

With about 300 postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disability across the country, more students are college-bound than ever before. The goal of high school and transition planning is to prepare students with intellectual disability for life after high school. How can Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams help prepare students for success in college? Use the checklist and related resources below to guide the selection of transition goals and activities that will likely be key factors in making the possibility of college a reality.

IDENTIFY AND EXPLORE OPTIONS

- Are the student and family aware of postsecondary options for students with intellectual disabilities and typical admission requirements?
- Have the student and family toured a postsecondary education program?
- Have the student and family learned about financial planning strategies to help pay for college?
- Has the family been connected to the IDEA-funded Parent Training and Information Center in their state for information and referral to agencies that may fund or provide adult disability services and supports?

Resources

- » [PACER web page on Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)
- » [Engaging Parents in Conversations About College-Based Transition Services](#)
- » [Conducting a College Search: Questions to Ask College Programs](#)
- » [College Planning Timeline](#)
- » [Federal Financial Aid for Students with Intellectual Disabilities](#)
- » [Achieving a Better Life Experience \(ABLE\) Act: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

PROMOTE HIGH EXPECTATIONS, INCLUSION, AND INCREASED INDEPENDENCE

- Is the IEP process student-focused with a foundation of strengths-based transition assessment?
- Do all members of the IEP team have high expectations for post-school training and employment?
- Is the student participating in inclusive classrooms, clubs, and community-based activities while in high school?
- Have the student and family been exposed to mentors or other individuals with disabilities that are participating in inclusive postsecondary education programs or competitive integrated employment?
- Does the student have chores and responsibilities at home and ways to contribute or volunteer at school or in the community?

Resources

- » [Promoting High Expectations for Post-School Success: A "To Do" List for Professionals](#)
- » [High Expectations: A Most Valuable Tool](#)
- » [I Am Thinking College \(Even with My Disability\)](#)
- » [How IEP Teams Can Use Dual Enrollment Experiences to Develop Robust Plans](#)
- » [PACER's Middle & High School Transition Planning Learning Center](#)

UNDERSTAND LAWS, RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Do the student and family understand how the applicable laws change from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act after a student receives their high school diploma*?
- Does the student understand the impact of their disability and the accommodations and supports they need to be successful?
- Is the family aware of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations related to communicating with colleges and other postsecondary programs?
- Does the family understand the transfer of rights that will take place at the Age of Majority and options for their continued involvement on the IEP team?

Resources

- » *The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education*
- » *Communicating with Your Student's College under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*
- » *Understanding the Difference Between High School and College*
- » *Prepare Your Child for Age of Majority and Transfer of Rights*

SUPPORT SELF-ADVOCACY, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND DECISION-MAKING

- Does the student have opportunities to make choices about elective classes, sports, and social activities?
- Is the student being supported to take an increasingly active role in IEP meetings?
- Does the student demonstrate skills to be an informed decision-maker? Does the family support the student in finding the relevant information to make choices? Does the family honor decisions that are made by the student?
- Does the student have knowledge of their disability and self-advocacy skills to request accommodations and voice their needs?
- Have the student and family been given information and training about self-determination? Has the student set goals for their future to “take charge” of their own life?
- Has the family considered the need for supported decision-making, guardianship, or other alternatives?

Resources

- » *How You Can Help Your Child Learn to Be a Good Self-Advocate*
- » *Self-Determination*
- » *Consider the Alternatives: Decision-Making Options for Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities*

ADDRESS ACADEMIC, FUNCTIONAL, AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Does the student use a digital planner or schedule to keep track of homework and activities?
- Is the student able to manage day-to-day tasks and activities?
- Does the student initiate tasks and stick with them?
- Is the student able to use email and social media to communicate with teachers and peers?
- Does the student demonstrate positive social skills including being able to invite others to social events?

* “diploma” is used generically to indicate the document a state provides when the student completes their public education and is no longer eligible for IDEA-funded special education.

- Does the student have a strong work ethic and motivation? Have they been provided opportunities for paid work?
- Does the student have the skills needed to access transportation in the community?
- Does the student have personal hygiene routines and medication management skills?
- Is the student able to make day-to-day expenditures using a debit card? Does the student have a basic understanding of finances including budgeting for expenses?

Resources

- » *Transition Goals and Activities for Inclusive Postsecondary Programs*
- » *The Transition to Independent Living: What Parents Can Do Now*
- » *Skills for Independent Living: Parents Help Build Social Skills*
- » *Skills for Independent Living: Personal Care Skills*

NOTE: This checklist is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. There is no “one size fits all” for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disability. The IEP team will want to use a person-centered approach to consider the unique needs of each individual student. In addition to the PACER and Think College resources provided in each section, we would like to acknowledge and thank Karla Wade, Ph.D. for the use of her publications: “20 Powerful Strategies to Prepare Your Child for Inclusive Postsecondary Education” and “Transition Goals and Activities for Inclusive Postsecondary Programs.”



This brief is a publication of Think College, a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, funded by a grant from the Office of Postsecondary Education (Grant No. P407B100002). The opinions contained in this document are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the funder.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BARB ZIEMKE

Co-Director, PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment

Barb has been a parent advocate and project coordinator at PACER Center for 17 years, specializing in the areas of secondary transition and inclusion. In addition to working with families, she writes training curriculum and presents workshops to parents and professionals. She serves on Minnesota's State Rehabilitation Council and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. Barb has a young adult son with IDD who is successfully learning, living, and working in the community.

For more information, email transition@pacer.org or call the PACER Center at 952-838-9000.

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment is a partner of Think College. We work together to develop materials to help families and others better understand opportunities in postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. This brief was created by PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment and is based on a review of existing guidance documents and discussions with experts in the field.



RECOMMENDED CITATION: Ziemke, B. (2020). Tips for IEP Teams to Help Students and Families Prepare for Inclusive Postsecondary Education. Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.