

The Re-evaluation & Transition Services: Best Practices for School Psychologists and Evaluation Teams



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THE RE-EVALUATION & TRANSITION SERVICES: Best Practices for School Psychologists and Evaluation Teams

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to recommend an evaluation process to secondary special education teams to enhance the transition of students with disabilities from school to their adult lives in order to increase positive post-school outcomes. Suggested timelines and resources are included to develop evaluations based on individual student needs.

Transition services for youth in special education are integral to secondary special education programs in high schools. The urgency to prepare students for life after high school increases rapidly during these final years. School psychologists have expressed interest in contributing to these efforts. *The re-evaluation process is one area in which psychologists can play a role in the final years of high school and have a significant impact in the provision of transition services.*

Currently districts are required to provide at least one formal reevaluation during the student's high school experience. Due to the changes in IDEA '97, district personnel often simply review existing data and develop evaluation reports that may not provide the current information that will assist students and families when accessing post-secondary services.

The strategies proposed in this paper may meet the proposed IDEA 2003 reauthorization transition language intending that local education agencies provide families with more appropriate and comprehensive evaluations prior to graduation or aging out of school. (*Proposed IDEA 2003 Transition Language appears in Appendix A*).

Transition Re-evaluation Process

Step 1 Identify anticipated post-school outcomes.

The first step in the final re-evaluation process is for the team to review the post-school outcomes in the current IEP and determine, through discussion with the student and his/her family, if these outcomes are still valid. Outcomes discussed in this paper include post-secondary training, education, employment and supported employment/living. It is extremely helpful to the team if the transition process beginning at age 14 addresses the anticipated post-school outcome and continues to address the feasibility and needed services of achieving the outcome. The anticipated post-school outcome and the data supporting the selection of that outcome should be well documented. Careful attention to this process during the high school years may reduce the likelihood of an unrealistic anticipated post-school outcome. If these outcomes are questionable by family, staff or the youth, the last year in high school is the ideal time for revision. If there is some question as to the appropriateness of the existing outcomes these should be revised as necessary. In addition, there should be a discussion of accommodations used by the student in the classroom or community setting as well as during any evaluations. This discussion should be part of each IEP and re-evaluation.

In determining the appropriateness of the outcomes, teams need to realistically evaluate the student's educational achievement including, transcripts, WASL and ITED scores as well as other functional academic and behavioral data. The Post-School Status Report (University of Washington, 2003) indicates that many special education graduates are not achieving their post-school goals as identified on the final

IEP, particularly the goal of post-secondary education. The re-evaluation is an opportunity and critical time to address this discrepancy.

Step 2 Identify post-secondary linkages and required documentation.

Once the post-school outcomes have been determined the team should identify any appropriate post-secondary agency linkages and the respective eligibility documentation requirements. These eligibility documentation requirements should be used to help determine the appropriate assessments to administer during the re-evaluation. (*Appendix B contains a list of common agency linkages and their respective eligibility criteria.*) This process will assure that the school psychologist is not conducting additional evaluation but rather gathering data that will be useful for the student as he or she transfers to the next environment. It may also lessen the duplication of services.

Step 3 Conduct re-evaluation.

The purpose for the last re-evaluation is to provide the student and the family with the necessary documentation to assist the student in meeting his/her post-secondary goals.

The focus of the evaluation should clearly:

1. describe the disability in a way that will meet the eligibility requirements of the anticipated post-school agency;
2. define the impact of the disability on learning, employment, daily living and any other relevant post-school activity areas; and
3. identify any needed academic adjustments, reasonable accommodations or adaptive strategies that may be useful in post-school settings.

Step 4 Provide feedback to student and family.

Once the evaluation is completed, it is important that the district provide the family and student with a clear explanation of the disability and its impact on his/her post school activities. This information should be easily understood, free of acronyms, and useful for planning purposes by the family. This is especially important for those students who will need services as they move to post-secondary training or employment where they will need to identify themselves as a person with a disability and ask for any needed assistance. As part of this explanation it is also important that the student and family understand how their legal rights change as they move into the adult world. It is vital to discuss the reality of the rights and responsibilities within the adult world with the student and their family. The services and accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act significantly differ from those provided within IDEA regulations.

Step 5 Conduct exit interview with youth and family.

The purpose of the exit interview is to verify the post-secondary linkages and documentation and to finalize a portfolio that summarizes the youth's academic achievement and functional performance. This final interview should occur in the spring of the final year of high school. The student most certainly should attend as well as family members, the special education teacher, the school psychologist, agency representation if possible, and any mentors or advocates for the youth. This is an opportunity to assure that the student is prepared for the next setting, not only with a plan but also with the documentation needed to support that plan.

TRANSITION RE-EVALUATION PROCESS

Step 1

Identify anticipated post-school outcomes

Post-Secondary
Education

Employment

Supported
employment/living

Step 2

Identify post-secondary linkages and required documentation

Post-Secondary Education

Disability Support Services
 • Qualified professional to diagnose disability;
 • Comprehensive evaluation;
 • Current adult learning level testing;
 • Assessment cost & responsibility is student's

DVR
 • Physical, mental or sensory impairment;
 • Impairment is substantial impediment to employment;
 • VR services required to achieve employment.

Employment

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
 • Physical, mental or sensory impairment;
 • Impairment is substantial impediment to employment;
 • VR services required to achieve employment.

WorkSource
 • No documentation required for services;
 • For accommodations youth must self-advocate

Supported employment/living

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
 • Have a diagnosed developmental disability;
 • Have a disability that begins before age 18;
 • Have a disability resulting in a substantial handicap;
 • Have a disability expected to continue indefinitely.

DVR
 • Physical, mental or sensory impairment;
 • Impairment is substantial impediment to employment;
 • VR services required to achieve employment.

Step 3

Conduct re-evaluation

Describe disability to meet agency req.

Define impact on learning, employment, daily living

Identify needed adjustments/accommodations

Step 4

Provide feedback to student and family

Clear explanation of disability & impact

Understandable, acronym-free, useful

Step 5

Conduct exit interview

Verify post-school linkages & documentation

Finalize portfolio

Academic achievement

Functional performance to include vocational experiences

Appendix A

Proposed IDEA 2003 Reauthorization transition mandates:

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 14, and updated annually thereafter—

- a. Appropriate measurable post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills.
- b. The transition services (including courses of study) needed by the child to reach those goals, including services to be provided by other agencies when needed.

For a child whose eligibility is terminated as the result of graduation with a regular diploma, or to exceeding the age of eligibility for FAPE, the district shall provide the child with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include any further recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting their child's post-secondary goals.

Appendix B

Post-secondary Education Eligibility Determination

Students seeking support services at a post-secondary institutions through the Disabled Support Services (DSS) office will be required to submit documentation verifying eligibility. It should be noted that final determination rests with each post-secondary institution. The following guidelines should be addressed in the last local educational agency (LEA) evaluation for those students with Post-Secondary Education as a goal.

Documentation must be:

1. **Prepared by a professional qualified to diagnose the disability. For youth with learning disabilities** this might include a neuro-psychologists, psychologists, or school psychologists. For youth with attention deficit disorders, this might include clinical psychologist, neuro-psychologist, psychiatrists, and other relevantly trained medical doctors.
2. **Be comprehensive. Information provided should state the nature, severity and impact of the disability.** A comprehensive assessment should include the current impact of the disability and include information gathered from such sources as transcripts, reports cards, teacher comments, psycho-educational testing, medical history, employment history, family history and third party interviews. Information gathered depends on the type of disability and the documentation needed to support such disability. One test alone is not typically sufficient for documentation purposes. Information pertaining to specific disabilities can be found on the Washington Association of Postsecondary Education and Disability (WAPED) website (<http://www.waped.org>)
3. **Adult-learning level testing must be administered. The WAIS-R, with subtests scores, is preferred as a measure of aptitudes.** In lieu of a WAIS-R, two WISC-III tests correlated within 15 IQ points may be acceptable. Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required for youth with learning disabilities and youth with academic needs due to disability. A standardized test is preferred. The WRAT-R and the WRAT-III are NOT appropriate for documentation purposes.
4. **Be current.** The report should include the date of testing, the exact instruments used, procedures followed, test results including sub-tests, a written interpretation of the results by the professional doing the evaluation, and his or her name, title and professional credentials.
5. **Provide clear and specific evidence to support the request for the academic adjustments (Accommodations).** The testing must be current and administered at the adult learning level in order to provide appropriate documentation and current date that supports a student's needs for academic adjustments in an academically competitive environment. The accommodations listed should be 1) only those accommodations that the student has used in the high school setting and are related to the student's disability and 2) are accommodations identified and allowed by the post-secondary institution. The academic standards will not be lowered for youth with disabilities. The student and the team should become familiar with the accommodations provided by post-secondary institutions. This information is available on the Post-Itt website (<http://www.postitt.org>).
6. **The cost and responsibility of providing professional assessment is borne by the student.** Therefore it is important to provide a comprehensive re-evaluation in a timely manner for those students with the anticipated goal of post-secondary education. Transition planning for this outcome needs to be well thought out, provide students with opportunities to learn the skills necessary for the post-secondary setting and include families as partners in supporting this outcome.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Eligibility Determination

The DVR counselor determines an applicant's eligibility for DVR services based only on the following requirements:

1. The individual has a physical, mental or sensory impairment.
2. The individual's impairment results in a substantial impediment to employment for that individual.
3. The individual requires VR services to achieve an employment outcome that is consistent with his or her strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities interests and informed choice. An employment outcome includes supported employment or other employment in an integrated setting. (This does not include volunteer work.)

These eligibility criteria are very similar to the special education criteria. They require documentation of the **disability**, documentation that the disability **substantially impedes employment** (instead of adversely affects the students educational performance), and that **DVR services are required** (instead of Specially Designed Instruction-SDI) to achieve an employment outcome (instead of an educational outcome).

For eligibility purposes, DVR needs:

1. Documentation of the disability (Current data)
2. Documentation by a physician or psychologist, backed by standardized testing and evaluations, to determine barriers to employment in the following areas: mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, or work skills.

To facilitate the transition process, it is extremely valuable to address these issues through the testing procedures used during the last three-year re-evaluation to provide DVR with the appropriate information. This includes addressing the barriers to employment in the areas identified by DVR (mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, or work skills) and those addressed in the IEP for a specific disability category. An example is identifying behavior issues in the area of interpersonal skills for a youth with a documented learning disability but not an emotional behavioral disorder. In addition to documenting barriers, it is important to describe the students strengths, interests and temperaments as a foundation upon which the DVR counselor can work with the student to build further skills and areas of interest that match his/her abilities.

Community based work assessments are another way of discovering strengths and barriers to work behaviors, interests, skill levels and capabilities. Student portfolios should include the results of functional vocational evaluations and any other career evaluations.

The DVR counselors need written observations of behavior/actions from school personnel and other professionals that describe and document the limitation or barrier.

The following Functional Loss Definitions are used by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) to determine "serious limitation." The VRC decides 1) which barriers to employment constitute serious limitations; 2) determines which functional areas the serious limitation falls within; 3) counts only one barrier to employment as one functional loss; 4) completes supporting case narrative documentation describing the specific limitations the individual experiences in each area of functional loss.

Functional Loss Definitions

<p>Communication</p>	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present when an individual is unable to communicate effectively, or is dependent upon a person, service, device or alternative mode of communication; and/or augmentation is required to communicate and an individual may not be readily understood by others, or may not understand others on their first contact; and/or an individual requires modifications, adaptive technology, and/or accommodations not typically made for other workers to communicate with others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to engage in verbal discussions, telephone conversations, speak clearly or write, or requires adaptive technology or services to perform these functions. • Tone or inflection conveyed in verbal communication is not perceived or understood. • Environmental cues, such as alarms, sirens, or warning lights are not detected or understood. • Conversation is rambling, halting, pressured, illogical, irrelevant or obscure.
<p>Interpersonal Skills</p>	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if an individual has difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships (personal, family, and community); and/or an individual exhibits behaviors that detract from his or her own performance and/or the performance of others that require more than normal intervention on the part of the supervisor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pervasive pattern of social and interpersonal deficits such as extreme awkwardness, withdrawal, anxiety, anger, aggression, suspiciousness, etc. • Unable to perceive or consider others' viewpoint or to work cooperatively. • Frequent conflict with others (family, teachers, co-workers, supervisors). • Persistent, maladaptive pattern of behavior that results in exclusion, discipline, or other negative consequences at home, work, school, or other settings.
<p>Mobility</p>	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if most common life and work activities are impaired or prevented and/or the person usually requires assistance from others to get around in the community (more than ½ the time); and/or the individual's range of travel is severely limited; and/or the individual requires modifications, adaptive technology and/or accommodations not typically made for other workers to get around in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to use public transportation. • Adaptive equipment or services are required to drive. • Range of travel is restricted due to the need for training (cognitive). • Limited ability to stand, walk, or maintain balance, or adaptive equipment or devices are required.
<p>Self Direction</p>	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if an individual requires supervision on an ongoing basis or has episodes during which they require supervision (e.g. a person with a bi-polar affective disorder) in order to begin and carry through on tasks, monitor ones own behavior and make decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to independently plan and carry out daily activities or make adjustments to daily routines. • Unable to follow instructions, concentrate, remember or complete tasks. • Unable to independently make adjustments in work methods or to shift from one task to another. • Unable to independently analyze and/or solve problems, weigh alternatives, and/or make decisions. • Responds impulsively and is easily distracted by external/environmental stimuli.

Self-Care	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if an individual is physically dependent upon other individuals, services, or devices to complete activities of daily living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to perform own personal care needs (eating, dressing, hygiene, health care management, etc).
Work Skills	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if the individual requires more training, supervision, and/or accommodations not typically given to other trainees to obtain/maintain work skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to learn new tasks or maintain skills without intensive and/or specialized instruction, job coaching, or learning accommodations. • Requires job modifications, adaptive technology, or accommodations to perform work due to learning or behavioral impairment.
Work Tolerance	<p>Definition of Serious Limitation: A serious limitation is present if an individual requires a modification, adaptive technology, and/or accommodations not typically made for other workers in terms of physical capacity or endurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme physical reactions to environmental conditions or substances, such as noise, moisture, humidity, dust, fumes, scents, temperature, etc. • Physical limitations or conditions that require job modifications, accommodations, or adaptive technology. • Speed, accuracy, productivity or quality of work significantly declines over a work shift. • Requires adjustments in work starting or ending time, or other scheduling adjustments.

The Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) established the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program to provide counseling and training to citizens whose visual disability makes it difficult for them to obtain or keep a job.

Students may be eligible for services from DSB if:

1. there is a visual impairment that makes it difficult for you to get a job or keep a job that matches your skills or potential.
2. there is a need for services and support from DSB, such as counseling, training, or assistance with a job search, so that the person can work.
3. the person is not able to get a job or keep a job that matches his or her skills and potential without this help.

Division of Developmental Disabilities Eligibility Determination

Any individual who has a developmental disability that starts before age 18, results in a substantial handicap, and is expected to continue indefinitely may be eligible for DDD services. Developmental disabilities include: mental retardation, developmental delays (ages birth to 6), Cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, another neurological condition or other conditions similar to mental retardation. The specific developmental disability eligibility criteria are defined under WAC 275-27-026:

- (1) The department shall determine an individual eligible for services upon application if the individual meets developmental disability criteria as defined under WAC 275-27-026.
- (2) The department may require appropriate documents substantiating the presence of a developmental disability.
- (3) When the department uses or requires the Wechsler Intelligence Test for the purposes of this chapter, the department may consider any standardized Wechsler Intelligence Test as a valid measure of intelligence, assuming a full-scale score can be obtained.
- (4) If, in the opinion of the testing psychologist, an individual is not able to complete all of the subtests necessary to achieve a full scale score on the Wechsler, the department shall make a professional judgment about the person's intellectual functioning, based upon the information available.

The chart below outlines documentation that is required as the first step in determining eligibility for services.

Condition/Diagnosis	Diagnostician	Other Records
Mental Retardation	Licensed psychologist or certified school psychologists	Full Scale IQ per a Wechsler, WAIS or Stanford Benet. Leiter may be used for hearing impaired. Wechsler verbal intelligence quotient may be used for significant visually impaired
Cerebral palsy (at least 4 years of age)	Licensed Physician	Assessed need for physical assistance with eating, dressing, bathing, toileting, or mobility
Epilepsy	Board-eligible neurologist	Documentation of the presence of partially controlled or uncontrolled seizures
Autism/Autism Disorder	Board-eligible psychiatrist or licensed clinical psychologist	Assessments of diagnosis and deficits of social, self-help, and communication skills.

Qualified professionals, as described by DDD, include, but are not limited to, the following professionals with at least one year's experience and training in the field of child development and preferably in the area of developmental disabilities:

1. Licensed physicians;
2. Licensed psychologists;
3. Certified communication disorder specialists;
4. Registered occupational therapists;
5. Licensed physical therapists;
6. Case managers;
7. Registered public health nurses; and
8. Educators.

Any standardized developmental assessment tool may be used if the tool:

1. Is reasonably reliable and valid by professional standards; and
2. Demonstrates the information required to make a determination of the developmental delay.

Post-School Linkages And Resources

Division of Developmental Disabilities: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/index.shtml>

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/>

Washington State Department of Services for the Blind: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov>

Washington Association on Postsecondary and Disability: <http://www.waped.org>

Post ITT: <http://www.postitt.org>

Washington State Guide to Transition Services, Center for Change in Transition Services:
<http://depts.washington.edu/ccts>

Agency Linkages: Information about employment and post-secondary education agencies for any county in Washington State

Center for Change in Transition Services, Seattle University
www.seattleu.edu/ccts

National Center for Secondary Education and Transition:
<http://ncset.org/default.asp>

Social Security Administration

A variety of services are available for students and adults with disabilities through the Social Security Administration (SSA). Information regarding the services available and the eligibility criteria can be accessed at the Social Security website at: <http://www.ssa.gov>.