

Transitioning out of high school into the “real world” can be a very stressful and emotional time for both students and their families. There is a lot of information to be aware of when planning for your child’s life after high school and it is never too early to get started. This booklet was created to assist families and students with the necessary information for our area in terms of planning, identifying services and agencies, employment, postsecondary education and independent living, and much more.

Introduction: Secondary Transition Planning for High School Students and Families

The purpose of special education is to prepare children to lead “productive and independent adult lives to the maximum extent possible.” IDEA 2004 (c)(5)(A)

For youth with disabilities, planning is needed in order to prepare them to leave high school, progress into adulthood, and meet their employment, educational and independent living goals. In order to determine the student’s needs, the team (parent, student, administrator, case manager, general education teacher, other service providers) will gather data from age-appropriate transition assessments. The team will also need to determine how the student will progress in the general education setting along with coordinating “transition services” needed to assist the students in meeting their goals.

Based on Minnesota Statute 125A 08(b)(1), schools are required to address transition needs in planning a child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and course of study during 9th grade. A student’s plan must address the transition needs with regard to postsecondary education, training and employment. When appropriate, the plan may also address independent living which includes community participation, recreation and leisure, and home living skills. The following components are a required part of the IEP.

Measurable Postsecondary Goals: Goal statements of what the student wants to do following high school graduation in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and independent living, if appropriate. Goals can be broad visions to start, but by the student’s senior year, the goals should be more specific in each of these areas:

Employment: Unpaid training, supported with a job coach, competitively paid or military

Postsecondary Education: 4 year college or university, 2 year college, technical training, vocational training, military, apprenticeships, on the job training (OJT), Job Corps, independent living skills training, adult day training program

Independent Living: Adult daily living, money management, personal care, communication, transportation, transportation, safety, interpersonal skills

Transition Services: They are a coordinated set of activities designed to focus on improving the academic and functional achievements of the student to facilitate movement from school to post-school living. Transition services include:

Courses of Study: The purpose is to provide the student with opportunities and experiences that will give them the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they will need in order to achieve their measurable postsecondary goals.

Activities that Show Coordination: These can include instruction (general education, modified or specialized instruction, career or technical classes), related services (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, mental health, county, Vocational Rehabilitation Services), community participation, the development of employment, and other post-school adult living and daily living skills.

What is the Transition Process?

Prior to grade 9, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a student with a disability will focus primarily on the student's educational and functional needs and what services the school will provide to help the student make educational progress. In the ninth grade (or earlier if the IEP team decides it is necessary), a student's IEP changes to include long-range planning to meet goals for a student's life after high school. This process is what is commonly called "transition planning," which continues to include a focus on education and functional needs. As a parent, you will be asked to provide information about what your child is able to do within the home and community. You may also be asked to complete a survey or inventory of their strengths and needs.

Parents need to be aware that the transition process is guided by federal and state special education law. This means that there are specific requirements for IEP team participation, assessment, creation of measurable postsecondary goals, and links to adult services that might benefit a student. The process involves helping students identify their vision for their future, and it expands the role of parents and families.

For more detailed information on the transition process as it relates to your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) please refer to the Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families: A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School at this link:

<http://www.pacer.org/publications/MDE-Toolkit-2013.pdf>

Attaining a County Social Worker

County social service departments provide programming that promote independence, productivity, and community inclusion. They may also provide services, such as semi-independent living services, vocational services, and medical assistance. County social workers can also play a part in the transition planning process for students. They can assist in coordinating services and accessing funding for needed adult programming.

Depending on the type of disability your child has, the process for acquiring a social worker can begin at any age; however, it is encouraged to apply by age 14 when schools are beginning the transition process. If students have a developmental/intellectual disability, this process can begin during early childhood (birth on up). If and when a county social worker is acquired, inviting them to IEP meetings is very helpful for programming.

To begin the process, you must contact an intake worker. Ask for an intake worker for the type of services you are requesting: adult services, mental health or developmental disabilities. In order to qualify for a Developmental Disabilities (DD) social worker, individuals must have an intellectual disability with an IQ score of 70 or below. Other impairments that may also qualify for services even when an IQ score is higher than 70 may include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Autism, or other developmental disabilities. Mental health social workers work with individuals with a medical mental health diagnosis obtained by a Psychiatrist, Ph.D. Psychologist, or Clinical Social Worker. Finally, some individuals with health impairments or other physical disabilities may qualify for adult services in the disability unit.

Applying for a county social worker can be done at no cost to the family. Students who are 18 or older and do not have a legal guardian can apply for a social worker without getting parental consent. Below is the contact information for the surrounding counties. To access update information or additional counties within the state of Minnesota go to:

<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-assistance/child-care/contact-us/contact-us-a-to-z.jsp>

Local County Health and Human Services Departments

County	Address	Phone Number
Douglas	Douglas County Social Services 809 Elm Street, Suite 1186 Alexandria, MN 56308	320-762-2302 1-844-204-0012
Grant	Grant County Social Service Department 28 Central Avenue South Elbow Lake, MN 56531	218-685-8200
Douglas County Contracted Agency	Lakes and Prairies Community Action 715 11th Street North, Suite 402 Moorhead, MN 56560	877-773-5778
Otter Tail	Otter Tail County Human Service Department 535 West Fir Avenue Fergus Falls, MN 56537	218-998-8150
Pope	Pope County Family Services 211 East Minnesota Ave, Suite 200 Glenwood, MN 56334	320-634-7755
Todd	Todd County Social Services 212 2nd Avenue South Long Prairie, MN 56347	320-732-4500

Transitioning to an Adult

The age of majority for all students is 18. For a student receiving special education, this means they will now have certain legal and educational rights and responsibilities previously held by their parents. Reaching the age of majority impacts more than just educational and due process rights in special education. Students reaching majority age also have the following rights:

- Receive notice of and attend IEP meetings
- Consent to re-evaluation
- Consent to change in placement
- Request mediation or a due process hearing to resolve a dispute regarding their evaluation, identification, eligibility, IEP, educational placement, or other issues

Reaching the age of majority can be an exciting time for students. However, transferring rights to those who are unable to make informed decisions or take responsibility for their choices can carry several risks. Questions may arise of whether your child will be able to recognize when an educational or due process decision needs to be made, the possible options in decision-making, and the consequences around those decisions. During the discussion of transfer of student's rights at the age of majority (prior to student's 17th birthday), it may benefit the team to share information about guardianship, especially if there is concern about whether a student is capable of making his or her own educational decisions.

Guardianship:

Advocacy and Resource Center for People with Disabilities (ARC) has issued a position paper on guardianship and conservatorship that states: "The appointment of a guardian is a serious matter involving the limitations of a person's independence and rights. When guardianship is appropriate, it should be sparingly used and adequately monitored by the legal system and legal advocates to insure the best interests of the individual are protected."

When does an adult need a guardian? When the individual lacks the understanding or capacity make or communicate reasonable personal decisions, and whose behavior shows that they are unable to meet personal needs for medical care, nutrition, clothing, shelter, or safety even when appropriate technological assistance.

What does guardianship entail? Guardianship provides care, comfort, and maintenance needs (including food, clothing, shelter, health care, social and recreational requirements, and appropriate training, education, and habilitation or rehabilitation).

Who can apply to become a legal guardian? Most commonly, family members become legal guardians for an adult over the age of 18. However, other individuals can certainly apply. The process usually included a home visit and court hearing. A guardian appointed by the court is considered an officer of the court and is under the control and direction of the court at all times. The court makes decisions to appoint a guardian based on the vulnerability in handling personal decisions, finances, property, etc. of the individual. The state may also appoint a public guardian if there is not a friend or family member who volunteers to act as a guardian.

Voluntary Alternatives to Guardianship:

Not all adult children with disabilities need nor should be under guardianship. There are alternatives to guardianship that can provide additional support to adults with disabilities without affecting their independence. When parents seek guardianship over their children, they must be prepared to explain what alternatives they looked at and whether their children only need help in making decisions in some areas, i.e. financial decisions.

Why parents should first consider alternatives to guardianship?

- Allows the person with a disability to get support for what they need and puts them in control now, and in the long run.
- Is less restrictive than guardianship
- Allows the person with a disability to cancel or change these arrangements more freely

What are some voluntary alternatives for personal needs? Health Care Declaration (Living Will), Advanced Psychiatric Directive, Individual and/or Family Plan, Case Manager Plan, Health Care Facility Plan.

What are some voluntary alternatives for financial needs? Banking Options, Power of Attorney (POA), Trusts, Social Security representative payee.

What does conservatorship entail? Conservators have court-ordered authority and responsibility to manage the affairs of those who can no longer make their own decisions about finances or health care. If a court appoints someone to take care of financial matters, that person is usually called a “conservator of the estate”, while a person in charge of medical and personal decisions is a “conservator of the person.” An incapacitated person may need just one type of representative or both. The same person can be appointed to take both jobs. Both types of conservators are supervised by and held accountable to a court. Generally, conservatorships are established for people who are in comas, suffer from advanced Alzheimer’s disease, or have other serious illnesses or injuries.

More information pertaining to guardianship and conservatorship can be found on the Arc West Central website: <http://www.arcwestcentral.org/>. You can contact Arc West Central at 218-233-5949 or 1-800-411-0124 or the Douglas County Court Administrator at 320-762-3033 or 320-762-3882.

Know the Laws, Rights, and Responsibilities

Graduation from high school triggers many changes for students with a disability and for their parents. This guide can help you successfully navigate these unfamiliar waters. Once your child graduates, the regulations and protections found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer apply. Students now enter the world of adult services, which may have unique eligibility requirements, unfamiliar language, multiple entry points, and the possibility of

long waiting lists. In preparation for transition, both parents and their youth need to become familiar with disability rights laws and responsibilities that might impact postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

The “responsibilities” part is important. Many civil rights laws require a person with a disability to inform others of their disability before protections must be put into place. For example, a person must disclose a disability to an employer at, or before, the point of a job offer if he or she wishes to be protected from unlawful firing. Students with disabilities should be given opportunities to learn about the laws that protect them and to practice disclosing their disability when appropriate.

Numerous laws provide rights and protections in the United States in such areas as employment, postsecondary education, independent living, health care, housing, communications, and transportation. Here are some of the most significant:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is the most comprehensive federal civil rights law protecting the rights of people with disabilities. It impacts access to employment, state and local government programs and services, and telecommunications. It also requires that public spaces, businesses, and transportation be accessible to people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

This milestone federal disability rights law authorizes state vocational rehabilitation programs, client assistance programs, independent living centers, and civil rights protections. It also makes it unlawful for entities receiving federal funding to discriminate against a person based on a disability. This is commonly referred to as “Section 504.”

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA is landmark federal legislation that is designed to strengthen and improve our nation’s public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. This is the newest legislation that helps to determine whether or not a young adult is to be part of the workforce or not and to what capacity they will participate.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act

This federal law helps individuals with developmental disabilities live in their communities as independently as possible. It provides for access to home care and personal care assistance, support in applying for public benefits, and some housing and employment assistance.

Social Security Programs Youth and adults who are not able to support themselves through employment may be eligible for assistance from the federal Social Security Administration (SSA). Social Security programs provide a limited amount of financial assistance and health care coverage to individuals with disabilities who meet eligibility requirements.

The Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988 This is the primary federal law that covers housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin against a tenant, potential tenant, or potential housing buyer.

Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) Enacted in 1967, MHRA is a Minnesota state law that protects people against disability discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public services, public accommodations (including private businesses, commercial facilities, and transportation companies), education (including public and private schools), credit, and reprisal or retaliation.

Overview of Post-Secondary Educational Models

Technical Colleges:

Admission is open to anyone who has earned a high school diploma, holds a General Education Diploma (GED), or is able to successfully prove their ability to benefit from enrolling. Different technical programs have different standards in reading, writing, and math which must be met before the student is allowed to enroll. These standards are usually measured by taking the ACCUPLACER. Depending on the students results on the ACCUPLACER and the standards of their program of interest, some students may be required to take developmental/remedial courses before enrolling in a chosen program. The following degrees are offered: Associate in Applied Science (AAS), Associate in Science (AS), diploma programs, and certificate programs.

Apprenticeships:

Programs offer young adults a career pathway that provides employment as they learn on the job. People who successfully complete a program become journey level workers. Apprentices are guaranteed a wage as they progress. Employers generally bear the costs of the program. Apprentices may begin at 16 years of age, but minimum age for most is 18. Many apprenticeship programs are suitable for people with a wide range of abilities. "Certificate of Training" credentials allow individuals to be recognized for a specific set of skills, allowing people with and without disabilities to move laterally or upward within a specific industry. Vocational Rehabilitation Services is an agency used to assist people with disabilities to enter such programs. They may provide additional training, resources ie. appropriate work attire, or a job coach. Some people may require additional training prior to qualify for an apprenticeship. This training can fall under two categories: basic skills needed to qualify for the occupation and general work readiness that provide the employee with the "soft skills" needed to be successful in the apprenticeship and future employment. Career One-Stop can help you further explore this option at: <https://www.careeronestop.org/>.

2-Year Colleges:

Any student who has earned a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) can apply for admission. Standardized tests and high school grades or class ranking are not part of the admission requirements. However, students will be required to take a placement test, most

likely the ACCUPLACER, to determine the appropriate classes based on reading, writing, and math skills. Students have a better chance to do well if they have taken the required academic courses in high school. Students may have to take developmental courses that will not count toward a degree before taking college-level courses if they do not test high enough on the placement test. There are disability coordinators available on campus to assist with accommodations and accessibility to content as needed. A student needs to reach out to the disability coordinator to receive these accommodations and accessibility. It will be beneficial to have a copy of their last Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Evaluation Report from their last year of high school to assist with providing information about their educational needs.

4-Year Colleges:

Admission is stricter and varies slightly. Checking with the specific university is always recommended. Most times, colleges are looking for a student who graduated in the top half of their class or earned a specific score on the American College Test (ACT) or Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). If a student does not meet the minimum requirements, they may still be considered under specific provisions. Students considering a 4-year college are encouraged to take the following classes in high school: 4 years of English/Language Arts, 3-4 years of math (up to Algebra 2), 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, 2 years of foreign language, and a year of arts (band, choir, drama). Remember, requirements vary and students need to be sure to research for your specific college. There are disability coordinators available on campus to assist with accommodations and accessibility as needed.

Private Institutions:

The entrance criteria for 4-year private schools vary depending on the school. Typically, these are areas most often considered: high school grade point average (GPA), ACT or SAT score, class rank, letters of recommendation, and personal essay/statement. Students are encouraged to explore the requirements for the specific school they are interested in and the requirements for that school.

Disability Coordinator

Colleges do not provide accommodations until they are requested. Students with a disability are responsible for requesting services for supports from the campus disability coordinator. Planning ahead is critical to ensure for the proper delivery of services. It is recommended that the student meet with the disability coordinator to discuss services received in the past and the procedures for setting current services. It would be beneficial to have a copy of the most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Evaluation Report. Most institutions require documentation of a disability, which can be in the form of this paperwork provided from the students' high school, psychological evaluations, or medical documentation. Disability coordinators will then design and implement accommodation plans to meet the individual needs of a student. It is the student's responsibility to inform their disability coordinator of upcoming assessments that require accommodations in order to ensure class/instructor timelines and expectations are met.

Accommodations are arranged on a case-by-case basis and services vary between institutions. This is a representation of the most common.

Note takers	Early registration
Extended test time	Quiet testing area
Enlargements	Readers
Audio formats for textbooks	Interpreters
Audio recordings	Assistive Technology
Scribes	Closed captioning

Postsecondary Models for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, *Intellectual disabilities are characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills that originates before the age of 18.*

Three Main Types of Postsecondary Education Models

Mixed/hybrid model: Students participate in social activities and/or academic classes with students without disabilities and also participate in classes with other students with disabilities (sometimes referred to as life skills or transition classes). This model typically provides students with employment experience on or off campus. An example of this would be a student who attends the Transition Center, through Alexandria Public Schools, and participates in classes at Alexandria Technical and Community College at the same time. The employment support could be provided by the Transition Center or by Vocational and Rehabilitation Services depending upon student needs.

Substantially separate model: Students participate only in classes with other students with disabilities. Students may have the opportunity participate in generic social activities on campus and may be offered employment experience, often through a rotation of pre-established employment slots on or off campus. An example of this is a student attending the Transition Center as their only post-secondary option.

Inclusive individual support model: Students receive individualized services (educational coach, tutor, technology, natural supports) in college courses, certificate programs, and/or degree programs for credit or audit. The individual student's vision and career goals drive services. There is no program base on campus. The focus is on establishing a student-identified career goal that directs the course of study and employment experiences, such as, internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning. This is built on a collaborative approach via an interagency team that includes agencies like adult services, generic community services, and the college disability support office. These agencies identify a flexible range of services and share the costs that are associated with programming.

Postsecondary Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Institution	Location	Phone Number	Web Address
Bethel University: Build Program	St. Paul, MN	(651) 635-8799	www.bethel.edu/academics/build/
Central Lakes College	Brainerd, MN	(218) 855-8000	www.clcmn.edu/program-majors/occupational-skills-diploma-2/
Concordia University Wisconsin: Bethesda College of Applied Learning	Mequon, WI	(262) 243-2183	www.cuw.edu/about/offices/bethesda.html
Edgewood College: Cutting Edge Program	Madison, WI	(608) 663-2340	www.edgewood.edu/admissions/cutting-edge-program
Minnesota Life College	Richfield, MN	(612) 869-4008	www.minnesotalifecollege.org
Minot State University: Adult Student Transition Education Program (ASTEP)	Minot, ND	(800) 233-1737	www.ndcpd.org/astep/
Ridgewater College	Willmar, MN	(320) 222-8041	https://www.ridgewater.edu/academics/areas-of-study/occupational-skills/
Shepherds College	Union Grove, WI	(262) 878-6365	http://www.shepherdscollege.edu/

Regional Postsecondary Educational Institutes

To learn more about Minnesota state and community colleges, please visit www.mnscu.edu

Contact a disability coordinator at the following area colleges for more information:

Institution	Phone Number	Web Address
Alexandria Technical and Community College	(320) 762-4600	www.alextech.edu
University of Minnesota, Morris	(320) 589-6035	www4.morris.umn.edu
Minnesota State Community and Technical College-Fergus Falls	(218) 736-1500	www.minnesota.edu/fergus-falls
Saint John's University, Collegeville	(320) 363-2011	www.stjohns.edu
Ridgewater College, Willmar and Hutchinson	W: (320) 222 5200 H: (320) 234-8500	www.ridgewater.edu
College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph	(320) 363-5011	www.csbsju.edu/about/college-of-saint-benedict
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes	(218) 846-3700	www.minnesota.edu/detroit-lakes
St. Cloud Technical Community College	(800) 222-1009	www.stcc.edu
St. Cloud State University	(320)308-0121	www.stcloudstate.edu
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena	(218) 631-7800	www.minnesota.edu/wadena
Central Lakes College Brainerd	(218) 855-8000	http://www.clcmn.edu
Central Lakes College Staples	(218) 894-5100	http://www.clcmn.edu
North Dakota State School of Science	(800)-342-4325	www.ndscs.edu
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	(800) 658-2330	www.mnwest.edu

Postsecondary Enrollment Timeline

During 9th grade:

- Learn about your disability and be able to explain it to others.
- Learn what accommodations are and which will help you to be successful.
- Know how you learn best; investigate and understand your learning style
- Begin career exploration; take career aptitudes and interest inventories.
- Learn to be organized, independent and manage your time.
- Participate in extracurricular activities, both athletic and non-athletic.
- Actively participate in your IEP meeting.

During 10th grade:

- Begin to explore colleges, including programs, degrees, entrance requirements, and graduation requirements.
- Take classes that will prepare you for college.
- Practice requesting your own accommodations.
- Actively plan you IEP meeting with your case manager; speak on your own behalf at the meeting.
- With the help of your case manager, investigate other service providers that you can contact for assistance after graduation.
- Build your resume; continue involvement in your school's activities and participate in volunteer work.
- Talk with the counselor about college, career choices, and preparing for entrance exams.
- Continue career exploration activities (skill inventories, career aptitude, and career investigation).

During 11th grade:

- Narrow your career choices and match them to college programs.
- Invite outside agencies that provide assistance after graduation to your IEP meetings, ie. vocational rehabilitation services, social worker/mental health worker, center of independent living, probation officer).
- Understand "the age of majority" statement in your IEP and what it means.
- Assist your case manager in planning and running your IEP meeting and in writing your IEP.
- Explore assistive technology that might be helpful in college.
- Practice "self-determination" skills- learn when, how, and if to disclose your disability to others.
- Talk with the counselor about scholarships, financial aid, and college options.
- Take the ACT or SAT or the student assessment test (ACCUPLACER) in the spring.
- Take the Armed Forces ASVAB test- an excellent career aptitude activity.
- Continue to build your work, activities, and volunteer resume.
- Begin visiting college campuses.

- Plan to visit several schools by contacting the disability services coordinator for arrangements.

During 12th grade:

- Begin a “graduation File” to keep copies of all information about you that will be needed during the year. Contents will vary based upon your goals, but if you are going to college, the following categories would be necessary:
 - College applications
 - Disability verification and accommodation
 - Scholarships
 - Financial aid
 - Other agency contacts
 - Letters of recommendation
 - High school records
- If necessary, retake ACT, SAT, or ACCUPLACER in the Fall.
- Complete college applications, generally in the fall. Most are completed on-line, and the earlier you complete them the better. Be sure to check college websites for deadlines.
- Applications are not free. Generally they cost \$20 or more, but the fee may be waived if you have financial need. Have someone proofread the application before submitting and keep a paper copy in your file.
- Apply for scholarships. You do not have to be an honor student to get a scholarship. Many are based on participation or volunteering. Some are related to your parents’ employment or racial heritage or your disability.
 - Talk to the counselor about ones appropriate for you.
 - Search the web. There are sites that will send you scholarship information based on questions you complete. You should never have to pay for this search; the good ones are free.
 - Keep copies in your file.
- Apply for financial aid. Even if you do not qualify for grants or loans, you will probably have access to work-study programs.
 - Talk to your counselor. They can help you complete a free federal financial aid application called FAFSA. It is the fastest to complete the application online. Parents must include their income tax information so it cannot be completed before February.
- Visit the college before you accept admission and contact the disabilities service coordinator.
- Make your senior year as close to college as you can:
 - Take challenging academic classes without modification.
 - Use only accommodations available at college and use them only upon request by you.
 - Be able to explain your disabilities and describe accommodations that work best for you.
 - Be accountable for timelines and due dates.

- Run your IEP meeting.