

Transition from School to Adult Life Position Statement

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that students with disabilities, as all youth, must be given opportunities to achieve academic success and develop decision-making skills to foster independence and self-determination, and pursue career opportunities and personal interests that are both relevant and meaningful. Transition plans should identify and fully support individualized goals that reflect each student's highest potential and preference.

Transition plans are required for students receiving special education services beginning at age 14, or earlier as needed, and must be updated annually with concrete steps to guide and prepare students to move from school to adult lives with the necessary skills, services and supports that will enable them to be fully included in their community and exercise control over their own life. Student training in decision-making, self-determination, self-advocacy, and individual rights must be part of the plan. Transition planning must include academic and vocational opportunities that reflect the Texas "Employment First" law and policy, that "earning a living wage through competitive employment in the general workforce is the priority and preferred outcome for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits."

The Council supports the direction of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which requires that:

- pre-employment transition services include job exploration, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for higher education, and workplace readiness training, as well as education in self-determination, self-advocacy, and individual rights;
- a person under age 25 cannot be paid subminimum wages unless the individual has received these pre-employment transition services or transition services under IDEA, and has applied for vocational rehabilitation services; and
- the individual must be given career counseling and information and referral to other resources for services to assist the individual in attaining competitive integrated employment by an entity that does not have a financial interest in the individual's employment outcome.

Transition planning should include local and regional agencies that can help a student access supports beyond secondary school by providing essential information about the process for applying for community-based long-term services and supports through Medicaid waiver and non-waiver services, Social Security disability benefits, affordable community-based housing options, workforce services and transportation options. Transition planning should clearly

address student and family concerns about maintaining benefits, including health benefits, while the student pursues work and/or school.

Successful transition planning can only be accomplished when each student and his or her parents have the information, knowledge, skills, and access to supports and services that empower them to fully participate in the process of planning the student's future. The whole community, including families, schools, businesses, employers, health care providers, public service agencies, and other stakeholders, must work together to identify, locate, and share resources to assist in promoting successful post-school outcomes. It should be the local education agency's responsibility to make information and education available to students and families regarding how to effectively participate in transition planning, including resources regarding how to secure an independently facilitated transition plan and resources to connect with others with personal experience. Students should have the opportunity to identify and select the participants in their transition planning processes.

Fragmentation of the various service delivery systems results in the provision of inadequate, untimely, and/or inappropriate services and costly duplicative efforts. Coordination among young adults and their families, local education agencies, outside agencies, and others on information sharing, flexible scheduling, and the timeline for plan implementation is essential to ensure successful transition from school to adult life.

The Council supports the position that providing effective transition planning and services for young adults with disabilities is beneficial for each community and the entire state. Students with disabilities who become employed enrich the diversity of our communities, rely less on publicly-funded services, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community's economic base.

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