

Transition Information: Iowa

Timeline

- *By the age of 14:*
 - The transition planning process must begin at the latest at 14 years old, which should involve creating an IEP for the student which discusses possible post-secondary goals for the student's future. This should include the involvement of external agencies, the commitment to certain programs and various services that the student will need to accomplish their IEP goals.
- *At the age of 16:*
 - The transition process in relation to the IEP must go into effect at the age of 16 and annual updates must occur thereafter.
 - The prospective coursework must go into effect during high school and if desired, through college as detailed in the student's IEP.
- *Before the age of 17:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin.
 - At the age of majority in Iowa, which is 18, the rights of the student will be transferred from their guardians to themselves. Therefore, they must be informed and sign a statement stating that they have been informed of this transfer by 17 years of age.
 - 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 18th 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:

The transition planning process must begin at the latest at 14 years old, which should involve creating an IEP for the student which discusses possible post-secondary goals for the student's future. This should include the involvement of external agencies, the commitment to certain programs and various services that the student will need to accomplish his or her IEP goals. It should be specific to the individual's needs and desires and include an idea of prospective coursework that the student should complete. There should be assessments that show what the student's strengths and weaknesses are. The four main topics that should be discussed are: the student's knowledge and skills (current and expected), the student's learning characteristics, how much support is necessary, and the number of environments that will be affected by the child's needs.

The transition process in relation to the IEP must go into effect at the age of 16 and annual updates must occur thereafter. At the annual meetings, all agency representatives and people that will be at least partially responsible for the student's care throughout the transition process must be present at the meeting. The student should also be invited to the meeting if they feel capable of making these decisions. At the age of majority in Iowa, which is 18, the rights of the student will be transferred from their guardian to themselves. Therefore, they must be informed and sign a statement stating that they have been informed of this transfer by 17 years of age.

Education:

The prospective coursework must go into effect during high school and if desired, through college as detailed in the student's IEP. This indicates that decisions about the student's graduation options and post-high school options must be discussed and decided upon as soon as possible. At the annual IEP meetings, those decisions are subject to change depending on the student's progress.

The state does provide their own guidelines for graduation requirements but LEAs can set their own requirements based on the case. However, any changes to the requirements must be addressed in the student's IEP. The diploma options are: an honors diploma, a regular/standard diploma, a certificate of attendance or a certificate of achievement. Iowa does allow many allowances for students with disabilities. The number of required credits can be reduced; alternate courses can be used to earn those credits; performance criteria can be lowered; other allowances can be addressed individually in the IEP and extensions can be granted so that the student has sufficient time to complete their requirements. There is no state exit exam to achieve a high school diploma.

Guardianship:

The age of majority in Iowa is **18 years of age**. The student must be notified of the transfer of

rights **at 17** and must sign a consent statement that states that the student understands that the transfer will occur.

To establish either a guardianship or a conservatorship, the court must be present with evidence declaring that the individual is disabled and incompetent and must be placed under the supervision of another individual that the court deems appropriate for the person's care. The three factors related to declaring someone as incompetent are: decisional capacity, impairment and functional capacity.

There can be more than one guardian for one person, and they usually live in Iowa. If the court appoints a non-Iowa resident, there will be an Iowa resident who is also a guardian and there must be a specific reason why both these parties must both be guardians. A petition for the appointment of a guardian or conservator must be filed with the court in the county where the disabled individual lives. The individual can choose their own guardian if they are thought to be capable of making that decision and can petition for this in court.

A conservatorship in Iowa goes through the same legal process, except that the assessment needs to test the disabled individual's abilities to make their own financial decisions. Both can be done through one petition.

The ward/disabled individual has the right to a lawyer and witnesses can be brought to the hearing to corroborate the individuals' abilities. There will be a bond required to pay for the cost of the hearing and information about both parties must be presented to the court. Annually, after the hearing, the guardian/conservator will have to file a report with the court, which includes the mental and physical condition of the disabled individual, their place of residence, a list of their services, the involvement of the guardian in the individual's life thus far and if the guardianship is still necessary.

Guardianship & Conservatorship in Iowa:

www.state.ia.us/government/ddcouncil/Guardianship%20pdfs/17%20Modification%20and%20Termination%20of%20Guardianship%20and%20Conservatorship.pdf

Vocational Rehabilitation:

The mission of the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to work for and with individuals who have disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals. There is a waiting list for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. To be approved to be put on the list, an individual has to meet an IVRS counselor and complete the application for services. Based on federal regulation, he or she will be approved eligible for services and be placed on one of three different waiting lists depending on the severity of the disability. IVRS also has programs such as a career center/resources, different reference manuals, a diversity initiative and also an Iowa Self-Employment Program.

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 800-772-1213.

- *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:

Iowa Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Iowa

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

Iowa Resources

Office of Special Education

Iowa Department of Education

(515) 281-5294

www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education

Secondary Transition Services

Iowa Department of Education

(515) 281-5265

www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/special-education-programs-services/secondary-transition

Iowa's Guidance for Quality IEP's: Secondary Transition

Iowa Department of Education

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/guidance-quality-ieps/secondary-transition-guidance-quality-ieps>

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

(515) 281-4211

www.ivrs.iowa.gov

Office of Persons with Disabilities

Iowa Department of Human Rights

<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/pd>

Iowans with Disabilities in Action (ID Action)

(866) 432-2846

idaction.com

Iowa Legal Aid:

www.iowalegalaid.org