



Fast Fact

Secondary Transition: Why it is important to plan early?

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) 2004 defines secondary transition as a coordinated set of activities designed to be within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic achievement and functional performance to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities. The purpose of transition planning for youth at ages 14 and 16 is similar; good planning should address academic achievement and functional performance that will facilitate movement from school to post-school activities such as postsecondary education, career and technical education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Local educational agencies (LEAs) should begin no later than the first individualized education program (IEP) to be in effect when the student is 14 because high school diploma options and courses of study discussions beginning earlier than the 8th grade will enable the student to access high school courses needed for graduation. When the IEP team members discuss diploma options, they should refer to the graduation requirements in the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. At both ages, 14 and 16, planning is based upon age appropriate transition assessments that outline the student's individual needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. Transition assessments may include observations, interviews, inventories, situational assessments, formal and informal assessments, as well as academic assessments. Transition services include a coordinated set of activities focused on academic and functional achievement needed to assist the student in reaching postsecondary goals; this includes courses of study. Transition services or activities may include instruction, related services, community experience, employment and other adult living objectives, daily living skills, and a functional vocational evaluation. A discussion should take place with the student and parents, and others as needed, to determine the postsecondary goals or post-school vision for the student. Postsecondary goals are measurable and happen after high school. These postsecondary goals must be based on age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills, when necessary. Additionally, the goals are based on the student's needs, while considering the strengths, preferences and interests. As the IEP is updated annually, changes can be noted as the student gets older. At age 16, or earlier if appropriate, interagency responsibilities and linkages must be addressed in the IEP.

A summary of performance should be given to a student when they exit the secondary program. A summary, which will help the student make the transition to postsecondary settings includes:

- Academic achievement - what the youth knows such as literacy, numeracy, consumer, personal finance, and learning skills; reasoning, communication, processing, including the accommodations, supports and modifications required, etc.;
- Functional performance - behavior across different environments such as how the youth interacts with peers at school, in the community, at work; self-care, mobility, self-determination, safety, executive functioning skills, including the accommodations and supports required, etc.;
- Supports - Accommodations, modifications, assistive technology or other supports that students might need to be successful in postsecondary environments; and
- Next Steps - Recommendations for attaining postsecondary goals such as attend college orientation, meet with Department of Rehabilitative Services, meet with Disability Services Counselor at community college, keep a file of current disability documentation, complete employment applications, etc.

For more information: Virginia Department of Education's Web site: www.doe.virginia.gov or contact Division of Special Education and Student Services at (804) 225-2932, 1-800-422-2083, Text users dial 711 (Virginia Relay)