

Questions and Answers Regarding Secondary Transition Planning Volume 11

1) Why is secondary transition planning important?

A. Secondary transition planning is the process of preparing students for life after high school and includes planning for post secondary education or training, employment, and independent living. Studies show that a large number of students receiving special education services do not pursue education or training beyond high school and, when compared to the general population, are not as successful in the workplace. Transition planning and corresponding programming helps to close this gap. Moreover, transition planning is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and 22 Pa. Code Chapter 14.

2) When must the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team address secondary transition?

A. The IEP team must address transition in the year that the student will turn 14 years of age. This means that if a student will turn 14 in October, and the IEP is written in April, transition must be addressed in April. If it is not addressed in the April IEP, the IEP team must reconvene prior to the student's 14th birthday to address transition. An IEP team may also decide to address transition at an earlier age.

3) What students must have transition planning?

A. Transition planning is required to be in place for all students with disabilities ages 14-21 in Pennsylvania.

4) How do we determine what a student needs for good transition programming?

A. Transition planning begins with a transition assessment, which should be completed before developing the IEP. The end goal of a transition assessment is to determine what a student will need in order to be successful in achieving post secondary goals. Assessments might include interest inventories, vocational assessments and career planning tests, as well as opportunities for students to participate in job shadowing or mentoring to assess their interests, aptitudes and abilities. Transition related assessment information, as well as the student's present levels of academic achievement should be described in the Present Levels of Educational Performance section of the student's IEP.

5) What is a coordinated set of secondary transition activities?

A. A coordinated set of activities is a long-range plan for adult life, and should reflect all the activities, experiences and services that should be commenced beginning at age 14 or younger, when appropriate, to help the student prepare for transition to the adult world. In preparing the coordinated set of activities, several important questions should be asked, including:

- What is the student's current levels of educational performance based on his or her long range goals for adult life?

- What activities and strategies can be included in the IEP to help the student move toward the realization of his or her post secondary goals?
- What community linkages, services, supports or programs will the student need in order to achieve his or her desired post secondary goals and ensure success as he or she enters the adult world?

The IEP team's responsibility is to ask these questions and to help identify activities and strategies, involve appropriate agencies, and coordinate the process so that the student's goals are met.

6) Is the transition section of the IEP written for just the IEP year or is it written to be inclusive of the current IEP year and all future IEP years?

- A. The transition section of the IEP, like all other IEP sections, is written for one year. The transition section of the IEP must be updated annually, therefore all activities and services indicated in the transition section should only cover the IEP year.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Transition:

7) When reviewing the LRE numbers with districts, is there also emphasis placed on community based instruction that would enable the districts to meet the LRE requirements and also meet the transition requirements?

- A. Curriculum based instruction (CBI) is included in the calculation for LRE. CBI is counted as a regular education setting if the instruction is provided where nondisabled students participate.

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments

8) What are acceptable age-appropriate transition assessments?

- A. Age-appropriate transition assessments refer to any assessments, which are conducted in order to determine a student's interests, preferences, aptitudes or abilities. Transition assessment can be thought of as a two step process.

First, the team should use a variety of formal and informal assessments to determine a student's interests and preferences. These might include interest inventories, surveys, interviews, online assessments, direct observations or environmental analyses. Information from these assessments is used to establish the student's post secondary goals for higher education, employment and/or independent living.

Once the student's post secondary goals have been identified, if needed, team members will complete additional assessments related to aptitudes, abilities, and skills to determine the student's current status in relationship to the goals. Assessments include measures of skills such as: reading, math, written language, organizational, work-related, social, independent living, self-determination, adaptive behavior, daily living, specific aptitudes, travel, employability, dexterity and other skill areas determined on an individual basis. Assessments are used to identify gaps between current functioning and those skills

needed to reach post secondary goals. Transition assessments also help to identify the types of services and supports the student will need to reach their goals.

9) What is a functional vocational assessment?

- A. The IEP team may need information about a student’s aptitudes, interests and skills in relation to employment. A functional vocational assessment is information gathered through situational assessments, preferably in the setting where the job is performed. It can include observations, surveys, interviews and formal or informal measures. It focuses on practical skills needed for job and career success. Information can be collected about a student’s personal/social interactions, ability to manage money, mobility, personal hygiene, ability to follow directions or their ability to complete a task. The information that is collected can be used to refine the transition activities included in the IEP.

10) Is there a recommended set of transition assessments and/or a recommended number of transition assessments that should be completed?

- A. There is no set number of assessments that must be conducted. Overall, the number of transition assessments must be sufficient to establish post secondary goals and paint a clear picture of the student’s performance in relation to those goals. Although not required, many local education agencies do establish a suggested sequence of assessments which can then be customized to meet individual needs.

11) What happens if a re-evaluation is due when the student is 12 years old? Does the team need to complete transition assessments for the re-evaluation?

- A. Transition must be addressed by the time a student reaches his/her 14 birthday. Prior to the student reaching age 14, the IEP team is not required to address transition in the re-evaluation process unless the IEP team determines it necessary and/or appropriate to do so.

12) Will one assessment satisfy the annual assessment requirement or does there need to be numerous assessments to establish a baseline?

- A. There is no set number of assessments that must be administered to establish baseline data.

13) Is it required that at least one of the assessments be standardized and formal?

- A. Pursuant to 34 CFR §300.43(2), transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that “... [i]s based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preference, and interests and includes:
- i. Instruction;
 - ii. Related services;
 - iii. Community experiences;
 - iv. The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and

- v. If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a function vocational evaluation.”

There is no regulatory requirement that transition assessment be standardized and formal.

Post Secondary Goals

14) How do post secondary goals and measurable annual goals differ?

- A. Post secondary goals are based on age-appropriate transition assessment and describe the student’s goals AFTER they graduate from high school. There are three areas that post secondary goals must address: post secondary education/training, employment and independent living. Post secondary goals do not describe activities that occur during high school.

By contrast, measurable annual goals are goals for high school. Measurable annual goals represent services provided to the student that will help them attain their post secondary goals. Measurable annual goals are statements of expected student achievement over one year and address skill deficits, such as reading, math, organization, behavior and communication skills.

15) There are three post secondary goal areas: post secondary education/training, employment and independent living. How many of these must be addressed for students in Pennsylvania?

- A. All goal areas need to be addressed by the IEP team and summarized in the present educational levels secondary transition section of the IEP. Federal law requires that students have “appropriate, measurable post secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills” (§300.320[b][1]).

A student *must* have at least one post secondary goal, but it is anticipated that most students will have at least two and many will have three goal areas. The decision regarding the number of goals appropriate for a student is determined by the IEP team.

16) What happens if a post secondary goal area is not needed for a particular student?

- A. If a post secondary goal area is not needed, it must be documented why it is not needed in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance portion of a student’s IEP. For example, if the IEP team has not selected a goal area of independent living for a particular student, the present levels should contain data to show that the student’s current skills are age appropriate and that further preparation during high school is not needed. On the transition grid, the team would note that the IEP team had considered the goal area and due to the student’s current level of independence, as documented in the present levels of the IEP, has determined that a goal for this area is not needed at this time.

17) How specific must post secondary goals be?

- A. Post secondary goals should clearly indicate the student's intent for what they plan to do after high school. Goals for younger students may be more broadly written, but by the time a student nears graduation transition assessment should provide a much clearer picture of a student's post secondary plans.

Updating Post secondary Goals

18) How should an IEP team go about updating post secondary goals and documenting the updated goals?

- A. Evidence of updating would include noting updated assessments in the present levels section of the IEP, revising the transition grid and updating post secondary goals, based on new assessment data.

19) Must all measurable annual goals be measurable?

- A. Yes, all IEP measurable annual goals must be measurable.

20) Is it required that career education and work standards be included in the measurable annual goal statement?

- A. Neither federal nor state regulations require career education and work standards to be included in the measurable annual goal statement. If an IEP team determines it to be appropriate, the IEP team may include career education and work standards as part of the measurable annual goals.

Agencies and Invitations

21) Who is involved in the transition planning process?

- A. Transition planning involves the student, the family, educational staff, personnel from outside agencies, and other relevant community members who engage in developing a purposeful transition plan.

22) When should agencies be invited to an IEP meeting?

- A. For transition services that are likely to be provided or paid for by other agencies, representatives of the agency(ies) must be invited, with parental consent, to the IEP meeting.

23) How important is the participation of outside agencies in the secondary transition process?

- A. Collaboration with outside agencies is crucial. If a community agency is likely to be responsible for providing a program for transition services prior to and/or after graduation, the school must invite an agency representative to the IEP meeting. This includes agencies such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office of Mental

Health, the Office of Developmental Programs, the Department of Health and other community agencies providing services to adults.

24) If an IEP team does not envision that an agency will provide or pay for services, must an agency still be invited in order to fulfill requirements of Indicator 13?

- A. If it is not likely that an agency is likely to provide or pay for services, it is not required that an agency representative be invited to the IEP meeting. The nature of a student's disability or a student's young age would dictate an agency's involvement.

25) May schools adapt the invitation to indicate that an agency is not being invited because the student is too young or an agency is not likely to provide or pay for transition services?

- A. The IEP invitation is a standardized form and, as such, no items may be removed. However, LEAs may choose to indicate on the IEP invitation the reasons that an agency is not being invited.

26) How can the IEP team document that parents refused to allow an agency to be invited to an IEP meeting?

- A. If it is clear that parents have been informed of, and understand, the role that agencies play, their refusal may be included in the present levels of the IEP. Other sources of documentation include the invitation, with parent notations or signatures, as well as permission forms in which the parent clearly refuses permission. Again, informed consent or refusal to consent is key.

27) Must a separate IEP invitation be sent to the student and the parent?

- A. The same form may be used for both parent and student. Some LEAs choose to create an additional, student-friendly invitation however, this would not substitute for the official form.

Courses of Study

28) What are courses of study and how should they be listed in the transition grid?

- A. Courses of study refer to the list of academic courses (classes) that the student will complete each year that support the achievement of his/her individual post secondary goals. Courses of study represent part of the coordinated set of activities that help to move the student towards his/her post secondary goals.

Courses of study:

- i. Focus on improving academic and functional achievement to support post secondary goals.
- ii. Facilitate the transition from school by aligning curriculum with identified transition outcomes.
- iii. Should promote graduation by meeting district standards.

Within the transition grid, the student's courses of study should name each of the courses he or she will be taking within the duration of the IEP that relate to each post secondary goal. All courses should be placed under each goal area that applies. Courses of study must be updated as needed to reflect the current year's schedule. Only the current year's courses of study should appear in the transition grid.

29) Under the courses of study, does the IEP need to reflect the courses for the entire IEP year or just the current school year?

- A. Courses of study should reflect all of the courses expected to be completed over the duration of the IEP.

Services and Activities

30) What is meant by "services and activities" that lead to post secondary goals?

- A. Transition services and activities are part of the coordinated set of services that move the student toward his/her post secondary goals. Listed within the transition grid of the IEP, services and activities represent action steps that are to be completed during the current year on behalf of the student.
- i. **Transition Activities** are activities to be completed during the course of the IEP year but do not require a measurable annual goal. Examples include exploring options for post secondary education, developing a resume, practicing interview skills, exploring employment opportunities, attending a college or employment fair, exploring housing opportunities and registering to vote.
 - ii. **Transition Services** for students with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.

The person(s) or agency responsible are those key educational staff, agencies or persons that support each service or activity.

31) Is there a minimum number of services or activities that must be listed in the transition grid?

- A. For each post secondary goal area (post secondary education, employment and independent living), there must be at least one service or activity that will support the student in achieving his/her goal.

32) If the services and activities listed in the grid are not completed, is the LEA responsible?

- A. Services and activities listed in the transition grid are the responsibility of the LEA. If an agency or outside provider fails to provide or pay for services listed, the LEA must convene a meeting to address ways to complete the services listed.

33) What experiences and activities outside the school building will prepare a student for participation in community life?

- A. Activities that help prepare students for life outside of school include, but are not limited to, government, social activities, recreation and leisure, routine appointments, shopping, banking and transportation. Some examples include:
- i. Securing a drivers license
 - ii. Applying for a state identification card
 - iii. Visiting or joining a community recreation center or YMCA/YWCA
 - iv. Investigating opportunities for socialization (bowling, ice skating)
 - v. Participating in community and civic organizations
 - vi. Learning the location of convenient and affordable places to shop for food, clothes, etc.
 - vii. Identifying transportation options within the community
 - viii. Registering to vote

34) What activities and strategies will a student need to assist him/her in acquiring a desired job or career?

- A. Activities and strategies can focus on developing work-related behaviors, seeking employment, exploring careers, pursuing skills training, taking apprenticeship training and finding actual employment. Students may need to focus on basic employee behaviors to succeed in the workplace such as staying on task, responding appropriately to instructions, working with a team, working under pressure and developing skills for self-advocacy. Workplace readiness skills may be gained through part-time (supported or non-supported) employment, involvement in career and technical education programming (CTE), community service, apprenticeship programs, or involvement in the local office of vocational rehabilitation (OVR) and/or career link offices.

35) What is the role of career and technical education (CTE) in transition?

- A. Career and technical education programs can be part of the transition program to help prepare a student for work after high school. If a student with a disability is considering a career or technical education, or is currently enrolled in a CTE program, a representative from that program must be present at the IEP meeting.

Measurable Annual Goals

36) Which measurable annual goals should be considered to be transition goals?

- A. Measurable annual goals support a student's post secondary goals and would be considered transition goals. Measurable annual goals are related to the student's needs or skill deficits.

37) Must all measurable annual goals be listed in the transition grid?

- A. No, there are no federal or state regulations that require measurable annual goals to be listed in the transition grid.