

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Penn*Link

TO: School District Superintendents
School District Special Education Directors
Intermediate Unit Executive Directors
Intermediate Unit Special Education Directors
Charter Schools Chief Executive Officers
Charter Schools Special Education Directors
Career and Technical Education Center Directors

FROM: Patricia Hozella, Director
Bureau of Special Education

SUBJECT: Secondary Transition and Postsecondary Education and Training

To best prepare youth in Pennsylvania to compete in today's complex global economy, students must be equipped with the skills needed to contribute meaningfully to their communities. For all, it will mean learning about themselves and the world of work. For many, this will mean completing some postsecondary education or training.

However, individuals with disabilities are less than half as likely as individuals without disabilities to obtain a postsecondary degree. Low enrollment and retention rates are often associated with the following two factors: 1) the lack of preparation for students with disabilities to meet the entrance requirements and academic rigor of postsecondary institutions, and 2) the lack of encouragement for youth with disabilities to extend their education beyond secondary school. Critical factors in postsecondary school success and retention of individuals with disabilities also includes understanding how to access appropriate supports and accommodations. Preparing students with disabilities for adult life, including postsecondary education, training, or employment, needs to begin while youth are still in school.

Chapter 14 regulations require that beginning at age 14, students receiving special education services must also have secondary transition planning as part of the IEP process. The term "transition services" as referenced in IDEA 2004 means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (a) is designed to be within a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation; (b) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (c) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. 20 U.S.C. 1401(34) and 34 CFR §300.43(a).

In order to provide better secondary transition planning that is focused on post-secondary and vocational education, educational staff are encouraged to work directly with local colleges and universities to learn more about the educational programs offered, including inclusive educational options for individuals with disabilities while still in high school.

To assist in this process, refer to the following resources:

Think College | College Options for People with Intellectual Disabilities

<http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

D.R.E.A.M Partnership | Options for Postsecondary Education in Pennsylvania

<http://dreampartnership.org/>

Additionally, youth, families and education staff are encouraged to review the resources available on the Postsecondary Education and Training section of the Pennsylvania Secondary Transition Guide website: www.secondarytransition.org.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Maria Mardula, Bureau of Special Education Transition Coordinator, at mmardula@pa.gov or 717.783.6137.