



## Transitioning From High School to Adult Life For Children in Special Education

### What's Next?

Some students who receive special education services will graduate with a diploma at age 18 or 19. At that point, special education services will end. Other students may finish high school with a certificate of completion which means they have completed their course of studies at the high school level and may continue in public school post-secondary programs through the semester during which they turn 22. Public school programs provide a variety of options for students who do not receive a diploma and remain in school past high school.

### Important considerations:

- The decision to work toward a diploma or a certificate of completion is an important one and needs to be considered during early middle school and finalized during early high school. This must be documented in the IEP.
- In either situation, students must have a Transition Plan that is included in their IEP that is in effect during the year during which they turn 16.
- Questions regarding the student's participation in standardized assessments (those for all students) with or without accommodations or modifications must be addressed carefully.
- At this time, only special education students graduating in 2006 are exempt from the California High School Exit Exam in order to receive a diploma if they have met all of the other requirements.
- Algebra I is a requirement for all students who wish to graduate with a diploma
- It should be noted that students who receive a certificate of completion may participate in all graduation activities including grad night, graduation ceremonies, etc.

### Transition Plans

Some changes in transition planning occurred with the reauthorization of IDEA, special education law, in 2004. Previously, transition planning needed to be documented by age 14; that has now been changed to age 16. Transition services are defined as "a coordinated set of activities" that is "results oriented" and focused on "improving the academic and functional achievement" of the child who is leaving high school. The focus is on preparing them for

- further education
- employment
- and independent living

Plans must address a child's needs and take into consideration strengths, preferences and interests. The high school activities that are part of the transition plan can include:

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- instruction
- related services
- community experiences
- the development of employment or other adult living objectives
- when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills
- when appropriate, a functional vocational evaluation

### **The IEP/Transition Meeting**

Transition planning is not one meeting or one set document. It needs to occur over time, involving the student and outside agencies and resources as appropriate. The relationship between the student's high school activities and desired post-school outcomes needs to be clear and meaningful.

Transition planning needs to include:

- Structured discussions with a student and parent, as appropriate, about a student's interests and post-school goals.
- Transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills.
- Student exploration with school and family support of options after high school (e.g. vocational programs such as ROP, community college, Department of Rehabilitation, disabled adult services, further independent living skills training, etc.)
- Appropriate and measurable post-secondary goals based on assessments and results of student exploration or planned exploration
- "Who, what, and when" will carry out the activities needed to meet the goals
- Student progress toward meeting either graduation requirements or IEP determined high school goals
- A "summary of achievement" (both academic and functional) for students who exit special education with a diploma or when they reach age 22. This summary must include recommendations on how to assist a student in achieving their postsecondary goals.

### **Ahead of Time**

Some things to consider doing:

- Learn about agencies in your community that serve young adults
- Follow up on student interests in specific vocations by speaking with professionals in that field or visiting schools that provide training or other education
- Encourage greater self-advocacy as a student matures, helping them rather than "doing for" them

### **Independence and Adulthood**

Careful planning and follow through will ensure that a student exits public school and special education with skills that will move them toward a satisfying and successful future whatever their level of skills or choice of post-school activities.

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