

# MOVING FORWARD

*News and information about the education of special needs students for teachers and parents*

Winter 2014

## THE ONE CERTAINTY IN LIFE: TRANSITION (PART 1)



For students with disabilities, the transition plan is the critical bridge between school and the community. A transition plan is a living document that is continually changing as a student progresses through school.

Once a student leaves the security of the educational system, the responsibility of sustaining accommodations and resources for special needs children shifts to the family.

This should be a rather smooth exchange, but what families soon discover is that the bureaucracy of disability assistance for young adults can be a web of red tape and frustration. That is why schools are charged with educating and preparing students and their families for the bumpy road ahead.

Indiana law states that when a student turns 14 years old or is in the ninth grade (whichever comes first), schools must develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that focuses on the skills and services needed for transition from school to the community.

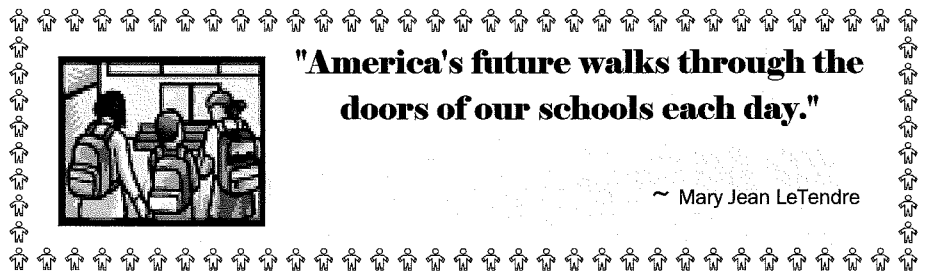
effort and is based on a student's individual needs, strengths, skills and interests. The overall objective is to **empower the student** so that he/she can thrive in the community and live as independently as possible. The plan must have measurable goals that are based on a formal or informal assessment of a student's future aspirations.

The tricky part is the fact that the federal, state and local agencies that support adults with disabilities each have a very different set of guidelines, and unlike the schools, are not mandated to serve everyone. It is important to remember that while all students are entitled to a free, appropriate education, access to adult services is based on specific eligibility criteria and availability of funds.

Navigating this process means careful planning, keeping abreast of constant rule changes, and consistently communicating with agency representatives. Many disabled people are vying for a very limited amount of public resources. That is why schools try to prepare families for this challenge by helping them to create a plan, long before the student steps out of the classroom.

Smart transition planning significantly increases the probability for a positive outcome and is a win-win for both the student and the community.

The transition plan is a collaborative



**"America's future walks through the doors of our schools each day."**

~ Mary Jean LeTendre

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# TRANSITION TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

## **Age of Majority**

All parent educational rights shift to the student upon his/her 18th birthday.

## **Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services**

(BDDS) assists eligible individuals of all ages with developmental disabilities to receive funding for support services needed at home and in the community. Contact your local BDDS office for eligibility requirements. **There is a long waiting list** for services, so it is recommended that you contact your local BDDS office well before the child reaches adolescence.



ing a diploma or a certificate of graduation.

## **Long-Term or Estate Planning**

This is planning that takes place to provide for the needs of a child in the future, when families are no longer able to care for him/her. Such planning may include setting up Special Needs Trusts, residential services, employment, health care and financial arrangements.

## **Medicaid**

Medicaid is the health insurance program for persons with limited income and resources jointly funded by the state and federal governments, and managed by the state.

## **Medicaid Waivers**

Medicaid Waivers make funds and services available to allow members to live in a community setting and avoid institutional placement. To be eligible for any waiver program, you must meet Medicaid guidelines and waiver eligibility guidelines. To apply, go to your local Bureau of Developmental Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, 1-800-545-7763.

## **SSI – Supplemental Security Income**

This is a monthly stipend paid by the United States government to individuals who are disabled, blind, or 65 and older, based upon financial need (i.e., low income and limited resources). A child under age 18 can qualify if he/she meets Social Security's definition of disability for children, and the income and resources fall within the eligibility limits.

## **VR – Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

VR is an agency that works with eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. Applicants must have a mental or physical impairment that substantially interferes with their ability to work. Students should apply to VR during their final two years of high school. Your high school staff can help you arrange and complete an intake meeting with a VR Counselor.

## **Summary of Performance**

A written plan that provides a student with a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance, and includes recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting the student's postsecondary goals.

Source: *INSOURCE / Indiana Protection & Advocacy Services*

## **Certificate of Completion**

Certificate of Completion is not a credential or a diploma. It proves that the student met all of the IEP goals throughout high school years. Students receiving Certificates of Completion are eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies.

## **ECA – End of Course Assessment**

Beginning with the graduating class of 2012, students must pass an assessment after completing Algebra 1, Biology, and English 10. Students must pass the End of Course Assessments in order to receive a diploma. If the student cannot pass these exams, ask the Case Conference Committee about a waiver.

## **FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid**

This application is for federal financial aid for students who are pursuing a post-secondary education. The FAFSA may be obtained from high schools, financial aid offices, or online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). This application is typically due in March of the student's senior (final) year of high school.

## **Functional Skills**

Those skills needed for independent living, such as cooking, shopping, managing money, daily living skills, using public transportation and safety.

## **Functional Vocational Evaluation**

An assessment process used to determine a student's strengths, skills and interests while seeking ways to meet the student's needs and accommodate his or her limitations.

## **ITP–Individualized Transition Plan**

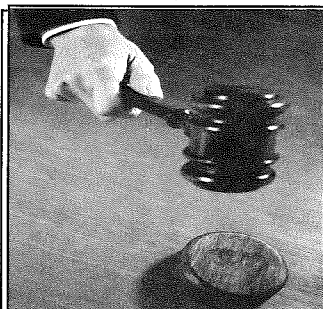
A part of the IEP, developed annually once the student turns the age of 14. It guides the development and sustainment of resources and related services. It also charts the course for pursu-

# Dream BIG

*The challenge of lofty goals sometimes pushes us beyond our expectations!*

# THE TRANSFER OF STUDENT EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE LAW



The transfer of rights provision should help motivate parents and educators to teach self advocacy skills so that students gain experience in decision making, especially as they approach adulthood.

At the case conference committee meeting, no later than the student's 17th birthday, the school must inform and provide written notice to the student and the parent that the educational rights will transfer to the student at age 18. At this time, all notices must go to both the student and the parent.

Legally, if a student is incapable of providing informed consent, this means that "the student is

*unable to understand on a continuing or consistent basis the nature, extent, and probable consequences of a proposed educational program."* (Article 7).

There are two ways a parent can continue to make educational decisions for their child. First is by having a court of law appoint the parent as the legal guardian. The second way is to for the student to make a written request for the school to appoint an educational representative. (The student may also revoke this consent.) If the child is incapable of making this request, the school can go through the legal process of appointing the educational representative.

The student's parent must be appointed to act as the educational representative. If the parent is unavailable, a person trained as an educational surrogate parent will be appointed.

### THE STUDENT ...

*is the most important person in the transition planning process. The ultimate goal is to give them the tools to excel in the community and teach them to advocate for themselves.*

*Students must not only be invited to their Case Conferences, after 14 years of age, their input and decision-making should drive the entire transition process.*



## THE POWER OF SELF DETERMINATION

**SELF DETERMINATION** is an attitude that motivates us to try to be our best, in spite of the many obstacles that life throws in our path. It involves the power to make our own decisions based on our own judgment, without the influence of others. It also means that we accept the consequences of those decisions, good or bad.

Self determination is fueled by the confidence to take calculated risks. We don't learn about confidence by reading about it. It involves getting out there, rolling up your sleeves and trying to do your best. The irony is that confidence is as much about failing as it is about succeeding. We learn life's greatest lessons by the missteps that we make.



When working with individuals with disabilities, we often want to shield them from the pain of making mistakes because we fear that their disabilities already make them too vulnerable. Unfortunately, part of the journey to adulthood means finding the right tools and skills to compensate for our weaknesses. It is a trial and error process that everyone must endure. In order to be prepared for the world, we must learn from our errors, and apply that knowledge when the opportunity arises.

Adults have to allow children to make own choices and determine their own direction in everyday situations. Encourage students to push themselves, so that they understand their limitations before venturing out into the world.

# RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TRANSITION RELATED PROGRAMS

## Everybody Counts

Merrillville Office: (219) 769-5055  
Toll-free (888) 769-3636 [www.everybodycounts.org](http://www.everybodycounts.org)

## Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Provides education, training, assistive technology, placement, and other services to help people with disabilities find employment. Toll-free: (877) 847-9891

## Self-Advocates of Indiana

Provides education for everyone about the abilities of people with developmental disabilities. (800) 382-9100  
[www.arcind.org/self-advocates-of-indiana](http://www.arcind.org/self-advocates-of-indiana)

## INSOURCE (Center for Families with Special Needs)

Provides families with information/training to help assure appropriate services for children with disabilities. Links families with parents in their community who have been trained to help resolve special education issues. (800) 332-4433  
[www.insource.org](http://www.insource.org)



## Indiana Family Helpline

Telephone hotline through the Indiana State Department of Health. Responds to all calls for assistance. Toll-free (855) 435-7178

## Hoosier Healthwise

Assists lower-income residents of Indiana by providing insurance coverage for health care services. (800) 889-9949

## About Special Kids (ASK)

A "parent-to-parent" organization provides support, information and resources to Indiana families with children with special needs. (800) 964-4746 [www.aboutspecialkids.org](http://www.aboutspecialkids.org)

## Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center

An online resource for teachers, administrators, families with information about the process of moving from high school to adult life. [www.iidc.indiana.edu/instrc](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/instrc) (812) 855-6508

## Center for Disability Information & Referral

Statewide referral services on disability, including providers, support groups, education, and residential facilities. Lends books and videos (800) 437-7924

## Indiana Department of Workforce Development –

**WorkOne** Centers provide a local resource for posting jobs, recruiting candidates, securing training, finding jobs, and other workforce needs. (800) 891-6499

## ABOUT HOPE...

We have all known at least one child with limited intelligence announce that she is going to be a heart surgeon, or an obviously uncoordinated boy, who proclaims his desire to be a professional athlete. Our first thought is to say "**That is never going to happen.**" But upon further review, that is clearly not the answer anyone is looking for.

A great response is "You go for it!" However, you may also want to add: "**If that plan does not work out, you have to have a back-up plan.**"

Remember that although she may not become a heart surgeon, there may be other medical-related opportunities that she can achieve. The boy may not become a superstar athlete, but who is to say that he can't find some aspect of the sports world that he can excel in?

The bottom line is that miracles happen all the time. Our role is to encourage, not minimize another person's dreams. Do not ever underestimate the role that passion plays in fueling motivation.

**Hope is a very powerful.** No one has the right to take hope away from another human being.

## Moving Forward

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