

Post-Secondary Transition

(Over Age 13)

When your child turns 13, the school district is required (in CT) to begin thinking about the student's transition from school to adult life. This means that at the PPT following your child's 13th birthday, the PPT needs to discuss what plans might need to be made to move him/her toward independence. Initially, this is done through making long-term goals on courses of study that might be appropriate (for example, his course load may look very different if he/she will be considering college, technical school, or a job). It may involve some formal or informal assessments on career preferences, and might include a 'MAPPING' or 'FUTURES' planning session. This type of planning involves in-depth discussion about the student's likes and strengths, dislikes and weaknesses, past experiences, future dreams, desires, and long term goals. AN IEP can then be drawn up to include goals and objectives that fit in with the individual student's profile. From the time a student turns 15, or younger if deemed appropriate, there need to be goals and objectives specifically targeted to four areas included in the IEP. These areas are:

- Ü Postsecondary education (i.e. college, adult ed, technical school, etc)
- Ü Employment (i.e. job coaching/supported employment, job shadowing, internships, etc.)
- Ü Independent living (i.e. safety skills, money management, hygiene, etc.)
- Ü Community participation (i.e. voting, recreation, transportation skills, etc.)

Each year's IEP should include some transition planning from at least the age of 13. The student is now considered to be a member of the planning and placement team, and will receive an invitation to attend the IEP meetings. It can be decided, however, that it is not appropriate for the student to attend the entire meeting, or not at all. It would not, for instance, be advisable to have the student attend a meeting that is contentious, and/or in which his/her weaknesses will be the focus. It may also not be recommended if the student's presence will keep staff or parents from being honest with their comments for fear of being hurtful, or if the student would be very uncomfortable with the meeting format. The student should, however, be given a chance to have their ideas included, and this can be done in many ways, including an interview with a teacher he/she feels comfortable with, or

being asked to provide a list of things they would like to accomplish or things that were not successful in the past. The student should, in some way at least, feel that they are a part of the decision-making team, and that their concerns or desires are important to the plans being made for him/her.

Students can graduate when they complete their academic requirements (usually at age 18). However, students with disabilities should also have completed the transition goals and objectives that are included in their IEP. If the student has completed their academic requirements, but have not yet completed their transition goals and objectives, he/she can continue to receive services provided by the school district until they have fulfilled their IEP requirements up to the age of 21. In other words, a student is not required to graduate with their peers just because their academic course load is completed, and also is not required to remain in academic classes after his/her course load has been met just to receive the continuing transition services. For example, if a student has completed all of their coursework but has had no job training, the school district can continue to pay for these services until his/her goals have been met without the young adult having to sit in a high school classroom. These decisions are made by the planning and placement team on an individual basis.

Many professionals involved with students on the autism spectrum suggest that these individuals receive transition services at the earliest possible opportunity, and that social skills, independence skills, and community participation be a major focus of the goals and objectives that the student will be working toward. It is also suggested that since individuals on the autism spectrum have difficulty generalizing skills from one place to another, that they be taught as much as reasonable in the actual setting in which he/she will need to use the skills. For instance, if the student needs to learn to use public transportation that instruction should take place on a public bus or train, not in a classroom.