

Transition Planning and the Role of Stakeholders in Education, Employment and Independent Living of Students with Disabilities

Dr. Arjun Prasad

Special Educator, Department of Hearing Impairment, Faculty of Special Education

Dr. Shkuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow

Email: drarjunprasaddsmru@gmail.com

Abstract: Transition in special education means preparing students with disabilities to smoothly transition from school to life beyond adulthood, including smooth and successful transitions to job training, independent living skills, and social skills. Transition planning is a planned process that begins at age 16 and prepares students for the future according to their abilities and interests. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2004 mandates transition planning for all youth with disabilities. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created for each student in special education, which includes a transition plan. The IEP team consists of the student, parents, teachers, and other professionals. The transition services section of the IEP is a long-term individualized plan that addresses future goals in at least three areas required by IDEA, 2004: education/training, employment/job, and independent living. In transition planning for students with disabilities, students, schools and families all play important, interrelated roles. This article seeks to understand transition planning for students with disabilities, highlight key areas and the roles of students, schools and families in its development, and offers suggestions for developing a good transition plan.

Key Words: Transition Planning, Special Education, Students with Disabilities, Job Training, Independent Living, Social Skills, Education and training, Employment and Job etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The word 'transition' means a change or transformation from one state, condition or stage to another. It is a process in which something or someone moves from one form to another or from one level to another. It can also be a continuous process and occur in multiple areas. Transition in education means moving from one educational environment to another or from one level to another, such as from home to pre-school, pre-school to primary school or from education and training to employment or job. During transition, students have to adjust to new environments, new teachers, new classmates and new rules and expectations. This process can be stressful for students, especially if they are struggling socially, emotionally or academically. Transition in special education means preparing students with disabilities to smoothly transition from school to life after adulthood; including smooth and successful transitions to job training, independent living skills and social skills. It is a planned process that begins at the age of 16 and prepares the student for the future according to their abilities and interests. In short, transition in education is an important process that affects the academic and personal development of students. To facilitate this process, teachers, parents and students need to work together. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2004 mandates the need for a transition plan for all youth with disabilities. Its purpose is to facilitate the student's transition from school to after-school activities.

2. The Main Objectives of Transition Plans:

Transition plans are required in IEPs for students ages 14 to 22. When a student turns 16, transition plans should include measurable goals and the transition services needed to meet those goals. The purpose of a transition plan is to ensure that each youth with a disability receives smooth and timely assistance to prepare for adulthood so that they are supported to achieve their outcomes appropriately. Each youth with a disability is involved in the process, expresses their thoughts and wishes, and has as many choices as possible about what outcomes they want to achieve in the future and how they will be supported. Parents or caregivers of each youth with a disability are involved as partners in the

process, and have clear and early information about how the transition process works and what options may be available to the youth with a disability, and adult services receive adequate advance notice of youth with disabilities whose needs they will be responsible for meeting, so that timely financial and other plans can be made.

Importance of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for Transition:

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed for each student in special education, which includes a transition plan. The IEP team consists of the student, parents, teachers, and other professionals. The team develops a transition plan based on the student's needs and interests. This plan is designed to help the student achieve their goals and succeed in the future. Transition planning is federally mandated for students who have an IEP. Transition planning begins with the first IEP that is in place when the student turns 16, or at an earlier age as deemed necessary by the IEP team. In order for the student to achieve his or her measurable after-school goals, the IEP includes a description of the transition services that will help the student transition from high school to the adult world.

Main Functions of the Transition Team:

Once transition planning begins, the roles of special education teachers, students, and families change. A transition team performs a number of functions; such as: Identifying the student's vision for life after high school. Discussing what the student is currently able to do in both academic and functional areas; identifying age-appropriate, measurable goals. Establishing services designed to enhance strengths and identifying necessary accommodations. Defining each transition activity on the IEP, who is responsible for the activity and when each activity will begin and end.

Transition Areas for Disabilities:

The transition services section of the IEP is a long-term individualized plan that addresses future goals in at least three areas required by IDEA 2004- education/training, employment/jobs, and independent living. The first one is transition to education and transition. In transition to education/training, students with disabilities are prepared for higher education, vocational training or employment. A student who is planning to go to college is given information about college preparation, application process and financial aid by the IEP team. In this, preparation is done for transition in two forms, first from special education to mainstream education and second higher education and vocational training. Under special education to mainstream education, adaptations and support are provided to the school and teachers according to their specific needs to transfer students with disabilities from special education to mainstream education and under higher education and vocational training, students are provided the necessary support and guidance to successfully complete their studies and training to enter higher education or vocational training. Second is transition to employment and job. In this type of transition, students with disabilities are helped in social skills, self-awareness and self-management. A student who plans to take up a job is taught about job skills, interview skills and workplace etiquette. They are provided with vocational training, skill development and job search assistance to prepare them for employment or self-employment. After employment, they are assisted in making necessary adaptations to make the workplace accessible to them. They are also provided with social security and financial assistance; such as assistance in getting pension and other benefits. Third is transition to independent living. It prepares students with disabilities to live independently, manage their health and well-being, and actively participate in the community. A student who plans to live independently is taught how to run a household, budget and participate in the community. They are provided with access to social activities, transportation and housing to enable them to participate more actively in the community. To help those individuals live independently, they are provided with housing, personal assistance and other necessary services; also ensuring their access to health services, including rehabilitation services. Efforts are made to protect the legal rights of persons with disabilities and to prevent discrimination against them.

Role of Students, Schools, and Families in Transition Planning:

In transition planning for students with disabilities, students, schools, families, societies, non-governmental organizations and governments all play important, interrelated roles.

(I) Role of the Students: Students with disabilities must clearly articulate their needs, preferences, and goals and advocate for themselves in the transition process. They must actively participate in setting realistic and achievable goals for their future in further education, employment, or independent living. Students need to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for adult life, including academic skills, vocational skills, and social-emotional skills. Students must be aware of the resources available to them and how to access them; such as vocational rehabilitation services, disability support programs, and postsecondary education options. Transition planning should begin early; ideally in middle school or even earlier, to allow adequate time for preparation. Schools should develop individualized transition plans that are tailored to each student's specific needs, strengths, and goals.

(II) *Role of the Schools*: Schools should provide instruction and training in relevant areas such as career exploration, job skills, independent living skills, and financial literacy. Schools should collaborate with community organizations, businesses, and other agencies to provide students with real-world experiences and opportunities. Schools should actively involve families in the transition planning process through regular communication, workshops, and opportunities for input. Schools should create a welcoming and supportive environment for students and families, and promote open communication and collaboration.

(III) *Role of the Family*: Families should actively participate in the transition planning process, attending meetings, providing input, and working with school staff to develop and implement the plan. Families should be provided with information about the transition process, including available resources, legal requirements, and after-school options. Families should advocate for their child's needs and ensure that the transition plan takes into account their child's goals. Families should provide support at home by reinforcing skills learned in school, creating opportunities for practice in real-life situations, and promoting independence. Families should provide emotional support and encouragement to their child as they move toward adulthood.

(IV) *Role of the Society*: Society has an important role to play in the transition of persons with disabilities into social life. Society must actively work to ensure equal opportunity, access and participation for persons with disabilities. This includes improving access to education, employment, healthcare and social services, as well as eliminating prejudices and discrimination. Society needs to raise awareness about disability and develop a positive attitude towards persons with disabilities. Facilitate access to public places, transport, and information so that persons with disabilities can participate in society without any barriers. Provide quality education to children with disabilities and employment opportunities to adults with disabilities so that they can become self-reliant. Conduct social awareness campaigns and provide legal protection to eliminate discrimination and prejudices against persons with disabilities. Promote community-based rehabilitation programs so that persons with disabilities can actively participate in their communities. Support the rights of persons with disabilities and involve them in the decision-making process.

(V) *Role of the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)*: NGOs provide essential services to persons with disabilities such as education, vocational training, healthcare and rehabilitation. They provide persons with disabilities with the skills and knowledge necessary to live independent lives and actively participate in the community. They advocate to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including reforms in laws and policies to ensure they are inclusive and protective. Advocate for equal opportunities and rights for persons with disabilities, such as access to education, employment and public services. Challenge misconceptions about disability by conducting public awareness campaigns and using the media. Work to make public areas, transport and services more accessible. They run initiatives and campaigns to remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Also work to make public transport more accessible to persons with disabilities; Organize community activities and support groups to promote social inclusion and reduce stigma about disability. Provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in community life and build social networks. Focus on capacity building of persons with disabilities and their families. Educate persons with disabilities about their rights, help them make decisions about their lives, and provide them with the skills needed to become self-reliant. Also provide persons with disabilities with the support and resources they need to actively participate in community life.

(VI) *Role of the Government*: The government has an important role in the transition of persons with disabilities. The government provides special education programs, assistive devices and accessibility in school buildings to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities; Provides scholarships and financial assistance for higher education and vocational training. Conducts skill development and vocational training programs for persons with disabilities so that they can become self-reliant. Provides assistive devices at concessional rates or free of cost; Establishes rehabilitation centers that provide medical, vocational and social rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities. Under some schemes, the government provides health insurance coverage for persons with disabilities; Provides reservation for persons with disabilities in government jobs. Provides skill development training to persons with disabilities and helps them in getting employment. Encourages making workplaces accessible to persons with disabilities. Provides pension and other social security benefits to persons with disabilities and runs various social security schemes. It works to create a safe and inclusive environment and conducts campaigns to increase awareness in society about persons with disabilities; Makes laws and policies to protect their rights. It also promotes research and development related to disability.

Important Tips for Creating a Transition Plan for Students with Disabilities:

Transition planning for students with disabilities involves a collaborative process focused on preparing them for adulthood. It includes assessing their strengths and needs, setting realistic goals, developing action plans, and providing ongoing support. The process should be individualized, person-centered, and involve the student, their family,

and related professionals. Initial and comprehensive assessment of students with disabilities should begin early. Transition planning should begin well before the student leaves high school. Identify the student's skills, interests, and challenges related to higher secondary education, employment, independent living, and community participation. Use a variety of formal and informal methods for identification rather than relying on just one assessment. Set clear and measurable goals for education, employment, and independent living. Involve students in setting goals that reflect their interests and aspirations. Break down long-term goals into smaller, achievable annual goals. Identify specific steps needed to achieve each goal. Set realistic timelines for completion of each step. Provide guidance and support throughout the process. Encourage students to play an active role in their IEP and transition plan. Involve families in the planning process and provide them with resources and support. Involve teachers, counselors, therapists, and other relevant professionals. Provide specialized instruction and training in areas such as academic skills, job readiness, and independent living skills. Connect students with relevant agencies for assistance with employment, housing, transportation, and other needs. Provide follow-up support and monitoring after the transition to adulthood. Review the transition plan annually or more frequently as needed. Update the plan based on student progress, changing needs, and new opportunities. Recognize and celebrate student accomplishments throughout the transition process.

2. CONCLUSION:

In short "Transition" is a continuous process for individuals with disabilities in which a variety of supports and services are provided to facilitate their participation in education, occupation, and social life. A transition plan helps students with disabilities prepare for their future. It helps students develop self-confidence and independence. It helps students actively participate in the community. It helps students achieve their goals and lead successful lives. An IEP is created for each student in special education, which also includes a transition plan. The IEP team consists of the student, parents, teachers, and other professionals. This team develops a transition plan according to the student's needs and interests. This plan is created to help the student achieve their goals and succeed in the future. An IEP for transition addresses future goals in three essential areas- education/training, employment/jobs, and independent living.

REFERENCES:

1. Blackbory, J., & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal postschool outcomes for youth with Disabilities: Findings from the national longitudinal transition study. *Exceptional Children*, 53, 507-514.
2. Cronin, M., Patton, J., & Lock, R. (1997). Transition planning for students with special needs. In T.F. Harrington (Ed.), *Handbook of career planning for students with special needs*. (2nd ed., pp. 319-353). Austin: PRO-ED.
3. Getzel, E., & Defur, S. (1997). Transition planning for students with significant disabilities: Implications for student-centered planning. *Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities*, 12(1), 4-14.
4. Nisbet, J., Covert, S., & Schuh, M. (1992). Family involvement in the transition from school to adult life. In F.R. Rusch, L. DeStefano, J. Chadsey-Rusch, L. A. Phelps, & E. Szymakski (Eds.), *Transition from school to adult life: Models, linkages, and policy* (pp.407-424). Sycamore, IL: Sycamore Publishing
5. Storms, J., O'Leary, E., & Williams, J. (2000). *Transition requirements: A guide for states, districts, schools, universities, and families*. Minneapolis, MN: Institute on Community Integration
6. Timmons, J., Whitney-Thomas, J., McIntyre, J., Butterworth, J., & Allen, D. (2004). Managing service delivery systems and the role of parents during their children's transitions. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 70(2), 19-26.

Websites:

- <https://www.edutopia.org>
- <https://www.ecac-parentcenter.org>
- <https://ldaamerica.org>
- <https://lesley.edu>
- <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>
- <https://nottinghamshirecs.trixonline.co.uk>