



My teen who receives Special Education is turning 18, what should I know or do?

Your teen's IEP should indicate one of two options for high school:

- Graduating with a diploma after completing all diploma requirements. Special Education services will then end.
- Receiving a certificate of completion. This means completing a course of study specific for that student. With a certificate, a student then may take other post-secondary courses through the semester they turn 22.
- The IEP team usually begins discussion in late middle school about which high school option may be possible. For some students it is not clear which option is possible until late in high school once information is known on passing the high school exit exam or if required courses are completed.

The Transition Plan is key!

- Every Special Education student must have a transition plan in place before his or her 16th birthday.
- Transition planning includes assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills.
- Plans should be in place for all testing, including the California High School Exit Exam. (Note: Teens in Special Education who do not pass the exam can participate in the regular graduation activities at the high school.)
- Transition services are a set of activities that are coordinated with each other and improve the academics and functioning of your teen in preparation for leaving high school.
- The plan should focus on preparing your teen for further education, employment, and/or independent living.
- The plan must address your teen's needs, strengths and interests.
- Transition activities include instruction, community experience, resume planning, and adult living skills. It may also include a vocation/career evaluation or other services related to jobs.
- The Transition Plan must have specific, measurable goals, just like the rest of the IEP.

What you can do:

- Be informed. Get the California Department of Education book, *Transition to Adult Living: An Information and Resource Guide* – find this and other important links to good information on the Matrix website at: <http://www.matrixparents.org/links/transitionlinks.htm>
- Support your teen as they learn about agencies that may serve them.
- See what your teen may need in order to meet with people in interest areas.
- Encourage your teen to be his or her own advocate.

Moving into adulthood is a big step for everyone, and may be even bigger for your teen with special needs. They can do it and so can you!

