

Quick Tips for Support Service Professionals

Transition Planning

Serving Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students

Transition programs assist students and parents as they plan for life after high school in a proactive and organized manner, assuming responsibility for their educational and employment decisions. This is particularly important for students who are deaf and hard of hearing because of the communication barriers they encounter during their formative years. Over 80% of families do not sign and some experts estimate some 60% of what we know is overheard. The consequent lack of communication impacts exposure to critical foundational information for deaf and hard of hearing youth.



What is Transition Planning?

Transition planning is a team process that involves the student, their teachers, parents or guardians, and other service providers. It is a complex process, unique for each student.

A strong transition plan starts as early as middle school in an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) that works alongside the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The transition team engages in dialogue and discovery to map out a transition course of action. They may:

- Conduct assessments that identify the student's strengths, needs, likes, and dislikes in academics, careers, employment, and extracurricular/social settings
- Identify postsecondary goals: employment, education or training, or independent living
- Create a course plan for classes the student needs to complete
- Agree on annual high school goals that support the student's postsecondary goals, including opportunities to strengthen self-determination and self-advocacy skills

Essential Transition Questions

- What kinds of extracurricular experiences will provide opportunities to learn social and problem solving skills?
- What classes will prepare the student for postsecondary programs and/or employment?
- Will the student participate in general education classes or is more intense training needed to achieve postsecondary goals?
- What types of accommodations are needed in various settings?
- Will the student work during high school?



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Student Involvement

Common wisdom says a person has a greater stake in the outcome if s/he is involved in the creation of an activity's goal or plan. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, ready access to incidental learning is often limited, so the student's involvement in transition planning is essential.

Students should know what their strengths and needs are, understand how their hearing level affects them in different settings, and explore what they want to do after they complete their high school education. Their opinions, wants, and desires must be taken into consideration if transition goals will be on target.

The role of the family in transition planning should not be underestimated. Families contribute information about the student's life and support systems outside of school.



Transition Planning

- Is student-focused
- Promotes student involvement and ensures the plan incorporates their concerns
- Actively involves families in the transition process
- Uses transition assessments to gather information for planning
- Checks with students frequently about barriers encountered and accommodations they are using
- Reviews and revises the transition plan annually (students' goals often change year-to-year)
- Takes time, so an early start is helpful

The Law

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to do transition planning for students who are deaf or hard of hearing beginning at age 16 and mandates that students be invited to their annual transition planning meetings.

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