

Transition Planning – Special Education

Children with disabilities are entitled to public education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is a federal law that forces states to provide "free, appropriate, public education" for all children.. To qualify for special education services, children must meet the IDEA's disability criteria. When a student meets the criteria for special education, a meeting is scheduled to develop an Individualized Education Program or IEP. An IEP is developed by the student, parents, teachers and school administrators and should be re-evaluated and updated yearly.

Although federal IDEA requires transition planning to start at age 16, although some states require that transition planning start as soon as age 14 ½. When the student reaches requisite age, the IEP should start to include concrete transition goals, in addition to educational goals, to prepare the student for life after high school. Transition goals and services can address vocational training, higher education, employment, or independent living. Some states have laws stating that students with IEPs may remain in high school and continue to receive transition planning and transition services past age 18, even if they have enough credits to graduate. (Example: Illinois's Brittany's Law, 105 ILCS 5/14-16) Sec. 14-16)

If a student with disabilities does not qualify for an IEP, he or she may still qualify for a 504 plan, which provides few protections and services but still requires the school to address the disability within the school setting. Similar plans in post-secondary educational settings, such as college, can be put in place to ensure reasonable accommodations in the classroom.

Transition planning is an important step in becoming an adult. Students with disabilities may have a more difficult time attending a 4-year college or obtaining a full time job. Because of this it is important to determine which skills these students may need to reach these goals. You should speak with your school system regarding the transition plan. As with the IEP, transition planning should be done by the student, parents, teachers and other school staff.

Other resources:

Family Resource Center on Disability
312-939-3513

<http://www.fred.org/contact>

Illinois State Board of Education
312-814-2220

www.isbe.net

http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/transition_video.htm

Illinois State Board of Education:
Special Education Compliance
Division
312-814-5560

Illinois Lifespan

<http://www.illinoislifespan.org/toolbox/transitionservices/IEP.asp>