



Transition Information: New Jersey

Timeline

- *By the age of 14:*
 - The transition planning should begin by the time the student turns 14 years old. A transition team should be assembled and families should gather information regarding the strengths and preferences of the student and the possible paths that the student can take towards a specific long-term goal.
- *By the age of 16:*
 - The IEP will go into effect by the time the student turns 16 years old. It should include a statement of needed transition services. The student's IEP should also include information about future instruction and community experiences that will be involved in helping the student achieve their post-secondary goals.
- *Before the age of 17:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in New Jersey is 18)
 - 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 individual should be informed of the transfer of rights that will happen at age 18. Some sort of acknowledgement of the notification should be placed in the IEP by this point in time.
 - 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 18th 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.
- *At age 21:*
 - Special education programs are terminated once the student fulfills their IEP goals or when they turn 21 years old.

Starting the Transition:

The transition planning should begin by the time the student turns 14 years old. A transition team should be assembled at that age to ensure that the IEP is completed before the student turns 16 years old. This team should include the child's parents, teachers from both the regular and special education programs, medical professionals and those who know the student well (e.g. therapists), and representatives from any external agencies that will be providing the student services in the future. There are consent forms that need to be completed to invite other people to the IEP meetings and even to invite the student.

The IEP will go into effect by the time the student turns 16 years old. It should include a statement of needed transition services. Students should be involved in their own transition meetings and should share their preferences and strengths with the transition team. If the individual is not in attendance, his or her wishes should be advocated for and considered during the decision process.

The student's IEP should include information about future instruction and community experiences that will be involved in helping the student achieve his or her post-secondary goals, as well as his or her goals to be reviewed at the annual IEP meetings. These goals should be related to training in vocational skills, preparation for future education and also preparation for independent living through the development of daily living skills.

Education:

When writing the IEP, it is important that assessments are done to see the current levels of skills that the student has both in academic areas, and other areas. With respect to those skill levels, the transition team can create a plan and set goals depending on the position the student is in at the time of the assessments. The IEP should include possible courses that the student will take in the future, and be as specific as possible for every year the individual is in school. It should include preparation for college if that is appropriate including college training. If the student is planning on attending college, it is important that the student completes all the required applications and standardized tests during his or her junior and senior years of high school.

In terms of graduation, the state provides minimum requirements for graduation, but LEAs are allowed to add to those requirements. The state only allows one option for receiving a regular/standard diploma to graduate. Any allowances for those requirements must be approved and included in an individual's IEP. There is a state exit exam required for high school graduation. Students who fail the exam are allowed to retake the same exam or take an alternate exam. There is no state rule concerning participation in graduation ceremonies. This is at the discretion of the local community

and the school, especially if the student was unable to complete the requirements. However, there is no rule that states that someone in the special education program cannot participate in a graduation ceremony. Special education programs are terminated once students fulfill their IEP goals or when they turn 21 years old.

Guardianship:

The age of majority is 18 years old. At this age, the rights to make decisions about education, finance, health services, and all other aspects of life will be transferred from the families of the disabled individual or their legal guardians to the student. The student should be notified of the transfer at least three years in advance. Some sort of acknowledgement of the notification should be placed in the IEP by this point in time. The families and the students should be informed of this transfer and should take the proper precautions and prepare themselves for the transfer.

If families and students feel uncomfortable with this transfer and the total switch of the decision-making abilities to the student itself, guardianship is a possibility. Firstly, the prospective guardian needs to petition for guardianship at the local probate court. Then, a medical professional (physician or psychologist) should state that the person is incapacitated and therefore, incapable of making decisions about their own welfare.

Once all of the petitions and evidence are filed with the court, there will be a hearing where both the guardian and the individual need to be represented by lawyers. Then, a judge and jury will decide whether guardianship is necessary and will specify during the hearing the terms of the guardianship. There are various forms of guardianship, including plenary guardianship and limited guardianship which require the same process. Filing and legal fees are included in this process. For that reason, it is best to start this process as early as the student's 17th birthday so that the process is completed before the student turns 18.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

The New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) provides services that enable individuals with disabilities to find jobs or keep their existing jobs. The type of services that they provide include vocational counseling, placement services, job seeking skills, assistive technology and supported employment and college training to prepare for post-secondary education. These programs can also be integrated into an individual's school curriculum. It is important to begin this during high school to ensure that once the student graduates, they are capable of finding and keeping a job.

Social Security:

Benefits should be applied for before the student's 18th birthday and then be re-evaluated after the student's 18th birthday. It is also important that the office be contacted well in advance before the student's 18th 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
- *Social Security Benefit Application:* www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityonline
- *Social Security Benefits for People with Disabilities:* www.ssa.gov/disability
- *Social Security Office Locator:* <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

Housing Resources:

New Jersey Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/nj.cfm

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in New Jersey

http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/new_jersey

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

www.disability.gov/resource/disability-govs-guide-housing

New Jersey Resources

Office of Special Education Programs

New Jersey Department of Education

(609) 292-0147

www.state.nj.us/education/specialed

Special Education Forms: <http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form>

Transition from School to Adult Life: www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/transition

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development

(609) 292-5987

(609) 292-2919 (TTY)

<http://jobs4jersey.com/jobs4jersey/jobseekers/disable>

Find Your Local Office:

<http://jobs4jersey.com/jobs4jersey/documents/DVRS/DVRSFieldOfficeContactListWithBackups.pdf>

Division of Developmental Disabilities

New Jersey Department of Human Services

(800) 832-9173

www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Transition to Adulthood

www.spannj.org/BasicRights/transition_to_adulthood.htm