

# So, what's all this talk about "transition?"

## The Big Ideas:

Transition

Goals

Supports

Individualized Education Program

Self-determination

Self-advocacy

Self-directed services

## What is “transition”?

**Transitions are times of change. Moving from high school into the adult world is a big and important transition.**

Transition means changing from one thing to another. Transitions can be exciting, because the next step you take will be a whole new adventure. Transitions can also be a little scary, because you might have to learn how to do things you haven’t done before. High school begins the transition from being a teenager to being an adult, and you’ve probably already felt both excited and nervous as you’ve thought about leaving school and moving into the adult world.

## My parents and teachers keep talking about “transition planning.” What is that?

When your parents, teachers or other adults in your school talk about “transition planning,” they are talking about things you can do now to get ready for the time after you leave high school. That future may seem far away, but the more you plan now, the easier your first steps into the adult world will be.

**Goals are the things you want to work for in your future.**

When you were a young child, the grown-ups in your life probably did most of the planning for your future. That’s okay, because that was their job. The difference between being a young child and being a teenager is that planning for your future becomes *your* job. You need to choose goals that matter *to you*. That means you need to figure out where you want to be and what you want to be doing. Do you want to go to college? What kind of job would you like? Where do you want to live? What kinds of things do you want to do for fun?

## What do people mean when they talk about “supports?”

**Supports are everything that help a person reach his or her goals.**

Transitions often mean that you have to try doing things you haven’t done before. Transition from high school to the adult world might mean working at your first job, taking care of your own money, learning to drive, learning to use the bus, or learning how to cook your own meals and wash your own clothes. The good news is that you

don't have to figure out how to do all this by yourself. You can ask other people to help you when you need it. That help is what we mean by supports.

## **Do I need supports just because I have a disability?**

No one can do everything they want to do in life by themselves. This isn't just true for high school students or people with disabilities. We *all* need help to reach our goals. The only difference is the kinds of supports each of us needs. It's also true that the kinds of supports we need changes, depending on what we want to do. Sometimes we might need a *person* to help us (like give us a ride or help us think through a problem); sometimes we might need a *thing* (like a wheelchair, calculator, or computer); and sometimes we might need a *service* (like tutoring). Often we use more than one kind of support at a time.

The thing to remember is that whatever you need, you can be sure it isn't exactly the same as what your sisters or brothers, your friends, or your neighbor across the street needs. So while everyone uses supports, the key is to figure out what supports would be the most helpful to meet *your own needs* so that you can reach *your own goals*.

## Activity:

Either on your own, or with your classmates:

- Think about people who have supported you (for example, your parents, friends, or teachers) and write their names down.
- Write down what they've done that's been helpful (for example, helping you study for a test or coming to your softball games).

People who have supported me	What they've done that's been helpful to me

## Activity (cont.):

Either on your own, or with your classmates:

- Write down some things (for example, a tape recorder) or services (for example, sign interpreting) you use now, or have used in the past
- Write down how these have been helpful to you.

Things or services I use now, or have used in the past.	How these things or services have been helpful to me.

## What do “Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)” have to do with transition planning?

**Your IEP should show both what you *want* to do (your goals), and what you *need* to help you do it (your supports).**

For planning your life after high school, your Individualized Education Program (or IEP) is like a roadmap. It shows where you are going and how you are going to get there. “Individualized” means about you. Your IEP should show the goals *you want* to reach, and the supports *you need* to reach them. Paying attention to what’s in your IEP is how you can make sure that you learn the skills in high school to do what you want with your life after you graduate.

## Activity:

Either on your own, or with your classmates:

- Make a list of some things you want (for example, “I want to live in my own apartment”).
- Make a list of some things you need so you can get what you want (for example, “I need to have a job to support myself”).

Things I want	Things I need to get what I want

## **How can I make sure that my IEP is really about me?**

Your IEP should make clear what it is you want to do, and what supports you need to do it. But if your IEP is really going to do that you have to become an active member of your IEP team. That means you should go to all your IEP meetings and let other people (teachers, parents, case manager, etc.) know what goals are most important to you, and what help you think you need to reach those goals.

The first thing you should do before going to your next IEP meeting is find out what's in the IEP you have now.



## Activity:

- Get a copy of your IEP. You don't have to read through the whole thing, but find the goals that are written down.

**Does your IEP have goals for your future that are important to you?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, list one goal in your IEP that is important to you:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

**If no, is there one goal that you wish were included in your IEP?**

---

---

---

---

## Activity (cont.):

Does your IEP include supports that you think will help you reach your goals?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, list one support in your IEP that you think will help you reach your goals: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

If no, is there one support that you wish were included in your IEP?

---

---

---

---

If there's something you don't understand, ask your parent, a teacher, a guidance counselor, or another adult to help you figure out exactly what's written down.

**PORTFOLIO:** Put a copy of your IEP (either the whole thing or just the part about your goals) in the section for "Official Information."

## My IEP talks about “transition services.” What are those?

Transition services are the supports you will receive from your school to help you reach your goals. Some examples of these services are:

- helping you learn about the kind of work you might like to do after you graduate
- helping you decide if you want to go to college, or if you want more training in a certain skill
- helping you learn what kinds of supports would be useful to you after you leave high school
- helping you learn new skills in your community.

There are four major areas of adult life that are important in your transition IEPs:

- Employment (jobs and careers)
- Post-secondary education and training (more school, or training in new skills, after you graduate from high school)
- Living arrangements (where you live)
- Daily living skills (the things you do everyday to take care of yourself)

Making sure your transition services are about *your* goals and *your* needs has a lot to do with something called “self determination.”

## What is “self-determination?”

**Self-determination means knowing what you want to do, and knowing what you need to do it.**

Self-determination means knowing what you want in life (your goals), and knowing how to get what you need so you can reach your goals. In other words, self-determined people know where they want to go and how to get there!

As an adult, you will make important decisions (that means choices) everyday that will help you to feel good about the life you are living. High school is a good time to practice making decisions that are right for you. For example, *you* should be the one to decide what transition goals are the most important *to you*. That’s the only way your transition plan will help you get to where you really want to go.

## Activity:

- Either on your own, or with your classmates, complete the “Who Decides?” activity at the end of this chapter.

Is there anything you learned that surprised you about who makes decisions in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Is there anything you want to change about who makes decisions in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

**PORTFOLIO:** Put the “Who Decides” activity in the section for “Personal Information.”

## What is “self-advocacy?”

**Self-advocacy is letting other people know what you think and feel, and what you need.**

“Self-advocacy” is a part of self-determination. Once you know what you want and need, you have to be able to tell other people. That’s the only way to make your dreams come true! Whether you communicate using spoken words, sign language, assistive technology, gestures, or some combination of these, it’s important that you let other people know what you are thinking and feeling. Learning how to speak up for yourself can be hard, but self-advocacy is something that gets easier with practice.

*“Advocating is a big issue...In high school, I think a lot of people did that for me, and when I went off to college, I had to do it all on my own.” Recent high school graduate*

*(A)ll through school people have taken care of them [students with disabilities]... whether it’s a mother or a case manager at the high school. But put them into society, and they’ve got to figure out how to go to the boss and tell the boss they’re having a problem. They have got to know in college that they have to go after services themselves... So I think self-advocacy is a piece that’s very important...” Parent*

## What are self-directed services?

**Self-directed services means that you make decisions about the services you get.**

Having “self-directed services” means you are in charge of the services you get. It used to be that the places that provided services told people with disabilities what they could and couldn’t do, and how to live their lives. The good news is that that is changing. Now, more and more people with disabilities are deciding for themselves what they are going to do and the kind of help they need to do it. One important thing to know about self-directed services: They can’t happen without self-determination (knowing what you want and need) and self-advocacy (speaking up for yourself).

## **Activity:**

Either on your own, or with your classmates, answer the following questions:

**Write down a time you let other people know what you thought or felt about something, or asked for something you needed.**

**Write down a time you didn't let other people know what you thought or felt about something, or asked for something you needed, but wish you had.**

**Remember, every time you let someone know what you're thinking or feeling, or ask for something you need, you are using self-advocacy skills!**

## Learning from Leaders

Justin Dart, Jr. Dart is often called "the father of the Americans with Disabilities Act" because of the leadership role he played in fighting for the passage of this very important civil rights law.

Dart was born in 1930. He became sick with polio at 18, and had to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Dart took what he learned from having a disability and used that knowledge to fight for the rights of all people with disabilities.

Dart earned both a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Unfortunately, even with these successes the university he attended would not allow him to get a teaching certificate. This was the sort of discrimination (unfair treatment) that people with disabilities often faced in the 1950's, but Dart would not let this stop him. He went on to run a number of companies in Mexico and Japan. Eventually he left the business world and devoted all his time to fighting for the rights of people with disabilities. He believed strongly in the power of advocacy, and told people, "Get into politics as if your life depended on it. It does."

In 1998, Dart was awarded the Presidential Medal Of Freedom, which is the country's highest civilian award. He died in 2002.

Questions to think about:

1. Use the internet to find out information about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Why is this law so important to people with disabilities?
2. Look up the word "discrimination." Can you think of examples of discrimination that you've either seen or experienced?
3. Justin Dart said, "Get into politics as if your life depended on it. It does." What do you think he meant?

## Felicia's story:

Felicia is sixteen. She lives in an apartment in a large city with her parents and younger brother. Felicia was born with cerebral palsy, so it's hard to use her legs, and her right arm isn't very strong. She uses a wheelchair to get around.

Felicia's parents moved to New Jersey from Puerto Rico when she was seven years old. They speak Spanish in the house and when they visit friends. Felicia can speak both Spanish and English, but sometimes people can't understand what she is saying. It's frustrating. Felicia has a machine that can speak for her, but she doesn't like to use it very much because she thinks it makes her sound like a robot.

When Felicia was in elementary school, she was in a "special" class. She hated feeling separated from the rest of the school. Then in middle school Felicia got to go to a regular class. She was very happy about that. Now in high school, she attends all regular classes. Some of the subjects are hard, but she is able to get the extra help she needs. In math, another student called a peer tutor helps her with her work, and she uses a calculator to solve problems. Felicia has made some good friends at school, and they spend a lot of time IMing with each other when they're home.

The other day, Felicia went to an IEP meeting. There were a lot of adults sitting around the table. The only people Felicia knew were her parents and teacher. Someone started talking about "transition planning," and then everyone started asking Felicia a lot of questions about what kind of work she'd like to do, if she wanted to go to college, and where she'd like to live when she leaves school. Listening to all those questions at once was confusing to Felicia. She hadn't really thought about them before. She didn't know what to say... so she didn't say anything. Her parents ended up speaking for her.



## Activity:

- Either on your own, or with your classmates, think about Felicia's story and answer the following questions:

What are the *things* that Felicia uses? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What supports does Felicia get from *people*? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

How do you think Felicia felt at the meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What did she do at the meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

---

What else could Felicia have done? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What else could the adults have done to support her? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## Let's Review:

- Transitions are times of change. In high school we begin the transition from being a teenager to being an adult. Transition planning means planning for your future after high school.
- Everyone needs support. Supports can be people who help us, or they can be things or services we use.
- Your Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a roadmap that shows where you are going (your future goals) and what you are doing to get there each year that you are in high school.
- Transition services are the activities and supports your school provides to help you meet your own goals for life after high school. These should be written down in your IEP.
- Self-determination means knowing what you want and need, and knowing how to get what you want and need.
- Self-advocacy is the ability to let other people know what you want and need. It's something that gets easier with practice.
- Self-directed services are services that you are in charge of. You decide what you want to do and what kind of help you need to do it.

## Additional Activities:

- **PORTFOLIO:** Make sure to put a new copy of your IEP in the section for “Official Information” whenever changes are made.
  
- Ask your parent, or another adult you are close with, if they’d be willing to help you with some of the activities in this book. Some examples of how they might help you are: Reading sections of the book with you; looking up information on-line with you; going with you to visit places that provide disability-related supports; and helping you practice speaking up for yourself.
  
- Using pictures from magazines, photographs, or pictures you draw yourself, make a collage of your dreams for the future.
  
- Find out about advocacy organizations for people with disabilities. Ask a family member, friend, teacher, librarian, etc. for help. Here are a few to get you started:
  - New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project - (732) 926-8010  
44 Stelton Rd., Suite 110, Piscataway, NJ 08854.
  
  - Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)-  
<http://www.sabeusa.org/>
  
  - Monday Morning (part of the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities) –  
1-800-216-1199  
<http://www.njddc.org/mm-about.htm>

# Who Decides?

	Who decides that?				How satisfied are you with that?				How important is that to you?			
	I decide	I decide with help from others	Others decide	N/A	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Very Unsatisfied	N/A	Very important	Important	Not Important
Decision												
Who decides what is in your room?												
Who decides what you wear?												
Who decides what kind of haircut you get?												
Who decides what you eat for meals and snacks?												
Who decides when you get up in the morning and when you go to sleep?												
Who decides what you do in the evenings and on weekends?												

## Who Decides? (cont.):

Decision	Who decides that?						How satisfied are you with that?						How important is that to you?		
	I decide	I decide with help from others	Others decide	N/A	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Very Unsatisfied	N/A	Very important	Important	Not Important			
Who decides what you do during school holidays and summer vacations?															
Who decides who your friends will be?															
When you go someplace for fun, who decides where you go?															
Who decides how much money you can have for yourself?															
Who decides what you buy when you have money?															

## Who Decides? (cont.):

Decision	Who decides that?					How satisfied are you with that?					How important is that to you?		
	I decide	I decide with help from others	Others decide	N/A	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Very Unsatisfied	N/A	Very important	Important	Not Important	
Who decides what you study in school?													
At your last IEP meeting, who decided what was in your IEP?													
If you work, who decides what work you do?													
Who decides what doctors and dentists you see?													
If a doctor recommends something, who decides if you do what the doctor says?													

## Who Decides? (cont.):

	Who decides that?					How satisfied are you with that?					How important is that to you?		
	I decide	I decide with help from others	Others decide	N/A	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Very Unsatisfied	N/A	Very important	Important	Not Important	
Decision													
If you have paid staff to help you, who decided which people to hire?													
If you have paid staff to help you, who decides what they do to help you?													