



## Transition from School to Adulthood FAQ

### What is a transition program, who is it for and when does it start?

A transition program is for students with disabilities who have received a credential in 12th grade and have not and will not receive a diploma. Typically, it is for students 18-21 years old. Some districts have transition programs in their buildings and others will send students out to transition program like to a BOCES transition program or a post-secondary college program. A transition program is to help students gain functional academic skills and build vocational skills.

### Is there an IEP diploma?

**NO.** Students exit high school with either a diploma (could be local or regents) or a credential (could be CDOS or SAC). It is important for families to know what "track" their child is on at all times. Students are either on a diploma track and exposed to grade level curriculum or are alternately assessed where curriculum is highly modified, and the student will not be participating in NYS tests or regents' exams. The student will take an alternate assessment to gauge progress.

### Should my child attend his/her CSE meetings?

A student should attend their CSE meeting when they are ready to do so. A student could start out and attend for 5 or 10 minutes to talk about what is working and what isn't working at school. A student could write something up that either they or a caregiver/parent could share at the meeting. It is important for the students' voice to be a part of the development of the IEP. At age 14, your child should be invited by the school to attend their CSE meeting. Once the student turns 15, the school must include transition services on the IEP.

### I am really worried about what will happen to my child after the age of 21 and the bus stops coming. What do I do to prepare for that time?

Learn as much as you can about the agencies in your area that provide adult services. Speak with your school's transition coordinator and work with your Care Coordinator to learn what is available. Get your child involved with activities with peers so you and they can network with other families. Families learn a lot from other families.

### What is the role of the Care Coordinator in the transition process?

The Care Coordinator works with the school and OPWDD to figure out what happens after graduation. The school spends the most time with the student and does a lot of assessments leading up to graduation. It is imperative that the Care Coordinator and the school are talking to each other about what they are seeing and finding and what experiences the student is having. They work together with you to figure out what options seem appropriate. The Care Coordinator must submit documentation to OPWDD for all graduating students including documents from the school and OPWDD reviews everything to determine what the student will be authorized for within OPWDD services. Then the Care Coordinator can go out and seek those services that are authorized.

My son graduates soon, once he is 21. He is mild to moderate ID and ADHD and we are based in Niagara County. What is there here for him, or should we move? Also, how do I still be able to make doctor appointments because he is of age and people want to speak to him?

While it is true that there are a higher number of services in more densely populated areas, it is also true that there are more people who need those services, so it does not necessarily mean there are more openings. There are some services that operate in certain geographic areas, and sometimes you need to think about access to transportation. This is something very individualized. For instance, if you opt for self-directed services, where you live may not matter as much. It is important that you know what options are available in your area and you should talk with your Care Coordinator about these concerns and make sure you are talking about the different options in your area.

The financial aspects of our son's "independence" concern us. How can we prepare/protect him?

There are a lot of financial considerations that vary widely for each person. I am not sure what this question is speaking to in particular, but I will generally note that people are assumed to have many abilities to do things independently at age 18. If someone does NOT have the capability of handling their finances, there are different avenues to explore including but not limited to having a joint account at a bank, becoming a rep payee for benefits, having a special needs trust for larger sums of money, etc. These are all very individualized and we encourage you to talk about these with the Care Coordinator to figure out what's right for your situation.

Are there any local college experiences available with Skills and Achievement Commencement Credentials? We live in Genesee County.

Genesee Community College does have some supports they offer via CAP (Center for Academic Progress). If you want to enroll in college, it is important to know that most colleges do have a disability office who can help with individualized needs.

Will they receive a certificate for the credential program?

Yes. A certificate of completion will be provided.

What do self-directed services look like once "independent"?

Self-directed services look different for everyone, and that's really the beauty of this service as it's directed by that person and their needs and goals. There are many, many different levels of independence. Some are able to be independent BECAUSE they have self-directed supports, while others may no longer need as much support because they are so independent. It really depends on the person.

How do I know what skills/supports my child needs to be able to work?

Look at the Exit summary (provided by school district) to help you see areas of strength and needs. Also, any documentation from internships could be helpful in determining the type of supports that may be needed.

Are there programs/services that specifically target transition age youth that my child could participate in?

Yes, depending on your location. Have discussions with your school district, Care Coordinator, and community agencies in your area to learn about program/service options.

What advice do you have for service providers in schools who have children they know need OPWDD services, but for whatever reason, cannot get their family to start/get through that front door process? Does Person Centered Services provide case management for families to help take them through the OPWDD front door process?

We have an intake and enrollment department and teams of intake specialists who can help people through the process. We recognize it's a lot of paperwork and can feel daunting. We do our best to "hold your hand" through that process so that it feels as manageable as possible.

We live in Wayne County. My child will be graduating in June 2023 and is on the Autism Spectrum. What are their service options post-graduation? What are the eligibility requirements? How can we best define the best placement, be it employment or a day program? Part time or full time? Living at home or in a community home?

It is so important to talk to your Care Coordinator about these questions - these are great questions, and you need to know what is available near you. This is so dependent on each individual person and what their needs and goals are. Your Care Coordinator can work with your school to figure out what path the student is heading in - this is so important! The school has the knowledge of being with this student every day and doing many assessments in school - sharing this with the Care Coordinator who knows the OPWDD system better is the collaboration needed to figure out what to expect after graduation.

Can my child apply for ACCES VR? If so, when can they apply? Can they have OPWDD services also?

School age youth should apply for ACCES-VR 2 years prior to exit. If appropriate this should be facilitated by the school district. An individual can have ACCES-VR and OPWDD services. They cannot receive the same service from both systems as it would be double dipping. An example is if an individual is receiving ACCES-VR services they cannot get OPWDD Employment services but could be getting other services from OPWDD.

What does it mean to be “authorized” for services?

OPWDD is the decision maker on authorization of services. You can think of this working a little like insurance does. If your insurance provider authorizes you for a medical service, you can then go to providers to get that service. Let's say you were authorized to receive Physical Therapy - then you could go to a provider and the provider could be paid for your physical therapy services. OPWDD is the one who would authorize any OPWDD services such as day hab, prevocational services, self-directed services, etc. Once they authorize the service, the Care Coordinator can then apply for the service at a provider and OPWDD has agreed to pay them for the service.

What should you do if you know your Care Coordinator is leaving?

We recognize that sometimes you get a new Care Coordinator, and this can be stressful for you. Sometimes this is because the Care Coordinator got a promotion or moved out of the area or decided this was not the right job for them- for whatever reason. But we do a great deal of documentation within our case notes and life plans. The best thing you can do is make sure your life plan is thorough and captures your goals and hopes and dreams. This is an official document and gets passed to the next Care Coordinator - the more thorough it is, the faster they will catch up to what you want. I cannot stress this enough - your life plan should truly reflect what you hope to do with your life.

How do I know what skills/supports my child needs to be able to work?

Look at the Exit summary (provided by the school district) to help you see areas of strength and needs. Also, any documentation from internships could be helpful in determining the type of supports may be needed.

What is the difference between Day Hab / Pre-Voc / SEMP?

**Day Hab** is the most restrictive service. It is a day program. Though there are many different levels of independence and different types of activities within different day habs. Day Habs can be very high needs with a lot of medical intervention through the day and are maintaining skills and giving opportunities for experiences there and in the community. Others are very independent and called "day hab without walls" - these may be really focusing on independent skills both within the day program location and in the community. Some are volunteering and learning to use public transportation. And of course, anything in between.

**Pre-Voc** is another type of day program but with a focus on work - "Pre" meaning what skills do you need to work on to get ready to enter the workforce. Some have paying jobs and others have volunteering and others do experience related activities. Pre-Voc focuses on what skills do you need to develop in order to be able to work in a job more independently.

**SEMP** - supported employment - is NOT a day program, this is working with a job coach to find or maintain a job. When looking for a job, the job coach helps with finding postings, applying, interview skills, and all the things needed to find a job. They can do career exploration to help you figure out what you want to do. Once you have a job (which must be at least minimum wage), the job coach can help with whatever you may need - they work closely with the individual and often with the employer to troubleshoot issues. For instance, if the person is having issues with hygiene, the job supervisor may reach out to the job coach to help, and the job coach can work with the individual on the importance of good hygiene at work. Or maybe if the individual needs more support to learn a new task, the job coach may be able to come on the job and provide a higher level of support to help the person learn the job. Or maybe they work together on conflict resolution. The goal is to help the person be successful in their job and maintain their employment.

Should I set up tours for day programs to go check them out and see if they are where I want to go?

Yes, if possible. Each Community Agency will have their own rules when it comes to tours. Some will allow while others will not or only allow if you have been approved for the service. Call and ask questions.

What if I am graduating but I don't want OPWDD services right now? Do I still need to go through the transition process?

Often, we think that we do not need OPWDD services because the school district is meeting all the needs. Once an individual leaves high school it falls on the family to fill the day. You should be encouraged to reach out to your Care Coordinator and discuss the options for adults and determine from there as service options change as they age out of school.

If the CC is not aware of the meeting, how can they support the families/student? Most districts do not include the CC on the CSE invite list.

Parents/Families need to indicate that they want the Care Coordinator to be invited. We also recommend that families let the Care Coordinator know when a meeting is scheduled so they can try to attend.

Can you tell me how to find post-secondary college programs? What is available?

This depends on what you are looking for - if you are looking to enroll in college, you would do that as any other student would, however, a Care Coordinator, a school guidance counselor or designee, or someone else may be able to help you with the application process itself. Each school has its own rules and programs and either a Care Coordinator or a guidance counselor can help you try to navigate all the information out there.

I am a special education teacher at a local agency school for students with significant disabilities or medical needs- we have always been prompted to encourage parents to apply for guardianship (especially for students that are very clearly unable to advocate for themselves or do not have the capacity to make those major life decisions.) Should we not be encouraging parents to apply for guardianship?

While guardianship is still the answer for some, it is not the answer for all. It is important to understand what things the parent is worried about that makes them think they need to become a guardian. While it is appropriate from some people, there are other options that could be less restrictive when appropriate. To obtain guardianship, the individual must receive evaluations to show that they are unable to make their own decisions, and generally we find that the courts are asking for more proof of this than they were in the past. Whether or not someone needs a guardian to make decisions on their behalf is dependent on each individual situation.

Do the Care Coordinators complete the capacity assessments?

Care Coordinators at Person Centered Services are able to use a screening tool for capacity that is an internally developed form, however this is not an official capacity assessment. It can, however, help to determine if someone needs a formal capacity assessment. You can think of this as an unofficial pre-screening tool.

Could you explain guardianship a little more?

Guardianship is a legal decision by the Surrogate Court in New York State that states the person is unable to make their own decisions and lacks the capacity to do so. This must be proven with documentation and attestations from medical and psychological professionals. Once it is deemed that the person is unable to make decisions for themselves, the court can appoint someone to become a guardian for that person. If that guardian is no longer in the picture for whatever reason, the individual must still have a guardian according to the court because they lack capacity to make their own decisions, so one would be appointed to them by the court if there is no available natural support to do so. There are two types of guardianship, guardianship of the person or guardianship of the person's property (usually meaning financial property). Guardians can be one or both of these types of guardians.