

TRANSITION SERVICES IN HIGH SCHOOL

WHAT IS A VISION?

The first step in transition planning is creating a **Post-Secondary Vision**. The Vision is a statement of what the student wants for their life after high school.

This statement should include areas like:

- further education
- employment
- independent or supported living
- community supports and engagement, and recreation.

It is important to remember that this is the **individual's vision** and should reflect what they want for their own life. This is different from a traditional IEP where the goals are set by the school team. The student should be highly involved in the development of this vision, and the vision will likely change over time as the individual continues to grow and develops new interests and skills.



Transition Planning in School

Starting at age 14, schools in Massachusetts are required to begin working with their students on **Transition Planning**, or planning for life after the student leaves the public school system. Students with disabilities can stay in the public school system until **they turn 22 or receive their high school diploma**, whichever comes first.

KEY PARTS OF TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition Planning Form (TPF)

The main document involved in transition planning is the student's **Transition Planning Form (TPF)**. This form is an action plan that outlines the post-secondary vision, disability-related needs and skills, and an action plan to achieve the vision.

Schools are required to complete this form and update it every year as the student's plans and needs change. The TPF should be written as a **collaboration between the school, the family, and the student** so that it is individualized and true to the student's goals. Collaborating on the TPF also ensures that everyone involved is on the same page in terms of understanding what the student wants for his/her future and how he/she will be prepared by the school, family, service providers, and others in the community.

Transition Assessment

Schools should be conducting age appropriate **Transition Assessments** during transition years to measure students' skills, interests, abilities, and progress. Assessments may be formal or informal, and they provide schools with information about a student's functioning and abilities related to different areas, and highlight areas of strength as well as skills that need to be developed.

Some Formal Assessments:

- living skills assessments
- aptitude tests
- interest inventories
- employability tests
- transition planning inventories

Some Informal Assessments:

- direct observation of the student,
- interviews and questionnaires
- information-gathering from academic performance (i.e., how well a student is doing in school subjects and in which areas they excel or need extra help).

Important Notes about Schools and Transition

- * The goals and action steps laid out by the TPF will not necessarily be accomplished while the student is still in the public school system; it is a long term plan for the future and separate from the IEP. The TPF does not replace the IEP, but should be used to guide discussions about IEP goals and objectives.
- * Schools should use transition assessments in setting IEP goals and objectives, developing programming, and helping students make connections between what they are doing in school and their Post-Secondary Vision. Parents should ask about what assessments are being used for their child. If there are specific, individual formal assessments being done, schools are required to obtain parental consent to perform the assessment.



IEP Goals and Meetings

From the time a student turns 14 until they turn 22 or graduate from the public school system, all IEPs should be transition-focused and related to the student's Vision and preparing them for life after public school.

IEP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Changes in IEP Focus

- **Before Age 14:** IEP focuses mostly on academic, social, and emotional skills
- **After Age 14:** Keep academic skills, especially if the student is planning to go on to higher education, but also include vocational (job) and independent living skills

Creating IEP Goals and Objectives

Schools should be using the Transition Planning Form (TPF) as well as Transition Assessments to guide decisions about IEP Goals and Objectives so that the IEP is truly individualized. It is important to remember that while the TPF outlines the student's future when they leave school, the IEP details what the school will do to help prepare the student for this future while they are still in school. The Post-Secondary Vision statement from the TPF should be copied exactly into the IEP.

MEETINGS

Also starting at age 14, students are allowed and encouraged to attend their IEP meetings. While students are not required to attend the meeting, they should be included on the official invitation list and encouraged to participate in any way that is appropriate and possible. For example, students may wish to speak about their goals and experiences, write an essay, do some artwork or a visual presentation, design invitations to the meeting, make introductions at the meeting, etc.

While transition planning should be considered and discussed at every meeting starting at age 14, it can be a good idea to ask for a **transition-specific meeting** to discuss the TPF if this is possible for the family and school team. If an additional meeting is not possible, parents can send some information out to the team ahead of time (e.g., a first draft of the TPF, or something that the student has prepared), and should ask that the TPF be discussed at the beginning of the meeting while everyone has the time and energy to address it properly and fully.

AGE OF MAJORITY

In Massachusetts, the Age of Majority is 18 years old. Once an individual turns 18, he/she is legally an adult and the decision-making rights change from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to the student.

This means that an **18-year-old student can make all decisions about his/her special education**, including whether or not to accept an IEP, whether or not to use services provided by the school, and even whether or not to stay in school until age 22. The school is required to obtain consent from the student when he/she turns 18 to continue using the current IEP.

However, there are certain cases in which these rights do not transfer:

1. The student has a **court-appointed legal guardian** who will make educational decisions.
2. The student **chooses to share** educational decision making with his/her parent(s) or other willing adult(s).
3. The student **chooses to delegate** (assign) educational decision making to his/her parent(s) or other willing adult(s).

If the student chooses share or delegate decision making, this choice must be documented in writing and witnessed by representatives of the school district, and the student may change his/her mind and revoke the parent/adult's right to make decisions at any time.

Chapter 688 Referral

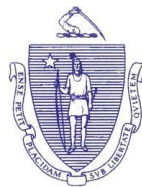
The **Chapter 688 referral** is a referral to an adult service agency that can provide support to an individual with a disability if they are found eligible. The school will decide which agency would be the best fit for the student, but for most people with autism and/or intellectual disability, the referral will go to one of the following agencies:

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) provides employment support and services, such as vocational training and assessments, job coaching, practice interviews, assistance with finding and filling out job applications, etc. These services are targeted at finding and securing a job for the individual and are meant to be short-term (e.g., until the individual has a job).

Department of Developmental Services (DDS) provides services in the areas of employment, residential, daily living, and family support. Services may be in the home or out in the community, and the amount/type of services and funding will vary depending on the impact of individual's disability on his/her daily life. DDS services are long-term, and the agency can pick up cases or services from MRC if/when MRC services end.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- * Chapter 688 is **only a referral**, so that the agency gets a sense of who will apply for services. Families still need to apply to the agency after the referral has been submitted.
- * Only one Chapter 688 referral will be submitted per student, but individuals can be found eligible for both DDS and MRC services at the same time. It is a good idea for families to **also apply** to the agency not covered by the Chapter 688 referral.
- * Once someone has been approved for services, the case will be picked up by an agency coordinator who will write an **Individual Support Plan (ISP)**. This plan details what services the agency will provide and how they will provide them.
- * After age 22, adult services are **no longer an entitlement** like they are in the public school system. This means that not every person with a disability may be eligible for or receive services, and that while the agency will do its best to create and carry out a comprehensive service plan, it may not be able to meet every need/request.



Department of
Developmental
Services



Getting a High School Diploma

A student is eligible for a high school diploma when he/she meet two sets of criteria: the Competency Determination (CD) standard (set by the state) as well as all local graduation requirements (set by the school/school district). In most cases, public school supports and services end when the student receives a diploma, even if the student is not yet 22, so families should work with the school to make the best decision for the student. Schools should write the anticipated "graduation" date (date student will either receive a diploma or age out) on the IEP.



COMPETENCY DETERMINATION (CD STANDARD)

In Massachusetts, the CD standard is based on MCAS testing. Students must achieve the following:

1. **English Language Arts and Mathematics:**
 - A score of **240 or higher (Proficient)** on the ELA and Math 10th grade tests *OR*
 - A score of **220-238 (Needs Improvement)** on the ELA and Math 10th grade tests and fulfill the requirements of an **Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)**, which includes the student's strengths and weaknesses, courses in grades 11 and 12, and annual assessments to show that the student has met proficiency standards in the subject area that are typically measured by the MCAS.
 2. **Science and Technology/Engineering:**
 - A score of **220 or higher (Needs Improvement)** on one high school STE test in biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering.
- *Note: In some cases, a passing score on the **MCAS-Alt portfolio** may suffice for the CD standard, but this is rare.

LOCAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Local graduation requirements are the courses/subject areas required by the school or school district that students must take in order to receive their diploma. These requirements vary between schools or districts and may be adjusted based on the student's needs/abilities.

As an example, the graduation requirements for East Boston High School are:

- 4 ELA/ESL courses
- 4 Math courses (1 advanced algebra & 3 math)
- 3 Science courses (2 biology/physics/chemistry & 1 elective)
- 3 History courses (2 US history & 1 world history)
- 2 World/Native Language courses (in same language)
- 2 PE/Health courses
- 1 Art course
- 1 Computer course

DIPLOMA ALTERNATIVES

HiSET (Formerly the GED)

Individuals who are able may consider taking the **HiSET**, which has replaced the GED as the high school equivalency test. However, to be eligible for the HiSET test-takers must not be enrolled in a secondary school, so students will need to wait until after age 22 to take the test.

Certificates

If the student does not meet the standards and/or requirements for a diploma, he or she may receive a **Certificate** acknowledging attendance, course completion, achievement, and/or participation.

Ceremony

Students may also be able to participate in a graduation ceremony even if they do not receive a diploma. This is often called a **Social Graduation**.

HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Vision Statement

- Work with your adolescent to create a Post-Secondary Vision statement. This can be as simple or as complex as you'd like, but should be personal and cover the major aspects of your adolescent's future.

Transition Planning

- Work with your adolescent and the school team to fill out the Transition Planning Form.
- Update the TPF every year to reflect growth and changing interests.
- Ask about the Transition Assessments being done for your adolescent and how they are being used to set goals.

Meetings

- Make sure your adolescent is on the official invitation list for his/her IEP meetings. Encourage him/her to attend and participate in the meetings.
- Request a pre-IEP transition meeting to discuss transition planning and goals.
- Start IEP meetings with discussions about transition planning.

Age of Majority

- Look for the Age of Majority notice from the school. Decide how your family will make educational decisions (check one).
 - Guardianship:** You are or will become your adolescent's legal guardian so you will make the decisions.
 - Shared Decision-Making:** You and your child will make decisions together and you will both sign off on these choices.
 - Delegated Decision-Making:** You and your child talk about education choices, but you will make the decisions on his/her behalf.

Chapter 688

- Find out from the school to which agency they are referring your adolescent (likely either DDS or MRC). Submit an application to that agency.
 - For DDS:** Fill out the DDS Adult application found at: mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/awp/dds-elig-app-child-adult-eng.pdf
 - For MRC:** Call the main information line at 1-800-245-6543 or your Area Office (mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation/locations) and speak with the receptionist about your referral.
- Apply to the agency not covered by the Chapter 688 referral.

Diplomas and Graduation

- Find out when the school expects your child to leave school (this should be written on the IEP). Make sure you agree with this decision and that your adolescent will be prepared to leave school at that time.
- If your adolescent will not receive a diploma, decide what (if any) diploma alternative is right for him/her.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Creating the Vision and Transition Planning Form

- doe.mass.edu/sped/28MR/28m9.pdf
- doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/goals-example-sheet.pdf
- fcsn.org/newsletter/2014/summer-2014/transition-vision

Transition Assessment and IEP Goals

- youth-move.org/transition-basics/measurable-postsecondary-goals
- thearcofmass.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A3-T-assessments.pdf
- doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2014-4ta.html
- doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/goals-example-sheet.pdf
- doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/transition-assessments-example-sheet.pdf
- ncdcdt.org/wp/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/DCDT_Fact_Sheet_age_appropriate_Transition_Assessment.NSTTAC.pdf
- fcsn.org/linkcenter/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2017/08/dese_transition_assessment_brochure_web-sm.pdf

Chapter 688 Referral

- doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688/
- doe.mass.edu/sped/28MR/28m11.pdf
- *DDS application*: mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/awp/dds-elig-app-child-adult-eng.pdf
- *MRC Area Offices*: mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation/locations

Age of Majority

- fcsn.org/linkcenter/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2017/08/dese_student_ieps_brochure_web-sm.pdf
- doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/11_1.html

Diplomas/Graduation Requirements

- doe.mass.edu/ccr/epp/qa.html
- doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html
- ebhsjets.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=213722&type=d&hideMenu=1
- hiset.ets.org/test_takers

Photo Credits:
willmarlakesarea2040.com/?page_id=88
specialneeds.com/legal-and-trustees/autism/iep-goals-children-autism
yvcc.edu/admission/highschool-options/PublishingImages/Grad.JPG
mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dmr/reports/family-support/family-support-directory.pdf
dcucenter.com/default/cache/file/FFA8FC7A-5056-9000-03D601672BBC70AC_thumbnail.jpg