

## Transition Information: North Carolina

### **Timeline**

- *By the age of 15:*
  - The transition planning should begin, and the transition part of the IEP should begin to be developed.
  - Information should be gathered as to what coursework might be necessary for the individual to achieve his or her post-secondary goals, based on his or her skills and interests.
- *By the age of 16:*
  - By the age of 16, the IEP should include information regarding community participation, extracurricular activities, detailed post-secondary goals and also any agency participation that is specific to the transition process.
  - By the age of 16, students should be involved in the creation of their transition IEPs and should be invited to the annual IEP meetings to review goals and state their preferences and interests
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in North Carolina is 18)
  - The student should be notified of the transfer of rights at least a year before they turn 18. By the individual's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, a statement of informed consent of this transfer must be placed into the student's IEP, indicating that he or she understands the importance of this transfer and the responsibilities that come with making these kinds of decisions, including medical, financial and educational.
    - 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.

## **Starting the Transition Process:**

The IEP will go into effect when the student turns 16 years old, and this means that the transition portion of the IEP must be started by the time the student is 15 years old, if not earlier. Before the student turns 16 years old, the IEP should include information regarding the prospective course work of the student. After the age of 16, the IEP should include information regarding community participation, extracurricular activities, detailed post-secondary goals and also any agency participation that is specific to the transition process.

Students should be involved in the creation of their transition IEPs and should be invited to the annual IEP meetings to review goals and state their preferences and interests by the time they turn 16 years old. The IEP should include a statement of the student's present levels of educational and skill-based performance, their annual and long-term goals, any school-related or external participation that student will need during the process, any modifications to state-based requirements that the students will need, a projected date by which the student will complete their goals. By the age of 16, the IEP must include a statement of needed transition services for both the educational and non-educational aspects of student's development. This should also be updated annually.

## **Education:**

The North Carolina Department of Education offers various courses of study that are permitted for disabled students to use for various purposes, such as career-related, technical college-related, or university-related futures. There is also an occupational course of study that intends to help small groups of students achieve success in post-secondary employment and independent living. There are different credit requirements for students intending to pursue one of these courses of study.

North Carolina also offers disabled students extensive time accommodations to complete assignments and tests. The state of North Carolina requires all students to complete a state exit exam to receive a high school diploma in a variety of skill assessments, including in computer skills. All students take the same test and have the same passing score. If they fail the exam, they are allowed to retake the same exam twice.

FAPE is provided to all students starting at age 3 until they turn 21, and for disabled students, until they complete their IEP goals or finish their educational programs or at the age of 22 when all services are terminated.

## **Guardianship:**

The age of majority in North Carolina is 18 years old. At the age of 18, the student will have all rights to make decisions about their own welfare transferred to them from their original guardians, or their families. The student should be notified of this transfer at least a year before they turn 18, which means that by their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, a statement of informed consent of this transfer must be placed into the student's IEP, indicating that they understand the importance of this transfer and the responsibilities that come with making these kinds of decisions, including medical, financial and educational.

If families feel that the individual is incapable of making these decisions and the individual is diagnosed by a medical professional as being incapacitated (which must be presented as evidence in court), the families can elect to have a guardian for their loved one.

There are various forms of guardianship: Guardian of the Person, Guardian of the Estate, or a General Guardian. In the case of a guardian of the person or a guardian of the estate, the court elects someone to take care of either the personal care or wellbeing of the individual, or his or her finances and assets. A general guardian is a combination of both of the other forms of guardianship. To begin the process, a petition to have someone declared incompetent must be filed with the court. A legal proceeding will take place in which lawyers representing both the disabled individual and the person looking to become his or her guardian must be present. The judge or jury will decide whether the person needs a guardian, as well as the terms of the guardianship. This process should be started early, at least a year before the student's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

The VR process begins when an application is submitted to the local VR office, and a meeting is arranged with a VR counselor. There will be an application process followed by an interview at which the counselor will have to review the medical and psychological records of the individual to examine the level of the disability, the individual's current skill set, as well as his or her interests in terms of employment. If the individual is eligible, after a preliminary assessment the VR office will develop an IPE or an Individualized Plan for Employment that will determine what needs to be done to help the individual find and keep a job. VR services include guidance, placement, training and also post-employment support. VR counselors can help integrate the training into other treatments or school curriculums and connect individuals to service providers to help the individual achieve his or her vocational goals.

### **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:**

North Carolina Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in North Carolina

[http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/north\\_carolina](http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/north_carolina)

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

# North Carolina Resources

## **Exceptional Children Division**

Public Schools of North Carolina  
Department of Public Instruction  
[ec.ncpublicschools.gov](http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov)

## **North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Department of Health and Human Services  
(919) 855-3500  
(919) 855-3579 (TTY)  
[www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs)

## **North Carolina Division on Career Development and Transition**

(980) 343-2632  
[www.ncdcdt.org](http://www.ncdcdt.org)

## **Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services**

Department of Health and Human Services  
(919) 733-7011  
[www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/disability-services/intellectual-developmental-disabilities](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/disability-services/intellectual-developmental-disabilities)