

# *Getting Older, Moving On*

*Book 4 of 5*  
The Guide to Special Education  
in Maine: A Team Approach  
2009



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# The Guide to Special Education in Maine: A Team Approach

## *Getting Older, Moving On*

*Getting Older, Moving On* reviews the planning process for helping your youth make the transition from high school to adulthood.

It is part of the fifth edition of *The Maine Guide to Special Education in Maine: A Team Approach*. The Guide was researched, written, and reviewed by people who know the Maine special education system best – parents, educators, special education advocates, lawyers, and the Maine Department of Education.

While the guide does not address every possible circumstance or regulation concerning special education in Maine (some of which vary among school districts), it does provide an in-depth overview of the law, especially your rights and responsibilities as a parent.

*#1: Building Partnerships and Getting Organized*

*#2: The Early Years: Birth to 5*

*#3: The School Years: 5 to 20*

***#4: Getting Older, Moving On***

*#5: Dispute Resolution: When Things Aren't Going Well*

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# The Big Transition: Finishing School

You and your child have faced many education transitions, from pre-school to kindergarten to elementary school to middle and then high school, as well as every year in between. However, perhaps the most challenging transition for both of you, will be from high school into the adult world.

Planning for that transition begins early. In fact, the **Maine Unified State Education Regulation (MUSER or Chapter 101)** requires that the formal planning process begin no later than when the student turns 14, and earlier if appropriate.

Addressing transition planning as a process requires the student and other members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to start asking questions about the future: Where will the student be living? What kind of job do they want? Will they be attending a postsecondary school or program? What supports will they need?

Answers to questions like these help the IEP team develop transition services that become not only postsecondary goals, but also part of the IEP during high school.

Even though transition planning emphasizes career planning, the intent of the law is to assist a young person to prepare for all facets of adult life, not just vocational.

## *What worked for me as a parent...*

*“It helped me when another parent confirmed to us that we too were going through a transition process at the same time as our child. It’s so hard to let go, but so important. It was a very emotional time and it helped when people working with us understood that.”*

# A Team Effort

Transition planning, similar to all of special education planning, is the responsibility of the IEP team. It is not something that the parent, the school, or the student does alone. Each member of the team has a role to play in developing a plan.

The school's role includes initiating and facilitating the transition planning process and making sure the student is involved in the process. The school also establishes links with other appropriate agencies, services, and individuals that might play a role in preparing for transition.

As a parent, your role includes involving your youth in activities that foster a sense of self-advocacy, responsibility, and independence. Talk about future goals and high school courses that might advance them. In addition, investigate postsecondary programs and community agencies that could help reach long-term, post-school goals.

## *What worked for me as a student...*

*"It is really helpful if I can prepare with someone before my IEP meeting. Sometimes it's my parents, sometimes it's my teachers, sometimes both. It's much easier to answer the question, 'What do you want to do when you get out of high school?' if I've had some time to think about it and make some notes."*



The law requires that students be involved actively in preparing for their transition out of high school. By age 14, if not earlier, they should be participating in all IEP team meetings and talking with their parents, teachers, and others about what they want to do after high school. While the law notes it's the school's responsibility to involve the

student, all team members need to work to engage the student in the process and share information about resources and options.

It's up to the IEP team to determine what areas need to be addressed and to review and update the plan annually. What those needs are depend on what the student wants and needs. They might include classes that address daily living skills, advanced-placement courses, or vocational education. The course of study must be documented in the IEP.

## Begin Early

Although the process of planning for life after high school officially begins at the age of 14, there are activities that you and your child can do at any age to help prepare for the shift to adult life in the community:

- ◆ Offer your child opportunities to make choices and decisions.
- ◆ Suggest or insist that they participate in household chores or manage their allowance.
- ◆ Initiate discussions about their hopes and dreams for the future.
- ◆ Assist them to participate actively in their IEP meetings at an early age.

Research strongly indicates that adults with disabilities who, in their youth, worked, were involved in extracurricular activities, and attended regular classes, are more likely to lead successful and satisfying lives than those who did not have those experiences while in school. It also appears that students remain more motivated and engaged in their education if school, home, and community activities relate to what they want to pursue in life.

When thinking specifically of transition to adulthood, the first step is to talk with your son or daughter. Answers to questions such as, "Do you want to go to college after high school?" or "What kind of job do you want to have and what skills will you need?" will help guide discussions about courses and activities for high school. It will also help identify the supports that might be needed to make it work.

It is equally important to hear what your child wants to do. The IEP team can then try to help the student identify interests and skills and explore how those might relate to career options. For example, school guidance counselors can assist with interest inventories or arrange for vocational aptitude testing.

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As a parent, you might want to think about setting up some job shadowing opportunities for through family, friends, or other connections you might have in the community.

***What worked for me as a parent...***

*“We began in middle school to prepare for life after high school. The time in high school goes so fast, but because we started early, we didn’t feel as though we were scrambling to get services the last half of my son’s last year in high school.”*

## **Refining the plan**

As your child moves through high school, the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) should increasingly focus on objectives directly related to post-school plans.

That focus will differ depending on the student’s needs and plans for the future. For example, students planning on postsecondary education need to be kept aware of pre-requisites, entrance exams, and application deadlines. They also may want to investigate what postsecondary services might be available at the institutions they are interested in attending.

If the student’s goal is to live in the community, with or without supports, or to get a job, the IEP team needs to determine what agencies and services will be available for support.

## **Service agencies**

State and community service agencies are required to have a designated representative involved in the transition planning process. However, the reality is that agencies often lack staff for all the meetings they are invited to attend. Plenty of advance notice sometimes helps.

Parents and teachers also sometimes arrange to meet with agency representatives outside of IEP meetings to discuss what services might be available for a particular student.

Although the school is responsible for identifying and connecting with appropriate adult agencies, ensuring that these connections have been made is an essential activity for you as a parent.

Follow up on IEP team recommendations by becoming familiar with adult support agencies and services in the community. Once appropriate services have been identified, have your teen-ager, with your support, apply for those services.

Many agencies have long waiting lists. Even if your child does not need services immediately, it is better to apply and not need them when the time comes, than risk being put on a long waiting list.

***What worked for me as a parent...***

*“I developed a list of questions and visited several different community support programs to get a better idea of which program or service would be a good match for my daughter. I was able to narrow the search down a bit and then have my daughter with me for the ones that I particularly liked.”*

## **Age of Majority**

Maine State Education Regulations require that your child be informed at least a year before turning 18 of the changes in rights that occur at the age of majority.

By law, your child at 18 becomes an equal participant in the decision-making process of the IEP team. At this point the student will become known as an adult student.

***What worked for me as a student...***

*“Now that I’m out on my own, I realize how important it was for me to have had work experience while I was in high school. I learned about being responsible for a job, built my resumé, and was able to have some experience managing my own money.”*

## **Graduation or Aging Out**

In some instances, students with disabilities remain in school through the school year in which they turn 20, the age limit under law for all students to complete public education.

At age 20, a student may receive a regular education diploma, a certificate of completion, or some other form of documentation signifying completion of their public education. This is called Aging Out.

Policies on graduation and Aging Out differ from one district to the next. In some districts, graduation requirements are modified to accommodate a student with disabilities.



Plans for graduation or Aging Out should be considered early by the IEP team and clearly stated in the IEP, although the team needs to make sure they are in accordance with school district policy.

The Maine Legislature and Maine Department of Education continue to look at the issue of standards-based diplomas and the role of the IEP team in adjusting graduation requirements. You may want to check for the most up to date information on this issue, if they have questions.

All students with disabilities who graduate or Age Out must receive a **Summary of Performance (SOP)**. This review of the student's academic achievement and functional performance also includes recommendations on how the student might meet their postsecondary goals.

## School disruption

Youth who have had their education disrupted because of frequent changes in schools or placements, often have trouble getting credit for courses they've taken, making graduation difficult if not impossible.

The state recently passed legislation to address this problem. The Task Force to Engage Maine's Youth in Successful School Completion, overseen by the state Department of Education, can help ensure students get credit for school work they've completed at various sites.

# A New Set of Laws

When your adult child finishes high school, a new set of laws and regulations take over.

Services and legal protections shift from those outlined by the Maine State Education Regulations (MUSER or Chapter 101) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

If you think your adult child will require ongoing support, you need to understand the difference between entitlement to services and eligibility for services. This represents a significant shift.

A key concept is that once a student's public education ends, all entitlements end. Access to services for the adult with disabilities will be based on eligibility requirements and, in some cases, the amount of funding available.

A smooth transition will be more likely if representatives from appropriate adult agencies and service providers are involved in the development and implementation of the transition plan before your child leaves the school system.

## Heading for college

If enrolling in college or another postsecondary education program, a student may choose whether or not to disclose a disability. However, if your child needs some accommodations because of the disability, the child must personally request accommodations.

This is usually done with the campus ADA coordinator. Documentation verifying the disability within the past 3 years must be submitted. The ADA coordinator will then decide if the disability meets the criteria of the ADA and Section 504. It is recommended that students register with the ADA coordinator even if they may not need services. It is easier to register and not be in need of services, than to backtrack when services are needed.

## **Educational records**

Once your child has graduated or exited public school, the school's responsibility for maintaining records changes. Schools must notify parents when records are going to be destroyed. You may want to make sure that you get the files or copies of them since these records may prove useful in the future if application is made for federal benefits or other services.



# Resources

A list of special education acronyms, timelines and contacts can be found in *Building Partnerships and Getting Started, part one of this guide, pp. 31-33..*

## Questions to consider when planning for life after high school

The following is a list of questions that a student can ask themselves as they start planning for life after high school. They are not intended to be addressed all at once, nor will all of the questions apply to every student. They are intended to help stimulate discussion and thought.

### Employment

- ◆ What hobbies, interests, or other activities do I like to do that might channel into a career?
- ◆ What kinds of things am I good at? What am I not good at?
- ◆ What would I like to do for a job someday?
- ◆ What skills will I need to do the kind of job that I want to do?
- ◆ Will I need more schooling after high school to do the kind of job that I want to do?
- ◆ What classes can I take now that will help me with my future job or career?
- ◆ What community agencies or programs can help me with my plans to work?

### Education

- ◆ Do I want to go to school after I graduate from high school?
- ◆ What further education will I need to have the career that I want to have?
- ◆ What classes do I need to take while I'm still in high school to be able to get into a college?
- ◆ What classes are successful for me now? Why?
- ◆ What classes are difficult for me now? Why?

- ◆ How do I learn best?
- ◆ What types of supports or accommodations have worked well for me in high school?
- ◆ How will I pay to go to school after I graduate? What type of financial aid is available? How do I apply for financial aid?

## **Housing**

- ◆ Where do I want to live after I graduate?
- ◆ Do I want to live alone or with a roommate?
- ◆ What kind of chores do I do now that will be helpful to me when I live away from home?
- ◆ What kind of household chores do I need help with (cooking, budgeting, etc.)
- ◆ What programs are available in the community to assist me with my housing goals?

## **Medical/Legal Questions**

- ◆ Do I have medical or emotional needs that will require support after high school?
- ◆ If I don't understand something that I've been asked to sign, who can I go to for help?
- ◆ What kind of insurance will I need? How do I apply and how will I pay for it?
- ◆ If I run into a legal problem, how will I handle it? Who can I go to for help?
- ◆ Is guardianship something my parents should consider?
- ◆ Should I consider applying for SSI?

## **Community Participation**

- ◆ What do I like to do for fun that I can continue to do after I graduate from high school?
- ◆ What are my hobbies and interests?
- ◆ What are the programs and organizations in my community that offer the types of things that I like to do?
- ◆ What are my transportation needs?

# Transition Checklist

You and your student can start early gathering information, asking questions, learning skills, and making plans for life post-school. The following lists can be used by both of you to help prepare for that transition.

## 4 to 5 years before finishing school

- Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker
- Identify career interest and skills, complete interest and career inventories, and identify additional education or training requirements
- Explore options for postsecondary education and admission criteria
- Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports
- Learn to communicate effectively your interests, preferences, and needs
- Be able to explain your disability and the accommodations you need
- Learn and practice informed decision-making skills
- Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities
- Broaden your experiences with community activities and expand your friendships
- Pursue and use local transportation options outside of your family
- Investigate money management and identify necessary skills
- Acquire identification card and the ability to communicate personal information

## **2 or 3 years before leaving the school district**

- Identify community support services and programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, County Services, Centers for Independent Living)
- Invite adult service providers, peers, and others to the IEP transition meeting
- Match career interests and skills with vocational course work and community work experiences
- Gather more information on postsecondary programs and support services offered; make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams
- Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues
- Determine the need for financial support (Supplemental Security Income, state financial supplement programs, Medicare)
- Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal skills, communication, and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, with peers, etc.)
- Explore legal status with regards to decision-making prior to the age of majority
- Begin a resume and update it as needed
- Practice independent living skills, e.g. budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping
- Identify needed personal assistant services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and a manage these services

## **1 year before leaving the school district**

- Apply for financial support programs (Supplementary Security Income, Independent Living Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Personal Assistant Services)
- Identify the postsecondary school you plan to attend and arrange for accommodations
- Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying necessary accommodations at postsecondary and work environments
- Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed
- Take responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments, and social activities
- Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions, etc.)
- Register to vote and for Selective Service (if male)

# What's Next For ME

"What do I want my life to be like after high school?"

My "To Do" List

In My Heart, what is most important to Me in planning for my future?



Fill out the Dreams & Vision sheet in my folder.



Fill out the S.N.O.W. sheet with my Strengths, Needs, Opportunities & Worries.

Think about who I want to attend my planning meeting and invite them to go.



Let people know what I think my plan should be. The goals in my plan should be what I want to do with my life when I finish school.

Go to my planning meeting and share my Dreams and Goals for the Future.





## Values

In my Heart, what is most important to Me  
in planning for my future?



**What do I want to do after High School?**

**What do I want to do for work?**

**Do I want to go to college?**

**Do I need to go to college to get the job I want?**

**Do I want to rent, or buy a home?**

**Do I want to have a roommate(s)?**

**What do I like to do for fun?**

# S.N.O.W.



<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <p>What am I good at? What do I like to do? What do other people think I am good at? What skills do I have?</p>	<p><b><u>Needs</u></b></p> <p>What things are difficult for me? Are there things that I need to get better at or learn, in order to reach my dreams?</p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <p>Who can help me reach my dreams? How can they help? What am I doing now that helps me reach my dreams?</p>	<p><b><u>Worries</u></b></p> <p>What do I worry about when I think about leaving high school and reaching my dreams?</p>

## **Strategies**

(Ways to increase my strengths and opportunities and decrease my needs and worries)

# Goals:

What are one or two things I would like to be doing one year after I finish high school? Make sure my goal leads to my Dream!

# Outcomes:

How will I know that I am making progress toward my goal?

What will be different for me?

What can I see or hold in my hand?



# STAKEHOLDERS

Who can help me reach my dreams...

Who can help me?	How can they help me?

**My Dreams after high school:**

**My Goals after high school:**



**What Goals will I work on in the next year?**

## Action Plan

What needs to be done?	Who can help me do it?	How will it be done?	When will it be done?

# Testing Accommodations PSAT/SAT

All Maine high school juniors take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which assesses general educational development and ability to complete college-level work. It is required by many colleges. Students may also elect to take Preliminary SATs (PSATs) in their sophomore year. The PSAT is good practice for the SAT.

Some students get better test results with the ACT, another college entrance exam that is accepted by many post-secondary institutions. Community colleges offer an entrance exam called the Acuplacer if SAT scores are not sufficiently high enough.

If your child wants to take any of these tests and will need some accommodations, you may want to discuss it at your IEP team meeting, as well as with your child's guidance counselor. Ask for a Student Eligibility Form.

## Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for test-taking accommodations, a student must have:

- Received accommodations for school-based tests,
- Have a disability that requires accommodations,
- Have documentation on file at school that supports the need for the requested accommodations and meets the Guidelines for Documentation (An IEP, 504 Plan, or professional evaluation), and
- Have applied for and received approval in advance for testing accommodations.

# Guidelines for Documentation

The presence of an IEP, 504 Plan, or professional evaluation does not necessarily mean that a student is eligible for testing accommodations. Documentation to support the need for requested accommodations must:

- State the specific disability as diagnosed;
- Be current (usually no more than 3 years old);
- Provide complete educational, developmental, and relevant medical history;
- Describe the comprehensive testing and techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis, the functional limitations supported by the test results, the specific accommodations requested;
- State why the disability qualifies the student for such accommodations; and,
- Establish the professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification and area of specialization.

## Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that test accommodations be individualized. This means that no single type of test accommodation may be adequate or appropriate for all individuals with any given type of disability.

Accommodations customarily used are available if documented by a qualified professional and approved in advance in accordance with program policies and procedures. Examples of accommodations that may be approved include:

- Extended testing time (but not “unlimited” time),
- Additional breaks,
- Selectable background and foreground colors,
- Test reader,
- Sign language interpreter (for check-in process only),
- Formatting, tool, and accessories if appropriate,
- Writer to record answers,
- Reader to dictate test answers,
- Other customarily used aids,
- Alternate test formats, such as Braille, enlarged print, audio cassettes with large-print or Braille supplements.

# Transition Planning (Ages 14-25)

*This resource list was compiled by AccessMaine, a website of the state's Department of Health and Human Services.*

**Center for Community Inclusion** - This is Maine's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service. The center offers interdisciplinary education, community services, applied research and evaluation, and disseminates information on developmental disabilities. (<http://www.ccids.umaine.edu>)

**Children and Adults with AD/HD** - CHADD serves individuals with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) through collaborative leadership, advocacy, research, education and support, they provide science-based, information about AD/HD for parents, educators, professionals. (<http://www.chadd.org/>)

**HEATH Resource Center** - The HEATH Resource Center is the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. Support from the US Department of Education enables the clearinghouse to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities. (<http://www.heath.gwu.edu>)

**DO-IT Program** — DO-IT stands for Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology. This program focuses on education, careers, assistive technology, and providing resources for people with disabilities. (<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>)

**Employment and Work-Based Learning Activities for College Students with Disabilities** - Advice to students with disabilities to prepare for employment. The title will open a link to a Microsoft Word version of the booklet in a new browser window.

**Goodwill Industries of Northern New England** - Goodwill Industries of Northern New England helps people with disabilities live more independently. Our mission is through employment, residential, educational and support services, Goodwill works to enhance the social and economic independence of people with disabilities and others who experience barriers to such independence. (<http://www.goodwillnne.org/>)

**Healthy and Ready to Work** - This site offers assistance to adolescents with disabilities who are ready to transition to post-secondary education, or towards working in an independent environment. (<http://www.hrtw.org>)

**Job Accommodation Network** - This is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. This site provides information on job accommodations, self-employment and small business opportunities to encourage employment and retention. (<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>)

**Kids as Self Advocates** — KASA is a national, grassroots network of youth with special needs and their friends, speaking on their own behalf. The site includes forums for youth to speak out, artwork by youth, and updates on news and rallies. (<http://www.fvkasa.org>)

**Maine Developmental Disabilities Council** - The DD Council supports individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to participate in the design of, and access to, community resources. The council provides information and referral, works on systems change, educates legislators, and funds projects. (<http://www.maineddc.org/>)

**Post It** - Though it's based in another state, this site has a collection of resources and tools for all guidance counselors, parents, and students. Applying for post-secondary education, self-advocacy for students with disabilities and training tools are some of the resources on this site. Enter the site by selecting "visitor". Multiple languages are also available. (<http://www.postitt.org>)

**Service Tapestry Database** - Developed by the Center for Community Inclusion. This is a searchable database of programs in Maine for youth in transition. (<http://www.umaine.edu/ci/servicetapestry/index.htm>)

**Student Assistance Team Unit** - This Maine site connects you to a group of school personnel who provide early identification, intervention, and referral to services for students experiencing academic or social problems. The program is located throughout Maine. (<http://www.maine.gov/education/sat/>)

**Struggling Teens** - The Struggling Teens site gives guidance about clinical and educational residential settings from the perspective of educational consultants. (<http://strugglingteens.com>)

**Transition Research Institute** - Sponsored by the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA), this site gives examples of "promising practices" that might be useful to policy makers and educators. (<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/sped/tri/institute.html>)

## **Additional resources**

### **Committee on Transition (COT) or Maine Transition Network**

621-9878 or 1-800-328-9549 Fax 623-1677 [www.mainetransition.org](http://www.mainetransition.org)

**College Board** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**The ACT** [www.act.org/app/](http://www.act.org/app/)

# Acknowledgements

*The Guide to Special Education in Maine: A Team Approach* was just that: a team approach. Its success depended on many people who contributed, reviewed, advised, and critiqued the text. We are especially grateful to the following individuals:

Jeanette Andonian, Department of Social Work, USM

Katherine Chasse, Mosaic Center

Tom Coulombe, Special Services, MDOE

Margaret Degon, Maine Parent Federation

Cathy Dionne, The Autism Society of Maine

Sarah A. Forster, Assistant Attorney General

Barbara Gunn, Old Town Regional Program

Debra Hannigan, Director, Child Development Services, MDOE

Eric Herlan, Attorney, Drummond Woodsum, Portland

Linda Higgins, Ethel's Tree of Life

Ann Hume, parent

Pauline Lamontagne, Esq., Due Process Consultant, MDOE

Michelle LaPointe, Learning Disabilities Association of Maine

Betsy Morrison, Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition

Susan J. Parks, Due Process Consultant, MDOE

Kate Pettogrou, parent

Kathy Son, Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, UMO

Steve Spears, Due Process Consultant, MDOE

Cher Zuk, parent

Sue Henri-MacKenzie, Executive Director, Southern Maine Parent Awareness, served as the Guide's project director and editor. In addition: C.W. Wolff, of Foreside Communications, editorial consultant/writer; Donald Young, indexer; and Cathryn Poulin & Janis Wilder, proofreaders.

The Guide is available on-line: [www.somepa.org](http://www.somepa.org). It also is available in alternative format upon request: Maine Department of Education, Special Services, 207-624-6650.

*The Guide to Special Education in Maine: A Team Approach* was made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, State Programs Improvement Grant, Award Number: H027A070109, CFDA: 84.027A



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