



Transition to Adulthood

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Position:

Transition Services must be based upon students' abilities and preferences and prepare them for further education, competitive employment, and independent living. Schools must coordinate and collaborate with students, families, and other agencies and organizations, with students playing a lead role, to ensure that students have multiple and diverse opportunities to gain the skills they need to lead meaningful, productive, independent, and 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.¹ 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."²

Research shows 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.³ When students receive such coordinated supports, they are more likely to complete school, become employed, and live independently.⁴

Unfortunately, schools too-often fail to provide appropriate Transition Services. In our 2021 statewide Needs Assessment, nearly a quarter of respondents and 46% of Hispanic/Latinx participants said they had unmet needs around planning for the transition from school to work or adult life.⁵ The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (MO DESE) 2020-2021 Performance Report noted: (1) 11% of students aged 15 or above receiving special education services whose files were reviewed as part of a sample for compliance did not have an IEP "that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals" and/or were not invited to an IEP meeting to discuss such goals and/or did not have appropriate supporting agencies invited to their IEP meeting; and (2) 38% of students receiving special education services who graduated or left school were unemployed and unenrolled in any postsecondary education or training programs.⁶ Participants in our Needs Assessment also reported that schools often recommend that they seek guardianship of their children without informing them about alternatives or the potential negative impacts of guardianship.⁷

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Recommendations:

- Schools must begin Transition Services as early as possible and provide students with meaningful and diverse opportunities for education and career exploration, and developing independent living skills.
- Students and parents must be full partners, with students playing a lead role, in planning and implementing Transition Services to ensure that services and supports are based upon each student's strengths, preferences, and interests.⁸
- Schools must collaborate and coordinate with other agencies and organizations in Transition Planning to ensure that students are connected with the people, agencies, and supports they will need and want after graduation.⁹
- MO DESE should promote interagency coordination in Transition Services, including relationships with Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Mental Health, Centers for Independent Living, Medicaid Waiver providers, and other organizations and agencies providing education, competitive employment, and independent living information, supports, and opportunities.¹⁰
- 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.
- MO DESE should develop accountability standards that review how often schools refer students to sheltered workshops, issue reports on school performance, and take action against schools that do not meet the standards.



- 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.¹¹

References

1. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)
2. 20 USC 1401(34)
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5. Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (2021). Comprehensive Review and Analysis, February 28, 2021.
6. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021.). State Performance Plan/Annual Report: Part B for State Formula Grant Programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For reporting on FFY 2019. Available at: <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/2021-sppapr-report>, pp. 46-51
8. Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, *supra* note 5.
9. 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>
10. 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.
11. 20 USC § 1401(34); Martinis, J., Cassidy, K., Gustin, J., Nadeau, J., & Robinson, D. (2019). Creating a Culture of Coordinated Support in Vermont: The Successful Transitions Program. *Impact* 32(1), 19-21; deFur, *supra* note 8. ; 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.
12. Martinis, et al., *supra* note 10; deFur, *supra* note 8; Martinis, J. G. (2014). One Person, Many Choices: Using Special Education Transition Services to Increase Self-Direction and Decision-Making and Decrease Overboard or Undue Guardianship. Retrieved from *Jenny Hatch Justice Project website*: http://jennyhatchjusticeproject.org/docs/publications/jhjp_publications_draft_article_guardianship.pdf .;

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