

Transition to Adulthood: Who Plans and Why

The special education transition planning team develops the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) lists required and additional IEP team members.

Takeaways from this handout:

- The student's role is essential, regardless of the disability.
- Parents must be invited to transition IEP meetings until the child reaches the age of majority.
- The IEP team must include specific school staff.
- Additional people may be invited to be part of the transition team.

The following is a description of who is involved in the transition planning process and why their role is important.

The student's role in the transition process is essential regardless of the student's disability. Although the student's attendance at the meeting is not required, it is the student's own dreams and goals that guide decisions about which transition services are needed. If your child does not attend the meeting, the team still needs his or her input. What can parents do to make sure the team involves the child?

- Have a discussion with your child about his or her **hopes and dreams** for the future. Ask, "What are your strengths? What skills do you think you still need to learn?" Either the parents or child may share this information with the team.
- Use the checklists found in the Resource Library at pacer.org/transition to identify your child's **strengths, needs, preferences, and interests** before attending a meeting. Either parents or child may share this information with the team.
- Help **prepare your child to attend** the IEP meetings. It will be easier for your child to participate in the meeting if he or she is prepared ahead of time. Some students will be able to participate in their IEP meetings more than others. While some may choose to lead the IEP meeting, others may find it helpful to prepare a PowerPoint presentation with the help of school staff to communicate their strengths and goals to the team.

Parents must be invited to the IEP transition meetings and informed prior to the meeting that the discussion will involve transition issues. Parents know their child best and remain important members of the IEP team until their son or daughter reaches the **age of majority**, which is 18 in most states (know what age your state has set). Once the student reaches the age of majority, he or she assumes the rights of the parental role and can invite the parents to the IEP meeting. The school is no longer required to invite the parents unless they have become legal guardians of the adult child.

Parents provide knowledge about their child's interests and medical history, as well as information about their child's experiences at home and in the community. Long after the last teacher or therapist has disappeared from your child's life, you will be there to support and encourage your child. **Your active participation as a member of his or her IEP team will help ensure that your child receives the education he or she needs and deserves.**

Although parents are equal members of the IEP team, it's not unusual to feel somewhat intimidated by the many professionals at the meeting. It may be helpful to remember that your role is critically important because of the following factors:

- You are the **expert** on your child. Your in-depth, ongoing relationship provides you with a wide-angle view. Professionals often see the child through the lens of their particular area of expertise.
- Parents are the **only continuous members** on a child's IEP team. You know what has worked and what hasn't worked over time. You will be the one constant factor through multiple transitions at school and in life. Professionals will change from year to year.
- The parent is the IEP team member who **represents and advocates solely for the individual child**. School personnel are responsible for many children and must be concerned with meeting all of their needs.
- You are the keeper and communicator of **high expectations** for your child. You are the one who cares the most about your child.

The team must include specific **school staff** including at least one **special education teacher of the child**, at least one **regular education teacher** if the child participates in general education classes, and a **qualified school district representative**.

Special education teachers have received teacher training specific to particular areas of disability and are licensed in one or more special education categories. This teacher is often assigned the role of IEP manager who is responsible for coordinating the delivery of special education services and serving as the primary contact for the parent and student. Special educators contribute to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provide current information, research, student assessment, and progress reporting data to guide the team in making IEP decisions
- Make recommendations about individualized learning strategies, teaching methodology, and effective accommodations in the classroom, home and community.
- Help regular educators adapt their teaching techniques and individualize or modify curriculum in the classroom
- Locate alternate teaching materials, assistive technology devices, and other needed resources
- Assist the team in finding ways to include the student in all aspects of the regular school program, including extracurricular activities

A regular education teacher must participate if the child participates in general education classes. Regular education teachers contribute to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provide information about the student's participation, performance, progress, and interaction with their peers in the regular classroom
- Share information about the general curriculum
- Identify areas of concern and help determine appropriate positive behavioral interventions and supports and other strategies for the child to be meaningfully included in the classroom
- Identify needed training, materials, or other classroom support teachers may need in order to help the student benefit from classroom instruction
- Make recommendations about individualized learning strategies and effective accommodations to be used in the classroom and school community
- Suggest ways parents can reinforce learning

A qualified school district representative is a required team member. This person is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, and must be knowledgeable about the general curriculum. The district representative contributes to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provides information regarding service options available in the school district
- Commits agency resources to ensure that services in the IEP will be provided as agreed upon by the team

Additional people may be needed, based on the needs of your child.

- When tests, assessments, or new evaluations are being discussed, a school staff person who can interpret the results is required to be at the meeting.
- Other school staff may include transition staff, guidance counselor, work coordinator, and service learning coordinator.
- With the parent's permission (or student's permission after the student reaches the age of majority), the school must invite a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. This might include a county social worker, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, postsecondary school staff, and medical or related service providers.
- Parents or the student may invite anyone to be on the IEP team who has knowledge or special expertise about the student, such as family, friends, a mentor, or people in the community.

For more information on the **parent role** and **age of majority** visit PACER.org/Transition.

