

# PRESCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION



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# TRANSITION

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The Reflective Framework for Individualized Education Program, depicted in the image above, has the central purpose of providing equitable access to grade-level content for students with disabilities. This purpose is supported by six surrounding components:

1. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
2. Special Factors
3. Individualized Education Program Goals
4. Specially Designed Instruction and Service Time
5. Accommodations and Modifications
6. Transition

The purpose of this document is to review the requirements for transition between preschool to kindergarten and postsecondary, as well as to give specific examples of how to implement these requirements.

## IMPORTANCE OF TRANSITION FOR ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) there are regulations set forth for two formal transitions that may occur in a student's educational career. Preschool transition refers to the transition between early intervention services (see IDEA Part C) and special education preschool services (see IDEA Part B). Postsecondary transition refers to the transition between secondary schools and postschool success with an emphasis on education and training, employment and, when appropriate, independent living. Both types of transitions are critical to the educational success of students with disabilities.

The first purpose of the IDEA is to ensure that students have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services, "as specified on an individualized education program (IEP) designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living." Therefore, transition is not just one point in time but is a pathway to "further education, employment, and independent living." A smooth transition from early intervention is the beginning of an ongoing process of assessing strengths and needs that will eventually lead to successful postsecondary transition. Every IEP that is developed and service that is provided has the potential to determine future successes for students with disabilities by furthering their education, having the student become competitively employed and ultimately increase their independent living skills.

Transitions for students with disabilities is a process that focuses on all aspects of special education. This section of the framework outlines how transition IEPs are developed to support

a student’s plan for future education and training, employment, and when appropriate, independent living.

Figure 1, below, visualizes the relationship among Early Intervention Services and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Preschool Services and the Individualized Education Program (IEP), and Postsecondary Transition and the IEP and Transition Plan.

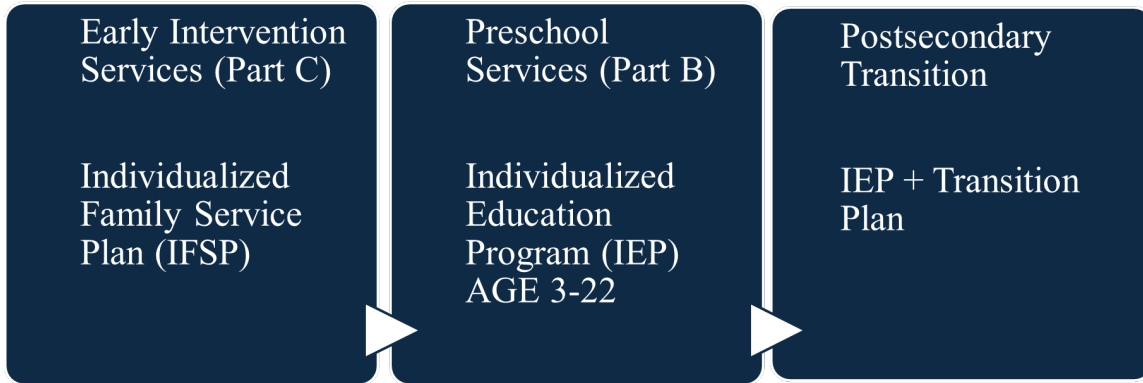


FIGURE 1: RELATIONSHIP AMONG TRANSITION SERVICES

## REQUIREMENTS OF PRESCHOOL AND POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION

Transition requirements effect two stages of special education: preschool and post-secondary.

Requirements for transition from early intervention to special education preschool (see also Parts C and B of the IDEA) are outlined the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules. According to section VII.A, “At the beginning of each school year, each local education agency (LEA) must have an individualized education program (IEP) in effect for each student with a disability, ages 3 through 5, within its jurisdiction.”<sup>1</sup>

This means that:

- “b. By the eligible student’s third birthday, an IEP has been developed and is being implemented for the student;
- c. If a student’s third birthday occurs after the end of the school year, the student’s IEP Team shall determine the date in the next school year when services under the IEP will

<sup>1</sup> Dickson, S. and Voorhies, L. (August 2020). Section VII.A. In *Special Education Rules*. Utah State Board of Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/0b19d648-9986-4629-8dd6-ba695707921c>

begin, except that the IEP Team may determine that extended school year services are needed outside the school year;”<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, when “developing the IEP for a student with a disability age 3 through 5 (or at the discretion of the LEA, a two-year-old student with a disability who will turn age three during the school year), the IEP Team must consider the contents of an Individualized family Service Plan (IFSP) that contains the natural environments statement and an educational component that promotes school readiness and incorporates pre-literacy, language, and numeracy skills.”<sup>3</sup>

Section VII.A also states, that “In the case of a student who was previously served under Part C of the IDEA, an invitation to the initial IEP meeting must, at the request of the parent, be sent to the Part C service coordinator or other representatives of the Part C system to assist with the smooth transition of services.”<sup>4</sup>

Postsecondary transition is outlined in USBE Rules III.J. and VII.B. These requirements can be summarized as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. A student must be invited to the IEP meeting when transition is a purpose of the meeting
2. Transition Assessments must be conducted
3. Postsecondary goals must be developed based on the transition assessments for education and training, employment, and when appropriate, independent living.
4. Transition services must be identified that will reasonably enable the student to reach their postsecondary goals.
5. A transition plan must include an “annual IEP goal related to the student’s transition services needs” (see [Annual Performance Report \(APR\) Measurement Table](#)).
6. If appropriate, obtain written consent from the parent and invite participating agencies who may be paying for or providing transition services.
7. A multi-year course of study must be developed to assist the student in reaching their postsecondary goals.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

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### PRESCHOOL TRANSITION

As stated above, Part C of the IDEA outlines the rules and requirements for identifying and serving children with disabilities ages birth to age 2. In Utah, Part C is administered by the Baby Watch Early Intervention Program (BWEIP), within the Utah Department of Health and Human

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Sections III.J. and VII.B.

Services (DHHS). Part C services are provided by contracted early intervention agencies and are often referred to as early intervention services. These services are outlined in the child’s IFSP.

## EARLY INTERVENTION TO PRESCHOOL TRANSITION: OVERVIEW

Transitioning from early intervention to special education preschool services is the process of transitioning from an IFSP to an IEP. An IFSP focuses on the child and family. Services are typically provided in the home or community. An IEP focuses on special education and related services provided in a school environment.

The school district where the child resides has the Child Find responsibility for completing the transition process for a child receiving Part C early intervention services residing within district boundaries. The process begins with a transition planning conference scheduled by the Part C early intervention agency at least three months before the child’s third birthday. A representative from the school district where the child resides attends the transition planning conference. At this planning conference, the representative will meet the family, discuss the Part B special education eligibility process, and identify potential areas to assess for special education eligibility.

Prior to this initial evaluation for special education, parent consent for assessment is obtained. The evaluation is completed within 45 school days of receiving parent consent or prior to the child’s third birthday, whichever is first. If the child is found eligible for Part B special education services, an IEP is developed and implemented by the child’s third birthday. When developing the IEP, the team must consider the contents of the IFSP. Documenting contents of the IFSP in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) section on the IEP ensures continuity in transition.

**TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN ISFP AND IEP**

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)	Individualized Education Program (IEP)
Focuses on child and family	Focuses on special education and related services
Generally provided in the home or community setting	Provided in the school setting
Child and family outcomes are based on family routines	Student needs based on ability to access general education curriculum
Families play an active role in the provision of services	Families are active and critical members of the team, but the school is responsible for providing the services

## COMPARISON BETWEEN AN IFSP AND AN IEP

Table 1 above provides a comparison between the IFSP and the IEP. The IFSP and the IEP differ in a few significant ways.

The IFSP:

- Focuses on child and family
- Generally, provides services in the home or community setting
- Child and family outcomes are based on family routines
- Families play an active role in the provision of services

Whereas the IEP:

- Focuses on special education and related services
- Provides services in the school setting
- Student needs based on ability to access general education curriculum
- Families are active and critical members of the team, but the school is responsible for providing the services

Because IFSP outcomes focus on child and family needs that are based in family routines, this means the IFSP can include both child and family goals. In contrast, the IEP contains measurable annual goals that are specific to an individual student's identified educational needs. This means the IEP *only* contains student goals. However, the IFSP can assist teams in determining areas to assess for Part B eligibility as well as possible IEP goals.

Although the IEP focuses on the individual student's needs, rather than the needs of the family, including the family in the development of the IEP can assist in the transition process from Part C and improve the family's experience in the IEP process. For example, by utilizing parent interviews as part of the Part B eligibility and IEP process, IEP teams can engage families and generate better IEP goals for students.

**TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF IFSP OUTCOMES AND IEP GOALS**

IFSP Outcomes Examples	IEP Goal Examples (Based on the IFSP Outcome Examples)
Lily will hold her own fishing pole for 5 minutes when she goes fishing with her family for two trips in a row.	When presented with a model of three writing strokes (vertical line, horizontal line, and circle), Lily will write on the provided model, copying the writing strokes and staying on the model lines, in four out of five trials.

IFSP Outcomes Examples	IEP Goal Examples (Based on the IFSP Outcome Examples)
Walker will greet his friends with a gesture or word while attending story time at the library for 3 story time trips in a row.	When entering the preschool classroom, Walker will independently greet friends with a greeting (hi, hello) and the friend's first name in 8 out of 10 opportunities for 4 consecutive weeks as measured by classroom observations.

## POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION

As part of the IEP, during the student's 14<sup>th</sup> year, a transition plan must be put in place for all students with disabilities. This plan will then be updated annually until the student exits the special education program. Below are requirements and ways of implementation to build a transition plan.

### REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION PLANS

There are many components of a post-secondary transition plan. Each component aligns with requirements from the USBE Rules.

Transition plans are to be developed along with the IEP at the latest, during the student's 14th year. Below is a list the required components for all transition plans:

- Transition Assessment
- Inviting the student to the IEP
- Measurable postsecondary goals in education/training, employment, and independent living
- Transition Services
- Courses of Study
- Agency participation
- Annual IEP Goals

The following sections outline and describe each of these components.

#### TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

The transition assessment is the foundation of a quality transition plan. The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) defines transition assessment as "the ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, personal, and social environments. Assessment data serves as the common thread in the transition process and

forms the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).”<sup>6</sup> Assessment helps identify gaps in student skills and needs for individualized transition services. For this reason, quality transition assessment should be aligned to the PLAAFP (see Annual IEP Goal section for further guidance).

Transition assessments are important to developing a quality transition plan because they:

- Help the student and their IEP team identify postsecondary goals (PSG) in education/training, employment, and independent living
- Inform the development of the student’s transition services
- Support the student’s choice in the development of courses of study
- Help the team set annual IEP goal(s) related to transition
- Offer insight on the need for involvement of other agencies
- Provide information regarding graduation and post-high options
- Help students make a connection between their IEP and their post-school ambitions

Choosing appropriate assessments, therefore, is a critical component of the transition plan (see [USBE SES Age Appropriate Transition Assessments](#)). As such, the process of choosing the appropriate assessment should be one that is student-centered, ongoing, and comprehensive. Selecting the right assessment for each student involves getting to know the student and becoming familiar with transition assessments more broadly. Additionally, to better support the foundational components of a quality transition assessment, it is recommended that an assessment of self-determination/self-advocacy skills be included as part of the overall assessment process.

As teams work to choose appropriate assessments, they will want to discuss the student’s unique talents and interests with them as well as what they want for their future. According to Morgan and Riesen, although it is critical that “the student should drive the process and decision-making” around their future goals, including “the perspectives of several stakeholders” who know and interact with the student can still be useful when trying to select the appropriate assessment.<sup>7</sup> That said, ultimately assessments should be selected based on the student’s vision of what they will accomplish in adult life. If the student is yet to develop a vision for life after school, an assessment can be chosen to help the student create it.

Choosing the best assessment can be done, first by identifying and collecting the information that will best help the student develop their transition plan. And second, by becoming familiar

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<sup>6</sup> See pages 70-71 of P.L. Sitlington, D. A. Neubert, & P.J. Leconte, (1997), Transition assessment: The position of the Division on Career Development and Transition, *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 20(1), 69-79.

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, R. L., & Riesen, T., (2016), *Promoting Successful Transition to Adulthood for Students with Disabilities*, New York: Guilford Publications, p. 84.



with the different types of transition assessments and their characteristics using the four transition assessment domains:

- Employment/Career Interests
- College Readiness/Postsecondary Training
- Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy
- Independent Living/Adult Living Skills

The student will want to have a variety of people providing input as they familiarize themselves with the assessment domains including their parents, special education teacher, school counselor, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, English Teacher, Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher, and the Pre-Employment Transition Services Provider that works with them.

Regular and effective communication is critical to this process, so it is best practice to put a clearly defined system of communication in place before it begins. Clear communication means that the IEP team members and other stakeholders should not only understand the purpose of transition assessment, but what they are being asked to contribute as well as when and how. For example, providing multiple formats (e.g., interviews, google forms, email) for team members to offer input, and to share and to collect information will ensure all stakeholders are heard.

As teams assess the strengths, skills, needs, and preferences of the student, the team should be aware of the options that exist in the student's community for further education, training, and employment. When conducting assessments, the team should determine whether the student would require both short-term and long-term support in achieving their postsecondary goals. Once these skills have been identified, team members can also observe where and what skills the student is already most successful at and give insight into what resources the student may access to help enable their success.

Finally, to ensure alignment between transition assessment and PLAAFP goals, a clear transition PLAAFP could be included in the IEP. A quality transition PLAAFP should highlight the student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs as they relate to the student's future employment, further education/training, and independent living. The PLAAFP should indicate the student's functional performance and gaps in functional skills needed to successfully reach their postsecondary goals. The functional skills to address in the PLAAFP could include the following:

- Self-determination skills
- Disability awareness
- Executive functioning
- Social and communication skills
- Adult living skills,
- Technology skills

- Mobility
- Time management
- Task completion
- Self-helps skills.

Once a Transition PLAAFP has been developed, it should include an annually updated summary of the student's transition assessment findings, including data and an impact statement.

## **STUDENT INVITATION**

The invitation of the student to attend their IEP meeting provides the opportunity for them to fully participate in the process of developing their transition plan by leading their own IEP and creating their own postsecondary goals (PSGs). If the student is invited but does not attend the meeting, the LEA must take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

The process of including students in their IEP meeting should begin as early as possible so that students can learn to be their own advocates, and to understand and articulate their strengths, preferences, interests, and needs. Students should be provided multiple opportunities to develop presentations and practice delivering them before they are asked to guide their IEP meeting. Collaborating with general education teachers and counselors to help students engage and practice these skills can help build confidence and increase motivation. Having the student start with selected portions of the IEP meeting is a strategy used to help them actively participate in their meeting, with the goal being that as they get older, they can lead their entire IEP meeting.

Opportunities for students to self-advocate can be provided by instructing students to practice in the use of a template of slides that provides structure to lead their IEP meeting. Students should also be given the opportunity to use the [Transition Elevated App](#), which is designed to help Utah students, families, and educators participate in and enhance the transition planning process. Students create a transition plan from the app that can be printed or downloaded and used during their IEP meeting.

## **POSTSECONDARY GOALS**

Beginning at age 14, the student's IEP must have PSGs in the areas of Education/Training and Employment. Independent living should be considered for the student if the IEP team determines it to be appropriate. PSGs are goals that are:

- Based on the results of transition assessments
- Written for the future (after exiting school)
- Contain active language
- Measurable
- Include the interests and vision of the student

PSGs are broader with a younger student and become more focused as the student gets closer to exiting school.

One of the most important things the IEP team can do is to help teach the student how to become a self-advocate and help them develop their own PSGs. Having the student be involved in analyzing their transition assessment results can help them learn more about themselves and provide an opportunity for them to take a more active role in planning for their post-secondary education, employment, and independent living skills. By teaching the student to advocate for themselves and to have a clearer picture of who and what they want to be as they exit the program can help them become a more independent adult.

As Brandt, Valent, and Danielson state:

“Students with disabilities should be held to high expectations while acknowledging the aspirations, interests, talents, and desires of each student as well as the necessary learning supports needed for each student to succeed. All adults in the school—principals, teachers, counselors, and aides—need to embrace a culture and belief system that students with disabilities are capable of high-level work and can complete a high school diploma, succeed in postsecondary education, and establish meaningful careers and independent lives. Furthermore, school staff and families must work to help students set goals based on their “personal bests,” goals that reflect the realities of students’ disabilities without constraining them through the limitations of lowered expectations. Goals should be personalized to include student strengths, abilities, and aspirations while pushing them to maximize achievement based on these abilities.”<sup>8</sup>

The use of a rubric or checklist is a helpful tool to ensure compliance, best practice, and quality when writing PSGs with students. Students should be involved in the practice of evaluating and tracking their progress toward goals and transition services. The IEP team should review what factors or data is used to mark items “considered, not needed” and evaluate the evidence substantiating why a student does not need an independent living goal. Also tracking the progress of the implementation of student-led IEPs and using the data to assess where more support is needed to build these opportunities for students.

## **TRANSITION SERVICES**

When determining appropriate transition services for a student first consider what the areas of need are for the student based on their transition assessment information. For example, some questions to consider are:

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<sup>8</sup> From page 7 of Brand, B., Valent, A., & Danielson, L. (2013). *Improving College and Career Readiness for Students with Disabilities*. College and Career Readiness and Success Center. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555694.pdf>

- What gaps in skills or experiences does the student have that they will need to successfully reach their postsecondary goals?
- What instruction, experiences, or action steps do they need this IEP year to move them closer to reaching their goals after high school?

After determining the transition areas of need for the student consider the evidence-based transition predictors for post school success. For example, work experience and self-determination skills are among the strongest predictors of post school success for SWD. The IEP team may also consider the [Career Development Credential](#) for a student, which includes a CTE pathways concentration, work-based learning internship, and transition curriculum. School counselors have a comprehensive understanding of the CTE pathways and additional resources or courses which may be available to students. It is critical to include the school counselor in the designing of the transition services and the courses of study in the transition plan

When the IEP team is determining appropriate transition services for a student, consider using the [USB E Transition Services Examples](#) document for guidance. The examples document is organized in a timeline format and suggests transition services for a student based on grade level and transition service needs that align and support the student with further education, employment, and independent living goals.

The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) has developed a [Pre-ETS Activity Guide](#) to help IEP teams determine needed transition services for students ages 14- 22. Pre-ETS can be delivered to a student through their LEA, a Pre-ETS instructor in their area, or through a contracted Pre-ETS provider in their county. IEP teams can learn about available Pre-ETS and connect with a provider by using this [Pre-Employment Transition Services brochure](#).

Independent living postsecondary goals and transition services should be considered for all students based on transition assessment data. Using transition assessments that identify gaps and needs in independent living skills should be used to determine whether a student needs services to support their goals after high school.

Transition services that support a student's independent living goals may include the following:

- Self-advocacy
- Self-determination
- Adult living skills
- Community safety
- Executive functioning
- Goal setting
- Instruction in the differences between IDEA, Section 504, and ADA laws
- Use of assistive technology
- Managing health care needs

## **COURSES OF STUDY**

The courses of study section of the transition IEP must include a multi-year description of the student's course work including the current year through the student's year of exit from school.

The courses of study should also include courses that align and support the student's post-secondary goals. The IEP team should hold high expectations for all students and encourage CTE pathways, concurrent enrollment and AP courses that may help prepare the student for further education/training, and employment. Furthermore, the courses of study should be clear and stand up to the "stranger test" if a student were to transfer to another school.

The courses of study on the student's transition IEP should align with the student's plan for college and career readiness (PCCR) they develop with their school counselor. Access to a school counselor is required for the purpose of planning school activities, including post-secondary education and employment. It is in the best interest of the student if the school counselor is involved in the transition IEP to ensure the student's course plan is appropriate in preparing them for transition from high school to postsecondary settings.

## **AGENCY PARTICIPATION**

Connecting students with other agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities helps "create a bridge" between high school and adult life, allowing the student to build community relationships before leaving high school.

Agencies that may be involved include, but are not limited to:

- [Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\)](#)
- [Division of Services for People with Disabilities \(DSPD\)](#)
- [Department of Workforce Services \(DWS\)](#)
- Community mental health agencies
- Community rehabilitation providers (CRPs)
- College disability resource centers

Students who are potentially eligible for VR can be referred for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS providers contract with VR to provide training and experiences designed to help youth get ready to participate in the workforce. These services include:

- Workplace readiness training
- Job exploration
- Work-based learning opportunities
- Counseling on postsecondary education
- Instruction in self-advocacy

Youth who have an IEP or 504 plan are eligible to receive these services beginning at age 14.

Learning about and developing relationships with other agencies that could support student transition is a critical task for educators working in transition. Special educators usually develop relationships with disability agencies, but general educators and school counselors often have relationships with other education and employment agencies that may benefit students with disabilities as well. It is critical for education professionals to collaborate around a student's needs and interests to identify which agencies would be relevant to the student's goals and ensure they have invited them to the student's IEP meeting. With proper release of information in place, educators and other agencies can share student progress information to ensure services, both in school and out, meet the student's needs and support the student's interests without duplicating services.

Starting the conversation with families and students about relevant agencies should begin early in the transition process. Putting systems in place to share resources and giving them an avenue to ask questions about other agencies will make this process more efficient.

### **ANNUAL IEP GOAL**

Annual IEP goals represent your LEAs offer of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Some students cannot access a FAPE without a transition specific goal and other students may be okay connecting other goals, such as math and behavior, to their postsecondary needs.

- Annual IEP goals may be written specifically for the area of transition if the team has also written a transition PLAAFP (including data and an impact statement) and annual service time to support that annual IEP goal.
- Annual IEP goals must connect to the transition service needs, which means a student may have goals for math and behavior that connect to their transition plan without a specific annual IEP goal for the area of transition.

An effective practice is to make a genuine connection between each annual IEP goal and the postsecondary goal or service it is supporting. When writing a PLAAFP there is always an impact statement regarding how the student's disability is impacting their access to the general education curriculum for a specific content area (e.g., math). An effective practice would be to add an impact statement for how the student's disability is impacting their access to their postsecondary goals or services.

Consider the skills a student will need to achieve their postsecondary goals. For example, if a student goes on to higher education, then math and language arts skills are a pre-requisite to admittance into those programs. Think about how the skills being taught to the student through their annual IEP goals might impact that student in achieving their postsecondary goals in education/training, employment, or independent living. For example, students may be receiving instruction in the development of behavioral skills, including self-regulation, which is vital for successful employment. Remember to consider the mental health, behavior,

communication, self-advocacy, and self-determination needs of students when considering the relationship between annual IEP goals and transition service needs.

## **TRANSFER OF RIGHTS**

Supporting adult students can be a challenging and emotional process for families. It is important to connect families with a network of support and resources for understanding what options might be available to them. Some families may indicate that their student does not have the skills to make adult decisions. It is important that parents understand that when a student turns 18, the rights of the parent will transfer to the student unless there is a legalized court document awarding guardianship to someone other than the adult student. If a family is seeking guardianship of their student, it can take time to complete the process, contributing to high levels of stress for families. [The Utah Parent Center](#) is a resource that employs parents or caregivers of students with disabilities which means they can be a great resource for walking through the processes and options as well as provide some emotional support many families need.

It is important for IEP team members to establish consistent procedures for keeping track of when students will turn 17 so parents and students can be notified about the age of majority before the student's 17th birthday. If a student is 16 already, it is possible that their 17th birthday will occur before their next annual IEP review and teams should plan accordingly.

Preparing students to understand what it means to have their rights transferred to them when they turn 18 requires more effort than simply sending them a form notifying them that the rights have been transferred. The IEP team's role is to support students in developing skills to self-advocate. Students should be encouraged to make age-appropriate decisions which are supported by participation in their IEP. Teams should engage students and families in discussions and instruction about the age of majority and what it means to take on the responsibilities of an adult in all areas of independent living. Teams also provide information to students and families on disability laws and their rights under those laws.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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Research has shown that experiences during school lead to positive outcomes for students with disabilities in employment, further education, and independent living after leaving school.

This is why it is important that transition services be student-centered. It is also why transition services look different for each student—services are based on individual strengths, preferences, interests, and needs (SPINs). For example, career exploration and work-based learning experiences may inform one student's course-taking patterns and career development. While another student may learn and practice self-determination skills by leading their own IEP or advocating for their accommodations.

Regardless of the specific goals, the components of a quality transition plan are firmly rooted in transition assessment and are designed to support the student in developing their unique vision of life post-high school.

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## STUDENT EXAMPLES

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### 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT: SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY

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#### CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND BASELINE DATA: 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT

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Sophie is a 7th grade student with a significant cognitive disability and approximately 85% of her math instruction is provided through small groups with three to four other students. Sophie's parents indicate that Sophie uses eye gaze at home as her primary mode of communication and would love to see Sophie increasing her use of eye gaze during instruction. Sophie has been receiving explicit instruction with number sense vocabulary and demonstrates that she can use eye gaze or gestures to match or identify groups of up to five tangible objects representing "more" and "less" in 8/20 (40%) opportunities. Sophie non-verbally matches or identifies the meaning of "same" or "equal" with 98% accuracy when provided with visual or tactile groups of objects or items. Sophie has also been working on geometry vocabulary and demonstrates the ability to identify basic geometrical shapes (i.e., square, triangle, circle) with 95% accuracy when using picture representations of those shapes. She has also been working on generalizing her ability to recognize shapes to items in her environment. Sophie is currently able to generalize shapes to real objects in 12/25 opportunities when the real item is paired with the visual item.

Although Sophie identifies "more" and "less" with approximately 40% accuracy, she still needs to build that academic language to a point where she can be proficient with that terminology. Sophie really benefits from integrating math concepts with vocabulary. Vocabulary like "more" and "less" is also used to integrate Sophie's number sense and knowledge of geometric shapes. Sophie currently identifies through pointing and gesturing to numbers up to 10 with 78% accuracy but identifies numbers 1–5 with 100% accuracy. During instruction, we are often using numbers (1–5) or shapes (square, circle, or triangle) that we know she is proficient with to practice or teach the concepts of "more" and "less." Once Sophie identifies "more" and "less" with more accuracy, she will then need to be able to classify, group, or pair items together based on whether the characteristics are "same/equal" or "more/less."

Based on the Personal Preference Indicators assessment completed with Sophie's parents on 3/20/22, Sophie enjoys being around people and lively activity. She enjoys being outside, swimming, listening to music, playing with her dog, and watching videos of animals. She does not like being left alone and will gesture when she wants attention. Sophie makes food choices by pointing but does not currently make choices about what she wears or watches on her iPad.



Life Skills Assessment: Self Reliance, completed with her parents on 3/15/22 indicates that Sophie is able to recognize pictures of items that she wants to play with but is not consistently making choices in her environment. She is flexible and can move from one activity to the next easily. She is currently not using a switch or communication device for communication or choice making at school or at home. For Sophie to be more self-determined she needs to be able to make consistent choices and indicate her wants and needs.

## **IMPACT OF THE DISABILITY: 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT**

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Sophie’s disability impacts her ability to demonstrate a functional understanding of how we use math in the real world, and her ability to access the general education curriculum. Numbers, shapes, and visual/tangible manipulatives used in math are simply a representation of something else. For math concepts to be meaningful for Sophie, she needs to be able to develop language skills with math so she can group, categorize, and compare numbers, shapes, and manipulatives in a functional way.

## **ANNUAL IEP GOAL EXAMPLE**

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When given real objects and corresponding shapes, Sophie will be able to match the object and the attribute of a shape by pointing to or looking at it (e.g., match a clock with an attribute of a circle, or a book with an attribute of a square) in 15 out of 15 opportunities.

### **BENCHMARKS**

- When given real objects and corresponding shapes, Sophie will be able to match the object and the attribute of a shape by pointing to or looking at it (e.g., match a clock with a circle, or a book with a square) in 8 out of 15 opportunities.
- When given real objects and corresponding shapes, Sophie will be able to match the object and the attribute of a shape by pointing to or looking at it (e.g., match a clock with a circle, or a book with a square) in 12 out of 15 opportunities.

### **EXAMPLE OF SERVICE TYPE, LOCATION, AND FREQUENCY**

<b>Special Education Service</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Math	Special Education	45 minutes daily

## EXAMPLES OF SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT

Instructional Strategy	SDI – Instruction that Supports the IEP Goal
The <b>Discrete Trial Teaching</b> is a one-to-one instructional approach used to teach skills in a planned, controlled, and systematic manner.	In a one-on-one session, Sophie’s teacher will present Sophie with a series of structured trials to practice matching two-dimensional shapes with three-dimensional objects.
The <b>Prompt Hierarchy</b> strategy involves establishing a sequence of instructional prompts ordered by the level of intrusiveness of the prompt (from least-to-most intrusive, or most-to-least intrusive).	The teacher will develop a prompt hierarchy, sequenced from least intrusive to most intrusive, to support Sophie in matching shapes. When given the opportunity to match, Sophie will first be given a few seconds to do so independently, followed by the next prompt in the hierarchy (e.g., gesture, modeling, partial physical guidance) until she is able to complete the task.
The <b>Naturalistic Teaching</b> strategy involves embedding opportunities to practice the skill in daily routines and interest-based activities.	The teacher will incorporate opportunities to match a shape cutout with a real object during a variety of natural opportunities in routines across the day. For example, at lunch, Sophie’s teacher will add shape cutouts to a cafeteria tray so Sophie can place the cookie on the circle, the juice box on the rectangle, and so forth.

## IEP TEAM ACCOMMODATION DISCUSSION

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The following are questions that the IEP discussed to determine appropriate accommodations for Sophie and now often they would need to be utilized in order to meet the IEP goals.

- **What input has the team, including the parent and student, discussed about accommodations and modifications that have worked for the student in making progress toward the annual goals?**
  - How is the team explicitly defining accommodations or modifications, and how and when they will be used (e.g., accommodations for assessment align to what is being used in daily instruction)?
    - Sophie’s team discussed her current use of eye gaze, pointing and gestures for communication and alternate response.
    - The team also reviewed that she is a student with a significant cognitive disability and will continue to be instructed through the support of the alternate academic achievement standards.
    - Sophie’s IEP team considered assistive technology as a special factor.

- They determined that Sophie requires a picture communication system.
  - They also determined she would need this technology at home.
  - Parents will be provided with training in the picture exchange communication system.
- **What input about the student is being considered in program design?**
  - Sophie’s IEP team reviewed current data and shared that due to her communication methods she should be given:
    - Extended time on assignments and assessments
    - Two to three choices for indicating answers so she can look at or point to the correct item
    - A picture communication system to make selections
  - Sophie also needs text-to-speech or read aloud by a peer or an adult for relevant text (i.e., math word problems, instructions)
- What data supports the frequency of supplementary aids, services, and program modifications across settings (how, when, and why)?
  - The team discussed if wait time for responses is needed during instruction and assessments for Sophie.
  - They also discussed how this accommodation would be communicated to each of her teachers.

## DETERMINATION OF APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS

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After discussing Sophie’s present levels and her strengths and needs, the IEP team determined the following accommodations are appropriate, and when and how often they would be needed to support Jill in progressing towards her goals.

These accommodations are listed in the table below:

<b>Accommodation, Modification, Support, Supplementary Aid, or Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Alternate response (e.g., eye gaze, gestures, pointing)	Daily
2 - 3 choice options	Daily
Text-to-speech or read aloud by peer or adult for relevant text	Daily
Wait time for responses	Daily
Picture communication system	Daily

## DETERMINATION OF ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATION

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The IEP team discussed the following questions before determining that Sophie would better demonstrate her grade level knowledge and measure her academic achievement by participating in the Alternate Assessment.

- Does the student have a significant cognitive disability that significantly impacts their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior?
  - Yes
- Does the student require extensive individualized, modified instruction and supports to achieve measurable gains?
  - Yes
- Is the student receiving the student's grade level instruction in the Utah Core Standards through the support of Utah's alternate achievement standards (i.e., The Essential Elements)?
  - Yes

Since the answers to these questions were all "yes," Sophie can participate in the alternate assessment and the IEP team determined that would be most appropriate.

The IEP team then provided a statement explaining why Sophie cannot participate in the regular assessment AND why the alternate assessment is appropriate for Sophie:

- Sophie cannot participate in the regular assessment, RISE, because she has a significant cognitive disability that requires instructional support using the alternate achievement standards, Essential Elements, therefore, it is more appropriate for Sophie to participate in the alternate assessment, DLM.

Based on the accommodations Sophie will be utilizing in academic, non-academic, and extra-curricular settings, the team then determined that the following accommodations would need to be available for Sophie on standardized assessments:

- **Statewide Assessment**
  - Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM): Participate in the Alternate Assessment (PAA) based on Alternate Achievement Standards the Essential Elements
    - DLM allows for a great deal of flexibility in allowed accessibility supports.
    - All of Sophie's accommodations outlined are considered accessibility supports not accommodations for DLM.

## TRANSITION PLAN EXAMPLE

PSG Area	Postsecondary Goal (PSG)	Services	Multi-Year Course of Study	Annual IEP Goal(s) (only one is required)	Other Agencies
<b>Employment</b>	After Sophie ages out of school she will be employed with the support of a job coach working around animals.	Support in job shadowing at an animal shelter.	All courses to fulfill the Alternate diploma requirements and courses in CTE that align with her interest in animals and being outside.	Given a picture task list, Sophie will accurately complete the steps in a picture task analysis for gathering supplies needed to feed and groom an animal with 100% accuracy over 10 trials.	Pre-ETS services in career exploration and work-based learning when she turns 14.
<b>Education/ Training</b>	After Sophie ages out of school she will receive on-the-job training working with animals.	Instruction on how to feed and groom animals.	All courses to fulfill the Alternate diploma requirements and courses in CTE that align with her interest in animals and being outside.	Given a picture task list, Sophie will accurately complete the steps in a picture task analysis for gathering supplies needed to feed and groom an animal with 100% accuracy over 10 trials.	Pre-ETS services in work-based learning when she turns 14.

PSG Area	Postsecondary Goal (PSG)	Services	Multi-Year Course of Study	Annual IEP Goal(s) (only one is required)	Other Agencies
<b>Independent Living</b>	After Sophie ages out of school she will make choices in her daily schedule including what she wants to eat, wear, and where she wants to go in the community.	Instruction in using a communication device to make choices.	All courses to fulfil the Alternate diploma requirements and a transition class including community-based instruction and choice making.	Given pictures of various daily activities, Sophie will independently choose 4 activities to place on her daily schedule for 3 consecutive weeks.	Apply for DSPD services for living, employment, and community-based support.

## 10TH GRADE STUDENT: OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT

### CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND BASELINE DATA: 10TH GRADE STUDENT

Matthew is a 10th grade student who has been diagnosed with anxiety and attention deficit disorder. Matthew does well in math, science, engineering, and art. Matthew likes working with his hands and building things. He can write one to two short paragraphs with simple sentences with no introduction or conclusion.

According to the BASC 3 checklist completed by his mother and English teacher last month, Matthew scores in the clinically significant range for Internalizing Behaviors, such as anxiety. His teacher observes that when Matthew is anxious, he will fidget with something on his desk, look around the room, or scribble on his paper. Matthew's mother notes that he can sit at the kitchen counter for over an hour and not write anything.

Matthew's average test score in English is 67%. His reading scores show he reads at an 11th grade level. Over the last four weeks, Matthew was given three curriculum-based writing assessments. He was asked to read a two-page text and then write a five-paragraph opinion essay. According to the writing rubric, his overall score was 65% on the first assessment, 72% on the second, and 55% on the third. Matthew has difficulty generating ideas, writing complex

sentences, relating his sentences back to the text, and using correct grammar. When given a complex writing task, Matthew exhibits behaviors that may suggest an increase in anxiety.

In reviewing Matthew's academic patterns, a cyclical connection has been made between anxiety and executive function. Difficulty with executive functioning increases his anxiety, which results in an inability to begin or complete task demands. Matthew currently responds well to breaking large tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces. He could benefit from using a graphic organizer to guide his writing process.

Matthew is currently employed part time at his uncle's law firm. Based on information from a 2/5/21 workplace interview with Matthew and his uncle, Matthew has demonstrated strengths in the workplace in the areas of answering the telephone and filing various legal documents. Based on the Your Future Interest Profiler Inventory from 12/16/20 and an Informal Student Interview, Matthew demonstrates a strong interest in becoming a high school teacher. Based on results from the 1/23/21 Self-Determination Checklist, Matthew can participate in his IEP meetings and express his interests and preferences. Based on student work samples and opportunities for classroom presentations, Matthew can access the computer by logging in and typing terms in the search bar for research with 100% accuracy. Matthew is only able to determine which links to access when a list is generated by the search 20% of the time independently. This difficulty with accessing research impacts Matthew's ability to obtain information on employment opportunities and colleges and will impact his ability to conduct research information for college course work when Matthew attends college. Matthew needs to be able to access research with 90% accuracy independently.

## **IMPACT OF THE DISABILITY: 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT**

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Matthew's disability inhibits his progress in the general curriculum. He has difficulty with written expression and completing his English assignments. Matthew often does not turn in his writing assignments because he either has not started them or they are incomplete. When given prompts and encouragement, he can write simple, short sentences, but he does not expand his writing to multiple paragraphs as required for 10th grade standards.

## **ANNUAL IEP GOAL EXAMPLE**

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### **Language Arts:**

- After reading a two-page text, Matthew will write or use text to speech to produce a five-paragraph essay using complex sentences, text evidence, and correct grammar and score a three or higher on a four-point grade-level writing rubric on three trials quarterly recorded by the teacher.

### **Executive Functioning:**

- Given instruction in task organization, Matthew will organize a complex task, including the materials needed, the steps to accomplish the task, and a time frame in which to complete the task, using a student picked Task Organizing Tool, with 90% proficiency by the end of the IEP year.

### EXAMPLES OF SERVICE TYPE, LOCATION AND FREQUENCY

Special Education Service	Location	Frequency
Language Arts	General Education	60 minutes per week
Executive Functioning Skills	Special Education	60 minutes monthly

### EXAMPLES OF SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENT

Instructional Strategy	SDI – Instruction that Supports the IEP Goal
The <b>Think-Pair-Share</b> strategy requires students to think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and share answers with classmates.	After receiving the assignment and reading the text, Matthew will formulate ideas about his writing assignment. The teacher will facilitate a discussion with Matthew and a peer to help develop ideas, draw conclusions, and receive feedback.
The <b>Direct Instruction</b> approach is structured, sequenced, and led by the teacher.	The teacher will provide Matthew with direct instruction in using a graphic organizer, writing complex sentences, referencing a text, and revising his work.
With the <b>Multiple Opportunities with Content</b> approach, students will be provided with structures to varied approaches and strategies to develop and demonstrate their knowledge over time.	Matthew will receive multiple opportunities to practice and demonstrate his knowledge through writing two, three, and four paragraph essays that include an introduction, complex sentences, transition words, and a conclusion with teacher support.
The <b>Chunking Content</b> strategy involves taking the content and breaking it down into smaller, more manageable pieces.	When Matthew is given a five-paragraph essay to compose, the teacher will teach him how to break the task into manageable steps and create a time frame to complete the assignment.

### IEP TEAM ACCOMMODATION DISCUSSION

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The following are questions that the IEP discussed to determine appropriate accommodations for Matthew and how often they would need to be utilized in order to meet the IEP goals.



- **What input from the student is being considered in program design?**
  - Matthew discussed with his IEP team that he responds well to breaking large tasks into more manageable pieces.
  - Matthew fidgets with things on his desk when experiencing anxiety, giving him a socially appropriate fidget was also discussed with the IEP team.
- **What accommodations could be provided, tapping into the students' strengths, that would allow involvement in the general education class?**
  - Matthew's IEP team discussed that he could benefit from using a graphic organizer to guide his writing process.
  - Alternate modes (other than writing) for demonstrating knowledge will help reduce anxiety while giving him the opportunity to participate in instruction and assessment.
  - The team discussed access to a school counselor to help with anxiety.
  - The team also discussed that because of Matthew's Attention Deficit Disorder he would benefit from extended time for assignments and assessments.
  - They determined that Mathew requires a speech-to-text and word prediction accommodation for complex writing assignments.
  - They also determined he would need this technology at home to complete homework assignments.
  - The LEA's AT team agreed to provide Matthew with a laptop and access to speech-to-text and word prediction software.
- **How are the supplementary aids, services, and program modifications being addressed across settings to ensure student access and involvement?**
  - When Matthew is participating in a standardized assessment, he will be limited in using various methods of demonstrating knowledge.

## **DETERMINATION OF APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION**

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After discussing Matthew's present levels and his strengths and needs, the IEP team determined the following accommodations are appropriate, and when and how often they would be needed to support Matthew in progressing towards his goals

These accommodations are listed in the table below:

<b>Accommodation, Modification, Support, Supplementary Aid, or Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Extended time for assignments	Daily
Extended time for assessments (one and half time)	Daily
Use of Graphic Organizers	Daily
Fidgets (small non-distracting item)	Daily
Alternate methods for completing complex writing assignments (e.g., speech-to-text, predictive text, and verbal responses)	Daily
Access to the school counselor	Weekly

## **DETERMINATION OF ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATION**

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Based on the accommodations Matthew will be utilizing in academic, non-academic, and extra-curricular settings, the team then determined that the following accommodations would need to be available for Matthew on standardized assessments:

- Statewide Assessment
  - Utah Aspire Plus: Participate with Accommodations (PA)
    - Extended time is an allowable accommodation but will need to be set at 1.5-time, double-time, or triple time).
      - This should match what was outlined for extended instructional time.
    - Graphic organizers are not allowed for assessment.
      - Matthew can replicate a graphic organizer on a blank sheet of paper.
    - Fidgets are allowed if they are not distracting to other students.
    - Utah Aspire Plus does not assess writing.
      - Matthew could use scribe/speech to text if necessary.

## TRANSITION PLAN EXAMPLE

PSG Areas	Postsecondary Goal (PSG)	Services	Multi-year Course of Study	Annual IEP Goal(s) (Only one is required)	Other Agencies
<b>Employment</b>	After graduating from college, Matthew will be employed as a teacher.	Support in researching requirements for employment as a high school teacher.	All courses to meet the High School graduation requirements including Teaching as a Profession 1 (CTE Pathway Teaching as a Profession)	Given direct instruction on researching opportunities in the teaching field and job shadowing experiences, Matthew will independently choose and report on three areas of interest in the presentation mode of his choice (e.g., verbal, written, slide deck) by the end of 3rd quarter, with 90% proficiency, as measured by a teacher-generated career reporting rubric.	Pre-ETS and VR

PSG Areas	Postsecondary Goal (PSG)	Services	Multi-year Course of Study	Annual IEP Goal(s) (Only one is required)	Other Agencies
<b>Education/ Training</b>	After graduating from high school, Matthew will enroll in a four-year college and major in a teacher education program.	Support in completing college application.	All courses to meet the High School graduation requirements including Spanish 2 and 3.	Given research on three colleges, Matthew will independently complete and submit applications for each by the end of the IEP year, as measured by a teacher generated college application checklist.	VR
<b>Independent Living</b>	After graduating from high school, Matthew will meet independently with the college office of student support and discuss his need for classroom accommodations before the semester begins.	Support in goal setting. Instruction and support in Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination.	All courses to meet the High School graduation requirements including Communication.	Given instruction and opportunities to role play, Matthew will communicate his accommodations with his general education teachers at least twice during his IEP year, as measured by a teacher generated self-advocacy observation checklist.	VR and College Disability Resource Center

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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The following is a list of additional resources on transition, including ones previously referenced in the above content:

- [Annual Performance Report \(APR\) Measurement Table](#)
- [Career Development Credential](#)
- [Department of Workforce Services \(DWS\)](#)
- [Division of Services for People with Disabilities \(DSPD\)](#)
- [Pre-ETS Activity Guide](#)
- [Pre-Employment Transition Services Brochure](#)
- [Transition Elevated App](#)
- [USBE SES Tips for Writing a Compliant Transition Plan](#)
- [USBE Age Appropriate Transition Assessments](#)
- [USBE Transition Services Examples](#)
- [The Utah Parent Center](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\)](#)