

## Transition Information: Florida

### Timeline

- *By the age of 14:*
  - Transition planning must begin at the latest by when the student turns 14.
  - At age 14, the Transition IEP must include a statement of the student's desired post-school outcome, a statement of needed transition services (specifically course work), and a statement that invites the student to attend their IEP meetings.
- *By the age of 16:*
  - By 16, the individual should have a full transition plan covering all aspects of the transition, including vocational services, needed support and post-secondary education.
  - At age 16, the TIEP must include a statement of the needed transition services for the various areas of instruction that the student might be pursuing, a statement of any other agencies involved in helping the students achieve those goals and if so, members of those agencies must be invited by the school district to attend IEP meetings.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Florida is 18)
    - The student must be informed of the transfer of rights and the guardianship options by age 17.
    - The TIEP must include an informed statement that states that the parents and students understand that the rights will be shifted upon the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This should be placed in the TIEP at the age of 17.
  - 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:**

Transition planning must begin at the latest by when the student turns 14. The IEP at that point must include a prospective education plan, including coursework and extracurricular activities. By 16, they should have a full transition plan covering all aspects of the transition, including vocational services, needed support and post-secondary education.

In Florida, there is a Transition Individualized Education Plan (*TIEP*), which is often a separate plan from the IEP, but can be a section of the IEP. This should detail what the student wants to do in the future, their strengths and weaknesses and any required preparations for the activities they want to do as they get older. It must be reviewed annually.

At age 14, the TIEP must include a statement of the student's desired post-school outcome, a statement of needed transition services (specifically course work), and a statement that invites the student to attend their IEP meetings. If the student is unable to attend the meeting, the school district is responsible for electing someone to ensure that the student's needs and desires are considered during the meeting.

At age 16, the TIEP must include a statement of the needed transition services for the various areas of instruction that the student might be pursuing, a statement of any other agencies involved in helping the students achieve those goals and if so, members of those agencies must be invited by the school district to attend IEP meetings.

## **Education:**

For students who decide to take the Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (*FCAT*), there must be a statement placed within the present level of educational performance statement in the IEP that states that there is enough remediation for the student to pass the state exam. This provides a list of the required resources that the student must use to be prepared and obtain a passing score on the exam.

If the IEP determines that the student is not able to pass the FCAT with the already established testing accommodations, the IEP could get instructional accommodations that are approved by the parent, whose consent would also be included in the IEP. If there is an alternate assessment that the student should participate in, the parents must be notified and provided information on this alternative, but consent is not required.

The state provides minimum requirements for a student to graduate which LEAs are allowed to alter. Florida allows disabled students to achieve a regular standard diploma, an IEP/Special Education Diploma or a certificate of attendance. There is a waiver for

the Florida exam, the FCAT. To be awarded the standard high school diploma, the student must pass the state exit exam. Both disabled and regular students are required to take the same test and have the same required passing score. If they fail the exam, there is a permitted petition for exemption.

Students have a right to Free Appropriate Public Education (*FAPE*) until the age of 22.

### **Guardianship/Conservatorship:**

The age of majority in Florida is 18 years old. At that age, the rights to make decisions will transfer to the student. The family must be provided with a notice stating that the transfer is taking place. Prior to that, the TIEP must include an informed statement that states that the parents and students understand that the rights will be shifted upon the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This should be placed in the TIEP at the age of 17.

There are a variety of guardian and advocate options for developmentally disabled individuals. If the person is receiving services through the Agency of Persons with Disabilities (APD), they can choose to appoint a family or friend as a Client Advocate to help the client make decisions, but cannot make the decisions for them. However, this is not recognized by the state. The individual can also receive a proxy health care surrogate to make medical decisions for the individual.

One can also appoint a Guardian Advocate for the individual, without deeming the individual incapable of making decisions, who will perform certain complicated tasks that the individual cannot understand. Full guardianship is also an option in Florida.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that works with people who have physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, gain or retain employment. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers.

*Directory of Local VR Offices:* [www.rehabworks.org/office\\_directory.shtml](http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml)

The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation offers a variety of services including their general program, the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services Technology (FAAST), and their Independent Living Program.

### **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:**

Florida Public Housing Agency Contact Information:  
[www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/fl.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/fl.cfm)

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Florida  
<http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/florida>

Florida's Housing Special Needs Housing Website:  
[www.floridahousing.org/SpecialNeeds](http://www.floridahousing.org/SpecialNeeds)

Florida Supportive Housing Coalition: [www.fshc.org](http://www.fshc.org)

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

# Florida Resources

## **Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

Florida Department of Education

[www.fldoe.org/ese](http://www.fldoe.org/ese)

*Secondary Transition Tools and Resources*

[www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/secondary-transition.stml](http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/secondary-transition.stml)

## **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Florida Department of Education

(800) 451-4327

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

## **Project 10: Transition Education Network**

University of South Florida St. Petersburg

(727) 873-4654

[project10.info](http://project10.info)

## **Agency for Persons with Disabilities**

(850) 488-4257

[www.apd.myflorida.com](http://www.apd.myflorida.com)