



Transition Information: Rhode Island

Timeline

- *By the age of 12:*
 - An IEP transition team should be assembled as soon as the student turns 12. This team should include the parents, teachers, advocates, therapists, and all those who know the student well and can contribute to laying out the student's plans for the future.
- *By the age of 14:*
 - The transition planning should begin by the time the student turns 14 years old. The transition portion of the IEP should include a statement of post-secondary goals and needed transition services once the student is 14 years old.
 - At 14, the student should begin attending the IEP meetings.
- *By the age of 16:*
 - The IEP will go into effect by the time the student turns 16 years old. It should include a statement of needed transition services. The student's IEP should also include information about future instruction and community experiences that will be involved in helping the student achieve their post-secondary goals.
 - The individual should be informed of the transfer of rights that will happen at age 18. Some sort of acknowledgement of the notification should be placed in the IEP by this point in time.
 - 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 17:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Rhode Island is 18)
 - By the student's **17th birthday**, the student must be informed that all rights will be transferred to them from their parents or guardians. A form of informed and signed consent by both the student and their family should be included in the IEP by the student's **17th birthday**.
 - 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.
- *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.
- *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 transition portion of the IEP should include a statement of post-secondary goals and needed transition services once the student is 14 years old. These goals should be appropriate depending on their age and also their current level of capabilities, in both academics and living skills. Proper assessments should be taken before the IEP goes into effect to determine what goals would be appropriate for the student. This means that a IEP transition team should be assembled as soon as the student turns 12 years old, and this team should include the student (who should be invited once they turn 14), the student's parents, their teachers, their therapists and representatives from special needs agencies that the student is either currently using or will use in the future to help them achieve their IEP goals.

The goals should be related to future instruction, education, rehabilitation, employment and independent living options for the student. The IEP should also include a summary of performance to observe the progress that the student is making and expected to make in the coming years. Annual IEP meetings should take place to alter the IEP goals as necessary, and if the student is not in attendance, there should be some representative there to advocate for his or her desires and preferences. It should be discussed whether the student's future instruction is based more upon cultivating life skills on an academic path that is appropriate for as long as possible.

All goals on the IEP should be in concurrence with the student's wishes. Also, it is important to begin researching during the IEP transition period future adult agencies that will be working with the student to help them accomplish their goals. It is important to find out at what age students are eligible for adult services.

Education:

IEP goals should detail which courses the student needs to take during their secondary school and at what levels of their studies they should take those courses. It is important to be as detailed as possible with coursework so that the school and school district understand exactly what programs to implement for the student and what kinds of therapies and courses would be most beneficial for the student. Also, if the student is planning on going to college once they graduate secondary school, they also need to find a college that has a special education program, and prepare themselves for applying to colleges. The IEP should include information concerning when the student will complete their applications and take the required standardized tests. It should also include what graduation/diploma option that the student is planning on pursuing and also a prospective graduation date.

In terms of graduation, the state does provide guidelines for graduation requirements, but LEAs are able to set their own requirements. The only diploma option that the state

of Rhode Island recognizes is the achievement of the standard high school diploma. Any allowances to help students get that diploma must be addressed in the IEP and approved. The state of Rhode Island does not require students to pass a state exit exam to graduate. Students are eligible for all educational programs until they turn 21 years old and at that point, they are no longer considered a child.

Guardianship:

The age of majority in Rhode Island is 18 years old. By the student's 17th birthday, the student must be informed that all rights will be transferred to them from their parents or guardians. These rights include the right to make decisions related to their welfare, including medical, financial and educational decisions. A form of informed and signed consent by both the student and their family should be included in the IEP by the student's 17th birthday. It is also important that this transfer is discussed with the student's transition team to determine what needs to take place to prepare the student for the transfer. The student must understand and be reminded of the importance of this transfer and the responsibilities that come with this transfer. For example, the student must be able to understand the consequences of making certain medical decisions.

If the student is thought to be incapable of making those decisions or the student feels uncomfortable doing so, it is possible to appoint a guardian to make those decisions for the student after they turn 18 years old. This process should be started as early as their 17th birthday and if possible, should be included in the IEP. It needs to be explained why the student cannot make their own decisions and evidence of their incapacity should be brought to the court during the hearing process.

To begin the guardianship process, a petition should be filed by the prospective guardian at the local district court and attorneys should be appointed for both the prospective guardian and also for the student. A hearing will take place and the judge or the jury will decide whether it is necessary for the student to have a guardian, as well as who the guardian should be. It is most often a close relative or a parent, if possible. They will also state the terms of the guardianship which can only be altered by the judge. There are other options for guardianship, including limited guardianship (detailed by the judge), Good Samaritans guardianship (which can be revoked after a certain point) and finally temporary guardianship (in case of emergencies).

Limited Guardianship and Guardianship of Adults in Rhode Island:
www.rilin.state.ri.us/statutes/title33/33-15/index.htm

Vocational Rehabilitation:

Students should start discussing employment options as soon as their IEP goes into effect at 14 years old. They are eligible for state-funded vocational rehabilitation programs once they have their SSI payments and also require developing their vocational skills since they are soon going to enter the working world. One must first apply to the program and deemed eligible for receiving these kinds of services, which will require documentation of the student's disability and also of the student's SSI payments. A VR counselor will be assigned to the student who will assess what programs would be most beneficial and practical for the student's current and expected levels of abilities. The counselor will then create an individualized plan for employment (IPE) which will identify the expected outcome of the program and the timeframe for the student to finally achieve their goal and work in the real world. The VR office will provide counseling, transition services, assistive technology offices, job placement and transportation or housing modifications that will make it simpler for the student to be able to work.

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:

Rhode Island Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Rhode Island

http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/rhode_island

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

Rhode Island Resources

Special Education

Rhode Island Department of Education

(401) 222-8333

www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/SpecialEducation.aspx

Secondary Transition Services

www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationProgramming.aspx#1239631-secondary-transition-services

Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project

ASD Support Center

(401) 456-4600

www.ritap.org/asd

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Office of Rehabilitation Services

Department of Human Services

(401) 421-7005

www.ors.ri.gov/VR.html

Rhode Island Division of Developmental Disabilities

Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals

(BHDDH)

(401) 462-3421

www.bhddh.ri.gov