

PROGRAMS: Life Span Transition

The primary purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to ensure that children receiving special education services are provided a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living. Lifespan transition planning is a collaborative process designed to strengthen communication and continuity between school programs, grade level to grade level, and between secondary programs and post-secondary programs and services.

New Mexico Special Education Rules require that transition and graduation planning begin at age 14. The State recommended preschool/elementary IEP form and the secondary IEP form are future-directed and designed to facilitate a child's movement through the educational system. Lifespan transition planning begins with a child's transition from IDEA Part C Programs to IDEA Part B programs, preschool to kindergarten, and from grade level to grade level, ultimately leading to positive post-school outcomes. When using the forms, the IEP team follows a collaborative planning process to ensure that the student's strengths, needs, and interests are considered when identifying special education services. Part of the IEP team discussion and decision-making must focus on designing and implementing an educational program and experiences that prepare students for lifespan transitions. Incorporating transition planning into the IEP includes early identification of and planning for the student's post-school goals by defining a course of study. Lifespan transition provides educational relevance for students and is driven by these beliefs:

- ✓ The IEP represents and supports the vision of the student and the student's family.
- ✓ Transition helps prepare the student for the changes and demands of lifespan transitions.
- ✓ Transition is an ongoing and outcome-oriented process that includes commitment of resources and collaboration between people and agencies.
- ✓ The family, school, and adult service agencies share responsibility for the transition.

- ✓ Transition planning promotes relevant instructional objectives within the least restrictive environment, including community-based experiences as appropriate.

Therefore, transition services, must be a coordinated set of activities and/or strategies that include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school activities and strategies that lead toward positive student outcomes. It should be noted that these transition planning activities are a required component of an IEP for students 14 and up. If a student will reach age 14 during the IEP year, transition planning for secondary coursework must be included in the IEP, for that year.

Beginning by age 14, the student's IEP must include:

- Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments;
- A planned course of study, designed to select high school courses based on the student's post-school goals and graduation requirements.

Students in New Mexico may graduate using one of three graduation options to a diploma. The IEP team must determine the most appropriate course of study based on the student's interest, strengths, and needs. In order to learn more about the graduation options see the **Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities**, technical assistance manual