



Transition to Adulthood for Youth with Challenging Behaviors: Transition Planning Tips for Parents

A successful transition to adulthood for a teen who has a mental health, emotional, or behavioral challenge can be addressed through the transition Individualized Education Program (IEP). Minnesota law requires that transition planning begins during ninth grade at the latest for students with disabilities who receive special education. The services that must be addressed to prepare them for post high school life include: employment, postsecondary education and training, and, when appropriate, independent living, which may include recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living.

While parents expect the IEP to address academic areas of need, they may not have considered that there may be other important transition skills needed for successful employment, postsecondary education, and independent living.

The following questions and checklists may help you and your teen better identify transition goals, accommodations, and related services to prepare for a successful transition to adulthood.

Employment

Interviewing, finding a job and going to work every day may seem like a distant goal, but the transition IEP can help prepare your teen with mental health, emotional, or behavioral needs to plan for future employment. The following questions may help your son or daughter learn how their interests, dreams, skills, and needs relate to employment possibilities, and help the IEP team create goals towards successful employment.

1. What are my interests and hobbies?
2. What can I do well?
3. What do others say that I do well?
4. What is challenging for me to do?
5. What kinds of jobs have I already done?
6. What do I like about my work experiences (paid, unpaid, and volunteering)?
7. What don't I like about my work experiences (paid, unpaid, and volunteering)?

Checklist of other things to consider in choosing employment:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I like to work with people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I like to try new things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I like to be active |

- I am always on time
- I am organized
- I can complete tasks independently
- I know how to ask for help when I need it
- I can accept feedback on my work
- I can be flexible
- I know what to do when I am feeling the symptoms of my disability (anxious, depressed, uncertain, angry, fearful, etc.)

Statements that are checked “no” may be areas to address in the IEP.

Postsecondary education and training.....

Students with mental health, emotional, or behavioral needs who are preparing for postsecondary education and training need to identify certain factors before deciding on a program to help them reach their goals. These questions may help you and your teen in finding the right educational or training option, and can be included as goals in the transition IEP.

1. What are my academic strengths? (reading, writing, math)
2. What are my academic challenges? (reading, writing, math)
3. What supports work for me to be successful at school (breaks, friends, trusted adults, modified assignments, testing accommodations, high interest classes, technology, etc.)?
4. Do I know what classes I need to take in high school to help prepare for my future goals?
5. Do I know what postsecondary education or training programs my teachers and school counselors recommend for my areas of interest?
6. Am I on track with my credits to graduate on time?
7. Do I know what kind of school (college, technical school, vocational school) I want to attend after graduation?

Checklist of other things to consider:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I am able to get to classes on time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I am organized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I can communicate effectively with my teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I can follow timelines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know how to ask for help when I need it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know what accommodations I will need to help me learn (extended time on assignments, projects, tests or quizzes, assistive technology, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I know how to manage my emotional needs (anxious, depressed, uncertain, angry, fearful, etc.) |

Independent living:

Most young adults want to live independently. For a teen with mental health, emotional, or behavioral needs, living independently is more than just finding a place to live. It also means understanding how to create and sustain a healthy lifestyle, how to manage medical and support services, and how to connect to positive community activities. These questions may help you and your teen determine what kinds of help they need so that they can live as independently as possible and include them as transitional goals in the IEP.

1. What kinds of housing options interest me after high school? Do I know what is available? (Living at home with my parents, living in an apartment, living alone with support services, using subsidized housing, etc.)
2. What supports, if any, would I like if I were to live alone? What do I know about how to take care of myself? (Do I know how to pay my bills, how to cook, keep a clean house, take care of my clothes, stay safe, manage transportation needs, etc.?)
3. Do I need help staying healthy? Do I know what kinds of supports might be available to me from the county? (Adult mental health and vocational rehabilitation services and supports?)
4. Do I know how to be involved in my community? (What kinds of resources are in my community that interest me, such as theatre, music, community education programs, clubs, and hobbies, and how do I connect to them?)

Checklist of things to consider:

Yes No

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I get along easily with people (peers and other adults) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I make friends quickly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I can keep friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do I get angry easily and have trouble settling down? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Am I impulsive? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do I know how and who to ask for help when I need it? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can I keep track of my medical needs? |

Conclusion

The transition to adulthood can be a difficult time for youth and a scary time for parents! The transition IEP can be an important step towards helping your son or daughter be successful in reaching their goals towards adulthood. **PACER Center** has other informational resources and supports to help you during this exciting time at PACER.org/Transition and PACER.org/cmh.

Additional resources

Sednet - The Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

paec.org/wp_paec/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Transition-and-Childrens-Mental-Health.pdf

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD)

ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-24

Minnesota Public Radio

www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/09/12/422870122/for-students-with-mental-health-issues-the-transition-to-college-is-complicated