

**WORKING WITH THE
SCHOOLS ON TRANSITION**
A BOOKLET FOR PARENTS OF YOUNGER TEENS



This booklet was written to help parents understand the Individualized Transition Planning (ITP) Process through which a young adult with a disability prepares for and makes the transition from high school to adult life. It also discusses how the regional center and your regional center Counselor can give you the help and support you may need for your son or daughter to get the most out of Transition.

THE IEP AND TRANSITION

Transition occurs in the context of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) process, something with which you are most likely already familiar. Because it is part of the IEP, all of the rights and responsibilities accorded in the IEP process by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also apply to Transition. We do not deal with those issues in this booklet. Instead, we discuss the unique things that the Transition component brings to the IEP.

For parents who want more specific information on the IEP, we suggest you ask your regional center Counselor or go to the HRC Resource Center for a copy of the HRC booklet, *Team up with your school! Making special education work for your child*. The regional center also offers parent education sessions on the IEP process. Information on these sessions can be found in the *Training and Events Catalog* on the HRC Web site, www.harborrc.org.

YOUR HRC COUNSELOR: AN ADVOCATE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD

As you approach Transition, we encourage you to think of your Harbor Regional Center Counselor as a partner in the process. Your Counselor can be a valuable asset in her role as an advocate for you and your child. She can help you prepare for the Transition IEP by gathering information that can allow you to be a more active and empowered participant. She can also get together with you in advance to plan for the meeting, identify potential problems, and come up with possible solutions.

Keep in mind, however, that the Counselor may not attend the Transition meeting without an invitation. For this reason, you should invite her far enough in advance so she can ensure her availability. Advance notice will also allow her to adequately prepare herself to support you at the meeting and to effectively advocate for you with the school and other agencies involved in the Transition process.



PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S TRANSITION

Now that your child is a teenager, the IEP team will, through the Transition process, begin to focus special attention on the things he needs to do to prepare for adult life. The law states that at the latest, a Transition component must be included in the IEP that is in effect when the student reaches age 16. It may be included as early as 14 if the IEP team thinks that is appropriate.

The ITP focuses specifically on the kinds of things the student needs to learn or achieve to maximize his independence as an adult. The process allows the family to give advanced thought to what his future will be like and what he needs to do to achieve his desired future.

The Transition planning process helps your son or daughter answer questions such as:

Do I want to get more education or training after high school?

Do I want to have a job? If so, what kind?

What can I do during the day instead of work or until I find a job?

Do I want to live with my family, with someone else, or on my own?

Whom do I want to spend time with and what do I want to do for fun?

How am I going to get around in the community?

How am I going to ensure that I have access to the health care I will need as an adult?

The responsibility of the planning team is to help you and your child answer those questions and help him develop the skills and knowledge he needs to achieve his life goals.



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HOW MANY YEARS WILL MY CHILD HAVE TO COMPLETE THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

Most children finish high school at around age 18, after 13 years of schooling. A student with a disability has the option of remaining in school until age 22. Part of Transition planning is deciding how long your child will need before he is ready to move on from high school.

Parents sometimes express surprise that Transition can consume so many years, believing that the process could be completed in much less time for

their child. However, once involved they see how much can be gained by their son or daughter from the extra years of participation in a wide array of activities while still in the supportive environment of the school. Every experience – from joining a school club to being involved in community service to gaining work experience – helps the child master new skills, learn what he likes and what he does well, and gives him a basis for deciding what kind of life he wants to have as an adult.

There are three options for completing Transition. The one that you and your child decide will best meet his needs should be written into the ITP.

Option 1: Diploma. The young person completes all academic requirements and passes the California high school exit exam. He graduates and the school district no longer has a responsibility to provide him with services.

Option 2: Certificate. The student does not meet or is not likely to meet the requirements for graduation. He may continue attending school until he reaches age 22 and the school has a responsibility to continue providing services.



Option 3: A Combination. The student delays graduation to obtain vocational training or other services needed to become a more independent adult. The end result may be either a diploma or a certificate. Sometimes school districts do not present this option to students and their parents, but it is a viable option and you may select it if you believe it will best meet your child's needs.

WHAT IS A TRANSITION PLAN?

As we have said, the ITP is part of the IEP that outlines Transition goals as well as the services and supports needed to achieve those goals. The ITP is based on the student's needs and takes into account his strengths, preferences and interests. It prepares him to achieve his desired post-school goals such as continuing his education, finding a job, living on his own, making new friends, and learning new skills that will make him more independent.

Because it is part of the IEP, the Transition Plan has all of the required components of the IEP, including assessment of performance, measurable goals and objectives, classroom placement, related services, and evaluation and review. The law mandates, however, that ITP goals specifically address four areas:

- Living independently in the community
- Meaningful employment
- Further educational opportunities
- Recreation and leisure activities in the community

As with the IEP, the ITP component should be based on a **comprehensive evaluation** that may include: personal history, daily living skills, vocational aptitudes and interests, learning style, academic skills, motivation, physical skills and social skills.





Services that may be required to address the Transition goals and objectives include: vocational assessment, functional academics, vocational training and counseling, daily living skills training, job placement and support, social skills development and mobility training.

The ITP must also identify other agencies that will be involved in implementing the plan and their responsibilities. These agencies must be invited to the planning meeting, either by you or by the school. If one of these agencies is not able to send a representative, the school is required to take other steps to ensure that the agency participates appropriately in carrying out its role in Transition.

Agencies that may play a role in Transition include the Department of Rehabilitation, the Employment Development Department, Regional Occupational Programs, and community colleges. Your regional center Counselor can help you find out about these agencies, what they do, and how they can help your child achieve his goals.

The regional center is, of course, an additional resource for Transition. We can help you learn about services such as independent living skills training, housing options, day activities, and supported employment – all of which will be important resources for your child as he enters adulthood.

The Transition meeting. The law requires that in all cases families receive a written notice that an IEP meeting will be held and that the notice include certain information. In addition to the information required for the IEP, the notice the school sends about a Transition meeting must include: a statement that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss Transition, a statement that the student is invited to attend the meeting, and the names of any other agencies that will be invited.

THE PARENTS' ROLE IN TRANSITION PLANNING

Obviously, parents have an important role as members of the IEP team, advocating for their child and providing information about him and about the values and priorities of the child and family. You should not hesitate to tell the team about the plans and ideas you and your child have discussed about his future, and about his life and experiences outside of school (for example, what he does particularly well and what he likes to do). You should encourage your child to participate in these discussions to the extent he is able, advocate for what he wants rather than only what may be offered, and take responsibility for following through with activities included in the Transition Plan.

You also have an important role in personally helping your child develop the kinds of skills he will need as an adult. For example, you can become directly involved in helping him develop skills that he will need in the workplace, independent living skills, social and communication skills, and the ability to advocate for himself.

When considering options, you should try to think creatively about how your child's interests and skills might be realized in adult life. For example, a young man who loves motorcycles might be happy working in any capacity in a place where motorcycles are sold or repaired. A young woman who would like to be a nurse but is unable to master the academic requirements might think about becoming a nurse's assistant or working in a hospital or other environment where medical services are delivered.

Involvement after your child's 18th birthday. When your child reaches age 18 he is regarded as an adult under the law. As an adult, he is responsible for making his own decisions about many things, including his education. Your child may be able to make his own educational decisions or he may want or need your help. You should discuss this with him and if you and he decide that you should continue to be involved in





his educational planning, you should ask him to sign an *Assignment of Educational Decision-making Authority*. When signed by the student, this document assigns to the parent the right to make “any and all decisions... regarding [the child’s] entitlement to a Free Appropriate Public Special Education.” A copy of that document is included at the end of this booklet.

Conservatorship. Another way of maintaining authority for educational decisions for your child is through a conservatorship. This is a legal process that gives one person the power to make decisions in specific life areas for another person who is unable to make decisions for himself. One of these areas is education. Obtaining a conservatorship is a legal process that takes some time, has associated costs, and may require a lawyer. The regional center does not normally encourage that parents take this step, but you should be aware that this is an option. Some parents do decide that this option is the best way to ensure the safety and welfare of their son or daughter. You can find more information about conservatorships in the HRC *Making it Happen* booklet, *Conservatorship: A Guide for Families*.

GENERIC SERVICES IMPORTANT TO TRANSITION

An important part of the parents’ role is to learn about the generic supports and services that adults with disabilities can access when living and working in the community. The most essential of these are financial and health supports. It is important to find out whether your child will be eligible for these programs and if so, to ensure timely applications so he can begin benefiting from the programs as soon as he is eligible. Below are thumbnail descriptions of the programs most often used by regional center clients.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI).** Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is the primary source of income for people with disabilities. Your child may now be receiving SSI, but even if he is not he will probably be eligible for this program when he reaches age 18. You should begin the application for SSI the month your son or daughter reaches age 18. In general, the individual must have reached age 18 by the first of day of the month that the application is filed.
- **Medi-Cal.** Medi-Cal is California's version of Medicaid, the joint federal-state program that covers medical care for people of low income. Medi-Cal is the major source of medical support for people with developmental disabilities in California. A person is automatically eligible for Medi-Cal if he receives SSI.
- **In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS).** This program provides personal care and other assistance in their homes for people with a disability. Many regional center clients living on their own in the community receive help through this program. Families may also be eligible for IHSS services under certain circumstances if they have a son or daughter of any age with a disability living with them.

There are several additional medical programs that can be accessed by regional center clients under certain circumstances. You can get information about these and other benefit programs from your regional center Counselor. In addition, your Counselor can arrange for you to meet with HRC's Benefits Specialist who can answer your questions about medical, income support and other programs for which your child may be eligible.



WHERE TO FIND HELP AND INFORMATION

In the HRC Resource Center you can find additional information about Transition, about generic services and supports, and about a wide range of other subjects that can help you and your child successfully navigate Transition. Among the resources is a series of booklets produced by Harbor Regional Center for parents and clients. This *Making it Happen* series is available in the Resource Center or on the HRC Web site, www.harborrc.org. References for some of the *Making it Happen* booklets are provided at the end of this document.

Harbor Regional Center also offers a variety of educational sessions and workshops where parents can learn about services and supports that are important for adults with disabilities. For example, we offer sessions on employment and other daytime activities, living options, and estate planning. Information about these programs can be found in the *HRC Training and Events Catalog* that is available in the Resource Center or online at www.harborrc.org.

Finally, we remind you again that your HRC Counselor is a valuable resource and willing partner who can support you and help you find the kinds of information and services your son or daughter will need to live a more satisfying life as a productive member of the community.



REFERENCES

These and many other books, videos and DVDs are available in the HRC Resource Center.

Making it Happen booklets:

- Facing Transition: A Look at Your Adolescent's Future
- Team up with your school! Making special education work for your child.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Adults
- What is Medi-Cal? A Booklet for Families
- In-Home Supportive Services
- Conservatorship: A Guide for Families

Transition to Adult Living: An Information and Resource Guide

www.calstat.org/transitionGuide.html

This comprehensive handbook, revised in 2008 and including changes as related to the regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), is written for students, parents and teachers. It offers practical guidance and resources in support of transition efforts for students with disabilities as they move from their junior high and high school years into the world of adulthood and/or independent living.

ASSIGNMENT OF EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

California Education Code Section 56041.5

I, _____, having reached the age of 18 years, having never been determined to be incompetent for any purpose by a court of competent jurisdiction, and having received, at the age of majority, all educational decision-making authority pursuant to California Education Code Section 56041.5, hereby authorize my parent, _____, to make any and all decisions for me regarding my entitlement to a Free Appropriate Public Special Education. Such authority shall include, but is not limited to:

Filing complaints with any public agency, such as the California Department of Education and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights;

Initiating and pursuing special education due process proceedings pursuant to Cal. Education Code Sec. 56500, et seq. and any judicial appeals thereof;

Attending IEP meetings and due process mediations and pre-due process mediations and signing IEP documents and mediation agreements with the same legal effect and authority as I would have absent this assignment;

Authorizing or refusing to authorize assessments, services, or placements;

Obtaining copies of any of my educational, psychological, medical, behavioral, or juvenile justice records, or any other materials and information related in any way to my special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, or transition services;

Receiving information orally from any individual or agency (public or private) regarding my special education rights or services;

Exercising any other right or action on my behalf concerning my education with the same authority as I would have absent this assignment.

A photocopy or facsimile of this document shall have the same effect as the original.

Dated: _____

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