

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Factsheet for Virginia's Parents Planning for the Future: Be Ready, Start Early

Planning for the Future and the Transition IEP

The purpose of school, for students with and without disabilities, is to prepare for adult life. Students with disabilities may need extra support in order to be as independent as possible, participate in post-high school education or training, and have the career of their choice. If your student receives services under an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**, Virginia state regulations require that **transition planning start at age 14**. This is younger than the federal age requirement of 16 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A **Transition IEP** spells out the services and supports your student needs, beyond academics, in order to achieve those post-high school goals.

Planning for the future cannot start early enough and, as the Virginia Department of Education notes in its *Critical Decision Points* pamphlet for families, *"It is ok to dream big... as your high expectations are a major factor in your student's success."*

What is the Focus of a Transition IEP?

By the time your student is 14, you will likely have known for several years, whether he/she will be obtaining a *Standard, Advanced, or Applied Studies Diploma*. (For more information see *Graduation Requirements* and *Applied Studies Diploma* Fact Sheets). Your student's transition path will be partly determined by the diploma they are seeking, but their hopes and dreams for the future should be the focus of the Transition IEP. Your student should be encouraged to **participate in the planning process** as much as possible.

Transition IEPs typically cover the areas of: **vocational training** (e.g., learning a trade, like plumbing); **post-secondary education**, (e.g., college or other schooling), **employment**, and **independent living**. The IEP should include how services will be provided and who will be involved, including community-based agencies.

Few of us know at age 14 what we want to do as adults. At an early age, your student may want to be a professional baseball player. Later, they may decide they want to work in the back-office of a baseball franchise. The Transition IEP needs to be changed as your student's goals change.

Resources on Planning for Transition at an Early Age

VDOE – [Critical Decision Points](#)

VDOE – [Transition Services for Students with Disabilities](#)

Understood – [IEP Transition Planning, Preparing for Young Adulthood](#)

Contact Us:

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How do I Involve Start Preparing My Student for Transition?

The *National Down Syndrome Society* has developed an **excellent timeline of proposed transition activities for younger students**. Some of that information is included below in edited form. [The full timeline can be accessed here](#).

Elementary School

- Introduce the concept of work into everyday activities, become familiar with types of careers, and think about middle and high school opportunities.
- Develop self-care and daily living skills and routines.
- Focus on good relationships and social skills at home and school.
- Introduce chores and an allowance.

Middle School Age

- Begin career exploration, watch movies, read books, go to work with adults.
- Support teacher efforts to provide job training as part of the school program.
- Look into different types of education options (inclusive, vocational, etc.).
- Do chores around the house, volunteer, participate in community projects.

14 Years Old

- Ensure that vocational training and other transition goals are in the IEP.
- Explore recreation and leisure interests.
- Attend every IEP meeting and provide your input
- Find out how other program like vocational rehabilitation, Social Security, Medicaid waivers, case management, etc. can help you.
- Continue to develop independent living skills.

Transition IEPs for students on the path to an **Advanced Studies** diploma may be more **focused on the steps needed to attend college or other post-secondary programs**. Students receiving a **Standard** diploma may focus their plans on going to **community college or vocational training**. Transition IEPs of students who will receive an **Applied Studies** diploma may be more **focused on independent living skills and supported job settings**. Whatever diploma your child is receiving, planning early is critical to helping him be successful when he leaves high school.

Tips for Your Child

Partially excerpted from [10 Things 14 Year Olds Can Do In Transition](#)

- Figure out what you may be interested in an/or good at. Vocational surveys can help.
- Start exploring career paths and develop a goal.
- Participate in your own IEP Team meetings and futures planning.
- Discuss your ideas for the future with your parents and teachers.
- Make a personal plan that shows your goals for the future and the steps you think you will take to achieve them. You can write it out or draw it in pictures and it can change whenever you want.
- Work on your independent living skills (doing laundry, cooking, managing money).
- Plan for getting a job or internship. Practice interviewing and work skills.
- Ask for help when you need it.

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

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