# NEBRASKA
## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
92 NAC 51 (Rule 51)

Transition Planning Guidance Document
August 2018

# NEBRASKA
# TRANSITION

# SPED
## SPECIAL EDUCATION

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# Transition Planning Guidance Document

## Purpose
The Nebraska Office of Special Education is committed to empowering educators, students, families, and agency partners in gathering valuable and usable information to assist in planning for individual student's adult life, which include both current and post-secondary needs.  Transition planning is a critical process ensuring Nebraska students are prepared for post-secondary citizenship.

## What is transition planning and why is it important?
Transitioning into the adult world can be a challenge for all young people, even more so for students with disabilities. Transition planning is a process that is designed to provide these students with the necessary skills and services to smoothly transition into adult life. Transition plans are built into the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

## Does everyone need a transition plan?
All students with disabilities, ages 16-21, must have transition components in their IEP. If parents and students agree, transition plans may be included in the IEP prior to age 16.

## What is involved in the transition planning process?
The IEP team creates a transition plan. This team consists of the student, family member(s), school personnel, agency representatives (with prior written parent consent) who may be providing services after the student graduates, and others who may be working with the student. The student's attendance and participation in this transition planning process is most important.  IEP teams should ensure decisions support student's ability to make adequate progress, access the general education curriculum, meet graduation requirements, and receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

## What are legal considerations regarding transition?
### Free and Appropriate Public Education
All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must provide students with a FAPE. This includes students who are eligible for special education from the ages of 3 through 21 [20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(1)(A) and 92 NAC 51, Section 004.01, FAPE is individually determined for each student with a disability. FAPE must include special education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and may include related services, transition services, supplementary aids and services, and/or assistive technology devices and services.

**Least Restrictive Environment**

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the least restrictive environment requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, all students with disabilities 3 through 21 years of age are to be educated with age appropriate peers, both with and without disabilities (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5)). Key components of LRE include:

- Students must have an array of services and a continuum of educational setting options available to meet the individual LRE requirements.
- An appropriate LRE is one that enables the student to make reasonable gains toward goals identified in an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The IEP team must consider and describe the extent the student will participate in the general education classroom environment, curriculum, extracurricular, and other nonacademic activities.
- Consideration must be given to any potential current or long-term harmful effect on the student or on the quality of services the student needs, including the student's ability to graduate and achieve his or her post high-school goals.

The overall goal of the IEP/Transition Planning Meeting is to determine the student's strengths, interests, and preferences in order to create an individualized transition plan.  There are three areas that must be discussed when participating in transition planning and development of measurable post-secondary goals (PSG) meeting:

- What is the student's long term goal in the area of post-secondary education or training?
- What is the student's long term goal in the area of employment?
- What is the student's long term goal in the area of independent living/community participation (when appropriate)?

It is important to keep in mind that a student's goals may change as they get older, they may experience more opportunities, and they will begin to personally define specific career directions.

# What is transition assessment?
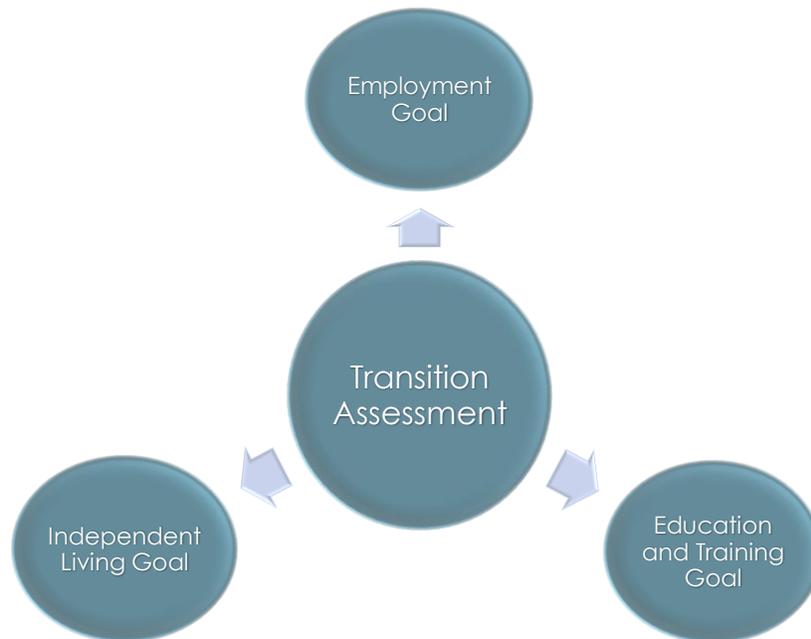


The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children defines transition assessment as an "...*ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)*" (Sitlington, Neubert, & Leconte, 1997; p. 70-71). Federal law requires "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills" (§300.320[b][l]).

Transition assessments may be conducted in a variety of ways, such as electronic/online assessments, paper and pencil tests, structured student and family interviews, community or work-based assessments, and curriculum-based assessments. These assessments or procedures come in two general formats - formal and informal. The types can be defined as:

### Formal Transition Assessments
Formal assessments are standardized instruments that include descriptions of their norming process, reliability and validity, and recommended uses. Some of these assessments can be limited to recommended use by a professional with requisite qualifications.

Examples of the formal assessments are the ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, Vineland (most current edition), Enderle-Severson Series of Assessments, Career Occupation Preference System (COPS series), Brigance, Woodcock Johnson (most current edition),  and Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG).

**Informal Transition Assessments**
In contrast, informal assessments generally lack a formal norming process and reliability or validity information.  These assessments require more subjectivity to complete and yield the best data when used on an ongoing basis and by more than one person to improve their validity.

Examples of some popular informal assessments include the Transition Planning Inventory, O'Net Career Interest Inventory, Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS), and Casey Life Skills.

Other examples of informal assessments include situational or observational learning styles assessments, curriculum-based assessment from courses, observational reports, situational assessments, structured interviews, personal future planning activities, and functional skill inventories.

# Why administer transition assessments?
Transition assessments are given for several reasons:
- develop post-secondary goals, related transition services, annual goals and objectives for the transition component of the IEP
- make instructional programming decisions
- include information in the present level of performance related to a student's interests, preferences, and needs in an IEP
- guide recommendations for instructional strategies and accommodations
- help students learn about themselves, be better prepared, and engaged in career development
- help students understand the connection between school and their post-school goals.

Transition assessment information should be gathered in these areas:
- academics
- self-determination (self-advocacy)
- vocational interests and exploration
- adaptive behavior/independent living
- other areas as appropriate, depending on need (i.e., social behavior, communication, assistive technology, community experience, etc.).
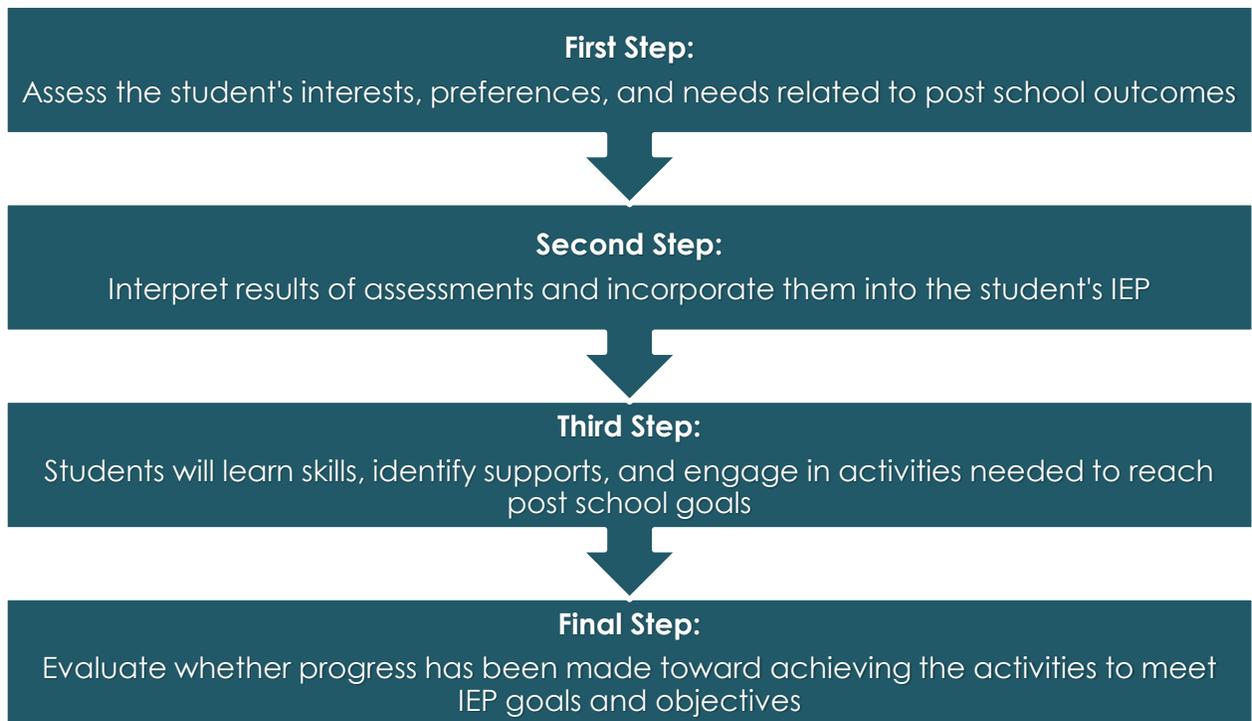
## Who completes transition assessments?

Transition assessments are completed across environments that uniquely represent each student. Although the IEP case manager will coordinate transition assessments, many individuals can complete them.  Assessments results are used to develop appropriate measurable post-secondary goals.

Assessments may be completed by:
- Special Education Teacher (with IEP responsibilities)
- Special Education Teacher (non IEP responsibilities)
- Vocational/Career and Technical Educator (CTE)
- General Education Teachers
- Transition Specialist/Coordinator (ESU or District representatives)
- School Counselor
- Parents/Guardian/Families
- Student
- Specialized Providers (Speech-Language Pathologist, School Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Teacher for Deaf/HOH, Teacher for Blind/Visually Impaired, etc.)
- Business Partners
- Developmental Disability Provider
- Nebraska VR Counselor
- Mental Health Service Provider
- Juvenile Justice Staff
- Medical Professionals

## Transition Assessment Framework

The transition assessment process can be viewed within a framework. One useful framework is by Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, and Leconte (1996). Their framework incorporates a variety of methods for assessing the student and potential work or training environment. Analyses of results help educators make decisions about how best to match a student with their potential training or job environment. The purpose of the framework is to identify training and post school options that match the students' interests, preferences, and needs using the Assess, Plan, Instruct, and Evaluate (APIE) model.

| **First Step:** |
| Assess the student's interests, preferences, and needs related to post school outcomes |

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| **Second Step:** |
| Interpret results of assessments and incorporate them into the student's IEP |

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| **Third Step:** |
| Students will learn skills, identify supports, and engage in activities needed to reach post school goals |

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| **Final Step:** |
| Evaluate whether progress has been made toward achieving the activities to meet IEP goals and objectives |

## How do I build my assessment toolbox?

First, it is important to become familiar with the different types of transition assessments available to you. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Explore the resources provided by the Nebraska Department of Education, http://transition.ne.gov/
- Read administration manuals and guides to identify what information is gathered through the assessment
- Complete online research to identify the benefits, read test reviews, look for professional opinions, and view reports of results
- Collaborate with local adult service providers/agencies to gather previously administered assessments
- Practice administering and scoring assessments prior to use with student

Then, select assessments and methods that help the student to answer the following questions:
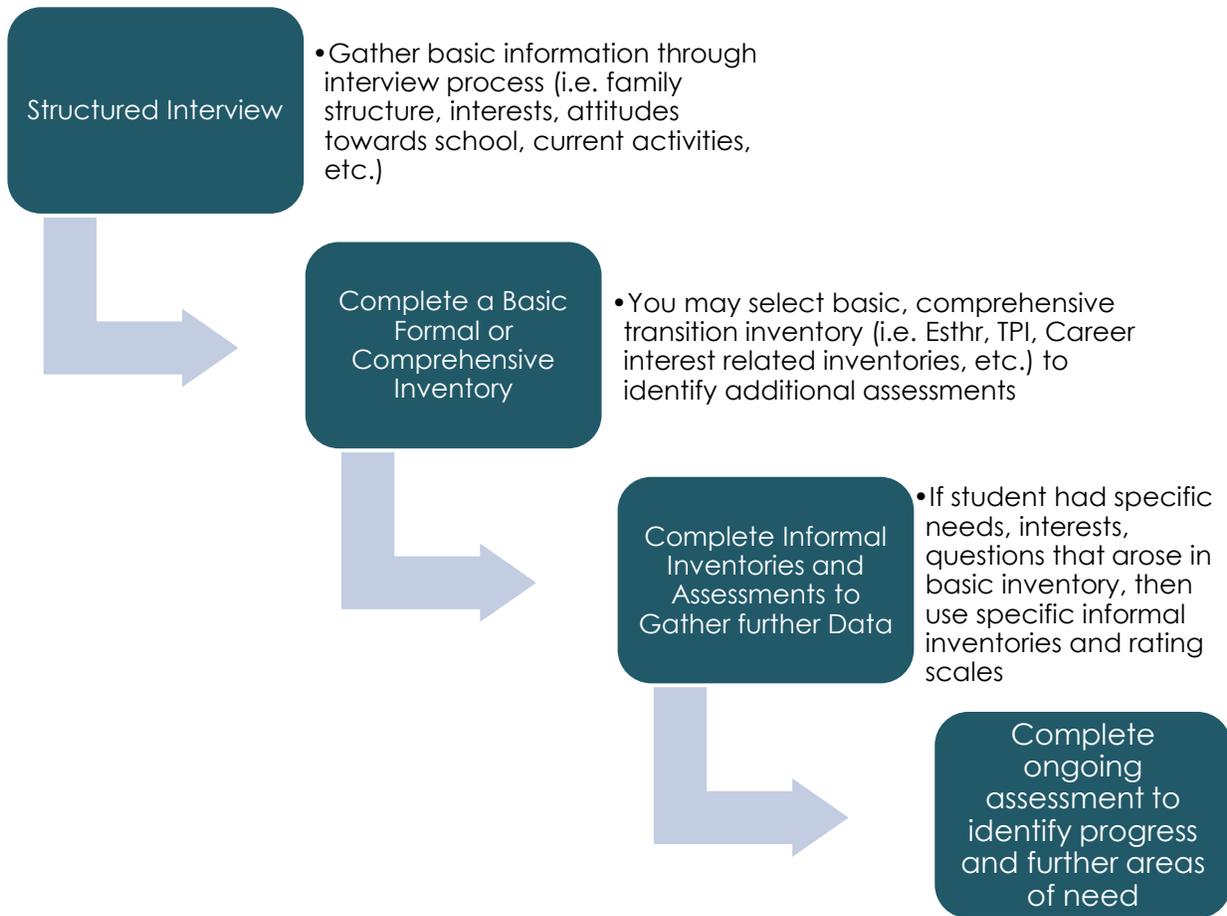
- Who am I?
- What are my unique talents and interests?
- What do I want in life, now and in the future?
- What are some of life's demands that I can meet now?
- What are the main barriers to getting what I want from school and my community?
- What opportunities are available in my school and community to prepare me for what I can do today and in the future?

Finally, identify specific assessments that meet the needs of each of your students. Base your choices on what the student's team identifies as an area of need. Think about the following things when selecting assessments specifically for your students:
- Current academic levels and needs related to their disability
- Self-determination needs
- Vocational interest and exploration
- Adaptive behavior/independent living
- Community opportunities and adaptations available and needed
- What accommodations, if any, will be needed during the assessment process

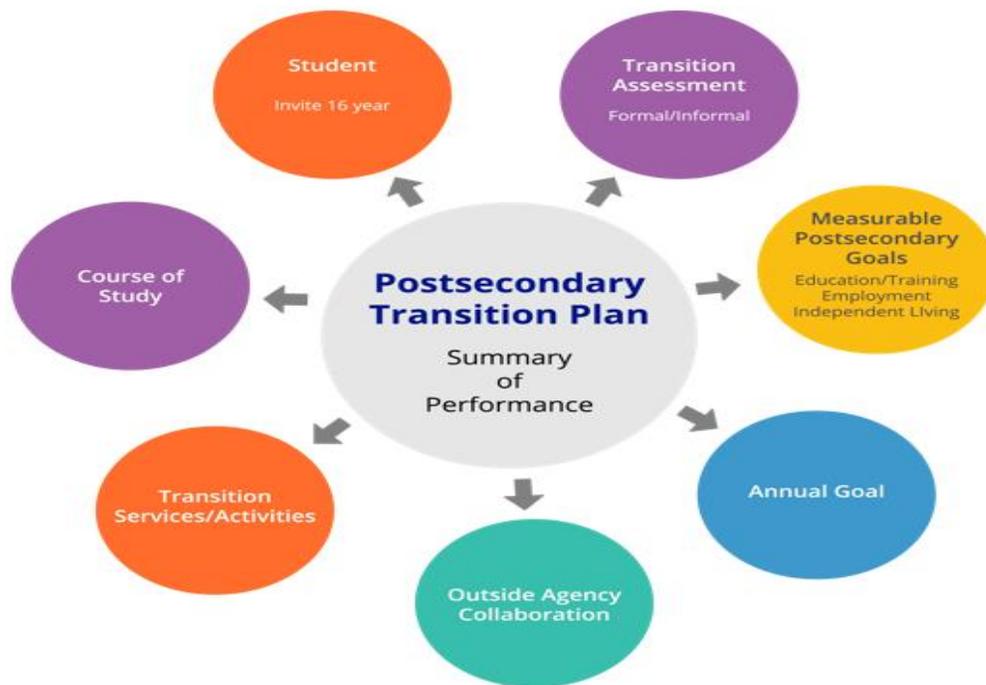## How do I conduct transition assessments?
The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2016) offers a format that may be useful in the administration process. If you choose to follow a standardized format, you could use the following process:

**Structured Interview**
- Gather basic information through interview process (i.e. family structure, interests, attitudes towards school, current activities, etc.)

**Complete a Basic Formal or Comprehensive Inventory**
- You may select basic, comprehensive transition inventory (i.e. Esthr, TPI, Career interest related inventories, etc.) to identify additional assessments

**Complete Informal Inventories and Assessments to Gather further Data**
- If student had specific needs, interests, questions that arose in basic inventory, then use specific informal inventories and rating scales

**Complete ongoing assessment to identify progress and further areas of need**

How you administer transition assessments will vary depending on the instrument you choose and your students' needs. However, Sitlington, Neubert, and Leconte (1997) offered the following guidelines to keep in mind when administering assessments:

- When possible, authentic assessments should take place in environments that resemble real situations and places. (i.e. work sites, independent living/apartment opportunities, community settings, or classrooms)
- Include assistive technology or accommodations as needed by students to allow them to demonstrate skills and abilities (document what assistive technology or accommodations you used)
- Vary assessment methods that allow for a sequence of activities to demonstrate behavior over a series of time
- Verify assessment data with more than one source
- Document and share in a format that all team members can understand
- Use assessment data to assist in developing the transition plan

## Connecting the Path

**Postsecondary Transition Plan**
Summary of Performance

Student — Invite 16 year
Transition Assessment — Formal/Informal
Measurable Postsecondary Goals — Education/Training, Employment, Independent Living
Annual Goal
Outside Agency Collaboration
Transition Services/Activities
Course of Study

Transition is an ongoing process requiring a comprehensive approach connecting people and planning over several years.  Plotting the path through secondary education makes the work less daunting by sharing tasks among professionals, family, and the student.  This also creates a support network of like-minded advocates. Knowledge and skills leading toward the student's post-secondary goals are developed.  Planning which is driven by the student's strengths and interests is enhanced when informed by ongoing assessment and data collection. Students able to make decisions based on data have an advantage in life.

**Course of Study.**  Transition assessment assists in identifying courses (required and elective) that support the student's specific post-secondary goals.  The objective of the course of study is to outline courses that assist the student in reaching his/her post-secondary goals.  This also includes work sites, internships, school organizations and activities, job shadows, etc.

**Summary of Performance (SOP).**  This document includes transition-related information, including formal and informal assessment information, classroom and school performance data, and information on appropriate accommodations and services during high school (Dukes, 2010).  This may also include vocational, business, and extracurricular assessment results.

The SOP serves as an information sharing tool that helps adult service providers

(e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Support Specialists in College or University settings) tailor services to the student's unique talents, limitations, and needs.  The document also provides the student with an opportunity to prepare for their post-school goals by having an accurate summary of their transition assessment data supporting their work with future service providers.

**College Entrance Examinations.** Given the increasing importance of a college education, it seems reasonable to consider helping youth prepare for college entrance exams as part of the transition assessment process.  A student's performance on these exams has a considerable impact on whether they get admitted to a college of their choice. The most common entrance exams are the ACT, SAT, and Accuplacer.  In helping prepare a student for these exams, high school counselors can be a valuable resource. In addition, several publications and websites, most offering free and for a fee services, provide access to sample test questions or further training.

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR) supplements transition activities that are being provided through the resident school district. Nebraska VR may provide work-based learning experiences to students outside of regular school hours, including evenings, weekends, holidays, and vacations.

For students ages 14–21, the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) include:

- Job Exploration
- Work Readiness Training
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Training Options
- Self-Advocacy
- Work-Based Learning Experiences

*For further information on Nebraska VR, please see www.vr.nebraska.gov.*

## Graduation Considerations

Students with disabilities are eligible for special education services until they meet the graduation requirements to receive a regular, signed diploma or until the end of the school year in which they reach age 21.  There are no specific curriculum requirements that students with disabilities must meet in order to graduate from high school.  Instead, they may graduate with a signed, regular diploma when they meet the transition goals in the IEP.  It is widely recognized by families and educators that graduation decisions are difficult to make and there are no clear guidelines to help direct that decision.  Assessment data can provide information for the team to consider when making graduation decisions.
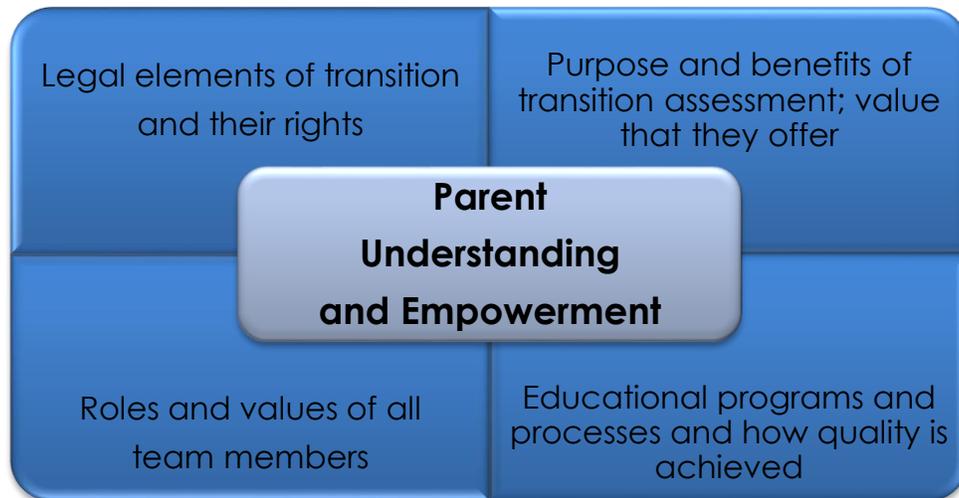
Regarding graduation, it is important to remember:

- It is recommended that graduation be addressed in all transition plans. Plans for graduation should be considered in development of the course of study and reviewed annually.

- The receipt of a signed, regular diploma terminates the service eligibility of students with special education needs.

- It is recommended that all diplomas awarded by a school district be identical in appearance, content and effect, except that symbols or notations may be added to individual student's diplomas to reflect official school honors or awards earned by students.

- A student who receives a document such as a certificate of attendance, unsigned diploma, or blank folder is eligible to continue receiving special education services until receipt of a signed, regular diploma or until the end of the school year in which the student turns 21.

- It is recommended that the IEP team review and document that all requirements for receipt of a signed, regular high school diploma have been met.

## How do we engage families in assessment?

Youth and family involvement in transition assessment are important components of a successful plan.  Family support promotes youth resiliency and has a significant impact on the student's success.  When families have meaningful opportunities to participate in both school and home, the roles and responsibilities of parents or guardians are strengthened and empowered.  Being a true part of the team brings many benefits for everyone!

Families are often the first, most knowledgeable, and consistent "case manager" for youth with disabilities.  Families possess valuable information about a youth's strengths, interests, and needs.  In a time of dwindling resources, family involvement can help professionals streamline their assessment process, access personal networks for job opportunities, and build work readiness skills in the home.  Young people benefit from the expertise their families bring to the process, and their commitment to their child's welfare.  Care must be taken to provide supports in a culturally competent and respectful manner (as well as a manner that ensures that parents have a firm understanding of the impact made by their decisions and input).

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|---|---|
| Legal elements of transition and their rights | Purpose and benefits of transition assessment; value that they offer |
| Roles and values of all team members | Educational programs and processes and how quality is achieved |

**Parent Understanding and Empowerment**

Some ideas for engaging families are:

- Interacting with the family in a way that lets them know you care
- Validating and listening to the family
- Using family friendly terminology and clear language
- Understanding and adapting to the family's strengths, challenges and barriers (i.e. work commitments, family demands, stresses from poverty, poor housing, nutrition, diversity)
- Providing visual resources to represent the progression of transition
- Planning and identifying the child's unique transition pathway

# References

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Sitlington, P.L., Neubert, D.A., Begun, W.H., Lombard, R.C., & Lecconte, P.J. *Assess for success: A practitioner's handbook on transition assessment (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks California: Corwin Press.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Toolbox Graphic Image Courtesy of istock photo.com