

Community Collaboration Process
Irvine Unified School District & Other Orange County School Districts
Regional Center of Orange County
CA Department of Rehabilitation, Laguna Hills Office

The transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life is a complex, yet exciting process. Collaboration among the student, parent/guardian/ caregivers, family, school staff and community agencies is critical. It is important for everyone involved in a student's life to have high expectations and a clear vision of successful employment, education and independent living skills outcomes starting at an early age. Effective interagency planning one to two years prior to school exit can help to ensure that appropriate post-secondary services and supports are identified and accessed, which in turn, can promote successful life outcomes for students.

Starting at age 18 years of age, for students with developmental/intellectual disabilities and other significant disabilities, the school district provides transition programs which emphasize community based instruction and job training experiences with goals to promote independent living and self-sufficiency. The age student's start in the Adult Transition Program varies depending on the individual student needs and IEP recommendations. Transition programs focus on students who will be receiving a Certificate of Completion upon exit. The transition process from high school to adult living can be confusing. Families will be faced with application procedures, locating funding sources, learning about eligibility requirements, and developing a comprehensive plan. Effective transition planning and programming will promote access to necessary services and ensure that the student is working currently on the skills needed for future success.

Parent/Guardian/Caregivers & other Family Members:

It is essential that parents/guardian/caregivers & or other family members promote and support short and long term goals for their children focused on self-sufficiency and positive life outcomes in the area of employment, education & independent living from an early age. Experiences in and exposure to a variety of community based activities and social settings will support the future goal of integrated competitive employment.

One to two years before exiting the school system, parents and students are encouraged to research potential adult service providers, vocational and college programs that offer services which align with each student's transition goals. It is essential that the process for making these selections is discussed and supported by school district staff and applicable agency representatives, i.e., Regional Center and Department of Rehabilitation.

Community Agency Partnerships

As the student is preparing to enter the adult world, participation in the IEP will expand to additional agencies and services that will be supporting the student. IDEA requires the school district to invite and orchestrate service provider involvement in the transition meeting. When agency representatives are not available to attend the meeting, it is important to get their input ahead of time. Key transition planning partnerships include the Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation (DR), and the Disabled Programs and Services (DSP& S) Office at the Community College. These programs and other adult service providers have separate qualification guidelines.

IEP Team Planning for Transition:

The ITP process needs to take into account the student's dreams and desires. The IEP Team is the hub of the transition planning process. Community partners and adult service providers are an important part of this team. At the IEP meeting the individual transition plan is developed. The ITP sets the plan in place to assist the student in developing the skills needed to pursue their post-secondary goals.

By age 16, individual transition planning is a mandated part of each student's IEP. The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) includes appropriate post-secondary goals related to training/education, employment, and independent living skills.

Individual Transition Plan Contents:

A transition plan is the section of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines transition goals and services for the student. The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is the template for mapping out long-term adult outcomes from which annual goals and objectives are defined.

The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) will help drive services today, and goals for the future. A collaborative effort among student, parents, school staff and adult service providers is essential to effective transition programming.

An ITP is designed to:

- Address the student's preferences, interests and needs
- Involve parent/guardian participation
- Specify a list of participants that identifies who is responsible for different aspects of the process
- Include a coordinated set of activities demonstrating use of various strategies, community and adult living experiences
- Include annual goals outlining steps and skills

- Develop a plan 5 to 7 years before graduation
- **Encourage coordinated efforts between agencies, service providers and vocational education and rehabilitation programs**
- Delineate responsibilities of parents and students

At least 8 months prior to leaving the school system:

- ___ Contact, interview, and select an Adult Service Provider 6 months before exit from IUSD
- ___ Complete Transition Planning Resource Notebook/Transition Portfolio that will serve as the Summary of Performance (SOP)
- ___ Work with Regional Center Service Coordinator and/or DOR Counselor
- ___ Transition to the parent/student selected RC approved adult program. The timeline for this transition ranges from six months to a week. Approval for this comes through the Regional Center Service Coordinator.

Central to the collaboration efforts, may be the need for school district, Regional Center and Department of Rehabilitation to meet together prior to exit from school. Key to this process is the school district, family and individual's understanding of the services provided by both DOR and the RC. The following description outlines specific services.

Department of Rehabilitation: The state agency whose mandate is to assist residents of California with disabilities to become gainfully employed. They serve a broad spectrum of persons with disabilities. They are responsible for all initial supported employment services such as assessment, job placement and initial job coaching through stabilization. Funding is generally for time limited intensive services.

www.dor.ca.gov

➤ **Eligibility**

- Students must have a physical or mental disability
- Student's disability must substantially impact employment potential
- Students must require rehabilitation services to secure, retain, or regain employment.

➤ **Services**

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Assessment and evaluation
- Vocational/postsecondary training
- Assistive technology evaluation and provision of devices needed for training and employment
- Employment-related needs, such as tools, occupational licenses, equipment, etc.
- On-the-job training funds
- Job placement service

- Supported employment
- Transportation assistance

Regional Center: Regional centers, mandated through the Lanterman Act, are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. There are 21 offices throughout California to help find and access the many services available to individuals and their families. Regional centers provide diagnosis and assessment of eligibility. There is no charge for the diagnosis and eligibility assessment. Once eligibility is determined, a case manager or service coordinator is assigned to help develop a plan for services, tell you where services are available, and help you get the services. Most services and supports are free. Regional Centers are contracted by the CA Department of Developmental Services.

<http://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/rcclist.cfm>

➤ **Eligibility:**

To be eligible for services the person must have a disability that began before the age of 18 and includes, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or any condition that would require treatment similar to an individual with mental retardation. Eligibility is established through diagnosis and assessment performed by the regional centers.

➤ **Services:**

- **Transition:** Teens & young adults, aged 14-22. Transition teams begin the essential future planning process of transitioning from school to work and from childhood to adulthood

The following is a partial list of supportive services and living arrangements available for persons with developmental disabilities:

- Day Program Services
- Dental Services Utilizing Denti-Cal
- Education Services
- Work Services Program (**Habilitation Services**)

Habilitation: The purpose is to prepare and maintain consumers at their highest level of vocational functioning and/or prepare them for referral to vocational rehabilitation services. Habilitation services were provided by the Department of Rehabilitation until July 1, 2004 when they were transferred to the Department of Developmental Services.

- Supported Employment
- Work Activity Programs
- Support Services
- Supported Living Services
- Affordable Housing
- Independent Living
- In-Home Supportive Services
- Respite (In-Home) Services

- Transportation Services
- Community Care Facilities (CCFs)
- Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs)
- **Adult:** Adults, aged 23-49. Coordination of services continues for adults on work, recreation and living option issues. The role of the Regional Center is one of fostering independence and inclusion in their communities.

Collaboration Specifics: As questions arise regarding specific programming options for students who are also DOR and RC clients, the IUSD Transition Specialist organizes a case conference meeting where the staff (school district, DOR & RC) sit down to discuss client needs, services and funding sources. Once the funding mechanisms are agreed upon, we have an additional meeting (s) where the parent, student and adult service provider are included as part of the team. This process has proven very effective in promoting a smooth transition from the secondary school setting to adult programming.

Barriers to Agency Collaboration:

- No mechanism to convene multi-agency planning meeting
- No clearly assigned contact people from school districts, DOR and RC
- Lack of information for parents regarding transition services including:
 - ✓ Employment/programming options
 - ✓ Social Security Benefits planning & management (SSI & SSDI)
 - ✓ DOR and RC
 - ✓ Adult service providers
 - ✓ Community transportation options
- Organizations who are not proactive in promoting integrated competitive employment (ICE) for individuals with DD/ID
- Administrative Staff from all agencies who are not informed about the possibilities of braided funding.

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