

Transition Information: Vermont

Timeline

- *By the age of 14:*
 - The transition planning should begin by the time the student turns 14 years old.
 - A transition team should be assembled and families should gather information regarding the strengths and preferences of the student and the possible paths that the student can take towards a specific long-term goal.
- *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 student should begin to be included in the IEP meetings at age 16.
 - Students should begin to look into Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- *Before the age of 17:*
 - The guardianship/conservatorship process should begin. (The age of majority in Vermont is 18)
 - 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 student should be informed of the pending transfer of rights, and a statement of consent should be included in the IEP. The student should spend that year preparing for the transfer.
 - 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.
- *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 will go into effect when the student turns 16 years old. Therefore, preparation for the transition period should begin at the latest when the student is 14 years old. For those students who are in special education programs, they should consider the Multi-Year program. To begin the process, it is best to prepare a transition team of those who understand the student best. It should include the student when they turn 16 years old, the parents, teachers, therapists and any other representatives from any external agencies that are either currently being used or will be used in the future to help the student achieve their post-secondary goals. Also, assessments should be conducted to determine the current skill level of the student, both academically and functionally.

The basis of the transition IEP is to explain the student's desired post-secondary outcomes, including detailed outcomes relating to post-secondary education and instruction, employment and independent living situations. The student's post-secondary goals should be based on their preferences and also should be appropriate for their expected level of skill and appropriate for the age that they plan on beginning their adult life (after they complete school). The IEP should also include a summary of performance, which assesses the current level of skills and the progress the student is making and is expected to make.

When the student turns 16 years old, they should be invited to all of their IEP meetings. If they are not able to make the meetings, someone should be present that will advocate for the student's preferences. IEP meetings should occur annually to monitor the completion of all the short-term objectives and the progress that the student is making. These short-term objectives should help the student achieve their final post-secondary goal. Depending on the progress, the team can choose to alter the post-secondary goals of the student to match the level of progress the student is making. An example of the necessary requirements for a transition IEP can be found at the aforementioned website.

Education:

The IEP should include a multi-year plan which is a separate plan for students with developmental disabilities that will eventually allow them to complete their graduation requirements. It should specify any allowances that were approved for the student to allow them to complete their requirements easily. The student's IEP should include a detailed curriculum of each course that the student will be taking through high school and at what level of schooling the student will be taking each course. This will help the school have the proper preparation and services that they need to implement that curriculum and choose the program that is most beneficial for the student achieving their post-secondary outcomes. The IEP should also include any courses or instruction

that the student will be taking outside of school. It should include information about post-secondary education, if applicable. If the student is planning on going to college, it is important to include when the student will be taking the required standardized tests and completing their applications. Also, it should include what diploma option the student wants and also a prospective graduation date.

In terms of graduation, the state provides guidelines for graduation requirements, but LEAs can choose their own requirements. The state of Vermont only offers the standard high school diploma, which a student has a chance to achieve until the end of FAPE, which is 21 years old. The state of Vermont allows disabled students to take alternate course to earn the required credits and lower the performance criteria. All allowances need to be approved and include in the student's IEP. There is no state exit exam for graduation.

Guardianship:

The age of majority in Vermont is 18 years old. At this age, the rights to make all decisions related to the student's welfare transfer from the parent or guardian to the student. The student should be informed of this transfer at least a year before the transfer is set to occur, which means that the student should be informed of the transfer by their 17th birthday. Some statement of consent should be included in the IEP and the student should spend that year preparing for the transfer. This means that the parents should remind the student of the transfer and teach them how to make appropriate decisions, relating to their health, hygiene, finances and education.

If the student feels uncomfortable about making such decisions, or the family feels that the student is too incapacitated to make those decisions, it is possible to petition for guardianship at a local court. The desired guardian or conservator should file the petition. Then, an attorney, guardian ad litem, should be appointed to represent the disabled individual during the hearing. The guardians should also appoint an attorney to help them with the legal paperwork and the hearing. Evidence must be presented by both sides concerning the level of the individual's disability. Based on that, the judge or jury will decide what form of guardian is appropriate. There is full/plenary guardianship, limited guardianship, temporary guardianship and other alternatives. The judge will specify the terms of the guardianship and what responsibilities the guardian has, such as legal, medical and contractual responsibilities. They will also specify if there are any methods of terminating the guardianship and the duration of the temporary guardianship.

If there is no individual with a personal relationship to the person with the disability, or if the judge feels that none of them are capable of working in the individual's best interests, a public guardian can be appointed. This is someone the court appoints to take care of the individual for a certain period of time.

Public Guardianship for Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Vermont:

www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-guardianship/programs-guardian-addl-webpages/programs-guardianship-adult-public-dev-dis

Vocational Rehabilitation:

The VR Office provides a variety of different services that include vocational counseling, guidance, job placement programs, transportation, assistive technology services, special job training, and other services that will help the student get and keep a job. To begin the process, one must contact a local VR office and apply for the programs. To confirm eligibility, it is important to meet with a VR counselor. Proper evaluations and assessments will take place to confirm that the student requires these services. Together with the VR counselor, an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will be created. This will include a vocational goal, such as a preferred job, as the final goal of the plan. The VR Office also has transition services that specialize in integrating the IPE into the school curriculum so that the student can complete school and be prepared for the job market (School to Career 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:

Vermont Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Vermont

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

Vermont Resources

Special Education

Vermont Agency of Education

(802) 479-1255

<http://education.vermont.gov/special-education>

Secondary Transition Planning Resources: <http://education.vermont.gov/special-education/policy-and-administration/secondary-transition>

VocRehab Vermont

Agency of Human Services

(866) 879-6757

vocrehab.vermont.gov

Developmental Disability Services

Division of Disability and Aging Services

(802) 871-3350

www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-dds

Autism Supports: www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-autism-default-page