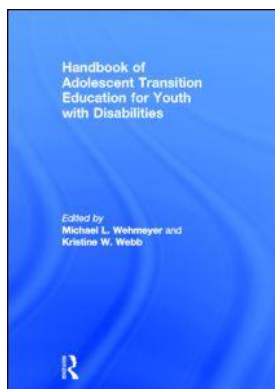
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Handbook of Adolescent Transition Education for Youth with Disabilities

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IEP Development in Adolescent Transition Education

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Section II

Adolescent Transition Education Planning

IEP Development in Adolescent Transition Education

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The transition of young people with disabilities is continuing to receive significant attention (Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009; and Wehman, 2010). Transition is the normal culmination of years of schooling, growth, and development. For adolescents with disabilities there is an especially strong need for a blueprint for the future. This blueprint can be formatted on a transition IEP and should reflect a balance of work, community and social skills, travel, financial literacy, and self-determination.

A. Turnbull and R. Turnbull (2009) talked about young people with disabilities as having “whole lives.” Whenever a student with a disability and/or family member is asked what this means, the answers often sound something like this: “Having a whole life means being part of a community, working, living independently, having friends and fun with those who have similar interests, safely getting to and from places on time, and using earnings to buy things and do what one wants to do.” The transition IEP is the mechanism to bring this to fruition. For many people, this does not sound unreasonable. As a matter of fact, it sounds quite typical of what most have come to expect during a lifetime.

Unfortunately, though, these expectations are more difficult to attain for many students with disabilities and particularly students with more intensive support needs (Wehman, 2006). Frequently, these students may be relegated to living an incomplete life, one that is missing the basic aspects that most of us have come to expect. And although what is left out varies from person to person, quite often it will include opportunities to work for real pay, go to college, and live in the community. This, in turn, infringes on the most basic of human rights—the opportunity to pursue happiness.

Many students with disabilities exit school unemployed and never go to work in the community (Wehman, 2006; Wehman, Inge, Revell, & Brooke, 2007). Instead they find themselves living and working in long-term segregated settings (Gill, 2005). In the workshop a person may be performing various types of rote tasks like putting together ink pens or stuffing envelopes to fulfill a contract with business or the government.

Young people with more intensive support needs are often channeled into day activity centers (Wehman, 2006; Wehman et al., 2007; Braddock, Hemp, & Rizzolo, 2008). In these settings individuals may be observed trying to put together a puzzle intended for a kindergarten-age student or using a blue crayon to scribble in a coloring book. Or perhaps, a person may be seen spinning a bottle cap around on a table, time after time again, or sitting in a chair located in a distant corner of the room rocking back and forth, off beat, to loud music that staff chose to play for the day.

In either setting, a workshop or day activity center, personal choices are highly limited (Gill, 2005). Paid staff often make decisions for those in attendance. Staff may tell a person what to do, when to do it, and where to do it. Even the most basic decisions are denied. For instance, the person will have lunch served at a set time, sit in a particular spot, and eat whatever the cook decided to serve that day.

In part this stems from society's inability to believe in the abilities of people with disabilities and a self-righteous desire to protect them. No matter what the reasons, the outcome remains the same—many people with disabilities go on to experience lives that are far removed from being “whole lives.” For some people, this may go on for a long time and for others it may last a lifetime.

In addition to a lack of opportunity to work, the main outlets for recreation and socialization for many students with disabilities may involve participating in activities with immediate family. This, of course, is only required when others are not being paid to “have fun” with them. Furthermore, many youth with disabilities continue to reside at home with their aging parents after exiting from school. This goes on until one day a parent is no longer able to care for an adult son or daughter. Then what?

Fortunately, it does not have to be this way. Youth with disabilities do not have to be destined to live incomplete lives but can and should live whole lives. Of utmost importance to pursuing this endeavor is a commitment from family, special educators, and other partners in transition, to stay abreast of and follow best practices in transition for youth with disabilities, and specifically to design and implement a transition plan that provides a roadmap to the future (Wehman, 2006; Wehman & Wittig, 2009). Such a plan is carefully crafted for one student at a time (Wehman & Wittig, 2009). That is the focus of this chapter.

It is, of course, critical to understand the legal context for transition, and readers are referred to Chapter 4 in this Volume for a comprehensive review of policy and legislation pertaining to transition. In this chapter, we review some of the organizations where professionals may serve on a student's transition team. This is followed by a description of some ways to individualize the student's transition IEP including person-centered planning and approaches to assessment. Then the chapter concludes by taking a look at the transition IEP meeting. Logistics, ways to enhance student involvement, challenges that may be encountered at this time, and goal writing are covered. In addition, a sample transition IEP is provided.

The Team

Transition planning should begin early enough to ensure that when a student exits school, he or she has developed some important skills to function as an adult. Many leaders in the field advocate for starting the plan early, around age 14 (Wehman, 2006). According to IDEA 2004, the first transition IEP should be in effect no later than age 16. At this time the student, to the greatest extent possible, and his or her team develop a transition IEP.

In addition to the student, transition IEP team members typically include family, school personnel, and representatives from outside agencies. Educators will want to establish relationships with adult service systems such as vocational rehabilitation, state mental health and developmental disabilities, one-stop career centers, and employment service organizations. Then, as indicated, representatives should be recruited to serve on a student's team (Wehman, 2006; Wehman & Wittig, 2009). A description of some of the agencies where future collaborators may be found is offered below.

State Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is mandated through the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 (PL 105–220). Each state has its own operational structure. However, federal government regulations provide considerable resources and direction to help ensure that a common set of practices and procedures is followed to provide and pay for various services. The state’s organization may be referred to as an Office of Vocational Rehabilitation or State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation services where vocational rehabilitation counselors offer a wide range of cost and no-cost services. Some services are offered in house, such as career guidance and counseling, assessment, and job placement services. Other services, such as supported employment, may be referred out to a community service provider.

To be eligible for the state’s vocational rehabilitation services a student needs assistance to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. Students who receive supplementary security income (SSI) are automatically presumed to be eligible for services. Some states also specify that students eligible for long-term supports from the mental health and developmental disabilities agencies who are pursuing supported employment are eligible for services. Furthermore, vocational rehabilitation may be able to augment or pay for job coaches or supported employment services.

Because of finite resources, the state’s vocational rehabilitation program may operate under a selection order, serving those first with significant disabilities who are the hardest to serve. This offers an excellent opportunity for youth with more severe disabilities to tap into needed support services.

Youth should be referred early on, in their secondary school years. Federal regulations favor active participation of vocational rehabilitation in transition planning and interagency cooperation so services are delivered as efficiently as possible. This is an extremely important resource that students need to access. Rights must be understood and able to be resolved that relate to accessing appropriate services, roles, and funding.

State Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Agencies

Each state has agencies that deliver mental health and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They are managed by state administration, community service boards, or distinct state regions. Eligibility guidelines differ from state to state. Not all youth are eligible for services. In addition, availability of funding depends on public funds and waiting lists are not unusual.

Fortunately, some states have made transitioning youth a priority for funding. Usually, these entities offer a range of services and are typically well known by school districts. For example, youth with emotional or mental health disabilities may receive case management, clinical services, counseling, and medication management. Services for youth with intellectual and development disabilities may include case management, housing, and employment services. Sometimes the organization provides direct services like job coaching or supported employment. Once again, stakeholders need to know what options are available to youth through a particular agency and what rights a young person is entitled to in order to resolve any difficulties.

One-Stop Career Centers

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (PL 105–220) marked a major reform in the nation’s job-training system. It consolidated more than 60 federal training programs into three

Table 3.1 One-Stop Career Centers

One-Stop Career Centers

Service: Core

Description: Core services provide basic job-search assistance and usually include assistance with accessing job postings by community employers, resources to search for and apply for work (telephones, fax machines, computers, internet services), and screening to identify the need for more intense employment services

Available to: anyone who wants basic job-search assistance

Service: Intensive

Description: Intensive services may include career guidance and counseling, vocational assessment, and case management, and short-term services such as resume development and professional conduct training

Available to: certain categories of jobseekers such as those with low income or who have been laid off

Service: Training

Description: Training services may include training and education related to good worker traits and skills, on-the-job training, adult education, and literacy activities, occupational skills training, etc.

Available to: only those who meet eligibility requirements

block grants to states: adult employment and training, disadvantaged youth employment and training, and adult education and family literacy. The act was passed to overcome many weaknesses in the current system by consolidating, coordinating, and improving employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs. The cornerstone of this legislation is a national system of One-Stop Career Centers, which serve as key employment resources to communities.

One-Stop Career Centers are a place in the community where anyone can go to obtain employment-related resources and multiple services, all located under the same roof. The One-Stop Career Centers are under federal mandate to offer three levels of services, described in Table 3.1.

Notably, core services are available to anyone age 18 or older, with no maximum age. The goal is to provide youth with career and job search assistance without them having to wait for eligibility determination or referrals.

Those involved with assisting students with transitioning to work will want to know about the various services and how these can be of benefit to students with disabilities. For example, information about the local labor market and hiring trends can be accessed along with youth employment programs or generic career development and training services. In addition, vocational rehabilitation and employment services are located there.

Some One-Stop Career Centers have a staff member on board who specializes in assisting persons with disabilities with a customized employment process. This specialist makes direct contact with businesses in an effort to locate potential work options and negotiate a viable opportunity for the jobseeker (Wehman et al., 2007). However, some Career One-Stops may seem unfamiliar with serving students with more significant support needs. Therefore, education and training may be required. In addition, some students may need assistance with advocating for their right to access One-Stop services.

Employment Service Providers

Employment service providers play an important role in assisting students with transitioning from school to work and are likely available in larger communities and cities. Providers may be more difficult to find in smaller communities and rural areas.

Generally, employment service providers are contracted by state vocational rehabilitation services and other agencies, including schools, to provide vocational support. Many perform community-based and functional vocational assessments, as well as other support services, to help a student gain and maintain work. Services range from help with pre-employment activities like locating work options, applying and interviewing for jobs to much more intensive services such as supported employment that offers one-on-one assistance with locating or creating a job, on-the-job training and support, and long-term follow-along (Wehman, 2006).

Resource Mapping

One way to gather information about services is through community resource or asset mapping. The process involves identifying and cataloging resources that are available within a designated region to fulfill a specific purpose. The process focuses on what is available rather than what is needed. Because of this, it may not be particularly useful in areas where resources are limited. Information collected includes: organization and/or person to contact, address, telephone and email address, best time to reach, alternative contact if applicable, overview of services offered (free of charge versus cost), eligibility requirements including areas served, recommendations on when to reach to avoid waiting for services, willingness to attend student planning meetings, and how to schedule appointments.

Roles

Professionals recruited from various organizations play important roles as members of a student's transition IEP team by providing services and a wealth of knowledge. Although it is crucial to have team support, it is not necessary to have representation from every agency. It is possible that some members may serve multiple roles. For instance, a vocational rehabilitation counselor may be able to discuss social security benefits, or parents will likely have expertise in how to interpret their child's nonverbal communications. Some examples of the roles of team members are offered in Table 3.2.

Notably, Certo et al. (2008) have called for seamless transition and federal entitlement to long-term support behind the three public systems responsible for employment and adult living outcome: the school, vocational rehabilitation, and developmental disabilities. If laws are amended under this change, among other things the school would be able to subcontract with adult agencies to help produce positive employment and adult-living outcomes. To support this recommendation, Certo et al. (2008) described and provided outcome data for the Transition Services Integration Model (TSIM). This approach includes integrating staff from different agencies and funding sources to offer services in the community. Public schools were able to subcontract with agencies to provide community-based services to students. Data revealed post-school outcomes were better than the national average for students with intellectual disabilities.

For a team to develop a transition IEP, they will need information about the student (Wehman, 2006; Wehman & Wittig, 2007). They will need to understand the student's vision for the future and his or her current levels of performance across the various adult life domains. Some possible ways to gather this important information are reviewed in the next section.

Individualized Transition Planning

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is an increased time of decision making and goal setting for living a whole life, including decisions involving independent living and

Table 3.2 Examples of team member roles

Examples of team member roles

State vocational rehabilitation counselor

Describes services (cost and no cost) and eligibility requirements
Assists with completing application
Provides career guidance and counseling
Provides information on Social Security, including use of work incentives
Recommends and coordinates services with community employment providers
Provides information on local labor market
Shares employer network information
Shares information on other resources
Provides information on transportation
Discusses disability disclosure options
Provides funding or blends funds
Helps solve problems related to accessing services, funding etc.
Helps determine postsecondary education, training, and employment-related goals
Helps determine activities required to reach goals

State mental health and developmental disability service case manager

Describes services and eligibility requirements
Assists with completing application process for various services
Provides case management
Coordinates service delivery
Provides funds or blends funds
Helps problem solve
Helps determine postsecondary goals across life domains
Helps determine activities required to reach goals

One-stop career centers

Describes services
Creatively problem solves to ensure services are provided to all, including youth with significant support needs

Employment services provider

Provides functional vocational assessment including situational assessments
Writes vocational reports
Recommends workplace supports
Recommends ideas for job creation
Customizes employment services offering intense (supported employment) and less intense services
Helps determine employment-related goals
Helps determine activities required to reach goals

employment. This means acquiring some of the new knowledge and skills as well as accessing any needed supports to live as independently as possible in the community (Wehman, 2006; Wehman & Wittig, 2009). For example, this may require learning to take more care of one's basic needs (hygiene, eating, toileting, etc.), keeping house, getting around safely and accessing community resources (shopping, recreation, etc.), handling finances (making purchases, maintaining bank accounts, understanding social security benefits, etc.) and estate planning.

This period also means going to work in the community (Luecking, 2009; Wehman et al., 2007). Some students may choose a career path that requires a college degree or specialized training prior to pursuing that particular vocation. Other students may go straight to work in the community. Some of these students may be continuing on in a job that he or she secured while still in school and perhaps be looking at a move from a part- to full-time status. If best practices in transition have not been followed, some will find themselves looking for

work for the first time. Some will need to access some type of vocational support services like job placement assistance or supported employment to assist them with gaining and maintaining work.

No matter what the scenario, one of the most important things to do is to teach and support youth with disabilities to develop the skills and knowledge to move into adulthood (Bouck, 2009; Wehman & Kregel, in press). This also means embracing the fact that some students, especially students with more intensive support needs, will require varying levels of assistance along the way.

This is why transition planning is so important. When done in a timely and meaningful way, transition planning assists students in learning more about themselves. In turn this allows the student and family to envision a more positive future, knowing they can access instruction, services, and needed supports to help move closer toward the desired outcome (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007).

On the other hand, when performed in a thoughtless manner, students may have limited or no direction for their future. For some, this will lead to an increased dependency on others for many of life's most basic necessities, or lowered self-esteem resulting from feelings of hopelessness and no sense of purpose. Others may exhibit negative or destructive behaviors, such as drug use and/or dropping out of school. No matter what the scenario, the outcome will be the same: an incomplete or ineffective education that results in a student who is at best ill equipped to lead a productive adult life.

Person-Centered Planning

Person-centered planning helps a student and family members think about and develop a positive vision for the future. Usually, a group of people is invited to come together to be part of a student's person-centered planning process. The group often includes family, friends, and select members of the student's support network. Sometimes, members of the student's transition IEP team are present.

As a matter of fact, sometimes a team chooses to use person-centered planning like a Plan for Achieving Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) to guide the development of a student's transition IEP. For example, during a PATH, those present envision the student's "positive, possible future." Then, with this vision in mind, the group works backwards to examine what would need to happen in order to help the student get there, including timeframes. Personal interests, preferences, abilities, support needs, and potential supports are also usually identified along the way. Those present may choose to enlist themselves to help with certain activities. At the close of the meeting, a date for the next one is established. The plan is then used to guide future actions and choices (Mount, 2000).

Person-centered planning has been extensively researched across disabilities and perspectives, including ways to individualize and maximize the effectiveness of a student's transition plan (deFur, 2003; Hosp, Griller-Clark, & Rutherford, 2001; Martin, Greene, & Borland, 2004; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004; Martin et al., 2006; Myers & Eisenman, 2005; Nelson, 2005; Powers et al., 2005). For example, when developing the transition IEP, the student with support can share the plan with the team. In turn, this information should stimulate student-focused discussions around his or her vision for the future. The team members can reflect on this, along with the results from transition assessments, to formulate student-centered goals and objectives.

Perhaps assessments results reveal a number of adult life skills that a student needs to acquire. Referring back to the person-centered plan may help the team prioritize what should happen first, second, and so on.

Transition Assessment

Before developing the student's transition IEP, an evaluation of his or her current level of performance across the various adult-life domains like employment and community living takes place. A variety of data gathering devices can be used to obtain this type of information, which is vital to establishing a suitable direction for the student's future education as well as designing educational and training experiences. Some examples of the types of instruments used are formal inventories, questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and observations (Sitlington et al., 2007; Wehman & Wittig, 2009).

Approaches

There are a variety of formal and informal approaches to assessment. The techniques that are most likely to render the most useful information are the ones that should be used. Standardized or formal assessment instruments have documented an acceptable level of validity and reliability. There are many examples of standardized or formal assessments (Sitlington et al., 2007; Wehman & Wittig, 2007). Some of the most widely used include achievement tests, aptitude tests, intelligence tests, adaptive behavioral scales, and interest inventories. Only a few published standardized assessment instruments are specifically related to transition.

An informal approach is often the preferred method for gathering information about a student's current levels of performance. Examples of informal assessment tools include: interviews, surveys, observations of a student in natural environments, and adaptive behavioral or functional skill inventories (Wehman & Wittig, 2007; Sitlington et al., 2007). Sometimes a variety of informal assessments, usually designed by teachers, have to take place before any useful information is found.

Some of the most useful information can be obtained by talking to people who know the student best and spending time to get to know the student (Wehman, 2006). For instance, parents and others who know the student best will have a wealth of information to share. Information on their views may be obtained through written surveys, checklists, or face-to-face interviews that have been specifically designed to further assess a student's current levels of competency as related to assuming adult roles and responsibilities in the future. Information is also gathered about the student's interests, likes, and dislikes.

Students may also be interviewed. Some students will be able to express their thoughts. Others will need some type or level of support to communicate personal preferences, likes, and dislikes. For instance, information may have to come primarily from those who know the student along with first-hand observations. Some examples of questions to help survey a student's or family member's perspectives are offered in Table 3.3.

No functional assessment would be complete without observing the student in community-based settings. Observation of the student's abilities in natural environments is essential. This is true not only when the student has difficulty communicating but also when experience is limited. When it comes to assuming many of the roles and responsibilities associated with adulthood such as work, managing a household and finances, mobility in the community, etc., many students will likely have limited knowledge, skills, and abilities in many areas.

Two types of assessment that allow the student to perform in natural environments while the evaluator observes and collects data are ecological evaluations and situational assessments. Table 3.4 provides a brief description.

One of the main advantages of either approach is that the student is more likely to give an authentic response. This, in turn, helps ensure that the data collected are representative of the student's current skills and abilities. For students with more significant disabilities, a functional or practical approach to assessment is usually required.

Table 3.3 Basic questions to ask

*Basic questions to ask**

What does X like to do or show an interest in?
 What does X do on a typical day/weekend?
 What would X like to do after leaving school?
 Where will X live and with whom?
 What responsibilities does X have in the home?
 What skills do you think X needs to develop to be more independent at home?
 What supports will X need to live as independently as possible?
 Where will X work?
 What types of jobs and careers have been explored?
 What characteristics make up a dream job (indoor/outdoor; work with people, data, or things; pay; distance from home; level of supervision)?
 What types of supports will X need to be successful (transportation, housing, personal care, job coaching, etc.)
 What, if anything, might interfere with success at work or living in the community?

Note: * Questions are written for a third party, e.g., parents, and need be rephrased to address a student.

Table 3.4 Assessments occurring in natural environments

Assessments occurring in natural environments

Ecological evaluation – performed across natural environments (school, home, places where student has fun, shops, etc.). Includes perceptions of others and observations over time as the student is engaged in normal routines. The process usually entails a review of current records from classroom teachers, therapists, psychologists, etc., and talking to the family and student. Similarities and discrepancies in findings are noted for future verification. Next, considerable time is spent observing student in a variety of settings (e.g., classroom, cafeteria, during free time, at home, at work-training site). To ensure consistency in data collection, oftentimes observational checklists are used to collect data. Information is also collected from the student (to the degree possible) and those who best know the student’s strengths, interests, and support needs.

Situational assessment – performed in particular location, often a vocational setting. When conducting the assessment, the evaluator observes in the same location for a period of time rather than across domains. Students are assessed on abilities, interests, and support needs while performing tasks in employment settings. Data are collected on skill acquisition and response-to-teaching strategies using a task analysis and productivity, including time on- and off-task behavior. Information on likes and dislikes, social skills, and self-determination is collected. In addition, goals and objectives related to achieving priorities can be suggested. Guidelines under the Fair Standards Labor Act are followed. These assessments may be conducted as part of a community-based vocational education program, taking place at various businesses.

Data Analysis

Teachers or others charged with assessment must have adequate tools and knowledge to analyze and interpret common assessment data. The type of analysis necessary is usually determined when the evaluation is designed. While the topic of data analysis is also beyond the scope of this chapter, a few guidelines are offered.

First, it is important to note that the analysis and interpretation of the data will only be as reliable as the data themselves. Therefore, any incorrect or insufficient data should be thrown out. Second, treat data confidentially. Be sure this has been communicated to the student and family in advance. Also, reiterate the need for confidentiality with team members. Finally, try to keep the data analysis simple. Use the simplest statistics possible and only what is needed to draw a conclusion. With a summary of the results from the various transition

assessments available, it will be time to convene the student's team and develop his or her transition IEP.

Transition IEP Meeting

Team members should come together with the understanding that, regardless of the student's disability, transition is a time to build skills and find support options. Do not rule out any possibilities for employment and independent living (Wehman & Wittig, 2009). Upon reviewing the results from the transition assessment, the team may find that a student has either few or extensive needs to address. One student may need to enhance social skills and begin making preparations to eventually enter college. Another may need to learn many of the skills associated with independent living as well as access assistance to gain and maintain employment in the community, such as supported employment.

No matter what the student's situation, it is important to make sure that the time the team spends together is time well spent. This section reviews tips on meeting logistics, offers insight on ways to promote student involvement, concludes with some of the challenges the team may face, and outlines guidelines for developing student goals.

Logistics

The team leader should be sure the meeting takes place at a time when the student, family members, and the core members of the team can be present. Some states have specific guidelines on attendance and what to do if a parent or other party cannot attend. Some tips to keep in mind when planning a student's transition IEP meeting are offered in Table 3.5.

In addition to coordinating the meeting, a person must be designated to take on lead responsibilities. Some of the key functions that the team leader or another designee may assume are provided in Table 3.6.

It is important to note that these may be some of the things a student can do or at least help with. Eventually, over time and with training and/or support, some students will lead the meeting. Cameto (2005) provides National Longitudinal Study 2 data on students' post-high school goals as well as who the active participants are in most efforts at transition planning.

Table 3.5 Meeting planning tips

Meeting planning tips

- Find out if attendees prefer morning meetings.
 - Tuesdays and Thursdays are popular meeting days for professionals.
 - Avoid Friday meetings if possible.
 - Avoid meetings on holidays and the night before holidays.
 - Be sensitive to attendee travel requirements.
 - Notify attendees early enough so they have time to plan to attend.
 - Invite people early and continue reminding them even if they have confirmed attendance.
 - Tell parents the purpose, time, and location of the meeting and who will attend.
 - Encourage the parents to invite people who have knowledge of or special expertise about the child.
 - Create an agenda and stick to it (e.g., start and end on time).
 - Keep the agenda focused and do not overwhelm attendees (e.g., be sure to schedule breaks).
 - Support the student in getting involved in setting up the meeting (e.g., phone calls and sending emails to extend invitations and reminders about the event, etc.).
 - Be sure the meeting room has comfortable seating, lighting, noise levels, and temperature.
-

Table 3.6 Possible responsibilities for meeting facilitator

Possible responsibilities for meeting facilitator

Gathers all pertinent information about the student prior to the meeting
Makes sure releases are signed
Sends information needing advance review to team members
Coordinates meeting with individuals and agency members who need to be present
Calls meeting to order on time
Discusses ground rules
States mission and values
Emphasizes that student and family members provide input and make final decisions
Supports student in participating/leading the meeting to greatest extent possible
Summarizes key information about student, including personal vision and assessment results
Initiates discussion about outcomes and possible supports
Fosters open and honest communication (remember that everyone needs to be heard)
Encourages team members to voice opinions, including any concerns about potential outcomes or support services
Ensures team members know responsibilities and timeframe for action
Adjourns meeting on time
Supports student in sending follow-up communications and thanks attendees

Cameto indicated that while 58% of students provide some input to their transition planning, only 12% take a leadership role.

Student Involvement

The student must be invited to his or her transition IEP meeting and should participate to the greatest extent possible (Thoma & Wehman, 2010). Having students take ownership and a leading role in the planning process further supports the large body of research related to self-determination and self-advocacy (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000). There are a number of curricula described in Chapter 6 of this Volume that can be used to assist students with developing skills associated with self-determination and advocacy. These skills can be shaped and advanced further during various activities associated with plan development.

In conclusion, with regard to planning, we would note that some principles that are directly aligned with work include the following: the best place to learn about work is in an actual workplace (students do not have to “get ready” to work); students should be employed prior to exiting school; and students will need varying levels of support to gain and maintain employment (e.g., supported employment) and live in the community (Wehman, 2006). It may be useful to send a list of these and other guiding principles to team members in advance along with the meeting agenda or, at the very least, to briefly review them when the team convenes.

Challenges

Transition planning is not always easy and straightforward. Sometimes challenges are encountered along the way since there is no such thing as a service menu for students with disabilities.

Obviously, accessing readily available services through existing community resources will be much easier than having to create new options. However, given the vast difference among students

with disabilities and the lack of available or quality services within some communities, resource development may sometimes be necessary. For example, consider Alice, a young woman with a severe intellectual disability. In order to gain and maintain employment in her community, she will require intense advocacy support services like those offered in a supported-employment approach. Supported employment provides one-on-one assistance to help a person gain employment and then, once hired, offers on- and off-the-job supports to help the person maintain work. The only supported employment provider in town is a workshop that offers a group placement approach, called an enclave. In addition, the waiting list for services is long. Many of the individuals who are referred there for employment services end up working in the workshop for many years. What does this mean for Alice and her parents? Do they have to settle for the “only game in town”? Is the vision of a real job for real pay in Alice’s future really just a dream?

The answer is no, at least not when best practices in transition are followed. Instead, creative problem solving can be used to develop and implement services specifically designed to meet Alice’s preferences and needs, rather than forcing her to fit into an antiquated, one-size-fits-all service option that just happens to be readily available.

On the other hand, some students will be able to have their needs and preferences met through existing service options. For example, consider Marion, a student with a physical disability who wants to attend college. He is ready to start thinking about where he will apply. As part of the process, Marion will require some support with determining what types of accommodations he will need and requesting those from the school’s disability services office. A vocational rehabilitation counselor will help him.

The take-away point is teams must understand that each student must be served—one person at a time. Some other challenges that may be faced are highlighted in Table 3.7.

Goals

A student’s transition IEP should include a number of things including goals and a description of the transition services the student needs to reach them. Down the road, when it is time to update the transition IEP, teams should be able to measure a student’s progress by reviewing his or her current levels of performance in relation to the intended outcomes—the goals. Then, as indicated, additional assessment and/or person-centered planning may take place to modify or develop new student goals.

Table 3.7 Challenges associated with transition

Some of the challenges associated with transition

Different degrees of expectations for students with disabilities and varying levels of staff competency lead to an uneven provision of services to assist individuals with planning and preparing for life after school.

Upon leaving school, an individual no longer has legal right to services (vocational services, transportation, life skills training, counseling, etc.).

The individual may need ongoing support to expand opportunities and potential to lead a whole life.

Locating, obtaining, and financing services may be difficult, requiring navigation of a complicated adult-service-delivery system.

Services needed may not exist or funding may not be present and, rather than putting the student’s needs first and finding another way, the student is expected to accept what is available.

Community employment services may not be tailored to serving one person at a time or may serve individuals with only specific types of disabilities.

Effective planning requires a review of issues surrounding disability benefits provided by Social Security Administration, which means involvement with one or more complex and confusing program.

When formulating goals, the team should keep the following points in mind. As previously mentioned, the team should have high expectations for the student regardless of the severity of his or her disability. Transition planning should start early, by age 14 or sooner, as needed. This is critical to help some students reach their goals, including those that other people may have deemed impossible.

It is also important to remember that whenever a student has difficulty or cannot learn something, supports should be considered. Supports help promote independence and might include adaptations or modifications to how an activity is completed.

Furthermore, students should not have artificial limitations imposed on them. For example, a goal that states a student needs to first learn how to perform tasks in the school cafeteria before a community-based work experience or real employment is not acceptable. The student should not have to jump through these hoops. On the other hand, this may be the scenario because of ease of implementation. It is a lot easier to work with students in the classroom or on campus than in real work settings. But this is not the best practice and simply exacerbates the problem of unemployment among students with disabilities.

Once again, it is important to remember that post-school goals should be driven by student and family choice rather than available resources and funding. Teams should anticipate this need and be prepared to use creative problem solving to ensure a student's education is relevant and that individual needs are being met.

As indicated throughout this chapter, transition goals are developed with the student's post-school life in mind. Assessment results should indicate a student's current level of performance in various adult-life domains. The discrepancy between where the student is now and where the student needs to be in adulthood can be broken down to form annual goals. Then each goal is broken down into specific objectives that, when combined, will achieve the targeted outcome. The process is completed across all domains relevant to a student's desired future and current situation. Table 3.8 provides an excerpt from a plan.

What comes next is an integral part of the process. It is important to make sure the student, family, and others are aware of what results are expected. Along the way data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Based on an analysis of the information collected, changes in the program may be necessary. Adjustments must be made.

Finally, unacceptable results, such as a student's lack of progress towards reaching goals, should be examined. Reasons may include improper IEP content, ineffective teaching strategies, or lack of motivation of participants (student or teacher). Every part of the program should be examined and, as indicated, changes should be made.

Transition IEP

We conclude with a sample of a student's IEP for transition. Teachers may want to use the format provided here for future IEP planning and development. The reader may note that the template crosses over all major life domains. Numerous other examples can be found in *Transition IEPs: A Curriculum Guide for Teachers and Transition Practitioners* (Wehman & Wittig, 2009).

Summary

Although post-school outcomes are improving for youth with disabilities, much remains to be done (Wehman, 2006). Transition planning should begin early enough to make sure that when a student exits school, he or she has developed some important skills to function as a responsible adult in society. The plan should include measurable goals that are based on assessments related

Table 3.8 Excerpts of post-school vision, goals, and objectives across adult life domains

Excerpts of post-school vision, goals, and objectives across adult life domains

Post-School Vision: Sherry will work full-time in a job in the community that interests her.

Domain: Employment.

Ask: Where does the student want to be? Where and/or what type of work might the student pursue? (Keep in mind that work is often expressed in terms other than a vocational goal and sometimes jobs are created for individuals with significant support needs.) Does the student plan to pursue postsecondary education or technical skills training for employment and, if so, what might this be and where will it take place? Where will the student live?

Source: This may come from a person-centered life planning meeting and/or a transition assessment that focuses on work, e.g., interviewing family, vocational situational assessments. Note: the student's vision statement should be in alignment with whatever is generally expected from youth; this means competitive work, a decent paying job in the community, etc. (Sheltered employment, enclaves, and mobile work crew should not be considered as options.) It means living in one's own home, renting a room or apartment in the community. (Living options like group homes or adult homes should not be considered as options.) Obviously, some students will need intensive support at work, at home, or in the community to achieve this natural adult lifestyle (e.g., supported employment, supported living, and case management services).

Present level of performance: Sherry is 14 years old and has limited knowledge about work. When asked, she will tell you her mother works with the "sick" (at a hospital) and her dad works for the president (at the state department of transportation). Her parents indicated that Sherry takes care of all of her personal needs at home except for washing her hair. She uses some small appliances when assisting her mother with meal preparation and she vacuums the house. She also assists her father with some aspects of lawn care and gardening. Sometimes she sits down in mid-task and refuses to get up. Her parents ignore her behavior (unless it is raining or cold outside) and eventually (after about 15 minutes) she usually gets up and moves on to some other preferred activity (watching television, playing video games, etc.). A survey with her teacher revealed that last year she had toured local businesses including the bakery, airport, and hospital. She looked happy during the tours, smiling much of the time. However, during the bakery tour there was a loud noise and she attempted to flee the immediate setting. Due to this, she was paired with the teacher or teacher's aide on all future trips. The behavior was not observed again.

Ask: What is the student doing now? What is his or her current level of performance across adult life domains? This information comes from person-centered planning or transition assessment data from interviews, surveys, observations, etc.

Sample Annual Goal: Using cue cards, Sherry will express her likes and dislikes by May for at least 12 different types of job tasks across three different types of employment settings.

Ask: What skills and/or knowledge would enhance the student's ability to work in the community in a real job for real pay? What skills and/or knowledge would enhance the student's ability to live as independently as possible? Does it describe the behavior the student will be doing when the goal is met? Does it state what will be observed? Does it state what the student will do and to what level or degree? Does the goal make sense to other members of the team? Does it avoid jargon?

Sample Objective: For each new job task tried, on at least five different occasions, Sherry will use cue cards to indicate if she likes or dislikes it.

Ask the following questions: Does it state what the student will need to do to reach the goal? Does it describe the behavior the student will be exhibiting when the short-term objective or benchmark is achieved?

Steps needed to accomplish goals: (1) obtain permissions (teacher); (2) set up situational assessment sites (transition specialist); (3) conduct one assessment per month (community service provider); (4) review findings with Sherry and parents to help determine work preferences and ideas for job creations (vocational rehabilitation counselor); (5) apply for vocational rehabilitation services, requesting supported employment (parent); (6) interview and choose a supported employment provider (parent).

Ask: What major activities need to happen? Who is the primary person responsible for overseeing that the activity takes place? (This should indicate who is responsible for making sure the activity takes place. Who actually carries out the activity may or may not be the person listed.)

Table 3.9 Transition individualized education program

Student's name	
Last: Manfred	First: Leah M.I.
Birthdate: 1/17/1988	School: Great Plains High School
Student's I.D. #: 102	IEP conference date: 8/21/09
Participants	
Name	Position
Leah Manfred	student
Mary and Sam Manfred	parents
Kendra Watson	IEP case manager
Tina Wendt	job coach
Roy Simms	VR counselor
Kent Bandon	transition coordinator
Jarrold Exeter	horticulture teacher
Ivy Robinson	CSB case manager
Jed Johnson	Great Plains Community College, DSS office
Katrina Roberts	Dept. of Parks and Recreation
David Hart	Center for Independent Living
Student profile	
(Note: Include recent transition assessments and student's post-school vision.)	
<p>Leah is a 19-year-old senior who attends a large comprehensive high school. She is very outgoing and popular. She can read and write at about the second-grade level. She has very supportive parents and is involved in many family and church activities.</p> <p>Leah has various jobs at school, including serving as a messenger for the guidance office. She has also worked at school-supported community-based job sites with other students. Those jobs included stocking shelves at a local department store, scanning and counting items for inventory, and serving as hostess in the snack bar. Over the summer she obtained a part-time job at a major home improvement store working two half-days a week, and she attends the horticulture program part of the day at the school's technical center. Leah enjoys working with plants and has recently transferred into the garden shop at her current job.</p>	
I. Career and economic self-sufficiency outcomes	
1. Employment goal: (may include integrated employment and supported employment):	
Leah will work full-time with support in a home improvement store garden center by July 2008.	
Level of present performance:	Leah received VR services for assessment in a home improvement store for one month during the spring and was employed with wages for two 4-hour shifts with a job coach. She has developed several skills in this site including inventory and pricing. She has told everyone how much she enjoys her work.
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	(1) obtain continued job coach support beyond assessment; (2) decrease level of support on the job; (3) coordinate transportation between job and school.
Date of completion:	May 2008
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, transition coordinator, parents

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<p>2. Vocational/technical training goal (may include apprenticeship, workforce training): Leah will develop skills in the area of horticulture by June, 2008.</p>	
<p>Level of present performance:</p>	<p>Leah has an interest in working with plants and attends a basic horticulture program five days a week. She experiences some difficulty with the assignments and has boarded the wrong bus to the tech center a couple of times. She enjoys working in her family's garden and is able to seed, weed, and harvest vegetables with no support at home.</p>
<p>Steps needed to accomplish goal:</p>	<p>(1) Provide Leah with a visual cue for the correct bus and identify a peer she can ask if she needs assistance; (2) Meet with the horticulture teacher to modify assignments for Leah; (3) Explore career options using horticulture skill sets with Leah and VR counselor during the 2007–08 academic year.</p>
<p>Date of completion:</p>	<p>May 2008</p>
<p>Person(s) responsible for implementation:</p>	<p>Leah, IEP case manager, horticulture teacher</p>
<p>II. Postsecondary education and training outcomes</p>	
<p>3. Higher education goal: Leah will improve skills in the field of horticulture to improve job opportunities by June, 2010.</p>	
<p>Level of present performance:</p>	<p>Leah will graduate with a 2-year certificate in horticulture in June 2010. She has developed good skills at home in this area. She wants to go to a local community college to improve her skills.</p>
<p>Steps needed to accomplish goal:</p>	<p>(1) Visit Great Plains Community College horticulture program with Transition Coordinator by September, 2007; (2) Apply for assistance for this postsecondary program at the local community college with VR counselor by October 2007; (3) Attend 1 class twice per week for audit purposes during spring 2008; (4) Attend program by August 2008.</p>
<p>Date of completion:</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Person(s) responsible for implementation:</p>	<p>Leah, VR counselor, parents, Disability Support Services counselor, GPCC</p>
<p>4. Continuing and adult education, career/technical education goal (may include public or private technical school): N/A at this time</p>	
<p>Level of present performance:</p>	
<p>Steps needed to accomplish goal:</p>	
<p>Date of completion:</p>	
<p>Person(s) responsible for implementation:</p>	
<p>III. Community integration and functional participation outcomes</p>	
<p>5. Residential goal: Leah will cook two meals per week at home independently by April 2008.</p>	
<p>Level of present performance:</p>	<p>Leah depends on others to prepare her meals. She recently has learned to cook basic recipes using a microwave oven. Her mother assists with the development of a weekly menu, and Leah cooks, with support, on Tuesday evenings. Her greatest challenge is managing her time during meal preparation.</p>

Steps needed to accomplish goal:	Leah will (1) prepare two meals per week using visual cue cards; and (2) use a visual timer and watch alarm to begin and end meal preparation at the designated times.
Date of completion:	April 2008
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, parents
6. Transportation/mobility goal: Leah will travel to and from work independently by June 2008.	
Level of present performance:	Leah gets to and from work by school bus and by her parents transporting her. She recently took part in a transportation practice day sponsored by the local Center for Independent Living.
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	Leah will (1) apply for specialized public transportation; (2) learn to use specialized public transportation by (a) learning how to call the service and (b) learning to purchase tickets.
Date of completion:	March 2008
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	CSB case manager, Leah, parents
7. Financial/income needs goal: Leah will independently deposit paycheck into her bank account.	
Level of present performance:	Leah's bank account was opened for her by her parents, who handle all of her finances. She has decided to learn this task so that she can "have a lot of money."
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	Leah will (1) learn to sign checks and complete deposit slips; (2) practice making deposits at the bank.
Date of completion:	June 2008
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, IEP case manager, parents
8. Self-determination goal: Leah will identify needs for assistance at the work-site by January 2008.	
Level of present performance:	Leah is articulate about her needs but waits for the last possible moment to ask for assistance, which leads to unfinished tasks. She has observed classmates and co-workers speaking up for themselves and is motivated to do this.
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	Leah will (1) identify appropriate means and situations for advocacy at the work place; (2) role-play situations; and (3) attend a class sponsored by the Center for Independent Living.
Date of completion:	November 2007
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, Center for Independent Living, job coach
9. Social competence goal: Leah will maintain friendships after graduation	
Level of present performance:	Leah has made several close friends in high school. She has seen several classmates leave school and has lost touch with them, which is "making her sad." Leah has asked for assistance in this area.
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	Leah will (1) keep an address book of friends; (2) identify monthly dates for suitable activities to engage in with friends; (3) arrange transportation to activities by December 2007.

Date of completion:	Ongoing
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, IEP case manager, parents
10. Health/safety goal: Leah will identify unsafe situations at the work-site and report them to her manager or parents (via cell phone).	
Level of present performance:	Leah is friendly and assists customers as a part of her job at the home improvement store. She occasionally helps customers take items to their vehicles. She has good self-awareness of safety issues but rarely reports issues until after the fact. A recent scare in which a customer tried to lure her into a truck prompted Leah, her school, and other transition team members to make this a priority.
Steps needed to accomplish goal:	(1) Leah will carry her cell phone attached to her work apron at all times. (2) Leah will, with support, call the front desk to announce her departure from the store and (3) go to the front desk to announce her arrival back. (4) Leah will role play calling in for an emergency at home, work, and at school.
Date of completion:	January 2008
Person(s) responsible for implementation:	Leah, job coach, VR counselor
Student's career preference:	Full-time competitive employment, preferably working with plants.
Student's major transition needs:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal safety 2. Continued education in horticulture field 3. Transportation 4. 5.
Summary of performance	
Student's name: Leah Manfred	Student I.D. #102
Disability: Intellectual disability	
Student's address: 4219 Omaha Blvd., Great Plains, ND	Phone number: 555-1212
School Address: 200 School Way, GP, ND	Phone number: 555-1212
Post-secondary goals	
Employment: Leah will work full time with supports after high school.	
Education/Training: Leah will earn program certification in horticulture within three years after graduation.	

Independent living/community participation: Leah will maintain her ties with friends and church members after graduation. She will increase her independence with transportation by June 2010.

Current academic achievement (include courses of study)

Leah will earn a transition diploma this June.

Current functional performance

Leah follows routines well and enjoys learning new tasks at work. She is also learning basic household tasks such as cooking and doing her own laundry.

Recommendations for achieving postsecondary goals

1. Maintain support system with VR counselor and CSB case manager by meeting with them at least once a month.
 2. Maintain employment.
- Attached is a resource directory of community and adult service agencies. To obtain a copy of transcripts, contact the school guidance office. To obtain copies of Special Education documentation, contact the Office of Special Education, School Board Office.

Additional notes

Source: Based on Barrett, Wehman, & Wittig, 2009.

to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills. It should also include a description of the transition services the student needs to reach the goals.

A number of people serve on the student's transition team. Educators need to have first-hand knowledge of these services and to work closely with them.

Person-centered planning can enrich the transition IEP. This process provides a way to identify and clarify a student's preferences, strengths, and support needs. It can also help prioritize areas to address first. There are formal and informal approaches to assessment. The techniques that render the most useful information to the planners are the ones that should be used. Sometimes a variety of assessments will be needed before useful information is found. For students with the most significant disabilities, a functional approach to assessment is required.

Educators should be familiar with some tips to help plan and implement the transition IEP meeting, including ways to involve the student. Transition planning is not always easy or straightforward and teams should expect to encounter some challenges. A student's plan should include goals, objectives, and a description of the transition services needed to reach specific goals. If a student is not showing progress, the plan may need to be redesigned.

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