Transition planning is a coordinated set of activities which promote a student’s movement from high school to postsecondary education or employment and independent living. Transition planning is based on the individual student’s interests, strengths, and needs. As a federal mandate, transition planning requires that all students age 16 years and older with individualized education programs (IEPs) have individualized transition plans. However, transition planning should begin at much younger ages, and transition planning need not be limited to students with IEPs.

The transition planning process is collaborative and team-based, involving the student and family, transition facilitator, and other school staff. The values and guiding principles of transition planning are similar to those of systems of care, wraparound supports, and person-centered planning. As part of transition planning, the team will:

- Conduct age-appropriate assessments (e.g., interest and life skill inventories).
- Set appropriate and measurable goals related to school, training, education, employment, and independent living skills.
- Base all goals on the student’s strengths, preferences, and interests.
- Identify the course of study and experiences (e.g., community and vocational) needed to prepare the student to achieve his or her goals. The course of

**WHAT WORKS**

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WHAT WORKS: TRANSITION PLANNING

What works: transition planning

Study should be relevant to the student’s future goals and motivate the student to complete his or her education.

- Engage the student’s family throughout the process and coach them in supporting their child’s goals and transition to independence.
- Develop a clear transition plan that contains all of the elements above, and details the steps needed to assist the student in reaching his or her goals. The plan specifies start and end dates and who has primary responsibility for each step.

The transition period for youth with emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD) is particularly critical. Studies consistently show that youth with EBD are at high risk of dropping out of school, experience difficulty in getting and maintaining employment, and have high rates of arrest and incarceration. For youth with EBD, excellent transition planning beginning in middle school is effective in breaking these bleak cycles and helping youth make a successful transition to adulthood. While transition planning promotes independence, the overarching goal is interdependence. Youth learn to function independently (e.g., maintain a job, budget, cook) while participating in a healthy community where they both receive from and offer support to others. The RENEW model for youth-directed planning is a best practice example of effective transition planning for youth with EBD.

SOURCES