



Transition Planning in IEPs

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Children's Advocacy



Provides individual and systems advocacy related to services and supports for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, specifically in:

- ▶ Early Intervention (EI)
- ▶ The Children's System of Care (CSOC)
- ▶ Special Education

The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute

Provides families with the necessary resources and education to access the appropriate supports and services for their loved one with an intellectual and developmental disability. We offer:

- Advocacy
- Education
- Resources
- Community Support



The Process of Getting an IEP

1. Identification - what do you do if you suspect your child has a learning disability?

Request in writing an evaluation from the Director of Special Services in your school District

The child study team has 20 days to screen your child and respond to your request.

2. If the child study team decides to do a full evaluation, written parental consent must be given. The District has 60 days to complete the evaluations. At least two evaluations must occur. Examples Social, educational, psychological, functional behavior, occupational and speech.
3. A meeting will take place where the results of the evaluations are shared with the parents. (Parents should receive the results of the evaluations 10 days prior to the meeting). Eligibility will be determined. If the child is classified, the District has 30 days to implement the IEP.

What is a Referral?

A referral is a written request for an evaluation that is given to the school district when a child is suspected of having a disability and might need special education services.

Who can make a referral?

- Parents
- School personnel
- Agencies concerned with the welfare of a student, including the New Jersey Department of Education

Within 20 days of receiving a referral, the school district must hold a meeting to decide whether an evaluation will be conducted.



What is an IEP?

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

- The IEP is a written document that describes the education plan for a student with a disability.
- The IEP is the foundation for your child's education, and you are a very important member of the team that develops it.
- Your child's IEP lists the special education services your child will receive, based upon his or her individual needs.

***This is why it's so important that you understand
and help develop your child's IEP***



The IEP has two general purposes:

- To set reasonable learning goals for a child.
- To state the services that the school district will provide for the child.

What Is In The IEP? (Detailed Version)

- Your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance
- Annual goals for your child
- How your child's progress will be measured
- The special education, related services and supplementary aids and services that will be provided to your child
- Program modifications or supports, if any
- An explanation of the extent to which your child will not participate with children without disabilities in the regular class and school activities
- Any modifications your child will need when taking state or district wide assessments
- The dates when services will begin and end, the amount of services, as well as how often and where they will take place
- How and when you will be informed of your child's progress
- By age 14 postsecondary goals and the **transition services** that your child will need to reach those goals
- Beginning at least one year before your child reaches the age of adulthood (usually 18-21), the IEP must include a statement that your child has been informed of any rights that will transfer to him/her



Who Attends the IEP meeting?

- Parents/Guardians/your child
- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Child Study Team Members
- Speech/Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- Counselors
- School Nurse
- Administrators
- Translators or interpreters
- Transition Personnel- (14 years of age)
- Others with knowledge or special expertise about your child

What is *The Parents* Role?

As a parent you bring very important information to the IEP meeting. You are your child's best advocate, and you have the most information regarding your child.

It is important for you to:

- Learn and understand the IEP process
- Share pertinent information- strengths, weaknesses, etc
- Ask questions
- Offer suggestions let the team know what works for your child at home



What is *The Parents* Role? cont.

- Keep the teams focus on “the big picture” and your child’s long term needs
- Speak up on your child’s behalf
- ***Be actively involved- To help you with that the school must make reasonable efforts to:***
- Schedule the IEP meeting at a time that works for you

In New Jersey, students must be invited to their IEP meeting starting at age 14.

However, they can attend earlier if the parent wishes.

Transition Services

Transition planning can begin when your child turns 14. **Transition Services** begin at 16. These services should be updated annually.

The **statement of needed transition services** within the IEP must include:

Instruction

Employment

Community Experiences

Post-School/Education

Related Services

Daily Living Skills, if appropriate

Functional Vocational Evaluation, if appropriate





Functional Vocational Evaluation

- The FVE is an assessment given to understand the students abilities, preferences, capabilities, and interests
- The results are used to determine the students vocational goals and any supports that are needed for success
- Recommend first FVE at age 14-16
- Follow up FVE when your student is transitioning out of high school, between ages 18-21

Transition Services

Transition Planning involves the student thinking about their life after high school and developing a long-range plan about what comes next:

- College/Training
- Employment
- Independent living

Middle school and high school are when the student needs to start focusing on developing the skills they will need to compete and succeed in these areas. Transition planning also helps students identify and link with colleges, training programs, and state and local agencies that may provide services that are needed to prepare for one's adult life.





How do outside organizations play a part in transition planning?

Your IEP team should take into account the necessity of seeking guidance from various agencies such as:

- Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
- Division of Mental Health and Addition Serices (DMHAS)
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)
- Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
- Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH)
- New Jersey Consortium on Deaf Blindness (NJCDB)

Strategies for Success

Post school activities should be looked upon as a set of **STRATEGIES**. They Should:

- Reflect and lead toward achieving the **desired** post school outcomes of your child
- Take into account your child's interests and preferences
- Identify long range strategies in each of the transition planning areas that will help the student achieve their post-school goals
- Identify all agencies and individuals responsible for carrying out each strategy Ex: *school, service providers, vocational rehabilitation service providers, parents, student, educator, agency personnel, etc...*
- Identify who will provide and pay for each strategy



Goals

Writing goals can be one of the hardest parts of developing an IEP. Goals can cover so many different areas. Depending on your child's needs, some goals may target areas of the general education curriculum. Other goals may target learning developmental or functional skills. For example, teaching your child how to eat independently. Still another area could be your child's social or emotional needs. A well written goal should be **positive and describe a skill that can be seen and measured**. It answers:

- **Who** will achieve the goal?
- **What** skill or behavior will be achieved?
- **How** or in what manner and at what level will the skill or behavior be achieved?
- **Where** or in what setting and under what conditions will the goal be achieved?
- **When** or by what time or date will the goal be achieved?

Example of an Education/Training Goal

Here is an example of a **measurable** postsecondary goal for education.

- ***Upon completion of high school, John will enroll in courses at Ocean County Community College.***

This goal meets NSTTAC* standard because of specific reasons:

- Participation in postsecondary education is the focus of this goal.
- Enrollment at a community college can be observed, as in John enrolls in courses or he does not
- Enrollment at a community college occurs after graduation, and it is stated that this goal will occur after graduation.

Key Words and Phrases

Use *Doing* Words

Write
Draw
List
Perform
Circle
Touch
Walk
Sign
Pick up
Removes
Sort
Sing
Underline
Point to
State
Smile
Add
Paint

Avoid *Slippery* Words

Identify
Know
Understand
Enjoy
Appreciate
Recognize
Communicate
Be able to Understand
Value
Solve
Apply
Tolerate

**Remember: Seen or heard by an
observer.**



Self-Advocacy: Where to Start?

One of the best places to start teaching a child about self-advocacy is in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Including the student in every IEP meeting, provides him or her with an opportunity to learn and practice important life skills.

How Can You Promote Self-Advocacy?

- Talk with your child about their strengths and weaknesses
- Remind them that asking for help is a good thing
- Praise them for speaking up when they need help
- Teach your child about their legal rights and how to talk about them in a positive, constructive way
- Encourage your child to use the classroom accommodations they are entitled to
- Consider putting self-advocacy goals into your child's or student's IEP
- Find a role model
- When a problem arises, give your child a chance to solve it before stepping in
- Let your child or student have a say in decisions about his or her education





What are some common mistakes made at High School IEP meetings?

- Not asking questions or for clarification
- Not putting your requests in writing
- Not knowing the procedural safeguards
- Accepting goals and objectives that can't be measured
- Not asking for an independent evaluation if you do not agree with a report
- Not discussing transition services starting at age 14



How can you make your students' High School IEP meeting successful?

It is important that you prepare to make this meeting successful. You can:

1. Review the old IEP, especially the goals
2. Establish your priorities for the meeting
3. Write down any concerns or fears you may have
4. Connect with a network
 - a. Other special needs families
 - b. A mentor
5. Start talking to your student about the upcoming meeting

Prepare Your Student For the Meeting

- Review all the information about your child. Make sure that your paperwork shows the whole story
- Talk with your child about the upcoming IEP and ask about school. i.e. What is hard? What is easy?
- Think about your child's learning style, special education needs and social needs
- If it is your child's first IEP meeting, explain what might happen in the meeting
- Assist your student in completing an outline of their questions, concerns and hopes
- Discuss their post-secondary goals

How Can Students Get Involved in Creating their IEP?

All students can get involved by:

- Writing down ideas, questions, and concerns before the IEP meeting
- Rehearsing what he or she wants to say in the IEP meeting
- Introducing themselves
- Talking about his or her interests, strengths, and desires for the future
- Explaining his or her disability to the Child Study Team
- Leading all or part of the IEP meeting
- Helping the team develop IEP goal areas
- Asking for explanations if he or she doesn't understand something
- Reviewing what the team has agreed to at the end of the meeting

Developing Transition Goals with your Student

Asking these questions can help guide the discussion:

- Do you feel organized with your schoolwork?
- Do you ask for help when you don't understand something?
- Do you feel able to express your opinions?
- Do you attend your IEP meeting?
- Do you know your disability?
- What accommodations would be helpful?
- Do you take care of your personal health care needs?
- What are your strengths and interests?



What is the Age of Marjority?

Once your student turns 18, they will be able to make their own IEP decisions.

Parents will be able to attend meetings with the consent of their child.

The only way to obtain the right to make decisions for your child past the age of 18, is to file for guardianship.





What if I don't want to file for guardianship?

Your student has the right to make their own decisions regarding their own education, healthcare, finances, and living arrangement once they turn 18.

Supported Decision Making (SDM) may be better option for your child to still make their own final decisions, with support from you or other trusted adults.



1 Year Prior to Graduation

Your team should guide you identifying your students adult needs and advise you on the following:

- Applying for adult programs and financial support
- Identify independent living skills to be worked on such as: navigating public transportation, hygiene, cooking, applying for jobs, etc
- Applying for postsecondary education and assist you in acquiring the necessary supports
- Assist in acquiring employment or supported employment

What if the Team Doesn't Agree?

If you can't agree on a particular item, write it down and come back to it. If you need more time you could say:

“Why don't we try this for six weeks and see how it works?”

“What will it take for us to reach an agreement on this issue?”

“I just don't see this as being appropriate for _____. Are there other options we haven't looked at?”

“I understand that you can't say yes to this request. Can you tell me who can, and how do we get that person here?”

What if the team still can't agree?

If you've done as much as you can and you still can't agree on the IEP:

- If this is your child's first IEP you can refuse to give permission for the school to implement the IEP. In this case, your child will not receive the special education services outlined in the IEP.
- Request an Independent Evaluation
- Ask the school to give you written notice on the issues under disagreement.
- You may request mediation or a due process hearing to resolve the conflict. With mediation you sit down with the school and try to work out the disagreement with an impartial state appointed mediator.
- ***Due process*** is a formal legal procedure.

What Do I Do After The IEP Meeting?

First: Pat yourself on the back.

You've completed your child's IEP meeting. Depending on the situation, you may want to schedule a follow up meeting after six weeks, so you and the rest of the team can talk about how things are going.

REMEMBER: If you ever feel that the IEP needs to be changed, you can request an IEP meeting at any time. If the change is minor (and agreed upon by the team), it can be implemented without a meeting.





What Do I Do After The IEP Meeting?

- Review the IEP- read over and make sure understand and agree with the proposed changes. You have 15 days to review
- Debrief your student- How are they feeling? Do they understand the changes?
- Mark your calendar for any progress meetings or scheduled check ins
- Make sure to sign and return the consent form

Resources

- www.parentcenterhub.org
- <http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/>
- www.spannj.org
- www.childrensdisabilities.info
- www.disability.gov
- www.thearcfamilyinstitute.org
- <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/home/>
- <http://www.performcarenj.org/>
- <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/>
- <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/home/index.html>
- <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/pa12/>
- <https://www.thearcfamilyinstitute.org/resources/iepgobag.html>
- <https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form/prise/>
- <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-relatedservices/>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/common-classroom-accommodations-and-modifications>



Contact Us!

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