

## Transition Information: Georgia

### **Timeline**

- *By the age of 14:*
  - The transition portfolio or writing the student's transition IEP should begin when the student is still in middle school, so prior to the start of 9<sup>th</sup> grade or age 14.
  - By the start of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the annual transition meetings should discuss new options for the student and also determine their eligibility and preparedness for the DOL/VR Work Plan (if it is needed).
- *By the age of 16:*
  - Students should be referred to vocational services during their final two years of high school, which is at the earliest at 16 years old.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Georgia is 18)
    - At the age of 17, the student and their parents should be informed of this transfer and consent and a statement of the knowledge of this transfer should be included in the student's IEP.
    - If families and students feel uncomfortable with the transfer of the decision-making abilities to the student, the prospective guardian needs to petition for guardianship at the local probate court.
  - The vocational rehabilitation process should begin at least 2 years prior to high school graduation.
- *Before the age of 18:*
  - Apply for Social Security benefits, Social Security Disability Insurance and Medicaid.
    - If ineligible for Medicaid, look into other health insurance options, as it is likely the individual will no longer be covered by the parents plan after age 19 if not enrolled in college or covered by Medicaid.
  - Add your name to the waiting list for residential placements in the state. Regardless of future residential plans, it is good to be on the waitlist, as these lists can be extremely long, and it is easy to remove your name than it is to add it.
- *At age 18:*
  - Register to vote.
  - Upon an individual's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he or she changes from a system of being entitled to certain rights and privileges to a system of eligibility.
  - Male students should register for the draft, no matter the level of functioning.
  - If applicable, individuals should apply to adult agencies for vocational and day programs, as well as for supported living.
- *By the age of 22:*
  - To achieve a high school diploma, individuals have to complete the integrated curriculum of 23 units of instruction, earning a passing score on the GAA, and at the latest reached their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

## **Starting the Transition Process:**

The transition portfolio or writing the student's transition IEP should begin when the student is still in middle school, so prior to the start of 9<sup>th</sup> grade or age 14. This portfolio should include references, skills, work history and other relevant assessments and information. The transition period is usually between the age of 14 until the student is 22 years old.

The annual IEP meetings should begin when the student turns 16 or enters ninth grade. This IEP would include prospective coursework, other needed transition services and information on the future living and vocational possibilities for the student. From that initial meeting onwards, the IEP needs to be reviewed and changed annually based on the students' interests and desires.

By the start of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the annual transition meetings should discuss new options for the student and also determine their eligibility and preparedness for the DOL/VR Work Plan (if it is needed).

## **Education:**

By high school, the transition IEP should include information on the coursework for the four years of high school and a prospective graduation plan for the student. The student should try and start preparing for any standardized tests and if needed, the GHGT, to get the high school standard diploma. The test and the passing score is the same for both regular students and disabled students.

Students can retake the exam if they fail or petition for an exemption so that they can still get the diploma after taking the exam at least once.

There are a variety of options concerning post-secondary outcomes. There are local colleges and schools that allow disabled students to pursue a less rigorous curriculum. Otherwise, they have the option of receiving vocational training and directly pursuing a path towards employment.

In terms of graduation, if the student is unable to pass the GHGT, but complete all their IEP requirements, they are permitted to receive a special education diploma. After receiving this diploma, they can still continue their studies to earn a high school diploma. To achieve a high school diploma, they have to complete the integrated curriculum of 23 units of instruction, earning a passing score on the GAA, and at the latest reached their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. They could have also transferred to a program where another agency helps the student achieve their IEP goals.

The state does provide minimum requirements for a student to earn a high school diploma, but the LEAs have the option to alter them. Also students are able to use alternate courses to obtain the required course credits.

Students can either get a regular high school diploma, an IEP/special education diploma or a certificate of attendance.

### **Guardianship/Conservatorship:**

The age of majority in Georgia is 18 years old. Because of this, at 18, the student will have all rights transferred to themselves from their parents/guardian. At the age of 17, the student and their parents should be informed of this transfer and consent and a statement of the knowledge of this transfer should be included in the student's IEP. The rights will automatically be transferred on the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

There are a variety of possible legally-approved guardianships if the student is considered to be unable to make their own decisions. Firstly, there is full guardianship, which allows the guardian to make all personal and financial decisions for the student, while the student retains some rights. Limited guardianship allows the individual to have some form of self-determination but still allows the guardian to make decisions for complicated matters, in regards to the disabled individual. There is also temporary guardianship and emergency guardianship.

The decision as to guardianship must occur well before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and must be approved by the state courts. It is helpful if families begin this process around the student's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, especially if they want full guardianship.

More information along with the form to petition for guardianship can be found at: [www.gaprobate.org/guardianship.php](http://www.gaprobate.org/guardianship.php).

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

Students should be referred to vocational services during their final two years of high school, which is at the earliest at 16 years old. It is important to contact a local office in regards to arranging a counselor for the student: <https://gvra.georgia.gov/contact-information>.

### **Social Security:**

Benefits should be applied for before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and then be re-evaluated after the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is also important that the office be contacted well in advance before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to understand that eligibility and application process.

Applicants may apply online or by contacting Social Security directly. Local Social Security offices can be found using SSA's office locator or by calling 800-772-1213.

- *Social Security Administration:* [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)
- *Social Security Benefit Application:* [www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityonline](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityonline)
- *Social Security Benefits for People with Disabilities:* [www.ssa.gov/disability](http://www.ssa.gov/disability)
- *Social Security Office Locator:* <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

## **Housing:**

Georgia Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

[www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ga.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ga.cfm)

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Georgia

<http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/georgia>

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

[www.disability.gov/resource/disability-govs-guide-housing](http://www.disability.gov/resource/disability-govs-guide-housing)

## Georgia Resources

### **Special Education Services & Supports**

Georgia Department of Education

(404) 656-3963

[www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services)

### **Transition Services**

#### **Special Education Services & Supports**

Georgia Department of Education

1752 Twin Towers East

Atlanta, GA 30334

(404) 656-3042

[www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Transition-.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Transition-.aspx)

#### **Georgia Department of Education Transition Manual:**

[www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Sp-Ed-Transition-Manual.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Sp-Ed-Transition-Manual.aspx)

#### **Georgia Transition Councils:**

Parent to Parent of Georgia

<http://gatransitioncouncils.squarespace.com>

#### **Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**

Georgia Department of Labor

(844) 367-4872

<https://gvra.georgia.gov/>

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Division: <http://gvra.georgia.gov/vocationalrehab/>

#### **Career, Technical, and Agriculture Education**

Special Populations

Georgia Department of Education

(404) 657-8304

[www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/)

#### **Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities**

(404) 657-2252

<http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/>