



TRANSITION

THE ROAD TO ADULTHOOD

AUTISMSPEAKS.ORG

More than 700,000 students with autism will enter adulthood in the next decade.¹

Improved implementation of existing law is necessary.

45% of parents of teens with ASD did not participate in IEP transition planning

25% of teens with ASD themselves did not participate in IEP transition planning

Advocacy on transition services involves:

Key Federal Laws Influencing Transition:

Transition refers to the time from adolescence to young adulthood during which students exit high school and enter adult life.

The transition process is complex. It can involve many aspects of everyday life – from employment to continuing education, independent living, community participation and more. Successful transition outcomes are key to positive outcomes later in life.

A lot of the advocacy efforts regarding transition focus on education and employment. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive. An individual's chosen path can and almost certainly will involve both in different ways and at different times.

The laws and regulations that govern transition services are interconnected at the local, state and federal levels. Implementation of these policies is experienced by people with autism and their families as they go through the transition process in their communities, especially school systems.

- **Federal laws, regulation and sub-regulatory guidance.**
- **State laws, regulations and programs.**
- **Implementation of federal laws through state and local entities.**

While numerous federal policies influence different aspects of the transition process, there are three pieces of legislation that are particularly important to our advocacy efforts.

- The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** requires transition planning to begin no later than age 16 as part of an Individual Education Program (IEP).
- The **Higher Education Act (HEA or HEOA)** does not provide a right to postsecondary education, unlike K-12.
- The **Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)** establishes a right to pre-employment transition services. These services are provided through State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies.

1. Shattuck, Paul T., Rast, Jessica E., Roux, Anne M., Anderson, Kristy A., Benevides, Teal, Garfield, Tamara, McGhee Hassrick, Elizabeth, and Kuo, Alice. *National Autism Indicators Report: High School Students on the Autism Spectrum*. Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Program, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2018



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Advances for Transition Services at the State Level

While federal legislation sets national standards for transition services, states have the ability to enact policies that exceed those standards. It's also often at the state level that people engage non-government stakeholders to promote change. Here are some notable examples:

Transition Bill of Rights. In 2015 the Connecticut General Assembly passed a law requiring the State Department of Education to create a bill of rights outlining the rights of transition-age students with an IEP. Similar efforts are being undertaken in Nebraska and Kansas.

Broadening Eligibility for Services. The IDEA requires that transition planning start no later than when the student with an IEP turns 16. Connecticut General Assembly is currently reviewing H.B. 5986, which would lower the mandatory transition-planning age from no later than 16 to 14 years old for all students receiving special education services. On the other end of the age spectrum, Michigan has extended IDEA coverage past the federal "termination age" by five years to age 26.

Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment. The Massachusetts state legislature is reviewing H.1219 which would create higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism and other developmental disabilities by providing inclusive concurrent enrollment opportunities at state-funded universities.

Integrated Efforts in Employment. California legislation was passed in 2018 that created and funded the "Breaking Barriers in Employment for Adults with Autism Pilot Program" in the counties of Sacramento and Los Angeles.

Coalition Efforts. The Transition Alliance of South Carolina brings together schools, employers and local support system providers to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Later this year, Autism Speaks will convene the Transition to Adulthood Thought Leadership Summit, bringing together state- and federal-level researchers, practitioners and policymakers to help disseminate evidence-based practices to improve transition.

Resources

The Annually-Published National Autism Indicators Reports provides national data about the experiences and outcomes of youth with disabilities, including autism, who receive education services.

Autism Speaks' Transition Toolkit provides suggestions and options to consider during the transition process. It covers topics including self-advocacy skills, legal issues, housing, employment and community living.