

Transition Information: Colorado

Timeline

- *Before the age of 14:*
 - The IEP must include transition plans before the age of 14.
 - The IEP must also include a statement that provides a projected course of future study that would start at age 14, as well as transition services that the individual would require before their 16th birthday.
- *At the age of 14:*
 - At age 14, a coordinator should be appointed to create the transition team and also begin the process of organizing files (e.g. birth certificate, social security card, etc.) for the individual to begin their transition into adulthood and obtain an understanding of those documents.
 - At age 14, it is vital that families begin the application for the Community Center Boards (CCB) system, which has very long waiting lists.
- *At the age of 15:*
 - At age 15, the individual must be invited to all of his or her IEP meetings and if he or she does not attend, the district or BOCES must document and execute the students' interests.
 - At 15, it is possible to obtain any community-based mental health services.
 - By age 16, it may be helpful to review the graduation plan, and plan on further education or vocational training.
- *At the age of 16:*
 - Most people begin vocational rehabilitation services around the age of 16, but the services should begin whenever the individual feels comfortable preparing for employment services.
- *Before the age of 17:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Colorado is 18)
 - The student must be informed of the transfer of rights and the guardianship options by age 17
 - The vocational rehabilitation process should begin at least 2 years prior to high school graduation.
 - You should meet with a counselor and discuss the best employment and living options for the student.
- *Before the age of 18:*
 - 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.
 - 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.
- *At age 18:*
 - Register to vote.
 - The individual becomes in control of his or her own decisions, unless a guardian has been appointed.
 - 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:*
 - FAPE (free appropriate public education) ends when the student finishes the semester at 21, unless they have already received a high school diploma which indicates that their right to FAPE has been terminated.

Starting the Transition:

The IEP must go into effect no later than age 14, and must include transition plans. Most people begin transition planning before eighth grade. The IEP must include a statement that provides a projected course of future study before that would start at age 14 and transition services that the individual would require before their 16th birthday.

At age 14, a coordinator should be appointed to create the transition team and also begin the process of organizing files (e.g. birth certificate, social security card, etc.) for the individual to begin their transition into adulthood and obtain an understanding of those documents.

Colorado Development Disabilities Services contracts with private not-for-profit agencies in local communities who are designated as Community Centered Boards (CCB). Each of the CCBs throughout Colorado has a designated geographical service area and offers a range of services including employment, residential, and community participation. To find the nearest CCB, go to www.colorado.gov/pacific/hcpf/community-centered-boards.

At age 14, it is vital that families begin the application for the CCB system, which has long waiting lists. It can take five to ten years to get employment and residential services. It is also helpful to obtain an identification card from the State of Colorado Division of Motor Vehicles (www.colorado.gov/dmv).

Education:

By age 14, the IEP must be in effect with a list of appropriate coursework for the individual. It would be appropriate during that time period to start orienting the student towards starting at a new high school and determining what graduation options the student has.

By age 16, it would be helpful to review his or her graduation plan, and plan on further education or vocational training. It could help to develop a resume and also take appropriate standardized tests for higher education purposes, if needed.

Four to five years before leaving school, it is important that the student discuss with his or her teachers, mentors, families, etc. the skills that he or she has and what he or she wants to do in the future.

FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) ends when the student finishes the semester at 21, unless they have already received a high school diploma. A high school diploma indicates that the individual's right to FAPE has been terminated.

In terms of graduation, Colorado is one of the only states that has no minimum state-wide graduation requirements and allows local education authorities and districts to set their own requirements. However, they are not allowed to discriminate and must review the needs of each student on a case-by-case basis. Individuals can graduate with a regular high school diploma or continue school through a process called “social graduation” until they complete their transition goals by 21. Different diplomas can be awarded to different students based on approved criteria for each population of students. Nevertheless, completing IEP goals does not automatically grant students a high school diploma, since diploma requirements are different from IEP goals.

Guardianship/Conservatorship:

The student must be informed of the transfer of rights and the guardianship options by age 17 and the transfer of their educational rights (while in the public school system) at 20.

At the age of majority which is 18 years old in Colorado, the student is in control over their own decisions, unless a legal guardian has been appointed and approved by the Colorado court system. This sometimes requires that the individual be deemed incapable of making their own decisions.

There is an alternate option: limited guardianship. As a limited guardian, the guardian would only be responsible for certain matters, such as medical issues and monetary matters. Most special education services can help with this process.

Parents can only access student records when the student is below 18, unless the student is a dependent and is still using high school services after the age of 18.

Educational rights will transfer at the age of 21, as long as the student is in the public education system. This occurs unless alternate guardianship has been appointed by the courts.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

Most people begin vocational rehabilitation services around the age of 16, but the services should begin whenever the individual feels comfortable preparing for employment services. Some mention of this plan should be included in the individual’s IEP.

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 (voice) 800-772-1213 or (TTY) 800-325-0778.

- *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:

Colorado Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Colorado

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

Colorado Resources:

Exceptional Students Services Unit

Colorado Department of Education

(303) 866-6694

www.cde.state.co.us/offices/exceptionalstudentservicesunit

Office of Special Education: www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

(303) 866-4150

www.dvrcolorado.com

Local DVR locations can be found at:

www.dvrcolorado.com/locations.php

Colorado Transition Services

Office of Special Education

(303) 866-6703

www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/transition

Transition Tool Kit: www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/Transition_TK.asp

Division for Developmental Disabilities

Colorado Department of Human Services

(303) 866-2993

www.colorado.gov/cdhs/ddd