

Transition Information: Wyoming

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:*
 - Assessments should be conducted prior to the IEP going into effect to establish the current skill set of the student and help determine an expected level of skill at the end of the student's transition period or when they complete their IEP goals.
 - The IEP will go into effect by the time the student turns 16 years old. It should include a statement of needed transition services.
 - This should include all activities and courses that the student will be taking through high school and beyond high school, any experiences to foster community involvement skills and any vocational rehabilitation services.
 - 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 Wyoming is 18)
 - 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.
 - 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.
- *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 Services:

The IEP will go into effect when the student turns 16 years old. Therefore, all transition assessments should be done when the student begins the transition planning process, which is usually at 14 years old. The IEP should consist of ideas about post-secondary outcomes pertaining to employment, education and independent living. The plan should be as detailed as possible for the next few years of the student's life. It should be in agreement with the student's preferences and therefore, if the student is unable to participate in their own IEP meetings, then, someone should be present at the meeting that will advocate their preferences. At the beginning of the process, the team should identify what the student's learning styles are and what accommodations they will need during the transition process, especially in school. They should be determined by the assessments that the student takes relating to both the level of their academic skills and their functional living skills.

The transition team should be assembled and it should consist of the student (when they reach age 16), the parents, teachers, therapists, medical professionals and also representatives from any external service providers that are either currently or will provide services in the future to the student. Assessments should be conducted prior to the IEP going into effect to establish the current skill set of the student and help determine an expected level of skill at the end of the student's transition period or when they complete their IEP goals. It is also important that the student expand their activities to include more community-involved activities so they can develop their social skills. IEP meetings should occur annually and at those meetings, the team should monitor the progress that the student is making on their short-term objectives and how practical their long-term goals still are. At the end of the IEP process, once they have completed all their goals, it is important that the student completes a summary of performance which is also placed within their IEP.

Education:

At age 14, the IEP should include information about future coursework and by the time, the student turns 16 years old, there should be a detailed list of all the courses the student wants to take in high school and beyond if applicable. These courses should help the student achieve their post-secondary goals. Also, it is important to detail any future instructional or educational possibilities in the IEP and the course of study should provide a basic curriculum to the student's school, so they can decide what programs and services at school will be most beneficial to the student's progress and completion of their IEP goals. If the student plans to continue with schooling after they graduate high school, such as getting admission into a college, the IEP should include when they will begin planning the college process, and integrating the times the student will be taking the required standardized tests and complete the necessary applications. Also, the IEP should include a prospective graduation date and the chosen diploma option. FAPE is provided until the student is 21 years old for students with disabilities.

In terms of graduation, the state of Wyoming has a minimum set of graduation requirements, which LEAs can add to if they see it necessary. The possible diploma options are between the standard high school diploma and a certificate of attendance. However, the state permits a variety of allowances when it comes to the completion of the requirements. Alternate courses can be taken to earn the required credits, performance criteria can be lowered, and extensions can be granted if the student needs more time. All allowances must be included in the student's IEP. There is not state exit exam to get the standard diploma.

Guardianship:

The age of majority in Wyoming 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. A 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 decisions about their welfare, or if the family feels that the individual's disability impedes their ability to properly take care of themselves, the proposed guardian can file a petition at the local circuit court. The petition should include a doctor's letter explaining the individual's condition and why the student would need guardianship. At the hearing, the evidence of the disability will be presented to the judge and a guardian ad litem will be appointed for the individual if desired. The other side should also have legal representation at the courthouse to help debate their case. There are many types of guardianships including full guardianship, limited guardianship, temporary guardianship, guardian of the person or guardian of property. The judge will specify the terms of the guardianship and what reasons would justify the termination of the guardianship. The judge, while considering the individual's preferences, will decide who they believe is the best fit as the individual's legal guardian.

This is often a lengthy process so it is best to begin the process as early as the student's 17th birthday. If the person is the guardian of the person, including their medical and personal affairs, they will have to present reports to the court on a semi-annual basis and if they are managing their financial affairs, they will have to provide an annual account of the individual's affairs. If the judge believes that the guardian is not performing their duties appropriately and is not working in the best interests of the individual, they can have the guardianship terminated and an alternate guardian replace them, even if it is a public guardian.

Wyoming Guardianship Process Flow Chart:

www.wyomingguardianship.org/docs/guardianshipprocessflowchart.pdf

Vocational Rehabilitation:

By using the VR program, the department has been able to increase on average the income of the consumer by \$11 for every one dollar spent on the services. After being referred to the program, and meeting with a counselor, assessments of vocational and social skills will be done and also the counselor will confirm eligibility for the programs. It will take a maximum of sixty days to confirm eligibility. Then, together with the counselor, the student will create an Individualized Plan for Employment with a final employment goal that the student will strive for while receiving their VR services. The program offers counseling, guidance, referral services, job search and placement assistance, training services, transportation services, supported employment services and rehabilitation technology services. They will also work with schools to help with the transition from school 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:

Wyoming Public Housing Agency Contact Information:

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

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: HUD in Wyoming

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

Disability.gov Guide to Housing:

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

Wyoming Resources

Special Programs

Wyoming Department of Education

(307) 857-9285

<http://edu.wyoming.gov/in-the-classroom/special-programs>

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services

www.wyomingworkforce.org

Vocational Rehabilitation: www.wyomingworkforce.org/workers/vr

Find your local office: www.wyomingworkforce.org/contact/vr

Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division

Department of Health

(307) 777-7115

www.health.wyo.gov/ddd

Wyoming Department of Family Services

(307) 777-7561

dfsweb.state.wy.us