



Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative

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Transition Programming for Students Between the Ages of 18 and 21

Students on an Individual Education Plan may require continued instruction beyond the 12th grade. When this is necessary, Transition Programs may be an option. Transition Programs are designed for students between the ages of 18 and 21 with unmet IEP goals. In these programs, students learn the transitional skills and knowledge that will assist them in attaining their measureable post-secondary goals. The overarching purpose of these programs is to improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities in the areas of employment, postsecondary education and, if necessary, independent living.

Considerations for the educating of students between the ages of 18 and 21:

1. Once a student exits high school, all IEP services end. Students may exit high school via:
 - a. Graduation on credits
 - b. Completion of IEP goals and objectives
 - c. Aging out at 21
2. 18 to 21 programs are not a continuation of high school but a time period for completion of transitional and other goals related to the student's measureable postsecondary goals:
 - a. Frequent new goals are not typically written during this period. Students work on uncompleted existing goals based upon identified needs which prepare them for their stated post-graduation ambitions.
 - b. Except for students who are making up classes to graduate via credits, students typically do not participate in traditional high school classes that are not related to existing goals
 - c. IDEA requires that instructional goals be written with an annual focus so it is inappropriate to write goals in a student's "senior" year that are more far reaching and comprehensive than those of previous years.
3. 18 to 21 programming does not have specific requirements for time or location
 - a. Because of their transitional focus, 18 – 21 programming tends to be community based with a high degree of focus on employment and independent living
 - b. Schools are not required to have students enrolled full time. Programming can be for part days, less than five days a week or in a non-school setting
4. 18-21 programs focus on the skills and behaviors to be learned based upon the students' measureable postsecondary goals and IEP instructional goals
 - a. Programs are educational, not career placement. Schools teach students marketable employment skills but are not required to find students meaningful employment
 - b. Schools are not required to place students in public or private programs to meet student needs if the school can adequately address those needs
 - c. The transitional areas addressed are those defined by the students post-graduation goals (measureable post-secondary goals)

5. With all students on IEP, IDEA requires that services be delivered in the least restrictive setting possible
 - a. Transition services need to be provided early and consistently in a student's educational career. We recommend that Transition is the focus of secondary special education services.
 - b. It is the goal of education to graduate all students with their peers with the skills and knowledge to be successful in their post-secondary options
6. 18 to 21 programs automatically move students to level IV programming

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