

## Transition Information: Washington

### **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 appropriate post-secondary goals that are related to the student's future education, independent living and employment.
  - Students should begin to look into Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Washington 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 student should be informed of the pending transfer of rights, and a statement of consent should be included in the IEP. The student should spend that year preparing for the transfer.
  - 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.
- *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 Process:**

The IEP will go into effect when the student turns 16 years old. It should include appropriate post-secondary goals that are related to the student's future education, independent living and employment. It should be in agreement with the student's preferences and therefore, if the student is unable to participate in their own IEP meetings, then, someone should be present at the meeting that will advocate their preferences. At the beginning of the process, the team should identify what the student's learning styles are and what accommodations they will need during the transition process, especially in school. These goals should be determined by a transition team that is assembled when the student is 14 years old and the transition planning process begins. They should be determined by the assessments that the student takes relating to both the level of their academic skills and their functional living skills.

The transition team should be assembled and it should consist of the student (when they reach age 16), the parents, teachers, therapists, medical professionals and also representatives from any external service providers that are either currently or will provide services in the future to the student. Assessments should be conducted prior to the IEP going into effect to establish the current skill set of the student and help determine an expected level of skill at the end of the student's transition period or when they complete their IEP goals. It is also important that the student expand their activities to include more community-involved activities so they can develop their social skills. IEP meetings should occur annually and at those meetings, the team should monitor the progress that the student is making on their short-term objectives and how practical their long-term goals still are.

If adult service providers will be needed, it is best to determine what the age of eligibility for each individual provider is. The student must be able to understand all the services that they are using and develop their decision-making skills so that they can make decisions about their programs. They should certainly develop their communication skills and know what to do in case of emergencies. It would also help for employment purposes if the student develops a resume at least two years before they leave school and give it to either the career center in their school or if VR services are being used, their local VR office. The state also provides Transition Liaison offices to help families with transition planning.

## **Education:**

At age 14, the IEP should include information about future coursework and by the time, the student turns 16 years old, there should be a detailed list of all the courses the student wants to take in high school and beyond if applicable. These courses should help the student achieve their post-secondary goals. Also, it is important to detail any future instructional or educational possibilities in the IEP and the course of study should

provide a basic curriculum to the student's school, so they can decide what programs and services at school will be most beneficial to the student's progress and completion of their IEP goals. If the student plans to continue with schooling after they graduate high school, such as getting admission into a college, the IEP should include when they will begin planning the college process, and integrating the times the student will be taking the required standardized tests and complete the necessary applications. Also, the IEP should include a prospective graduation date and the chosen diploma option. FAPE is provided until the student turns 22 years old, if their birthday is on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>.

In terms of graduation, the state provides a set of minimum graduation requirements, but LEAs can add to them if they see fit. The state of Washington offers the standard high school diploma. However, they do provide a lot of allowances for the graduation requirements. These include for the number of credits to be reduced, alternate courses can be used to earn the required credits, performance criteria can be lowered, extensions will be granted to get those credits, and any other allowances should also be approved and put in the student's IEP. There is a state exit exam to get the standard high school diploma. However, the state offers a variety of options for students with disabilities. They can take the same test as the other students and have the same passing score. They can also take the same test and have a different passing score or have a different test and have a different passing score. If the student fails the exam, they are allowed to take an alternate exam.

## **Guardianship:**

The age of majority in Washington is 18. At this age, the rights to make all decisions related to the student's welfare transfer from the parent or guardian to the student. The student should be informed of this transfer at least a year before the transfer is set to occur, which means that the student should be informed of the transfer by their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. A statement of consent should be included in the IEP and the student should spend that year preparing for the transfer. This means that the parents should remind the student of the transfer and teach them how to make appropriate decisions, relating to their health, hygiene, finances and education.

If the student feels uncomfortable about handling that kind of responsibility, or if the family feels that the student's disability impedes their ability to make complicated decisions about their welfare, it is possible to petition for guardianship. When the petition is filed with the district court, a hearing will take place. Attorneys should be appointed for both sides: the disabled individual and the prospective guardians. It is best for the petitioner to get an attorney individually so that the case will go to court quicker and a guardian ad litem will be appointed for the disabled individual. Evidence must be provided by medical professionals that the student is truly incapable of making their own decisions. Once the judge understands the student's level of disability, they

will decide if guardianship is necessary and if it is necessary, the judge will decide which form of guardianship is the best. There are alternatives to the guardianship process, including limited guardianship, powers of attorney, trusts and conservatorship. If limited guardianship is granted, the judge will state the terms of the guardianship and the method of termination if it is necessary. The judge also has the power to choose the guardian, and if they feel that no one who currently has a personal relationship with the disabled individual, they have the right to appoint a public guardian for the student who is approved by the court as being capable of acting in the student's best interests. Any guardian will have to file a report of how the guardianship is good and the judge also will have the power to terminate the guardianship if they feel that the chosen guardian is not performing their duties appropriately. Guardianship is a lengthy and expensive process, which means it is best started at least six months before the student's birthday, if not earlier. While the process should only take a few months, it should be done early just in case anything happens.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

The DVR offices offer a variety of vocational services that will help prepare the student for entering the work market and keeping a job. These services include counseling and guidance, assessment services, benefit planning (if the student does not have SSI yet), and independent living skills (such as keeping a schedule, money management skills and transportation skills), assistive technology services, training and education, and Project Hire, which places customers into competitive employment. To begin the process, one should contact their local offices and arrange a meeting with a VR counselor. It is also important to complete the required application with the proper paperwork. They confirm the eligibility of the student to receive VR services. The Washington VR office offers the Ticket to Work Program and also the Self-sufficiency program, which can also help with post-secondary educational needs if wanted.

### **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:**

Washington Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Washington

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

## Washington Resources

### **Washington State Special Education**

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

(360) 725-6075

[www.k12.wa.us/specialed](http://www.k12.wa.us/specialed)

*Secondary Transition Assistance:* [www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/Transition.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/Transition.aspx)

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

637-5627 (V/TTY)

[www.dshs.wa.gov/ra/division-vocational-rehabilitation](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ra/division-vocational-rehabilitation)

*DVR's Guide to Life After High School:*

[www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/publications/documents/22-657.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/publications/documents/22-657.pdf)

### **Developmental Disabilities Administration**

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

[www.dshs.wa.gov/ddd](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ddd)

### **Career and Technical Education**

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

(360) 725-6245

[www.k12.wa.us/careerteched](http://www.k12.wa.us/careerteched)