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A Resource Sheet: Using Goals to Get Ready for Your Future

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal special education law that ensures all children with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education. The IDEA recognizes the importance of preparing youth for success after high school and states that transition planning for students who receive special education services and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must begin by age 16 *(some states require that the process starts earlier)*. Transition planning means evaluating needs, strengths, and skills required for a student to move from high school to postsecondary life (https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/laws/idea.asp). By the time high school begins, some students who are deaf or hard of hearing may no longer have an IEP, but instead have a 504 Plan that outlines the accommodations they need to support them in their education. Other students may not have either an IEP or 504 Plan. Every student is unique and, since no one size fits all, having an IEP versus a 504 Plan versus some other kind of plan is typically determined by the unique needs of each student. Regardless, every student can benefit from thinking about and planning for life after high school. Putting that plan down in writing can make it more real and more achievable.

Chart own future: https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c113.pdf

Transition Goals: What are they and why do they matter in the IEP process?

Transition Goals in an IEP are designed to help you reach your post-secondary goals (in other words—your goals for what will happen after high school). Goals become real and achievable when you put two major life skills into action which are 1) self-advocacy and 2) self-determination.

https://nesca-newton.com/transition-goals-what-are-they-and-why-do-they-matter-in-the-iep-process/

What is Self-Advocacy?

"Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination" (source: https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/self.advocacy.htm).

35 Sample Self-Advocacy Goals: https://adayinourshoes.com/self-advocacy-iep-goals/

What is Self-Determination?

"Self-determination is a person's ability to control his or her own destiny. A crucial part of the concept of self-determination involves the combination of attitudes and abilities that will lead children or individuals to set goals for themselves, and to take the initiative to reach these goals."

(source: https://www.naset.org/index.php?id=selfdetermination2#:~:text=Self%2Ddetermination%20is%20a%20person's,initiative%20to%20reach%20these%20goals)

Self-Determination is so important, then your transition goals to our post-secondary life should be based on what YOU want over what anyone else wants. Play to your strengths, your preferences, your desires and your vision for your life.

Below is a formula for writing a postsecondary goal that is adapted from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT):

_____   _____ will _____   _____
    (After exiting school)   (the Student)   (behavior or activity)   (where and how)

(source: https://nesca-newton.com/transition-goals-what-are-they-and-why-do-they-matter-in-the-iep-process/)

Post-secondary goals are written for what will happen after high school. One way to reach your post-secondary goals is to create written annual goals. If you have an IEP team, your team can help you write these goals. *If you do not have an IEP team, then you and if you want, perhaps a parent, other family member or other trusted adult can help you write your goals. Here is a sample of some post-secondary and annual goals*:

Example #1:

Employment: After graduation from high school, Kohl will be a cosmetologist.

Education: Upon graduation, Kohl will attend and complete the 13-month cosmetology program at Xenon Academy in Omaha (Nebraska).

*Sample Annual Goal: (Employment and Education): By the end of the vocational tech program in cosmetology near Kohl's high school, he will write an essay about his expectations for his future career in cosmetology including statements of a) a goal b) 3 or more negative aspects of cosmetology c) 3 or more positive aspects of cosmetology and d) the education required to become a cosmetologist.

Example #2:

Employment: Maria will become employed in a promotional position in the music industry in Nashville.

Education: Upon graduation, Maria will attend college through the Tennessee Promise (State-funded program) at Middle Tennessee State University with a major in Music Industry or Advertising.

Sample Annual Goal (Employment and Education):

By March of her junior year, Maria will meet and job shadow at least two different professionals who work in the business end of the music industry. Maria will write an essay about her expectations for her future career and will include statements such as: a) a goal b) three or more negative aspects of working in the business end of the music industry c) three or more positive aspects of working in the business end of the music industry and d) the educational and other requirements for working in the music industry.

*You will want to create at least one annual goal related to your post-secondary goal(s) for each year you have left in high school.

Additional Resources:

IEP Transition Planning: Preparing for Young Adulthood:

https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/iep-transition-planning-preparing-for-young-adulthood

Legal Components for Transition Requirements of the IEP:

https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.legal.bateman.htm

You have a bright future ahead! Now is the right time to create goals that lead you to your dreams.

Additional resources can be found under "Higher Education Resources" at www.agbell.org.