

West Mifflin Area School District

# The **TRANSITION** Handbook

A guide to transition planning for IEP Teams  
Preparing students for life after they leave high school  
Post -Secondary Education/Training  
Employment  
Community Living



The Special Education Department of the West Mifflin Area School District presents this handbook as a collaborative effort to inform families of the transition process and to provide IEP team members with information regarding available resources that may assist students in the process of transitioning from school to adult life.

Information regarding the agencies, programs or services in this handbook does not imply endorsement, but rather acknowledgment of the many options available to individuals with disabilities. Individuals using this handbook should thoroughly investigate any service provider prior to contracting and/or registering for services.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide IEP Teams with general information and guidelines about the transition process. It is designed to assist IEP Teams in making the transition from school to adult life for students as smooth as possible.

# What is transition?

Transition is the process of preparing students for life after they leave high school, including participation in post-secondary education or training, employment, and community living. These three areas are often referred to as “post-school outcomes” and are the driving force behind the Individualized Education Program (IEP) written for students in high school. Transition planning begins at age 14, in middle school or early high school, as students explore what they want their post-school outcomes to be through career awareness exploration activities. It continues through high school as instruction and community experiences support these outcomes. By beginning to discuss transition prior to high school, the IEP team can work with each student and the student’s family to select courses of study that will be meaningful to the student’s future and motivate the student to complete his or her education.

Transition should be conceptualized as a bridge between school programs and the opportunities of adult life, including higher education, employment, independent living and community participation. Transition planning involves a partnership between the student, the family, school-age services and program providers, post-school services and program providers, and local community members. Effective transition involves purposeful planning among all these entities. It entails recognizing the student’s current strengths, interests, preferences, and needs, and then identifying what services and supports he or she will need to achieve future success.



## TRANSITION IS:

- Required by Federal Law PL 300.347
- A service mandated in 1990 by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and reauthorized June 4, 1997
- Required by State Law Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania State Regulations and Standards
- For ALL eligible students with an IEP, except those who are gifted
- An outcome-oriented process that is formalized at age 14, or younger if the IEP team determines it to be appropriate, in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and continues until graduation
- Multi-year in scope. . . single-year in operation. . . reviewed and revised annually
- A coordinated set of activities that systematically move the student from school to adult life
- A set of prescribed activities related to post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing adult education, adult services and independent living
- Based on the student's needs, interests and preferences
- The final phase of many years of quality instruction through special education

## THE TRANSITION PLAN SHOULD:

- Represent the decisions of educators and other service providers, the student and parents
- Include information provided by the student concerning his/her career plans
- Incorporate data from the student's functional vocational assessment
- Provide for the participation of education representatives and community service agencies
- Address the needs of the student seeking post-school employment or post-secondary education
- Assure that the student/parent has the appropriate information necessary to link the student to the adult service providers
- Be reviewed and modified at least annually as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Collaborative effort to plan for and to prepare students with disabilities for adult life
- A "bridge" between school-age programs and the opportunities of adult life
- A collaborative effort that involves parents/guardians and students working together with teachers, schools and the community to maximize adult life potential
- A focus on the future

## TRANSITION PLAN CONSIDERATIONS:

- Students interests, abilities and aptitudes
- Instructional, ecological and/or vocational profile
- Post-secondary goals in education or training, employment, adult services, community living, and community participation
- Specific activities supporting the development of post-school outcomes
- Person(s) responsible for implementation of each specific goal
- Support services, such as transportation, vocational counseling, case management, and medical services
- Agency or person responsible for continuation of transition planning and exchange of information following graduation. This person or agency must be identified in the plan during the final school year.

# The Role of the Family

- Attend and participate in the Individualized Education Planning (IEP) meetings
- Complete the parent and student survey for transition
- Decrease the student's dependence on the family by increasing participation in the community
- Become familiar with agencies that provide recreational, financial, social, employment, and residential opportunities for their young adult
- Make contact with agencies early to avoid being placed on waiting lists
- Explore career options
- Explore post-secondary options



# INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN:

The Transition plan is integrated into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and developed by team members at the IEP meeting.

## **Components of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) related to transition are:**

- Post-secondary outcomes
- Functional vocational assessments
- Instructional areas to support outcomes
- People responsible for coordination
- Interagency responsibilities and linkages

## **Areas addressed in the Transition Plan:**

- Post-secondary Education/Training
- Employment
- Community Living
- Residential
- Participation
- Recreation/Leisure
- Daily Living Skills



# IEP TEAM:

## Required members of the IEP team include:

- Student
- Parents and/or guardians
- Special education teacher
- Regular education and/or vocational teacher

## Optional team members may include, but are not limited to:

- Transition Coordinator
- Job coach
- Guidance Counselor
- Psychologist
- Community agency representatives
- OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) counselor
- MH/MR (Mental health / Mental retardation) case manager



## 9th Grade Checklist

- Continue orientation to the freshman academy
- Begin use of the Keys-to-Work program
- Start a schools-to-career portfolio with the freshman seminar career class
- Develop a 4-year academic and career plan
- Have 10th grade schedule complete and signed by parents
- Whenever the opportunity presents itself, visit a college campus
- Inquire at the local social security office about SSI eligibility requirements
- Begin the process of financial planning for your child's adult needs
- Have your child get involved in at least one extra curricular activity in the school or in the community
- Concentrate on the development of independent living skills in the home
- Identify additional post-secondary education or training requirements
- For students planning to continue their education post-high school, identify appropriate and required high school courses
- Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker
- Develop self-advocacy skills
- Be able to explain his/her disability and the accommodations he/she needs
- Involve the student in his/her IEP planning (attend meeting)
- Broaden your child's experiences with community activities and expand their friendships
- Pursue and use local public transportation
- Learn and practice personal health care

Note: If the student has a mild disability, it is extremely important to begin to develop a realistic view of post-secondary school life. An understanding of college, technical and work-study options is essential at this time.

If the student is moderately to severely disabled, mental health/mental retardation (MH/MR) should be involved in the evaluation process. The independent supports coordinator/case manager should be invited to the IEP meetings as early as possible.

## 10th Grade Checklist

- Review and adjust the four-year academic/career plan
- Review the information from the freshman seminar career class portfolio
- Develop the transition component of the IEP. The IEP must address goals for adult life, post-secondary education and career.
- Identify student's transportation, attendant care and functional needs for a job or vocational placement, college or post-secondary environment, independent living, and for recreation/leisure activities
- Be aware that the student is nearing the end of public school eligibility and will need appropriate programming from community-based services
- Realistically look at the student's strengths and weaknesses
- Investigate and initiate community-based work experiences such as neighborhood youth corps, volunteering and summer employment
- Match career interests and skills with vocational course work and community work experiences
- Gather more information on post-secondary programs and the support services offered. Make arrangements for accommodations to take the college entrance exams
- Determine the need for financial support (supplemental security income, Medicare and state financial supplemental programs)
- Teach and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication, and social skills for different settings (i.e.: employment, school, recreation, community), begin a resume and update as appropriate
- Practice independent living skills with the student (budgeting, shopping, cooking and housekeeping)

## 11th Grade Checklist

- Continue to investigate and explore community-based experiences
- Establish long-term goals for your child; think ahead to the future of his/her needs
- Begin to visit agencies that may be appropriate for child
- Direct the student to information on voter registration for the draft
- Begin to get a state driver's license if age appropriate
- For students planning to continue their education, identify appropriate post-secondary education options and the accommodations necessary for them to meet success
- Arrange for updated testing that is required for agency, college, or other post-secondary institutions that the student is planning on attending
- Apply for financial support programs (supplemental security income, independent living services and vocational rehabilitation)
- Identify transportation needs and teach transportation skills
- Identify the post-secondary school the student plans to attend and arrange for accommodations
- Practice effective communication, such as developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying accommodations in post-secondary and work environment
- Identify the job desired by the student and obtain paid employment with supports as needed
- Emphasize the student's responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments, and social activities
- Emphasize the student's responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and talking prescriptions)
- Determine eligibility for OVR services

## 12th Grade Checklist

- Assure that all adult services are in place
- Encourage parents to become involved in the selected program their child is about to enter
- Arrange for modified admissions tests, if necessary
- The family will be invited to attend and exit IEP from the public school

## Some Final Thoughts About Transition

- Think differently about transition planning
- Encourage the student to dream but be realistic about future plans
- Remember the outcomes selected should drive the IEP
- Expose the student to many different career and life options
- Provide opportunities in the community for the child as much as possible
- Encourage the student to get work experience
- Teach students about self-advocacy and help them understand how important it is to be in charge of their own lives



## **For Your Information**

As parents, you will find that there are many agencies that you may come in contact with as you develop your child's transition plans. The following agencies are most frequently accessed when seeking adult services for individuals with disabilities.

### **Allegheny County Department of Human Services**

933 Penn Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
412-350-5701

Provides comprehensive human services to Allegheny County residents through programmatic offices: Office of Children, Youth, and Families; Office of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities; Office of Behavioral Health; and the Office of Community Services.

Intake / Registration Unit 412-350-7285

### **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

412-392-4950

Offers complete vocational rehabilitation services to Allegheny County residents, including work potential evaluation, and physical and mental restoration services. Also provides job placement, training program placement, counseling, and guidance service to enable people to gain employment. A referral must be completed by parents and students and must remain active. Services are primarily geared toward helping the individual obtain community employment.

### **Social Security Administration (SSA)**

800-772-1213

Social Security Insurance benefits applications are available to children and adults with serious disabilities. It is important to understand these benefits as they relate to work and eligibility prior to working, while working, and in the event of loss of job.



**Achieva (ARC)**

800-522-5827

**Allegheny County/City of Pittsburgh Transition  
Coordinating Council**

412-394-5818

**Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 (AIU3)**

412-394-5818

**Family Links**

412-995-4104

**Family Services of Western PA**

724-335-9883

**Mon-Yough Community Services, Inc.**

412-675-8304

**Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network  
(PaTTAN)**

800-446-5607

**Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR**

412-351-0222



**This handbook was developed by the West Mifflin Area School District for use by students, parents/guardians and staff.**

Additional information may be obtained by calling  
Mr. Cliff Bowers - WMASD Transition Coordinator  
(412) 466-7220 ext. 1028