



## Transition Information: South Carolina

### **Timeline**

- *At the age of 12:*
  - Starting at the age of 12, an IEP team should be assembled with the student's involvement to help decide what the most appropriate course of action is for the student and what goals the student wants to achieve during the "transition" period.
  - Also, at age 12, assessments should be done for both academic and functional life skills to observe how independent the student is and what the student needs to work on to become more independent as an adult.
- *At the age of 13:*
  - The IEP must go into effect when the student turns thirteen.
  - The IEP should include information about post-secondary goals, including information about future education, employment and independent living options.
- *By the age of 15:*
  - It is highly recommended in the state of South Carolina that students begin working or at least volunteering as early as age 14 or 15.
- *Before the age of 17:*
  - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in South Carolina is 18)
    - The student and their family should be informed of this transfer by the student's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday so that they can prepare for the transfer.
    - 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.
  - It is best to apply for a Vocational Rehabilitation consultation as early as the student's junior year in high school.
- *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:**

The IEP must go into effect when the student turns thirteen years old. The IEP should include information about post-secondary goals, including information about future education, employment and independent living options. The IEP should include a schedule of training and education that the student will have in preparation of the becoming an adult.

Starting at the age of 12, an IEP team should be assembled with the student's involvement to help decide what the most appropriate course of action is for the student and what goals the student wants to achieve during the "transition" period. The student should be invited to attend their own meetings as early as when they are fourteen years old. These goals must agree with the desires and strengths of the student and therefore, if the student is incapable of attending their annual IEP meetings, someone should be present at the meeting to voice the student's wishes. The IEP team should include the student's parents or guardians, their teachers, their therapists, possibly physicians and psychologists (or those who have a better understanding of the current level of skill of the student) and if any external agency is currently or in the future being used, a representative from that agency should be present at the IEP meetings.

Also, at age 12, assessments should be done for both academic and functional life skills to observe how independent the student is and what the student needs to work on to become more independent as an adult. This will also help the IEP team create a plan to help improve certain skills of the student. At the annual IEP meetings, goals should be reviewed and altered as seen necessary while considering the current level of progress the student is making and the likelihood of the student completing their goals.

## **Education:**

After the assessments are completed, the IEP should specify what they expected level of skills is to be when they complete their IEP goals and complete their special education program. The IEP should be specific about what post-secondary goals the student wants. The IEP should also specify which courses the student should and wants to take in high school and if they wish to continue school, in college. The more detailed that this coursework list is and at what levels of schooling the student wants to take, the better and more effective the curriculum that the student's school will implement. If the student wishes to attend college, the IEP should also include the times when the student will take their standardized tests and also when they will complete their applications. Since most colleges do not have special education programs, the student will need to be relatively independent to get through the college-level of program. However, if they do plan to attend college, it is very important to contact the college's support services for disabilities program to see what kind of services they will provide

for a student with a developmental disability. These support services include registration priorities, tutoring, special classes, support groups and other related services. To be eligible for any of the aforementioned services, it is required that some form of psychological proof is provided to the school and their support services program.

Every student regardless of disability is required to have an *Individual Graduation Plan* which specifies which kind of diploma the student wants to have and how they will complete the necessary requirements in order to get it. In the IEP, it is also important to specify the diploma selected and also a prospective date of graduation. FAPE is provided until the student turns 21 years old or when they graduate from high school. If they participate in the SC-Alt program or the *South Carolina Alternative Assessment* program, they will not be eligible to earn a regular high school diploma.

South Carolina provides state requirements for high school graduation, and LEAs are not permitted to add or change those requirements. They are one of seven states in the United States to have that law. The state of South Carolina also offers a variety of diploma options: the regular high school diploma, the South Carolina High school certificate, or a school district Certificate of Attendance. Any allowances for completing those requirements must be addressed in the student's IEP. All disabled students are permitted to take alternate courses to complete the requirements and are usually granted extension for completing them as well.

The state of South Carolina does require that all students complete a high school state exit exam to get a standard high school diploma. Both students with and without disabilities have the same passing score and take the same test.

## **Guardianship:**

The age of majority in South Carolina is 18 years old. At this age, all rights to make decisions about the student's welfare are transferred from the parents or guardians to the student. This transfer includes managing their own finances, their health and also their educational plan. The student and their family should be informed of this transfer by the student's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday so that they can prepare for the transfer.

If the student feels uncomfortable about handling those kinds of those decisions or if the parents/guardians feel that the student is too incapacitated to make those decisions, the potential guardians can petition for guardianship over the disabled individual at the local probate court. After filing the petition, it is best to appoint attorneys for both the individual and also for the prospective guardians. There needs to be some proof of the disability and that the individual is truly incapable of making their own decisions. The court requires two examinations to assess the level of the individual's disability. One examination will be by a court-appointed medical

professional. Once the person is deemed incapable of making difficult decisions, the court will decide what level of guardianship is necessary for the individual.

There are many different kinds of guardianship: limited guardianship, testamentary guardianship, temporary guardianship, full guardianship or guardian ad litem. The provisions of any of those guardianships are specified by the judge or jury. The method of termination is specified within the law and will also be specified by the judge or jury. The judge also has the power to decide who the guardian of the individual should be. If they feel that no one with a personal relationship to the person in question is capable of performing their duties and is looking out for the best interests of the student, they can appoint a guardian ad litem, which is a court-appointed attorney that will help with the process.

It is best to start the legal proceeding by the student's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday to ensure that there is sufficient time for the proceedings to take place. It is also important to include the guardianship proceeds in the student's IEP if the decision is made early that the student will need guardianship to continue after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation:**

It is best to apply for vocational rehabilitation services at least two years before you graduate so that there is sufficient time for the application to be processed and the student has time to prepare themselves for the job market. Therefore, it is best to apply for a VR consultation as early as the student's junior year in high school. If a person is eligible for VR services, he or she will be assigned a counselor who will help create a plan leading towards the student becoming a full-time employee.

As part of the VR team alongside the student and their family, the counselor will provide guidance through a variety of practical job options and assess which skills are necessary for the job that is most suitable for the student. By assessing the current level of work skills and also the expected skill level in the future, the VR team will create a plan to improve the student's skills and teach them how to acquire and keep a job for an extended period of time. They will also help with the SSI benefits program. They have job classes and training programs, job placement programs, supported employment, assistive technology programs and other specialized and comprehensive services. They also can help integrate their vocational preparation programs into both the high school curriculum and also again if the student wants to go to college or tech school.

It is also highly recommended in the state of South Carolina that students begin working or at least volunteering as early as age 14. This helps to foster a better understanding of the student's independence and provides them with a supervised experience that will help them with employment in the future. Also, it is best to teach them various

transportation options so that the student does not need to rely on their guardians to get around in the future.

## **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:**

South Carolina Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

[www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/sc.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/sc.cfm)

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in South Carolina

[http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/south\\_carolina](http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/states/south_carolina)

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

## South Carolina Resources

### **Special Education Services**

South Carolina Department of Education

(803) 734-8410

<http://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/>

### **Parent Guide to Special Education in South Carolina**

<http://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/173/documents/ParentGuideNov12.pdf>

### **South Carolina Assistive Technology Program Post-Secondary Transition**

[www.sc.edu/scatp/transition.htm](http://www.sc.edu/scatp/transition.htm)

### **Coordinator for Career and Technology Education for Students with Disabilities**

Office of Career and Technology Education

[www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cate](http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cate)

### **South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department**

(803) 896-6500

[www.scvrd.net](http://www.scvrd.net)

### **South Carolina Developmental Disabilities Council**

(803) 734-0465

[www.scdcdc.state.sc.us](http://www.scdcdc.state.sc.us)