

APSE Fact Sheet: Transition



Currently many of our nation's students are leaving school without any significant work experience or a clear career plan. This problem is even more significant for students with disabilities. Youth with disabilities are more likely to drop out of high school, not receive adequate job training, become involved in the juvenile justice system, and remain on government programs resulting in a life of poverty and cyclical dependence. Evidence-based research has conclusively documented that youth with significant disabilities who were educated in inclusive settings, exposed to work experience and career exploration, and participated in a paid work experience during school, had better postsecondary outcomes and higher rates of sustainable employment. However, our current system does not provide language or policies that promote integrated, competitive employment with the potential of career growth. This is largely a result of low expectations.

APSE Transition Principles for Youth with Disabilities:

- Transition policies for young people with disabilities should be driven by the same high expectations that exist for all young people: that when young people leave school they are well-prepared to pursue jobs and careers that result in maximum economic self-sufficiency as part of fully participating citizens in mainstream society.
- Federal and state policy should focus on promoting transition outcomes that include competitive employment, economic self-sufficiency, community living, and additional educational opportunities.
- All students, including those with disabilities, should leave school having had a significant level of paid work experience.
- The work experiences of young with disabilities should be similar to those of students without disabilities, in afterschool and summer jobs with employers and businesses in their local communities.
- Individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, should enjoy the presumption that they can achieve integrated employment with the appropriate service and supports.
- From an early age, all professionals, educational settings, and publicly funded programs that families and young people with disabilities interact with should have a consistent message and expectation that children will grow up to become fully participating adults in all aspects of society, including successful jobs and careers working side-by-side with their fellow citizens without disabilities.
- Maximum integration and inclusion of young people with disabilities throughout their educational experience in all aspects of school life, will help to ensure that they become full participants in society as adults, including pursuing successful employment and careers.
- To encourage integrated employment outcomes, federal and state policy should promote interagency coordination, agency responsibilities, and a set of incentives for Labor, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, and other sources of public funds to maximize funding and to better develop cross-agency transition strategies
- All schools, including secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as agencies and programs they collaborate with, should have highly competent, professional and culturally competent staff, with the skills and abilities to ensure all young people are well prepared for adult lives characterized by successful careers.
- Young people with disabilities should be discouraged from long-term dependence on Social Security programs (SSI/SSDI), while also having access to the necessary publicly funded systems and supports that enable them to have full and rich adult lives characterized by employment success.
- Transition policies should include a prohibition on use of facility-based services including sheltered workshops, group setting options, and segregated day programs.
- Young people with disabilities need assistance and support specific to their needs as they go through the various stages of young adulthood; therefore, transition planning and services need to be focused on the

longer term beyond the ages of 21, to ensure the necessary assistance support for a successful transition into full adulthood.

- As with all young people, investment in young people with disabilities to properly prepare them for adult lives characterized by maximum independence and self-sufficiency, benefits both the individual and society by helping to ensure that individuals are not highly dependent on publicly funded services and programs throughout their adult lives.

APSE Recommendations for Strengthening Transition Policies:

- Strengthen language in IDEA and other federal laws and regulations regarding employment in the general workforce as the expected outcome for all young people with disabilities.
- Within IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, WIA, and other federal laws and regulations, prohibit the use of segregated facility-based programs (sheltered workshops, day habilitation centers, etc.) for any type of services provided to a student prior to leaving school.
- Within IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, and other federal laws and regulations, prohibit placement in segregated facility-based programs (sheltered workshops, day habilitation centers, etc.) as an accepted outcome after a young person leaves school.
- Strengthen language in IDEA and other federal laws and regulations that specifically proscribes paid work experience as an expectation of the transition experience.
- Within IDEA and other federal laws and regulations, mandate within the IEP process the development of plans for employment and gaining work experience, starting no later than age 14. This should include vocational preparation that concentrates on a targeted vocational goal through specific coursework; academic preparation for attending college as appropriate; preparation for life skills and independent living as youth enter into adulthood. Within such a mandate, require extensive documentation of a decision not to pursue employment, to be re-examined at least annually.
- Within WIA, mandate MOUs with local school districts, to ensure that young people with disabilities are pro-actively recruited and participating in youth services administered by state and local workforce investment boards.
- Modify the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, to more fully promote the inclusion of teenagers and young adults with significant disabilities in vocational and technical education programs, to ensure they have job skills that result in successful careers.
- Promote the inclusion of young people with significant disabilities in post-secondary education, by removal of federal/state/local policy barriers, with the goal of a post-secondary experience that leads to successful employment and career opportunities.
- Revamp the current data collection requirements for IDEA, to ensure the measurement of post-secondary outcomes is done with accuracy and integrity, and that there is accurate data on the transition experience of young people with disabilities that includes tracking of their employment experience while in school.

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About APSE

APSE, the *Association of People Supporting Employment First*, is the only national organization with an *exclusive focus* on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. APSE is a 3,000+ growing national non-profit membership organization, founded in 1988. Our members include individuals with disabilities, families, disability professionals, and businesses.