



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Frequently asked Questions About Transition

Who is eligible for transition services?

In Massachusetts, from the ages of 15 to 22, all students in special education, with any disability classification, are eligible to receive transition services as developed by the IEP Team.

What are transition services?

Transition services are skill based opportunities that may include exploring post-secondary educational options as well as vocational and employment opportunities. These services may also include connecting with the adult service agencies that may provide your student with services when they graduate from high school or turn 22 years of age. All transition planning is “designed within a results oriented process focused on improving both academic and functional achievement.”

Why does my child need transition services?

Transition services are meant to guide and prepare young adults with disabilities as they move from school to post school activities. Transition services increase your student’s ability to achieve successful outcomes in adult life.

How do I get transition services for my child?

Request an IEP Team meeting to address transition service needs. At the meeting, the IEP Team will develop transition goals that will be included in your child’s IEP.

How are transition services determined?

Transition services are individualized and based on needs determined by appropriate transition assessments. However, your student’s “*preferences, interests and vision for the future*” should drive the transition plan.

What are appropriate transition assessments?

Transition assessments should be determined by the needs of your child but can include a function vocational evaluation, an independent living (IL) assessment, an assistive technology assessment and in some cases a neuropsychological assessment can be helpful in planning postsecondary education.

Are transition services available at all secondary schools?

Yes. Transition services are not specific to, or determined by a particular secondary school or educational site. Transition services are required for all students receiving special education services no matter their placement. IDEA 2004 requires appropriate transition planning and services, including a discussion of the anticipated graduation date to be included in the IEP in order for your student to graduate.

Important Reminder: As with other IEP goals and services, transition services are NOT based on funding, availability of programs or disability classifications.

At what age must my student choose either a “vocational track” or “academic track”?

Students do not need to choose a “track” at any point. Your student’s education is determined by what is written in their IEP. Her/his IEP should reflect your child’s personal goals and not be determined by age, grade, disability or school site.

At what age should my child participate in IEP meetings?

At 16 students must be invited to attend their IEP meetings. However, a student may be asked to participate earlier if appropriate. It is advisable to include your student in at least part of the IEP meeting as soon as you feel it is appropriate.

Why is my child’s participation in IEP meetings important?

Your student is invited to participate in IEP meetings in preparation for their authorization at 18. Your student’s input and perspective regarding their strengths, skills and goals provides the team with unique insight into their vision for *their future*. Your child’s participation assures a more student driven IEP and encourages the development of critical self advocacy skills.

Important Reminder: NEVER assume that your student’s disability is too severe for communication and self determination to take place.

How can I help make the IEP meeting a meaningful experience for my student?

Communicate with your child; what does he/she want and need? Involve him/her so your child feels more in control and can begin to develop self-advocacy skills. Consider helping your child develop a personal portfolio to reflect preferences and interests to assure a more meaningful experience at the Team meeting. As you prepare for the Team meeting you may want to complete page 1 of the IEP together.

Important Reminder: It is also important for your child to be aware of the purpose of an IEP meeting and understand the agenda along with the terms and language that will be used by school staff and others. This preparation will help your child know what to expect and be able to participate more effectively in the decision making process.

If transition services include educational options that are located somewhere other than a high school site, is transportation provided?

Transition services are part of an educational program. Transportation is included as part of the placement decision. However, it may be beneficial to include transportation issues into your child’s IEP. For example, a transition goal of “travel training” would identify the skills and provide the training your student needs to learn to use a transportation system effectively. This type of community based support provides a natural environment to prepare your child for more independence.

Do I need to know about the transfer of decision making rights when my child turns 18?

Yes. Upon reaching the “age of majority”, every student is considered a competent adult and able to make his/her own decisions. Massachusetts has established 18 as the age of majority. This transfer of decision making rights extends to all students including those who are eligible for special education programs and services.

IDEA 2004 states that at least one year before your child reaches the age of majority; your school system must inform your child and you-the parent-that the educational decision-making rights transfer to your child when she/he reaches the age of 18. Documentation showing that you have been informed of this transfer of rights must be included in the IEP. [614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)] In Massachusetts this documentation is included in the “Additional Information” section on IEP page eight.

Important Reminder: In Massachusetts, the parent of an 18 year old student will continue to receive written notices and information, but will no longer have decision-making authority, unless the parent has received guardianship from the court of competent jurisdiction.

My child has cognitive disabilities and is non-verbal. Is guardianship the only way I can be involved to help her/him make decisions?

The quick answer is no, there are other less restrictive forms of legal protection.

In Massachusetts, upon reaching the age of majority, and in the absence of any court actions to the contrary, your child may **choose** to share continued decision making with you or, delegate continued decision making to you —his/her parent—including allowing you to co-sign the IEP. This **choice** must be made in the presence of the Team and must be documented in written form.

How will my child who is in Special Education get a high school diploma?

To obtain a Massachusetts state diploma, all students must pass MCAS and complete all local requirements.

If my child graduates with a diploma, does that end his/her SPED eligibility?

Yes. Once a student exits special education he/she is no longer eligible for transition services.

What if my child does not graduate with a diploma?

If your student does not receive a diploma she/he may be eligible to continue receiving special education and transition services. Special education services are available to eligible students until the age of 22.

If my student has graduated but was on an IEP in high school, can he/she use the IEP for support in college?

No. There is no special education in college!

Although a variety of accommodations are provided at the postsecondary level, your student will need clear, current documentation of their disability to access these services. Your student will also need to be able to self advocate by informing the school regarding what accommodations they need. Postsecondary education should be part of every high school student’s vision and their IEP should include goals that will prepare them for this important next step.

How can I find out how my son is doing in college? I would like to get progress reports and other info regarding my child/student with a disability.

The student is required to manage their own records. Parents will need the student's permission to access student records.

What is Chapter 688?

Eligibility for adult services is determined by Chapter 688. In order to be considered for adult services, the school must complete a Chapter 688 referral two years before graduation. Although special education services are guaranteed to those who are eligible, adult services are not. Adult services are based on legislative funding and availability of programs.

If I have a question that is not answered here, what should I do?

Call us and ask for an information specialist at 1-800-331-0688.