



Frequently Asked Questions:

How Can the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Help Me Transition Beyond High School?

What Is the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that requires schools to provide free public education to students with disabilities. This education must fit each student's needs, which means schools may need to provide:

- **Special education:** Includes extra help from a teacher or changes to the curriculum.
- **Services:** Includes transportation to school, speech therapy, or technology to help students communicate or learn.
- **Job training and preparation:** Includes services to help students train for a job, prepare for college or vocational school, and live independently.

These services are listed on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

How Can This Law Help Me Prepare for Life After High School?

If you live in D.C. and are over 14 years old, your IEP should include services that will help you find a job, continue your education, and live independently. These services are called "transition services." If you live outside of D.C., your IEP should include transition services by the time you turn 16. Transition services may include:

Finding a job

- After-school job training.
- Internships or part-time work in a field you're interested in.
- Connecting with mentors.
- Researching jobs, filling out job applications, and creating resumes.

Continuing school

- Help researching and applying for college or apprenticeships.
- Help applying for training programs, like mechanics, plumbing, hospitality or cosmetology.
- Help applying for financial aid.

Living on your own

- Training on meal preparation.
- Courses on empowerment and advocacy.
- Coaching on finding housing or accessing disability benefits.



Does This Law Apply to Me?

- The IDEA applies to students with disabilities who are 3 to 21 years old. In D.C., the law applies until you turn 22 or receive a regular high school diploma. If you have an IEP, the law should apply to you.
-

When am I eligible for transition services?

- **In D.C.:** You're eligible if you're between 14 and 22 years old and do not have a high school diploma.
 - **Outside D.C.:** You're eligible if you're between 16 and 21 years old.
-

What should my transition plan be based on?

The transition plan in your IEP should be based on your goals for life after high school and the services you need to meet those goals. Every year, you and your IEP team should develop goals around:

- What type of work do you want to do after high school?
- What kind of education or training do you want?
- Where do you want to live?
- How do you want to participate in the community?

Transition Assessments and IEP meetings

To help you decide on your goals and the services you need, your school should:

1. **Transition assessments:** Give you a test or a survey to help figure out your strengths and needs. These tests are called transition assessments.
2. **Discussing goals and interests:** Teachers or counselors should talk to you about your goals and interests.
3. **IEP meetings:** You will have a meeting with your school about your IEP to discuss your goals and the services you will need to achieve them. Your school should include you in these meetings.



What Should The Transition Plan in My IEP Include?

Your IEP's transition plan should include:

- The results of your transition assessments.
- Your goals for education, work, community participation, and independent living.
- A description of the services you will receive to help you reach your goals.
- The courses you will take to help you graduate and achieve your goals.

Goals in your IEP: Your IEP should have:

1. **Long-term goals** for work, education, and life after high school.
2. **Short-term goals** for what you want to accomplish during the school year to help you reach each of your long-term goals.

Examples:

- Long term goal: After graduation, I will work as a chef or cook in a restaurant.
- Short-term goal: I will join a food-service training program that meets twice a week for ten weeks.

Your plan should be unique to you. It should be challenging, realistic, and helpful, and based on your needs. Schools should not provide the same services to all students with disabilities.

What Happens After We Develop My Transition Plan?

You should receive the services, training, and support listed in your transition plan. If a school does not provide these services, it may be violating the law.

What Can I Do If I Have Questions or Think My Rights Have Been Violated?

You have options:

- Talk to your IEP team to see if you can resolve the issue.
- Contact the [D.C. Office of the Ombudsman for Education](#). They may be able to help you talk to your school.
- Seek legal help by contacting the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs at justice@washlaw.org or (202) 319-1000.