# Post-secondary Transition Manual for Students who are Deafblind

The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education
University of Cincinnati Systems Development & Improvement Center

Education
Criminal Justice
Human Services
Information Technology

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The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education (OCDBE) is operated through the University of Cincinnati Systems Development & Improvement Center. OCDBE provides technical assistance services at no cost to children, birth through 21 years of age, with combined vision and hearing loss. Technical assistance includes onsite consultation, training and professional development, information dissemination, and other consultative services. In addition, the Center is responsible for maintaining an annual registry of children and youth who have been identified as being deafblind within the state of Ohio. Families, service providers, and agencies supporting children and youth with deafblindness may request services at any time. For additional information, visit www.ohiodeafblind.com or call 614-897-0020.
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Ohio Center for Deafblind Education

# Post-secondary Transition Manual

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## About This Manual

This manual offers information and advice on how students with deafblindness and their families can work with teachers and other professionals to plan the student's successful transition from high school to adult life.

# THE BASICS OF POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING

**What does post-secondary mean?** "Secondary school" is another term for high school, and "post-secondary" in this context means after leaving high school.

**What is a post-secondary transition plan?**
Post-secondary transition plans state the student's goals for after high school, such as—

- Goals for post-secondary education or training
- Goals for employment
- Goals for independent living

Post-secondary transition plans state what transition services/activities are provided to help the student achieve his or her goals. Among the categories of transition service a student might need are—

- Instruction
- Related services
- Community recreation/leisure activities
- Employment goals
- Independent living skills (if appropriate)
- Functional vocational evaluation (if appropriate)

It is important to note that these categorical designations should not be used in isolation to describe transition services. Rather, the specific services to be provided, based on each student's individual needs, should be detailed as part of the student's IEP.

Federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) requires school districts to identify and provide transition services for students with disabilities. In Ohio, from the time a student with disabilities reaches the age of 14 until the student leaves secondary school, the transition plan must be part of his or her individualized education program (IEP).

**Why do students with deafblindness need a post-secondary transition plan?** Many young people have a difficult time transitioning from their home and school to post-secondary schooling, a job, or living away from home. Disabilities of any kind can make the transition even more difficult, or at least more complicated.

A post-secondary transition plan can make this transition smoother and much more successful.

**Do all students with deafblindness participate in a post-secondary transition plan?** ***Yes, beginning at age 14.*** "Deafblindness" means any combination of vision and hearing loss that affects a student's educational needs so much that the

### *IDEA on Transition*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) defines transition services as "A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that

(A) is designed to be within a result-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

(B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests, and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocation evaluation."

student qualifies for special services and due process rights under IDEA. All students with deafblindness who have been identified as eligible are required to have an individualized education program (IEP) to make sure that they receive an appropriate public education despite their sensory loss.

Students with vision and hearing loss who have not been evaluated to find out whether they should be receiving special education services have the right to an evaluation through their local school district. Even though students with deafblindness sometimes have other disabilities, such as learning disabilities or physical disabilities, Ohio law distinguishes between "deafblindness" and "multiple disabilities." These two categories of disability may require different sets of interventions and services based on the student's unique needs.

### *Deafblindness versus Multiple Disabilities*

**"Deaf-blindness"** is defined in the state of Ohio as "concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness."

**"Multiple disabilities"** is defined in Ohio as "concomitant (simultaneous) impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness; intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. **The term does not include deafblindness**."

**Why start transition planning so early?** It may seem that age 14 is early to begin discussions about expectations for post-secondary education/training, employment and independent living, but research shows that early preparation helps ensure successful post-secondary outcomes for students.

During elementary and secondary school, students with deafblindness, like other students with disabilities, have rights for educational and related services that they may no longer be afforded upon graduation or upon a student's 22nd birthday. Different laws, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ensure continuation of some accommodations and services for students with deafblindness and for others with disabilities, but ADA does not offer education and related services comparable to those provided under IDEA. The availability of services that can help adults with disabilities upon graduation depends on funding from the city, county, or state.

**Why is the student's self-advocacy important in transition planning?** Transition planning is often facilitated by the involvement of district and school personnel who have an understanding of students' preferences and needs. However, when students graduate or leave the PK-12 school setting, such personnel are no longer available to advocate on behalf of the student. Students who can effectively advocate for what they need are better able to influence the quality of their own lives.

Students without disabilities may pick up self-advocacy skills indirectly through years of informal "negotiations" with family, peers, teachers, and others. Because many students with sensory disabilities have challenges in participating fully in everyday negotiations, they may not learn these self-advocacy skills as readily as non-disabled peers. Self-advocacy skills need to be taught. Because communication is more labor-intensive for students with deafblindness than it is for other people, the students may answer questions with as brief a reply as possible. Yet the most important part of self-advocacy is explaining why you want or don't want something.

Transition planning can promote self-advocacy by encouraging the student with deafblindness to play an active role in setting post-secondary goals and identifying

needed transition services. Instruction in the skills of self-advocacy can be included as a transition service. Self-advocacy skills are relevant to all post-secondary goals. Self-advocacy skills are crucial for a student to learn in order for the student to advocate for him/herself as an adult.

**What process does the transition plan follow?** The school district is responsible for inviting the student and parent or guardian to participate in transition planning regardless of the student's age or the degree of his or her disability. Formal transition planning must begin no later than when the student turns 14 years of age during the IEP cycle as part of the IEP process.

As part of the IEP, all due process rights apply to the post-secondary transition plan. The student, the parents or guardian, teacher, and other professionals participating as part of the IEP team develop the transition plan, implement the plan, and review the plan at least annually to evaluate and update it as needed. To develop a transition plan, the IEP team will gather information, review data from the current IEP and develop a new post-secondary transition plan.

# DEVELOPING THE TRANSITION PLANñSTEP 1:

## Exchange Ideas and Gather Information About Possible Post-secondary Goals

Almost everyone wants to find a good job, good friends, a loving relationship, a sense of fulfillment in meeting responsibilities, and pleasure in leisure time and everyday events. However, many young people have fears or concerns about their future. Preparing for the future is the best way to optimize the quality of anyone's life. There are many questions students should ask themselves before setting future goals. For example:

- Do I want to continue with education or training of some kind?
- Do I want to get a job right after high school?
- Where do I want to live?

In thinking about post-secondary goals, the student will want to consider the question, **"What are my PINS"?**

**PINS** stands for ***p*references**, ***i*nterests**, ***n*eeds**, and ***s*trengths**. PINS form the basis for individualizing transition plan. Some PINS can be identified easily, through and discussion with family or teachers. Others are best identified through tests, interest inventories, and other types of formal and informal assessment of the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths.

*Preferences* are the student's choices about environment, time, or space, such as—

- Learning alone or learning in a group
- Being indoors or being outdoors
- Dressing casually or dressing up
- Working full-time or working part-time

*Interests* are things the student enjoys, such as—

- Music
- Animals
- Computers
- Sports

*Needs* are services or skills required for reaching goals, such as—

- Assistive technology
- Independent living skills
- Functional vocational evaluation
- Preparation through a course for college admissions tests (SAT or ACT)

*Strengths* are the student's abilities and other positive traits, such as—

- Participates in choral singing
- Completes academic assignments
- Cooperates with others
- Budgets money

Thinking and talking about the PINS and future goals might raise questions for the student such as—

- Can reasonable accommodations be made to overcome the obstacles presented by hearing or vision limitations as I try to reach my goals?
- Are there people involved with this type of schooling (or training, job, or career) that I can talk to about accommodations and expectations?
- Is there information available on-line that will help me learn more about whether my goals are a good fit with my PINS?

Some students with deafblindness may need support when developing their transition plan. Student participation, at whatever level possible, should be encouraged by the IEP transition team as required by IDEA beginning at age 14. The student's parents or guardian can advocate and provide input on behalf of the student. During the IEP meeting, students and parents may have questions about and seek information related to post-secondary education and training opportunities, employment opportunities, and independent living options, such as—

- What kinds of relationships would sustain my child's health and happiness?
- What living situation will my child most benefit from as an adult?

Laura's mother knew that she would need continued support and training after she left post-secondary school. The first meeting to plan for Laura's transition to adult life was at her mother's request. The first meeting was with school staff who knew Laura very well; later meetings included representatives from agencies that would provide services to Laura after high school. It took a great deal of planning to figure out the best configuration of training and adult service support for Laura. But all of the preparation made it possible for Laura to do independently the things she is able to do and enjoys doing and to live away from home in an apartment with a peer and with staff support. http://documents.nationaldb.org/products/transition01-09LP.pdf

**Strive for balance between hopes and fears.** Parents, family members, guardians, and teachers can help the student think about what kind of adult life may be most fulfilling. The student should be encouraged to share information, ask questions, and participate in the discussion and decisions related to his/her ideas for post-secondary goals. Discussing possible alternatives for what the student might like to do immediately after graduation and in the future may help the student discover meaningful goals.

The balance between realistic hope and overly restrictive caution is difficult to achieve in almost any situation in which a young person is making the transition to a different stage of life. However, an open discussion, keeping in mind that the student's best thinking about goals is an important process in itself, can keep the conversation productive even when there is disagreement about goals. In this stage of planning, goals that are meaningful and relevant to the student and his/her parent/guardian should be developed to help guide the information-gathering stage.

**Seek out important details relevant to post-secondary goals.** Most of the information gathering related to post-secondary goals will take place as a result of age-appropriate transition assessments that have been conducted and collected throughout the year. However, the student and his or her parent or guardian may want to investigate particular programs, agencies, or work sites prior to the IEP meetings in preparation for discussion with the IEP team.

For example—If the student knows what post-secondary school or training program he or she would like to attend, the student and parent/guardian should share information with the transition team to assist in identifying what services and activities need to be incorporated into IEP transition planning. If a visit to the education or

training site is not practical, requesting information by contacting the program prior to the IEP meeting is helpful. All institutions of higher education that accept federal funds must have an Office of Disability Services, although it may have a different name, such as the Office of Accessibility. Refer to the chart below for additional information regarding IDEA and American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements affecting PreK-12 school districts and colleges/universities).

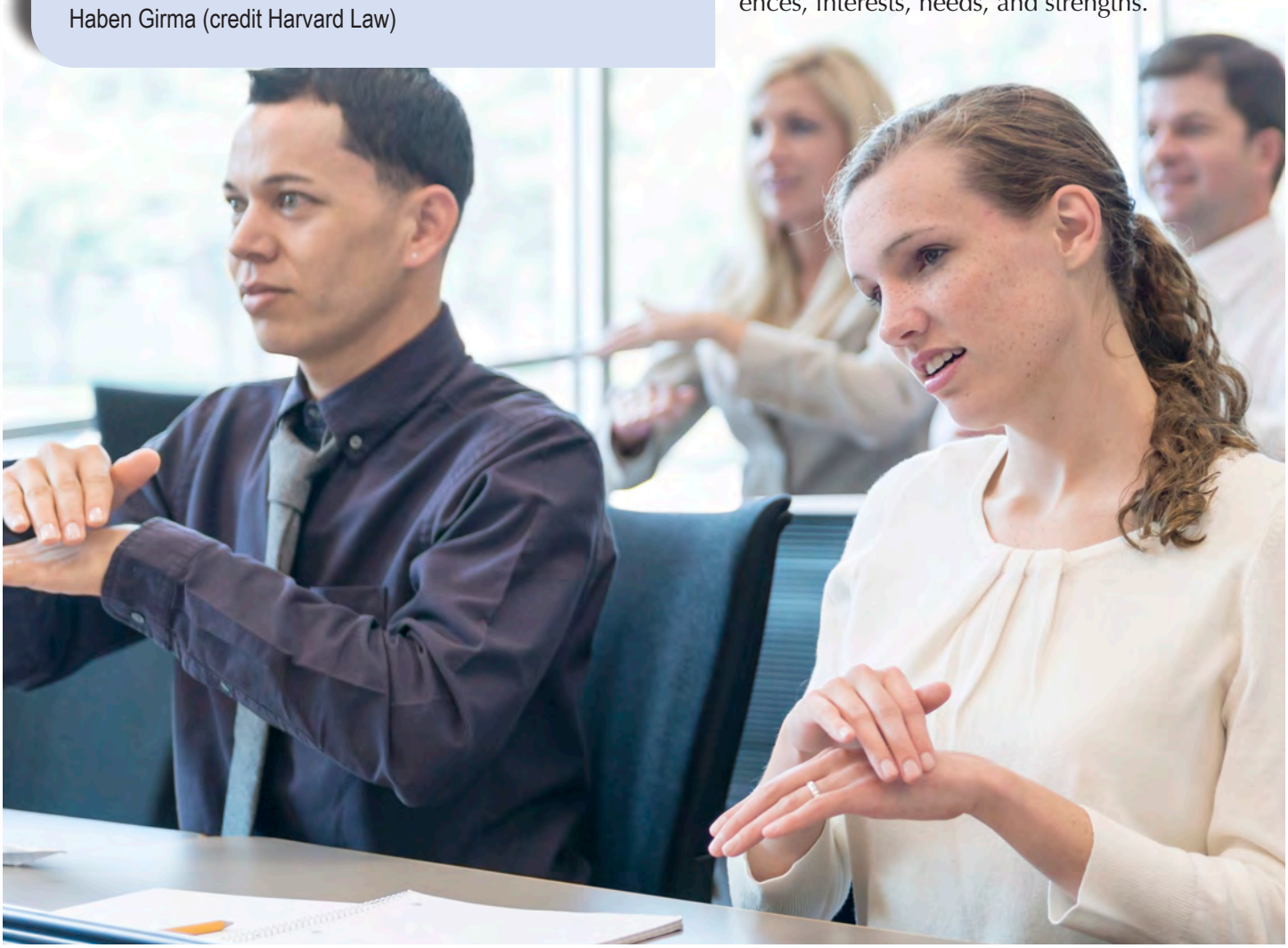
Post-secondary school responsibilities mandated through ADA for support services for students with disabilities are more limited than the responsibilities mandated for elementary and secondary schools.

| *Comparison of IDEA Requirements for Elementary/Secondary Schools with ADA Requirements for Colleges* | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Service Issues** | **IDEA** | **ADA** |
| **Identification of students with disabilities** | Elementary and secondary schools must identify, assess, and serve students with disabilities. | College students must self-Identify, request accommodations, and provide documentation to support need for accommodation. |
| **Communication with parent(s) or guardian** | Elementary and secondary schools must inform parents of needs for assessment and the results of assessment, and include them in individualized planning that reviews student progress periodically. | Colleges are mandated by FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) to keep students' academic and other performance confidential. Unless a student gives permission to release information to parents or guardian, the college is not allowed to give out any information about the student. |
| **Accommodation arrangements** | Elementary and secondary schools have to make accommodations for students with disabilities based on needs identified in individual students' IEPs or 504 plans. | College students must request accommodations for each specific instance, for example, provide textbooks in order to have them converted to an alternative format; provide the dates and times of exams for which the student needs accommodations. |
| **Purpose of accommodations** | In elementary and secondary schools, accommodations are designed to ensure that the student's education is appropriate to his/her achievement, ability, and age level. | At the post-secondary level, accommodations are granted to create a "level-playing field" in the interest of equity. Requests for accommodations that go beyond that purpose can be denied. |

Haben Girma, the first student with deafblindness at Harvard Law School, talks about a time she had to use self-advocacy. She was attending college, but couldn't read the menu in the cafeteria where students' meals were served. She requested that the menu be provided to her by email. The cafeteria management's response was half-hearted. Girma relates the incident this way: They said, "all right" but they failed to do that. They'd send it to me once every two days, or not at all for awhile, and I came again and asked, and they said "sorry we're too busy.". . . it's stressful already to be a student and to be studying for exams, and on top of that I had no choice about what I would eat, and I was eating three meals a day at this cafeteria. I was staying at the dorms. So eventually I told the managers that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, they were required to make reasonable accommodations, and easily emailing a menu is a very reasonable accommodation. And reminding them about the law really made a huge difference. It changed their attitude from "this is a favor we can do when we have a spare time" to "this is actually an important thing we need to do; she's paying for this service, and she should be able to choose what food she's going to eat". http://wunc.org/post/first-deaf-blind-student-harvard-law-pursues-dreams#stream/0

Haben Girma (credit Harvard Law)

**Involve the Teacher.** At the IEP meeting, students and their parent or guardian review data collected throughout the year related to the current IEP, including post-secondary transition goals. A teacher(s) who works closely with the student can provide specific information related to the student's skills and abilities in addition to the suitability of the post-secondary goals being considered. A teacher's experience with the student is in a different context than the family's experience. The teacher's suggestions and advice about post-secondary goals the student and family are considering can make an important contribution to the discussion. At the IEP meeting, teachers should also share information related to the student's academic progress, progress on the current IEP goals, as well as observations such as the student's social interactions in the classroom. In addition to the progress data related to the current IEP, the team should discuss the student's scores on statewide tests, as well as information obtained from interest inventories and performance on other assessments to help develop goals that match the individual student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths.



# DEVELOPING THE TRANSITION PLANñSTEP 2:

## Participate in an IEP Meeting to Discuss the Transition Plan

In a story about the legendary King Arthur, a wise sorcerer named Merlin knows what happens in the future because he lives backwards. In other words, he knows the future because he remembers it! Unlike this fictional character, most of us look forward to the future hopefully, uncertain about what it will bring. We envision what we want to happen and then try to figure out how we can make those things happen, or at least increase the likelihood that they will happen.

**Use backwards planning.** The IEP team should consider using "backwards planning," sometimes called "backward design," to provide instruction, support, and assistance that will help the student reach his or her goals for the future. This planning process takes place after the post-secondary goals are identified. For each goal, the IEP team gathers information about the student and the things that must happen in order for the student to be able to work toward accomplishing that goal.

Backwards planning and task analysis are based on the same principles of setting a standard (task or goal) and figuring out how the student can reach it. However, transition goals are broader than tasks and take a team of people with different types of expertise to consider the many elements that go into achieving post-secondary goals.

Backwards planning forms and templates are available at no cost to guide students, parents/guardians, or IEP teams through the transition planning process. Ohio Employment First, for example, has such forms. Their website is www.OhioEmploymentFirst.com.

Backwards planning recognizes that different transition goals have different implications for gathering information about the student, institutions, agencies, and resources. For example:

- What community-based experiences would be helpful if one of the student's goals is to work at a retail business in a nearby city?
- What interpersonal communication skills does the student need to develop in order to live in a university dormitory?
- What orientation and mobility skills does the student need to develop in order to volunteer at a local program for the elderly?
- What Career Connections activities in the school would be especially appropriate for the student to participate in?

Related services (e.g., speech therapy, orientation and mobility services), community experiences (e.g., job-shadowing, volunteer work), and assistive technology aids (e.g., voice synthesizers) that are a part of the student's IEP are important to consider in the development of a transition plan. If appropriate for the student, transition plans may also include a functional vocational evaluation and activities to develop vocational skills, as well as strategies for developing daily living skills. Based on their expertise and/or experience with the student, IEP team members

Career Connections provides a framework to help Ohio students develop a vision and a realistic plan for their future. Career Connection learning strategies are embedded in standards for English language arts, math, science, and social studies. In the elementary grades, teachers tie some lessons and learning activities to career awareness, so that students learn about different careers. In middle school, teachers provide career exploration, including assessments to help students understand their own strengths and interests. Middle school Career Connection activities include course selection planning for high school as well as exploring how people prepare for different careers. In high school, students engage in activities that offer hands-on opportunities in a workplace. Career Connections ties preparation for entry into the community workforce into the students' course of study and lessons.

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Career-Tech/Career-Connections

gather information and share the results with the team. They may conduct assessments of the student's PINS, investigate alternatives for technical assistance, gather information about job coaching services, and/or investigate eligibility criteria for admission to programs of interest to the student.

Assessments for students with deafblindness must accommodate their needs related to sensory loss. For the results of the assessment to be reliable, the time for the assessment may need to be extended, its format changed to Braille or large print, or it may need to be read aloud to the student. Positioning of the student with respect to the assessment material may be important for students with an impairment that limits field of vision. Students, or their parents/guardians may need to advocate for particular accommodations.

IDEA requires that a Summary of Performance (SOP) be completed prior to graduation. The SOP describes—

- The student's academic achievement
- The student's functional performance
- The IEP committee's recommendation(s) on how to assist the student in reaching post-secondary goals

The SOP can help the student recognize connections between skills he or she is learning in school with skills needed to reach goals after high school. Involvement with the SOP can also help the student develop a better understanding of his or her secondary-school accomplishments. This understanding can help the student advocate more effectively for further schooling, a job, accommodations, or services. The SOP may include a summary of the PINS of the student in addition to the student's post-secondary transition plan.

Transition assessment tools that the student or other members of the IEP team may find helpful are available at no cost from the following sources:

- **OHIO AATA (Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment) Library** has multiple free assessments listed by such categories as "General Assessments," "Post-secondary Goals," "Health and Medical Considerations," and more that may be used by students and parents to assess the PINS (preferences interest, needs, and strengths). www.ohioAATAlibrary.org

- **Ohio Means Jobs** invites web site visitors who open a free account to take a Career Cluster Inventory and Strengths/Skills inventory. The inventory results can suggest career pathways that students may be interested in pursuing. When students create an account, all search results are saved in a green "virtual backpack" for their future use and reference. Items in the "virtual backpack" can be changed. While not specifically designed for students with disabilities, this website is used by all state-regulated employment support and placement agencies in Ohio and is an important resource. www.ohiomeansjobs.com

- **Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)** offers resources to support

transition and transition assessment for students disabilities, including students with deafblindness. These resources include such information as the Customized Employment Guide, SIFTS (a web-based survey tool developed primarily to support IEP teams in matching student needs and strengths to AT features), Assistive Technology (AT) Transitions Webcast Library, and OCALI Transition Guidelines. www.ocali.org

**Identify IEP transition team members' responsibilities**. Transition planning for students with deafblindness may require more than one IEP meeting and the involvement of individuals from both school and adult services.

| *IEP Team Member Responsibilities in Transition Planning* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **IEP Team Member** | **Responsibilities (for post-secondary goals)** | **Responsibilities (for identifying needed services)** | **Responsibilities (for implementing transition plan** |
| **Student** | Participate in activities and assessments to identify PINS and post-secondary goals | Discuss and Identify skills and support needed to achieve post-secondary goals | Participate in transition courses, activities, and assessments; use or apply for services |
| **Parent/Guardian** | Discuss and help identify PINS and post-secondary goals based on understanding of student's home-life | Help identify long-term support needed from community resources | Support student's participation in transition activities; bridge home and school learning; and informally monitor student's progress |
| **Teacher (regular education, special education, and others, such as career technical education)** | Provide input on student's PINS including academic performance, communication and other social skills, study skills, and functional skills | Help identify needed services and provide referral information for school and community services | Participate in transition planning and implementation; gather information and provide input to summary of performance (SOP) |
| **School district personnel, such as administrator or supervisor** | Participate with other IEP team members in construction of clear, individualized post-secondary goals; schedule and commit resources | Help identify transition services and how they can be coordinated to meet the student's needs | Help ensure implementation of transition services as identified on IEP |
| **Additional IEP team members as needed, such as psychologist, audiologist, orientation and mobility specialist, occupational therapist, etc.** | Provide information on student PINS relevant to particular programs, services, and resources in view of post-secondary goals | Help identify needed transition services, such as vocational/career-training, orientation and mobility, use of interpreter | Serve as liaison between school and agency or between school and community-based experiences; provide specialized services |
| **Adult service agency representative** | Identify diagnostic assessments needed to decide eligibility for services suggested by goals | Provide assessment results; participate in planning how to provide and coordinate services | Serve as liaison for assessments, assistance, and support from agency |

The development of an effective transition plan with post-secondary goals can be an important experience for the student. It offers excellent opportunities for the student to develop self-advocacy skills and a sense of self-determination. Actively participating in this process can help students with deafblindness understand their own skills and abilities.

Andrew P. was the lead facilitator of his IEP transition meetings. He planned the meeting agendas ahead of time with his parents at home and his teachers at school. At the IEP meetings, he was careful to follow the agenda and to include all team members in the discussion. This leadership role offered Andrew a chance to practice self-determination and self-advocacy; it also offered the other team members a chance to learn more about his preferences, interests, needs, and strengths. The entire team—Andrew, his parents, his teachers, and the other team members with relevant knowledge—worked collaboratively to develop clear meaningful goals, driven by Andrew's preferences, and a set of coordinated services to help him achieve the goals. http://documents.nationaldb.org/products/self-determ.pdf

Inviting students with disabilities and encouraging them to participate in IEP meetings is required by law. The court case Gibson v. Forest Hills (2012) reinforced this law by finding that (1) students must be formally invited to any upcoming IEP meeting where post-secondary goals and services are being discussed (though the student does not have to attend the meeting), and (2) school districts must consider the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths in regard to transition planning or risk infringing on the student's right to a free appropriate public education.

**Identify who else is needed on the IEP transition planning team**. As the transition planning team discusses the goals and possible needed services, the team may find they need to add members who possess expertise and/or decision-making authority related to goals and services being considered. For example, representatives of service agencies may be invited (with parental and/or student consent) to IEP meetings when transition services are being discussed that are likely to be provided or paid for by the agencies. These representatives often —

- Provide referral information about agency services
- Help identify goals and needed skills related to the adult agency
- Help with the student's application for services

Additional IEP team members (e.g., transition coordinator, related services provider, interpreter) may help identify transition services such as in-school and community-based work experiences. Representatives of adult agencies that provide financial support, support for education or training opportunities, and living options, may be involved in IEP team discussions.

Through participation in the development of a transition plan at an IEP meeting, representatives from adult service agencies can respond to student and parent questions related to post-school options for training, employment, living, support, and funding.

Parents and guardians with children transitioning to adult services often have questions such as—

- What will happen to my child with special needs if I am unable to provide care?
- What other independent or supported living options are available for my child?
- What should I do right now to plan for the future?
- What expenditures should be planned for?

When planning the transition of a student with deafblindness to adult services, the student, parent/guardian, or another team member may raise specific questions related to the services and supports the student may access as an adult with the adult agency representative in attendance at the IEP meeting. With the adult services representative, the student and/or parent can make arrangements to meet with the representative and complete any required applications.

For many students with disabilities and their families, government assistance programs, such as SSI and Medicaid, are important for the student's independence as an adult. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid—more specifically the Medicaid Waiver program—may help ensure that the student with deafblindness will have caregivers for services and supports when his/her parents or guardian are no longer able. Eligibility for these programs includes consideration of the type and degree of disability as well as the income and assets of the individual child and family. The major barriers to eligibility are—

- The individual's disability does not qualify for government benefits.
- The individual with the disability earns too much to qualify for government assistance.
- The individual with the disability has too many assets, such as property or savings, to qualify for government assistance.

In 2014, federal legislation was passed leading to the creation of the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. ABLE allows for individuals with disabilities to accumulate and save wealth without risking the loss of Social Security or other government benefits, including Medicaid. Ohio's ABLE program, known as STABLE, allows participants to contribute up to $14,000 annually with a current lifetime cap of $445,000 in a STABLE Account. Specific details about Ohio's STABLE Accounts can be found at www.stableaccount.com. As with all financial matters, connecting with outside financial planners in order to best meet the needs of eligible participants is recommended.

Application to SSI and Medicaid is made directly to the Social Security Administration. The services of the Medicaid Waiver program are housed with the County Boards of Developmental Disabilities. The IEP team is not involved in the application process for SSI or Medicaid and cannot provide legal or financial planning assistance to families. By inviting adult agency representatives to the IEP meeting, students and parents can speak with representatives, gather information, and discuss steps to complete the application process.  IEP teams can provide students and parents with contact information for adult agencies.

# DEVELOPING THE TRANSITION PLANñSTEP 3:

## Participate in IEP Meetings to Draft the Transition Plan

The needs for each student vary, but in Ohio, the annual IEP for each student, including students with deafblindness, aged 14 and older, includes a transition plan that focuses on post-secondary education and training opportunities, employment, and independent living. The transition plan, a part of the annual IEP, is written in accordance with federal and state regulations.

IDEA requires that the transition services represent a coordinated set of activities. In this context, "coordinated" means that transition services and activities must be relevant to the post-secondary goals and provided by the school district.

**Write "measurable" post-secondary goals and annual goals.** Federal and state policies require that the post-secondary goals focus on three goal areas: post-secondary education/training, employment, and independent living goals – all of which will support the student in becoming independent as an adult. Post-secondary goals must be clearly written, observable and measurable.

**Record the what, who, and when of transition services on the IEP.** Students with deafblindness often have related services that support their transition needs such as—

- Communication
- Orientation and mobility
- Assistive technology
- Vision or hearing

Based on assessments, progress data on the goals of the IEP and transition goals, and the student's present level of performance, the transition team should determine what IEP goals, including transition goals, are appropriate. After setting the goals, the team may use backwards planning to identify short-term objectives and transition services and activities that will enable the student to accomplish the goals.

Expanding the depth and range of communication skills is often the primary transition challenge for students with deafblindness. Communication needs should focus on the skills that are important for a student to use in order to foster independence as an adult. Communication skills include spoken, written, and/or signed language or any language that an individual uses to express wants and needs.

The transition planning team may consider such questions as:

- What settings will enhance communication in various environments?
- What supports are needed (such as, interpreters, interveners, adaptive equipment)?
- How will others learn the methods that the student uses to communicate?

Parents or guardians, teachers, and/or speech and language pathologists can create opportunities for the student to communicate in varied settings such as using his/her augmented communication device at community events or in local stores and other businesses. When preparing a student for public life as an adult, the transition team should respect any form of communication used by the student that matches the student's strengths and needs.

Provisions for orientation and mobility training on the IEP should include learning skills such as traveling independently, using assistive mobility equipment, and accessing recreation and employment along bus routes. Even when transportation is not accessible, the student needs mobility skills to navigate streets and sidewalks to get to and from work or another destination. Achieving independent travel is one of the greatest challenges for students with deafblindness. At the same time, it is one of the most important facets of the freedom associated with adulthood.

Heather, a high school student with deafblindness, worked with a speech and language pathologist on strategies to communicate effectively with people she didn't know and who were not familiar with her communication style. Two of the important things she learned were to face the speaker and to request clarification as needed. She used her communication skills in a vocational program job in which she sometimes explained to customers the origin of crafts from different countries.

The IEP transition team may work with the orientation and mobility specialist to determine priorities and how they can create opportunities for the student to practice skills that will advance his/her progress toward meeting post-secondary goals.

Adults with deafblindness may use a variety of assistive technology devices and specialized computer technology to assist them in employment and independent living. It is important to provide students with opportunities to experience a variety of assistive technology devices in order to identify which device(s) is appropriate to meet the student's communication and mobility needs.

Evaluation for assistive technology may be a part of the transition plan. If not already evaluated as part of transition planning, the student's assistive technology needs should be assessed periodically to determine if the student's device(s) is still appropriate to meet the student's needs. Evaluations for assistive technology may include results and recommendations that should be considered as part of the IEP services and included in transition planning.

Any *vision* or *hearing* changes may impact the assistive technology needs of the student. New work environments may reveal previously unrecognized vision or hearing issues. For individuals with low vision, adaptive equipment can provide major benefits; however, some equipment may only be beneficial in certain environments or is designed for use with specific activities. The results of current vision and hearing assessments are important to consider in the development of post-secondary goals, annual goals, short-term objectives, and services.

While in school, the IEP specifies the nature of special education, related services, transition services, accommodations, and any required assistive technology,

I am especially thankful for those who taught me alternate ways to achieve independence despite having a hearing and vision loss. For example, learning to drive is a milestone of independence for teens. I had a wonderful mobility teacher who was brought in at the perfect time while I was struggling with not being able to drive. Instead my instructor empowered me by teaching me how to use public transportation. That experience renewed my confidence. Even though my parents and family had mixed feelings initially about my taking the buses by myself, they recognized it was important for me to be independent especially for the future. With the skills I acquired, now I can read bus schedules and figure out the transportation systems wherever I go.

*Jamie M., a student with deafblindness*, http://documents.nationaldb.org/products/self-determ.pdf

who will provide the services, and when and how the services are provided. To further support transition planning, students can be referred to the local Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) office beginning at age 14 and *no later than two years before the student graduates*. A referral can be made by the school district, a family member, the student, or other community resource personnel. For additional information, refer to the chart on page 13 that outlines IEP team member responsibilities in transition planning.

# EVALUATING THE TRANSITION PLANñSTEP 4:

## Continuing the Cycle

As the transition process progresses during the student's secondary school years, the goals and transition services and activities identified on the post-secondary transition services section of the IEP are reviewed at least annually. The IEP team reviews current data related to updated transition assessments and progress on each transition goal. If a goal continues to be appropriate, the IEP team identifies services and activities to support the goal. If the goal is no longer appropriate based upon updated and new data, the goal is rewritten, including transition services and activities. Goals and services/activities should be updated and/or added as the student progresses and his/her PINS change.

Annually, members of the IEP team, including the student and parent/guardian, should consider:

- The course of study that will provide the skills needed to become an independent adult;
- The growth the student achieved related to the IEP and post-secondary goals;
- Any changes that need to be made to the post-secondary goals and related transition services and activities;
- The services provided throughout the year as described on the IEP post-secondary transition plan; and
- Any additional transition services and activities needed to support the student's continued growth toward meeting post-secondary goals.

Transition planning, beginning at age 14, is a cyclical process that occurs at least annually. Each student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths are the basis for the development of the transition plan including post-secondary goals and services and activities. The transition plan evolves annually as the student's skills grow; as the student's PINS change; and as goals, transition services, and activities are identified that support the student's independence as an adult. Entering the adult world can be challenging, but its rewards can be well worth the challenge.

# RESOURCES FOR TRANSITION PLANNING

**Career Connections**
http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Career-Tech/Career-Connections

**ERIC—Guidelines for Conducting Functional Vocational Evaluation**
http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED393241

**National Center on Deaf-Blindness**
https://nationaldb.org/

**National Collaborative on Work Force and Disability**
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-34

**National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) for Parent Information and Resources** "Helping Youth Build Work Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families"
http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/transition-goals/

**OHIO AATA Library**
www.ohioAATAlibrary.org

**Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)**
www.ocali.org

**Ohio Employment First**
www.OhioEmploymentFirst.com

**Ohio Means Jobs**
www.ohiomeansjobs.com

**Perkins School for the Blind: Assessments for Transition Planning**
http://www.perkinselearning.org/transition/assessments

**Quick Book of Transition Assessment**
http://www.ocali.org/up_doc/Quickbook_of_Transition_Assessment.pdf

**ThinkCollege**
www.ThinkCollege.net

**Transition Planning for Students who are Deaf-Blind**
http://www.pepnet.org/sites/default/files/100Transition%20Planning%20for%20Students%20who%20are%20DeafBlind.pdf

**Transition Services, Akron (Ohio) Public Schools**
http://ncdcdt.org/wp/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/transition-services-Assessments-for-Transition-2014-A.pdf

**Transition Services: Definitions and Examples**
www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Transition%20Services_and_Activities_Definition_and_Examples.pdf

**Writing Transition Goals and Objectives**
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Transition_GO.pdf

**NOTE:** *Readers who encounter technical difficulty linking to particular resources are encouraged to copy the URL directly into their browsers in order to access the resource.*

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