

## Transition Information: Wisconsin

### **Timeline**

- *By the age of 12:*
  - The transition planning should begin by the time the student turns 12 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 14:*
  - The IEP will go into effect by the time the student turns 14 years old. The student should now be included in the transition team meetings.
  - The IEP should consist of ideas about post-secondary outcomes pertaining to employment, education and independent living.
  - This should include all activities and courses that the student will be taking through high school and beyond high school, any experiences to foster community involvement skills and any vocational rehabilitation services.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Wisconsin 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.
  - Students should begin to look into Vocational Rehabilitation services. It is best to apply for the DVR services two years prior to completing their educational program or 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 is 14 years old. The transition planning process should begin when the student is twelve years old to ensure that there is enough time to research the options the student has during their transition period and determine what options they have after they graduate from secondary school. Therefore, at 14, the IEP should consist of ideas about post-secondary outcomes pertaining to employment, education and independent living. The plan should be as detailed as possible to help give the student a plan for the next few years of their life. 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. 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 14), 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.

## **Education:**

At age 12, the IEP should include information about future coursework and by the time, the student turns 14 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. They are eligible for FAPE until they turn 21 years old.

The IEP team can decide if the student cannot take the statewide tests. The team uses the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment Participation Checklist to decide if an alternate assessment is needed in each area of curriculum.

In terms of graduation, the state provides a minimum set of requirements concerning graduation requirements, but LEAs can choose to add to them, if it proves to be more beneficial to the student. The state offers various diplomas, including the standard high school diploma, and other diplomas which are dictated by the local school board policy. There are not many allowances permitted in the state of Wisconsin pertaining to the completion of graduation requirements. However, they do permit using alternate courses to earn the required credits and any other allowances must be approved and written into the IEP. This should be done for competency in lieu of Carnegie units. Wisconsin does not have a state exit exam.

### **Guardianship:**

The age of majority is 18 years old. 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 individual feels uncomfortable handling their own welfare or their family feels that their disability impedes their ability to do so, the family can petition for permanent guardianship. The process begins with filing a petition and forms at the local circuit court. There has to be sufficient evidence, especially by medical professionals of the individual's disability. When the hearing takes place, a guardian ad litem will be appointed for the disabled individual and it would be helpful if the opposing side also had legal representation at the hearing to help with the legal aspects of the guardianship procedure. During the hearing, the individual has rights to contest the petition, have other opinions presented to the court and appoint their own attorney. The judge will decide whether or not guardianship is appropriate and if not, what kind of supervision the individual should have.

Other alternatives to the guardianship process are limited guardianship, conservatorship, guardian of the estate and guardian of the person (two separated guardianships), successor guardianship, temporary guardianship, special guardianship or standby guardianship. The judge will decide what is the best option is and specify the

terms of the guardianship. Also, the judge will decide what proper justifications for the termination of guardianship are and also who the most appropriate guardian for the individual is.

## **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

It is best to apply for the DVR services two years prior to completing their educational program or graduation. This allows sufficient time for the application to be approved and for the student to complete all VR programs before starting work. It will take the DVR at the most sixty days to decide whether the student is eligible or not. It is best to apply early for the vocational rehabilitation programs because there is a waiting list for those programs. After meeting with a counselor and assessing the student's level of skill and needs, the student will work with their counselor to create an Employment Plan. It is best to contact them once in a month to monitor the case and the progress that the student is making. After receiving all the recommended services, and achieving the final goal of the Employment Plan, the case will be closed, but it is possible to reapply to the program if you are unemployed and are in need of services again. The program provides job centers and fairs, apprenticeships and provides methods of job searching. They will help with job placement, counseling and guidance and will prepare the student to get and keep a job.

## **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:**

Wisconsin Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Wisconsin

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

## Wisconsin Resources

### **Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

(608) 266-1649

<https://sped.dpi.wi.gov/>

*Special Education in Plain Language: A User-Friendly Interactive Handbook on Special Education Laws, Policies, and Practices in Wisconsin*

[www.specialed.us/pl-07/pl07-index.html](http://www.specialed.us/pl-07/pl07-index.html)

*Opening Doors to Postsecondary Education and Training: Planning for Life After High School: A Handbook for Students, School Counselors, Teachers and Parents*

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

<http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/tranopndrs.pdf>

### **Wisconsin Transition Improvement Grant**

(262) 473-1446

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

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Department of Workforce Development

(800) 442-3477

<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr>

*Transition Action Guide for Post-School Planning:*

[dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf\\_files/tag.pdf](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag.pdf)

*Seamless Collaboration With and For Students with Disabilities: Transitioning To Employment and Adult Life*

[https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf\\_files/tag\\_short\\_version.pdf](https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag_short_version.pdf)

### **Developmental Disabilities Programs and Information**

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/dd.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/dd.htm)