



Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council  
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## Transition to Adulthood

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Position:**

Transition Services must be based upon students' identified abilities and preferences and prepare them for further education, competitive employment, and independent living. To that end, schools must coordinate and collaborate with students, families, and other agencies and organizations to ensure that students have multiple and diverse opportunities to gain the skills they need to lead independent, community-included lives.

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Reasons:**

Schools must provide Transition Services to students receiving special education services beginning the school year they turn 16, or earlier as appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Transition Services must reflect the students' "strengths, preferences, and interests" and help them gain the skills they need to take part in adult activities including "post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, [and] community participation."<sup>2</sup>

Studies have shown that Transition Services are more effective when schools collaborate with other agencies and organizations to provide students with supports that help them gain education, employment, self-determination, and independent living skills.<sup>3</sup> When students receive such coordinated supports, they are more likely to complete school, become employed, and live independently.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, many families and advocates report that Missouri public schools too-often fail to provide appropriate Transition Services.<sup>5</sup> These reports are consistent with our 2006 statewide Needs Assessment, where 71% of respondents said that Transition Services were either not available or only somewhat available in their local schools and 77% said that post-high school opportunities were either not available or only somewhat available.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Recommendations:**

- Schools must begin Transition Services as early as possible and provide students with meaningful opportunities for education and career exploration, paid work experiences, and developing self-determination and independent living skills.<sup>7</sup>
- Students and parents must be full partners in planning and implementing Transition Services to ensure that services and supports are based upon each student's strengths, preferences, and interests.<sup>8</sup>
- Schools must collaborate and coordinate with other agencies and organizations – particularly those providing competitive employment and independent living services – to ensure that students receive appropriate Transition Services and are connected with the people, agencies, and supports they will need and want after graduation.<sup>9</sup>
- The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MO DESE) should promote interagency coordination that meets or exceeds the standards set by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act,<sup>10</sup> including collaborative relationships with Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Mental Health, Centers for Independent Living, Medicaid Waiver providers, and other organizations and agencies that can provide students with education, competitive employment, and independent living information, supports, and opportunities.<sup>11</sup>
- Schools should work with employers and businesses to build community capacity and give students a wide variety of competitive work opportunities instead of referring students to sheltered workshops.
- Schools should not advise parents to seek guardianship. If students have limitations in decision-making or independent living, schools should provide appropriate supports and services and link students with agencies and organizations that can help them build skills in those areas.<sup>12</sup>
- MO DESE should increase initiatives promoting post-secondary education for students with disabilities.
- MO DESE should provide training to teachers and other employees to ensure that they are familiar with agencies organizations, and services that can help students achieve competitive employment and independent living.
- MO DESE should develop accountability standards to ensure that schools provide appropriate Transition Services, which should include reviewing whether schools refer students to sheltered workshops. MO DESE should issue public reports stating whether schools meet those standards and take appropriate action against those that do not.

*Let people with disabilities live real lives!*

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## References

1. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)
2. 20 USC 1401(34)
3. e.g., Michaels, C. A., & Ferrara, D. L. (2006). Promoting Post-School Success for all: The Role of Collaboration in Person-Centered Transition Planning. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 16(4), 287-313.
4. e.g., Malloy, J. M. (2013). The RENEW model: Supporting Transition-Age Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Challenges. *Emotional & Behavioral Disorders in Youth*, 13, 38-48.
5. For example, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MO DESE) conducts a survey asking parents, among other things, if they agree with this statement: "My child's school provides information on agencies that can assist my child in the transition from school to a career, technical training, or higher education." While that question does not come close to addressing all of a school's obligations to provide appropriate Transition Services under 20 U.S.C. 1401(34), the average answer from 2013-2017 fell between "Neutral" and "Agree."
6. See, <http://moddcouncil.org/pageDownload.php?docID=455>.
7. e.g., deFur, S. (2000). Designing Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Plans. *ERIC Digest #E598*. Available at: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED449599.pdf>
8. e.g. Wehman, P., Sima, A, Ketchum, J, West, M., Fong, C. & Luecking, R. (2015). Predictors of Successful Transition from School to Employment for Youth with Disabilities. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 25(2), 323.
9. e.g., Gustin, J. & Martinis, J. (2016). Change the Culture, Change the World: Increasing Independence by Creating a Culture of Coordinated Support. *Apostrophe Magazine*. Available at: [www.apostrophemagazine.com](http://www.apostrophemagazine.com)
10. 29 U.S.C. 3101, *et seq.*
11. e.g., deFur, *supra* note 6; Gustin & Martinis, *supra* note 8.
12. Martinis, J. (2015). "The Right to Make Choices": How Vocational Rehabilitation Can Help Young Adults with Disabilities Increase Self-Determination and Avoid Guardianship. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 42(3), 221-227.

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