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P&A FACT SHEET

SCHOOL TRANSITION SERVICES

What are transition services and why are they important?

Parents naturally worry about their children's future. They want to make sure their children are ready for work, college, living on their own and all the other things that come after high school. Transition services help prepare students with disabilities for adult life.

Many students with disabilities drop out of school but are not ready for the adult world. If a student has an individualized education program (IEP), school districts must provide services to help the student move from school to post-high school activities. Transition services can be used to help students get ready for:

- College
- Tech school
- Work
- Adult education
- Adult services
- Living on their own
- Participating in their community

When do transition services start?

South Carolina law requires transition services to start when the student turns 13.¹ Transition planning must be done before the student's 13th birthday. For students who are in special education, their IEP must include a statement of goals for the

¹2 SC Code Ann. Regs 43-243 (IV)(D)(1)(b)(2011):
<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/c043.php> Transition services may be included at ages younger than thirteen if considered appropriate by an IEP team.

student after high school and the transition services needed to reach these goals.

Who should be a part of transition planning?

The most important person for transition planning is the student. The plan should be based on the student's needs. The team should take into account what the student is good at, what the student likes, and what the student wants to do after school. Transition planning should also include input from:

- Teachers
- Parents
- School district transition experts (Examples: transition coordinators or career specialists)
- Others who work with the student (Examples: therapists or counselors)
- Outside agencies who work with adults (See next section for examples)
- Someone from the school district who can make decisions about paying for things on the transition plan.

What outside agencies should be involved in transition planning?

School districts should invite outside agencies who work with adults to help with student transition planning. These outside agencies should start helping while the student is still in school. Many agencies provide important transition services, like job coaching, help with finding a job, help living on your own, etc. If no one from the adult service agency comes to the meetings, the school district should take other steps to get the agency to help. Examples of adult service agencies include:

- SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department
- SC Department of Mental Health
- SC Commission for the Blind
- Disabilities & Special Needs Board

Note: If the student receives Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, the student may want to contact Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC). They are specially trained counselors funded by Social Security to assist SSI and SSDI recipients make informed choices about working. *For more information please see P&A's fact sheet: Community Work Incentive Coordinators.*

What should transition plans include?

The student's IEP must include:

- Goals to help the student be ready for what comes after school
- Classes that will help the student be ready for adult life (also known as "course of study")
- Services to help the student be ready for adult life
- Who is responsible for getting each thing done

School districts can offer services like:

- Teaching the student how to write a resume
- Counseling or therapy to help the student be ready to work
- Visiting a job site
- Teaching the student daily living skills
- Teaching the student how to understand work evaluations

How can the school district find out the student's interests?

The school district must do an assessment that is appropriate for the student's age. The assessment will include talking with the student and the parents. It should also include testing to provide information about the student's:

- Interests
- Personality
- Physical ability
- Mental ability
- Classroom learning style
- Potential in an area of work

If the student is working, there should be a report based on an observation of performance at work.

For more information, students and parents can visit the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center: <http://www.nsttac.org>.

What is an individual graduation plan?

A South Carolina law² seeks to make graduation rates higher and drop-out rates

² South Carolina Education and Economic Development Act passed in 2005 and schools were to comply by July 2011. SC Code of Laws Ann. 59-59-10 to 59-59-250 (2011 Supp.)
<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c059.php>

lower. Schools must now provide students experience with real-world problem-solving skills and work opportunities. Under the law, all students must have an individual graduation plan by the end of 8th grade. The individual graduation plan should help the student transition into work, work training, or college. The individual graduation plan must:

- Make sure that the student's work goals match the classes ("course of study") the student is taking
- Be based on the student's work interests ("cluster of study")
- Include academic subjects to make sure the student can graduate
- Include work experiences (Examples: internships and mentoring)
- Be flexible to allow change in the student's work interests
- Include parts of the student's IEP when appropriate
- Be approved by a certified school guidance counselor and the student's parents or guardians

Who should be involved in developing the individual graduation plan?

Schools should include the special education teacher in the development of the individual graduation plan. Also, middle schools and high schools must provide students with the services of a career specialist to help students with school-to-work activities. The career specialist should also help students become aware of different types of work ("career clusters").³

What is a summary of performance?

A summary of performance is a report that shows what the student has learned in school and what the student is able to do. The school district does this report for students with IEPs who age out of special education services (age 21) or graduate with a high school diploma. It is usually done the last two years a student is in high school. The report must suggest how to help the student be ready for the things he or she wants to do after school. The student then decides whether to share the report with colleges, adult agencies, vocational and rehabilitative centers, employers, and others.

How can a student let colleges know about his or her disability needs?

Colleges and tech schools do not have to find students with disabilities and offer them help. The student needs to tell the college or tech school that he or she has a disability and ask for help. If the college or tech school gets money from the federal government it cannot discriminate against students based on their

³ South Carolina Department of Education, Career Cluster Guides:
<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ac/Career-and-Technology-Education/CareerClusterGuides.cfm>

disability. Almost all colleges and tech schools get money from the federal government. Most have an office called Disability Student Services to help students with disabilities.

What are some things a student might ask the college or tech school to do?

What the student asks for will be based on the student's disability and individual needs. Examples can include:

- Letting the student take a reduced course load
- Arranging for someone to take notes
- Allowing tape recorders
- Sign language interpreters
- More time to take a test
- Special computer software

What proof must the student provide to the college?

Colleges or tech schools may require proof of the student's disability and that the student needs help. Some schools require more proof than others.

Examples may include:

- The name of the student's disability
- A report from the expert who decided the student has this disability
- An explanation of how the expert made this decision
- How the disability affects the student's life
- How the disability affects the student in school

A copy of an IEP or Section 504 plan from high school is generally not enough proof for a college or tech school. If the student has had a special education evaluation in the last year or two, it may be accepted. Colleges and tech schools do not have to pay for an evaluation to prove the student's disability. Students should contact the college or tech school as soon as possible to find out what they will need to provide the school.

What college programs are available for a student with an intellectual disability?

College of Charleston REACH, Carolina LIFE, Clemson LIFE, Coastal Carolina LIFE, and Winthrop Transition to College are new college programs in South Carolina for students with intellectual disabilities. These programs offer the chance to experience college life. They can help students get ready for work and living on their own. For more information please visit www.collegetransitionconnection.org.

What else can help in making a transition plan?

See P&A's fact sheet, *When a Child Grows Up: The Legal Effects of Becoming an Adult*. It includes information about making medical decisions, Social Security benefits, and voting. A transition plan could include training about these areas.

Sources for the information in this fact sheet:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004, 20 USC § 1401 (34) ("Transition Services") http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode20/usc_sec_20_00001401----000-.html ; see also 20 USC § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) ("Individualized Education Program" transition requirements) at http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/usc_sec_20_00001414----000-.html

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(b) ("Transition Services"); see also 34 C.F.R § 300.43 ("Transition services"), 34 C.F.R. § 300.34(c)(12), 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b). http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title34/34cfr300_main_02.tpl

SC State Board of Education Regulations, 2 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-243 (2011), <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/c043.php>

SC Education and Economic Development Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-59-10, et seq. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c059.php>

Office of Civil Rights website: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children website: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ac/Exceptional-Children/>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center website: <http://www.nsttac.org>

College Transition Connection: www.collegetransitionconnection.org

This publication provides legal information, but is not intended to be legal advice. The information was based on the law at the time it was written. As the law may change, please contact P&A for updates.

This publication is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities) and by the U.S. Department of Education (Rehabilitation Services Administration). It does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding authorities.

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