

## Transition Information: Maine

### Timeline

- *By the age of 12:*
  - The student should begin entry level vocational assessment which should continue annually to assess the student's progress.
- *By the age of 14:*
  - The transition planning process should begin at the latest when the student turns 14. The IEP should include transition services and the future plans of the student, created in accordance to the student's needs and desires. It should include post-school outcomes and what adult services the student will need.
  - By age 14, there should be annual IEP meetings to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses and also what skills the student has that will help the transition team make decisions about the student's future.
  - Also at 14, the student should be invited to their IEP meetings and be welcome to participate.
- *By the age of 16:*
  - By 16, the IEP should include annual goals and post-school outcomes. The transition team should determine if the individual will be going to college or finding employment after he or she leaves secondary school.
  - Individuals should get some form of state identification by age 16.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Maine is 18)
    - By the age of 18, the student should be informed as to what is being planned for his or her future and must approve of that particular path.
    - A statement indicating that this information has been understood by the student and their parents should be included in the IEP and the school must explain what the transfer entails.
  - 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.

## **Starting the Transition Process:**

The transition planning process should begin at the latest when the student turns 14. The IEP should include transition services and the future plans of the student, created in accordance to the student's needs and desires. It should include post-school outcomes and what adult services the student will need. By the age of 12, the student should begin entry level vocational assessment which should continue annually to assess the student's progress. By age 14, there should be annual IEP meetings to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses and also what skills the student has that will help the transition team make decisions about the student's future. Also, at this age, the student should be invited to their IEP meetings and be welcome to participate.

## **Education:**

By 16, the IEP should include annual goals and post-school outcomes. The transition team should determine if the individual will be going to college or finding employment after he or she leaves secondary school. The individual should also get some form of state identification. Annually, changes should be made to the student's IEP depending on their progress and their achievement of their annual goals. By the age of 18, the student should be informed as to what is being planned for his or her future and must approve of that particular path.

In terms of high school graduation, the state provides minimum graduation requirements and LEAs may add to them if they feel it is appropriate. There are no special diplomas awarded by the Maine school system besides a standard high school diploma. However, the state does provide certain allowances to help disabled students get their diplomas. For example, they can take alternate courses to meet the credit requirements. They can have extensions to meet those requirements. Any other allowances must be approved and listed in the student's IEP. Maine does not require students to pass a state exit exam to get their diplomas.

The *Maine College Transitions Program* is a comprehensive program that allows high school graduates with disabilities to continue their education in college. This program offers local adult education programs in career planning, data collection, college preparation and a coaching system to help with the social aspects of college. A student will be able to enroll in a normal college curriculum after completing this program within one to two years after he or she begins the process.

If the individual is planning on going to college after leaving secondary school, he or she should complete the required standardized tests at the age of 16 or 17. The individual should also be involved with community activities and if possible, find some part-time or summer employment to prepare them for the rigors of the university environment.

## **Guardianship/Conservatorship:**

The age of majority in Maine is 18 years old. This means that at this age, individuals will receive all rights pertaining to their welfare, education and health from their initial guardians, usually their parents. They should be informed of this transfer well before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, preferably around their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. A statement indicating that this information has been understood by the student and their parents should be included in the IEP and the school must explain what the transfer entails.

If they feel uncomfortable in making those kinds of decisions or if they are considered to be incapable of making those decisions by their families and their school, full or partial guardianship can be considered. The court will appoint a guardian after the petition is filed in court for the guardianship of the student. This needs to be done before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The probate court has to declare the individual as being incapacitated and will therefore appoint someone else to make their decisions for them. It is usually someone from the individual's family but if the judge believes that the family cannot take care of the individual, a person from a public guardianship agency can be appointed. The guardianship can be partial, co-guardianship or temporary. The court will decree the details of the guardianship and what rights both the disabled individual and the guardian have under the arrangement.

If this process seems too strict, the other option is power of attorney. This will be a legal document that delegates specified responsibilities and decisions to another individual. There are also people who can also be specifically responsible for the estate and financial decisions.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, also known as "VR," is a Department of Labor program that helps people who have disabilities to get and keep a job. VR helps people who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. To apply for VR, you need to call your local DVR office to request an application. Find your local office at [www.maine.gov/rehab/offices.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/offices.shtml).

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has independent living service programs and other services that help prepare students for their transition into the working world and independent life. They even have programs for those who are severely disabled, such as their extended support programs.

### **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 Resources:**

Maine Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Maine

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

## Maine Resources

### Maine Department of Education

#### Office of Special Services

(207) 624-6600

[www.maine.gov/doe/specialed](http://www.maine.gov/doe/specialed)

Maine College Transition Programs: <http://mct.maineadulted.org>

### Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Department of Labor

(207) 623-7944

[www.maine.gov/rehab](http://www.maine.gov/rehab)

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: [www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr)

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Services:

[www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/youth transition.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/youth_transition.shtml)

### AccessMaine

A website developed to assist Mainers with disabilities, their families and providers

[www.accessmaine.org](http://www.accessmaine.org)

*Transition Planning Guide for Families of Youth and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities*

*Toolkit:* [www.accessmaine.org/Toolkits/GuideforFamilies/guide.htm](http://www.accessmaine.org/Toolkits/GuideforFamilies/guide.htm)

### Aging and Disability Services

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

(207) 287-9200

888-568-1112 (Crisis Hotline)

[www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/disability](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/disability)