PARENT INFORMATION SERIES
Special Education Services in Maryland:
Secondary Transition Planning

Special Education Process  Parental Rights  Understanding the IEP  Secondary Transition
INTRODUCTION

A Family Guide to Secondary Transition is part of Maryland’s Birth through 21 Parent Information Series, a collection of publications designed to support families statewide in the special education process and system of services in Maryland. This guide provides preliminary information about the requirements of the secondary transition process under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as recommended strategies and resources to achieve a positive outcome.
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Welcome to Secondary Transition Planning in Maryland

What is Secondary Transition Planning?

Secondary Transition is an ongoing process of preparing students with disabilities for life after high school. This process begins early in a child’s life when they first learn about their environment, likes, dislikes, and interests. It continues throughout the school years as students participate in experiences to support the development of a vision for the future and prepare for the transition to adult life. Secondary transition planning is a collaborative effort that involves students, families, school staff, and other important community members.

Students with disabilities who receive special education services are entitled under federal and state laws to receive appropriate transition services that support their movement from high school to adult life. In Maryland, formal secondary transition planning begins through the IEP process at age 14, or earlier if appropriate. Maryland went beyond the federal requirement to begin formal transition planning at age 16. Maryland requires transition planning to begin at age 14, allowing students time to explore their postsecondary goal choices and change them based on transition experiences.

What the Law States

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. The IDEA defines transition services as a “coordinated set of activities” for a child that promotes movement from school to post-school activities. These services are designed to prepare transition age students for postsecondary employment, education or training, and independent living. These activities are based on the student’s interests, preferences, strengths and needs.
What is the Parent’s Role in Secondary Transition Planning?

Parents are instrumental in planning for their child’s secondary transition. They provide the IEP team with information critical to the development of an effective and meaningful transition plan. Parents can empower and guide their transition-age child to take an active role in the transition planning process, develop self-determination skills, and take ownership of their future. With support from parents and educators, students explore interests and develop the skills and independence needed to reach their post-school goals. It is important for parents to begin the process early and ensure the student’s voice is heard.

As a parent or guardian, you can help your child by:

- Participating in IEP and transition team meetings;
- Sharing their strengths, interests, and support needs;
- Advocating for their goals and services;
- Keeping high expectations;
- Providing opportunities to practice self-advocacy skills;
- Encouraging them to explore post school options such as college, work, and adult services;
- Supporting access to community transition partners; and
- Reviewing the secondary transition timeline and requesting support as needed.

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is the ability to make choices, solve problems, set goals, evaluate options, and speak up for your rights. It is about your child understanding their disability, strengths, needs, and the supports and accommodations that work best for them. Students must be taught these components of self-advocacy and given opportunities and support to practice self-advocacy skills as they transition from high school to adult life.
What is the Student’s Role in Secondary Transition Planning?

The student is at the center of the transition planning process and the most important member of the IEP team. It is their goals and aspirations that will be the driving force of the transition plan with the student in the driver’s seat. When students are actively involved in planning their future, they are more likely to commit to making their plans work.

The student’s role includes:

- Participating in the transition planning process;
- Participating in IEP meetings;
- Sharing their current and future goals;
- Identifying strengths and challenges;
- Communicating interests and preferences;
- Identifying postsecondary goals that match interests and skills;
- Developing a portfolio;
- Participating in transition activities identified in the IEP;
- Developing an understanding of their disability, including how it affects learning, living, and employment; and
- Participating in work experiences.

Predictor of Post School Success

There is a strong link between student participation in work experiences in high school and success after graduation. School teams and families that collaborate to network with neighbors, friends and local businesses expand community opportunities and narrow the gap.
Secondary Transition Steps

What is the Student’s Vision for the Future?

The goal of Secondary Transition planning is to help students identify their goals after high school. They will plan a course of study, services, and activities that will lead to opportunities to experience a successful transition from school to adult life. To do this, the IEP team must begin with the end in mind and support the student to create a vision for their future. It is sometimes difficult for students, particularly early in the secondary transition process, to have a vision of what life after high school will look like. Conversations with students both at home and in school can help youth explore who they are, what they like and don't like, and develop personal goals for the future.

Transition Assessments

Age-appropriate transition assessments are the foundation of the secondary transition process and help the student learn about themselves, their interests, preferences, and goals. Formal and informal assessments from multiple settings and sources, including the family and community, are used to identify measurable postsecondary goals. Assessment results provide the student, parents, and other members of the IEP team with information about how the student is currently functioning, and the skills and services needed to achieve their goals. The data is used to develop a comprehensive IEP and a meaningful transition plan to support students in achieving their postsecondary goals.

How are Transition Assessments documented in the IEP?

Secondary transition assessment results are documented in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLA AFP) section of the IEP. The information learned from transition assessments can assist in the ongoing development of the student’s IEP, including the postsecondary goals, transition activities, services, annual IEP goals, and agency linkages, as well as the next steps in the transition planning process. Assessment results provide guidance and options to the student, family, and IEP team.
Postsecondary Goals

Postsecondary goals are measurable goals that identify the student’s vision of what they will do after high school in the areas of Postsecondary Employment, Education or Training, and if appropriate, Independent Living. IEP teams discuss postsecondary goals with the student and family at a minimum each year at the annual IEP meeting. Measurable post-secondary employment goals are required by IDEA.
Course of Study

A course of study includes all the classes and community experiences the student will complete to achieve their postsecondary goals. Postsecondary goals should take into consideration where the student wants to work, learn, and live after graduation. It is important for everyone working with the student to assist in identifying a course of study that is aligned with their postsecondary goals. The team should ensure participation in courses and experiences that support progress towards the student’s goals. The connection between the student’s postsecondary goals and the course of study should be clear.

Transition Activities

Secondary transition activities are designed to improve the student’s academic and functional skills to help them achieve their post-school goals. These activities are specially designed for the student based on their strengths, preferences, interests, and needs. They may include instruction, related services, community experiences, employment development and independent living skill development. Thoughtful development and implementation of transition activities create the steps that the student will take from setting to achieving their goals.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses benefit everyone, but CTE especially helps students with disabilities. The data indicates students with disabilities enrolled in CTE classes are more likely to graduate and meet state proficiency goals. Students with disabilities enrolled in CTE programs have a higher graduation rate than students with disabilities not enrolled in CTE programs.
Annual IEP Goals

The annual IEP goals are developed and written to help the student build the knowledge, skills, and/or behaviors needed to achieve their postsecondary goals. The annual IEP goals and transition activities work together to create a student-centered, IEP that leads to the achievement of meaningful postsecondary goals.

Age of Majority

Age of Majority is the legal age at which a person is considered an adult with all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. The age of majority in Maryland is age 18. At least one year before reaching age 18, IDEA requires the IEP team to inform the student of their transfer of rights. If the student is not ready to take on full decision-making responsibility at age 18, there are other options, such as supported decision-making, that can be explored. In Maryland, special education decision-making does not automatically transfer to a student with a disability at the age of majority except under limited circumstances.

Guardianship vs. Supported Decision-Making

Guardianship is a legal process where the court appoints a person or agency to make decisions on behalf of another person and is the most restrictive form of legal protection for an individual. Typically, individuals with mental health, intellectual, or medical disabilities so severe that they cannot make informed decisions for themselves would meet the criteria for guardianship. In Maryland, a new law now allows adults to use supported decision-making to get support to understand, consider, and make decisions for themselves. Supported decision-making helps individuals to keep their rights and have more control and choice over their lives.
Graduation

Graduation from high school is a significant milestone in every student’s life. In Maryland, a student may receive a Maryland High School Diploma if they complete the enrollment, credit, and service requirements. A student with disabilities who cannot meet the requirements for a diploma may receive the Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion if the IEP team determines those standards outlined in Annotated Code of Maryland are met. The final decision to award a student with disabilities a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion is not made until the student's last year in high school.

Maryland Summary of Performance (MSOP)

The Maryland Summary of Performance is a report that provides information about a student’s:

- Secondary academic achievement;
- Functional performance;
- Accommodations; and
- Progress on postsecondary goals, services, and activities.

Students, families, and IEP teams may use the information in this report to review progress and make decisions throughout the transition planning process and as the student moves from school to postsecondary activities. The MSOP may provide potential employers, postsecondary education institutions, and adult service providers with meaningful information about the young adult's skills, strengths, and supports they may need.
Agency Linkage

Entitlement vs. Eligibility—What is the Difference?

Students eligible for special education services in Maryland are entitled to receive these services until they graduate with a high school diploma or through the school year in which they turn 21, if the school year begins before their twenty-first birthday. The individual must now apply for adult services to see if they are eligible to receive them. Eligibility for adult services is not an entitlement and access to services is not guaranteed. Funding must be available to receive services and supports from adult service agencies. Therefore, it is important to start the application process early to determine agency eligibility.
Maryland Adult Service Agencies

The chart below identifies the four state agencies that may provide services or supports for eligible individuals in Maryland. Each agency has specific eligibility criteria that must be met to receive services. Please contact the appropriate agency with questions regarding services or their eligibility process.

**Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) offers programs that help individuals with disabilities to go to work, stay on the job, or prepare for the world of work. DORS helps high school students, college students, and students in other approved programs by providing or arranging for services that may include career counseling, assistive technology, vocational training and/or job placement assistance.

For additional information visit: https://dors.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx

**Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)**

The DDA provides a coordinated service delivery system so that people with developmental disabilities receive appropriate services oriented toward the goal of full inclusion in their community, including obtaining and maintaining integrated competitive employment. The DDA's community-based service delivery system includes various home and community-based services and supports provided to eligible people, through either a Medicaid State Plan, Waiver program or via DDA State funded services.

For additional information about the DDA: https://dda.health.maryland.gov/Pages/dda.aspx

**Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)**

BHA is part of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) that serves people with mental illness and/or problems with alcohol and drug use. Through its local agencies, called Local Behavioral Administrations (LBHA) or Core Service Agencies (CSA), BHA funds and administers programs including but not limited to: psychiatric inpatient care, residential treatment, routine and intensive outpatient care, crisis services, rehabilitation services, family support, supported housing and supported employment for people with mental illness. Programs specifically for transition-aged youth are available in some regions.

For additional information about the BHA: https://bha.health.maryland.gov/pages/index.aspx

**Office of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Maryland Department of Labor (Maryland Labor)**

The Maryland Department of Labor’s Office of Workforce Development Youth Service Division provides programs and services to help young adults reach educational and employment goals. Through the Maryland Labor local America's Job Centers and Workforce Investment Boards, Maryland Labor provides career consultation, training, computer access, and other support services. Maryland Labor in conjunction with the American Job Centers provides an array of employment services and connects customers to work-related training and education opportunities through funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

For more information about Maryland Labor http://labor.maryland.gov
Timelines for **Secondary Transition**

### AGES 14 – 15

Families may prepare their student for life after high school by considering the following:

- Set and maintain high expectations
- Discuss the results of transition assessments with your student
- Discuss postsecondary goals and options
- Share your student’s strengths and needs to achieve their goals
- Provide input about the family’s vision for the future
- Provide opportunities to explore career interests
- Provide opportunities to practice self-advocacy, time management, and decision-making skills
- Attend transition-related workshops, IEP meetings, and conferences
- Prepare your student to attend and participate in their IEP meetings
- Help develop and practice communication and social skills for employment, education, and recreation settings
- Keep records of transition-related services and activities
- Understand your student’s disability, rights and responsibilities
- Guide your student in understanding their disability and their strengths
- Provide opportunities for guided decision-making
- Discuss Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS) with your student and the IEP team
- Apply to DDA to determine eligibility for services

### AGES 16 – 17

Further considerations for this age-band may include:

- Review graduation requirements and progress, including attendance, grades, and community service requirements
- Identify assistive technology tools that can increase education experiences, employment opportunities and community involvement
- Identify community services and programs
- Meet with community agencies to learn about eligibility for services while in high school and after graduation
- Gather information about postsecondary programs and the support services
- Sign consent for the IEP team to communicate with agencies that may provide services
- Support your student in exploring and participating in work opportunities
- Discuss the age of majority with your student
- Explore guardianship and supported decision-making
- Discuss transportation options after graduation
- Encourage and practice independent skills such as money management, healthy living, and self-care
- Discuss how learning will continue after graduation
- Review the Maryland Summary of Performance and your student’s progress toward their goals
- Apply to DORS, BHA, and MDL, as appropriate, and when eligible
AGES 17 – 18
Further considerations for this age-band may include:
• Discuss progress toward graduation
• Discuss when to register to vote and, if male, register for Selective Service
• Guide and support access to adult services
• Allow your student to make decisions, take responsibility, and learn from their mistakes
• Discuss participation in work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and career and technology education programs
• Follow-up with agency referrals and applications for adult services
• Schedule a meeting to discuss supports and benefits such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), higher education or technical school support services and financial aid
• Sign consent to invite agencies that may provide services after graduation to the IEP meeting
• Visit postsecondary schools with your student
• Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), if appropriate
• Meet with the DORS counselor to discuss and plan post-school services
• Review and obtain a final copy of your student’s Maryland Summary of Performance
• Guide your student in completing applications for postsecondary colleges and employment
• Encourage your student to register for college and armed services exams, if appropriate
• Apply to DORS, BHA, and MDL, as appropriate, and when eligible

AGES 18 – 21
Further considerations for this age-band may include:
• Meet with the IEP team to discuss high school transition programs in age-appropriate settings such as a college campus
• Encourage enrollment and inclusive participation in classes that support achievement of post-school goals
• Support participation in community work and learning experiences
• Provide opportunities for learning and practicing transportation options
• Identify supports needed after high school
• Verify eligibility for adult services
• Meet with DDA’s Coordination of Community Services to assist with the transition to adult services
• Support your student in applying for SSI, Medical Assistance and Paratransit services
• Discuss the Maryland Certificate of Program Completion endorsements that begin in the 2024 school year with the IEP team, if appropriate
• Apply to DORS, BHA, and MDL, as appropriate, and when eligible
Top 10 Things

Parents Can Do to Help Prepare Their Child for Secondary Transition

1. Understand your youth’s disability. You may know your youth, but do you know how your youth’s disability specifically impacts him or her in the areas of learning, communication, or mobility? During transition planning, seek to better understand your youth’s disability and how it may affect the pursuit of postsecondary education, employment, or independent living.

2. Encourage your youth to create a vision of his or her future. Help your youth research options to realize that vision and to expand his or her base of experiences. This will allow your youth to take ownership of the transition planning process while building in the freedom to change course if necessary.

3. Help your youth understand their vision can be realized. Youth take cues from parents on what to expect of themselves. Instill in your youth that the IEP transition plan is a pathway to achieving their vision and reaching their goals.

4. Build the belief in high expectations for your youth. You may have high expectations that your youth can achieve to his or her maximum ability. You need to advocate for an IEP and transition plan that reflect those expectations. If you convey low expectations for your youth’s future, others may do the same.

5. Share what you know about your youth by communicating strengths, interests, and needs during IEP meetings. Teachers value this type of information from parents because it helps provide details that assessments and school observation cannot. This information may also help the IEP team avoid academic and services decisions that don’t address a student’s interest or areas of need.
Keep essential education records throughout your youth’s education. Parents should save important records in an organized way to use for special education planning, such as report cards, current and past IEP documents, and evaluation summary reports.

Build self-confidence and self-determination in your youth using the IEP process. Help them find an effective way to express themselves. They might speak at the IEP meeting or construct a PowerPoint or video about themselves.

Help your youth develop independence in learning, studying, and living skills. Positive traits, such as being eager to learn new things, effectively managing time, and taking responsibility for doing a good job will serve youth well when it comes to employment, postsecondary education and community participation.

Understand the impact of “soft skills” on employment and educational success and use activities in the home to build those skills. Soft skills, personal communication, and responsibility are tools everyone needs to be successful. Teach your youth how to communicate appropriately with others, maintain personal appearance, take work direction, and resolve conflict.

Help identify potential community supports and work opportunities for your youth. This may include employment assistance from the Division of Rehabilitation Services, postsecondary education supports obtained through a college’s Student Disability Services Office, or independent living skills taught by a community-based organization. Parents should become familiar with available options and ask representatives of these services to be present at the IEP meeting, or to provide information for the team.

*Adapted from PACER’s “A Guide to Prepare Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School.”*
Resources

Got Transition
www.gottransition.org/
Got Transition is a federally funded national resource center on healthcare transition with the goal to improve the transition from pediatric to adult healthcare. Tools, resources, and information for young adults, families, and caregivers are included to prepare for a smooth transition to adult health care.

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council: Supported Decision-Making
www.md-council.org/did-you-know-a-new-supported-decision-making-bill-just-passed-in-maryland/
This article uses plain language to explain the Maryland Supported Decision-Making law that allows adults to use supported decision-making to receive adult support and make their own decisions.

Maryland MTA Disability Reduced Fare Program
www.mta.maryland.gov/disability-reduced-fare-program
Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Disability Reduced Fare Program eligibility is explained. An online application is found on the Forms page under Reduced Fares.

Maryland MTA MobilityLink
www.mta.maryland.gov/mobility
The MTA MobilityLink is a paratransit program for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use the MTA fixed route system. A link to complete the application and a guide to paratransit services are included.

The Maryland State Department of Education Secondary Transition Planning Guide for Individuals with Disabilities
elevates.marylandpublicschools.org/secondary-transition-planning-guide/
This guide provides information to students, parents/guardians, educators, and community agencies about the secondary transition process. Legal requirements, strategies, and resources related to elements of secondary transition planning are included. A link is included to access the guide in 20 additional languages.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
www.ncset.org/
The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) was established to create opportunities for youth with disabilities to attain successful adult outcomes. The website provides resources to support secondary transition topics for educators, families, and students.
National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability
youth.gov/federal-links/national-collaborative-workforce-and-disability
This website is a source of information about topics related to a student's transition to adult life and the challenges families and young adults often face. Links to a variety of topics specific to youth with disabilities are included to support students and families of transition age youth.

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center
www.nsttac.org
The website provides tools and resources for teachers, parents, and students navigating all areas of secondary transition. Interactive links are included to support transition planning.

PACER Center National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
www.pacer.org/tatra
The PACER Center provides information, resources, and technical assistance on transition-related topics to parents of young adults with disabilities, ages 14 through 21. This easy-to-use website provides resources and tips created by parents to address questions and concerns from the parent lens.

Think College
www.thinkcollege.net
Think College is a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for students with an intellectual disability. The website provides information for students and families to answer questions regarding college options, how to prepare for college, and the admission process.
Glossary of Secondary Transition Terms

Accommodation
A service or support related to a student’s disability that allows full access and an accurate demonstration of knowledge without requiring a fundamental alteration to the standard or expectation of the task.

Adult Services
Services needed for people when they reach adulthood; often including, but not limited to, assistance in finding a job, assistance in the home, assistance at work, employment-related supports such as housing and transportation, and delivery of various therapies or medications.

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment
The ongoing process of collecting data on the student’s needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future work, education, living, and personal and social environments.

Age of Majority
The legally defined age at which a person is considered an adult, with all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. This is 18 years old in Maryland.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
The federal disability anti-discrimination legislation that guarantees basic civil rights to people with disabilities. This is similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin and religion. It guarantees equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in areas of employment, transportation, government services, etc.

Apprenticeship Maryland
Apprenticeship Maryland is a youth apprenticeship program for students, ages 16 and up. It is designed to lead to sustainable employment and further education based on career pathways in manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) occupations or other occupations within the CTE Career Clusters.

Assistive Technology (AT) Device
Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that increases, maintains, or improves functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)
A sequence of courses that provide students with the academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to succeed in future careers and become proficient in relevant technical knowledge and skills.

Career Exploration
The process during which students with disabilities explore career options and take part in a variety of assessments and activities that can assist students to identify their unique interests, skills, and talents

Community-Based Instruction
Integrating students into their community as part of their educational curriculum and instruction.

Community-Based Services
Services provided in a community setting, preferably in the individual’s home community.
Competitive Employment
Working either full-or part-time for at least minimum wage or an equivalent payment after leaving high school in: (a) an integrated competitive employment setting (b) the military (c) a community-based supported employment setting (d) family business (e.g., farm) (e) self-employment.

Course of Study
A multi-year description of coursework necessary to achieve the student’s desired post-school goals.

Daily Living Skills
Skills needed for daily routines; i.e., eating, dressing, washing, taking care of hygiene, toileting.

Functional Life Skills
Skills needed to live as independently as possible. Examples include social skills, communication, behavior and safety skills.

Functional Vocational Assessment
Assessment to determine a student’s strengths, abilities, and needs in an actual or simulated work setting or in real work sample experiences.

Independent living skills
Skills or tasks that contribute to the successful independent functioning of an adult. They may address leisure recreation, home maintenance and personal care, and community participation.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
A legal document outlining a plan leading a person with a disability to competitive employment. It is utilized by the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Integrated or Supported Employment
An employment setting in which an individual with a disability receives the support necessary to learn and maintain his or her job.

Interest Inventory
A self-assessment tool used in career planning that matches a person’s interests, likes, and dislikes with activities and possible career options.

Job Analysis
Identification of the specific tasks and subtasks involved in completing a specific job.

Job Coach
Person who assists an individual to help them learn or maintain a job; can include training and support at the job site.

Job Sampling
Giving those with disabilities the opportunity to “try their hand” at a variety of jobs to determine those that might be a good fit given the individual’s skills and interests.

Job Shadowing
Exploring different occupations and types of work environments by following and watching people performing the jobs.

Life Skills
Any skills used to manage a home, cook, shop, manage finances, and organize personal living environments.

Mentoring
A supportive relationship between a youth or young adult and someone more senior in age and experience who offers support, guidance, and assistance.

Mobility Skills
The ability to travel safely from one location to another.

On-the-Job-Training
Knowledge and skills a person acquires while in the workplace, doing some activities related to an existing position.

Paid Employment
A person working for another person or a business for pay.

Person-Centered Planning
A process that empowers people with disabilities to plan their life, find their voice and work toward reaching their goals. It focuses on their strengths and preferences.

Self-Advocacy
Understanding one’s disability, being aware of the strengths and weaknesses resulting from their disability, and being able to explain their need for specific accommodations. Advocacy is the ability of a person to speak for their needs and preferences.
What if I Have Questions or Need Help?

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<td>Maryland School for the Deaf</td>
<td>443-277-8899</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland State Department of Education</td>
<td>410-767-0255</td>
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