



New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education
Educational Partnership





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Family Guide to Transition Planning

Preparing Students with Disabilities for Life After High School

Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership (TAP) for Transition at Cornell University.

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Disclaimer

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Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities



Self-Advocacy

Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.



Family Partnership

Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.



Specially-Designed Instruction

Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.



Research-Based Instruction

Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.



Multi-Tiered Support

Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.



Inclusive Activities

Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.



Transition Support

Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.

Training Objectives

Participants will:

- Discover how transition planning helps students get ready for life after high school.
- Identify strategies families can use to guide students as they transition into adulthood.
- Explore services, agencies, and organizations that support students and/or adults with disabilities.

Materials

- Family Guide to Transition Planning—Preparing Students with Disabilities for Life After High School

Introduction





The Purpose of the Family Guide

- To help families understand how to support their student in the transition from high school to adult life.
- When families are engaged in the transition planning process, students with disabilities experience **improved post-school outcomes**.

What Is Transition Planning?

- Transition planning is an ongoing, collaborative effort to prepare students with disabilities for life after high school.
- Transition planning includes the following student-focused questions:

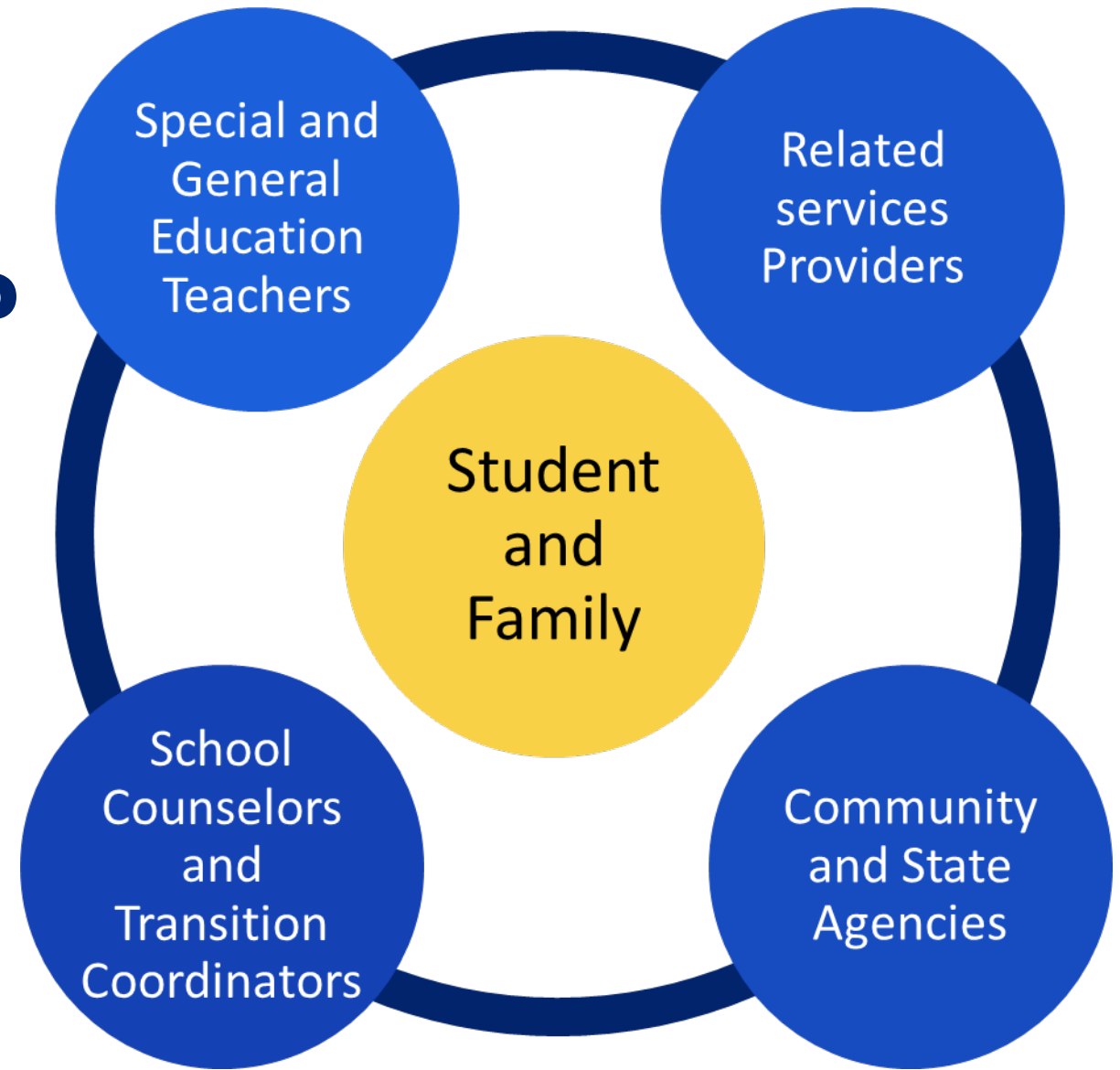
Where are
you now?

Where do you
want to go?

How do you
get there?

Who Should Be Involved in Transition Planning?

- The Committee on Special Education (CSE) team shares information, agrees on goals and services, and creates a plan to help the student reach their goals.
- This information is documented in an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a living document that changes and develops as your child does.





Future Goals

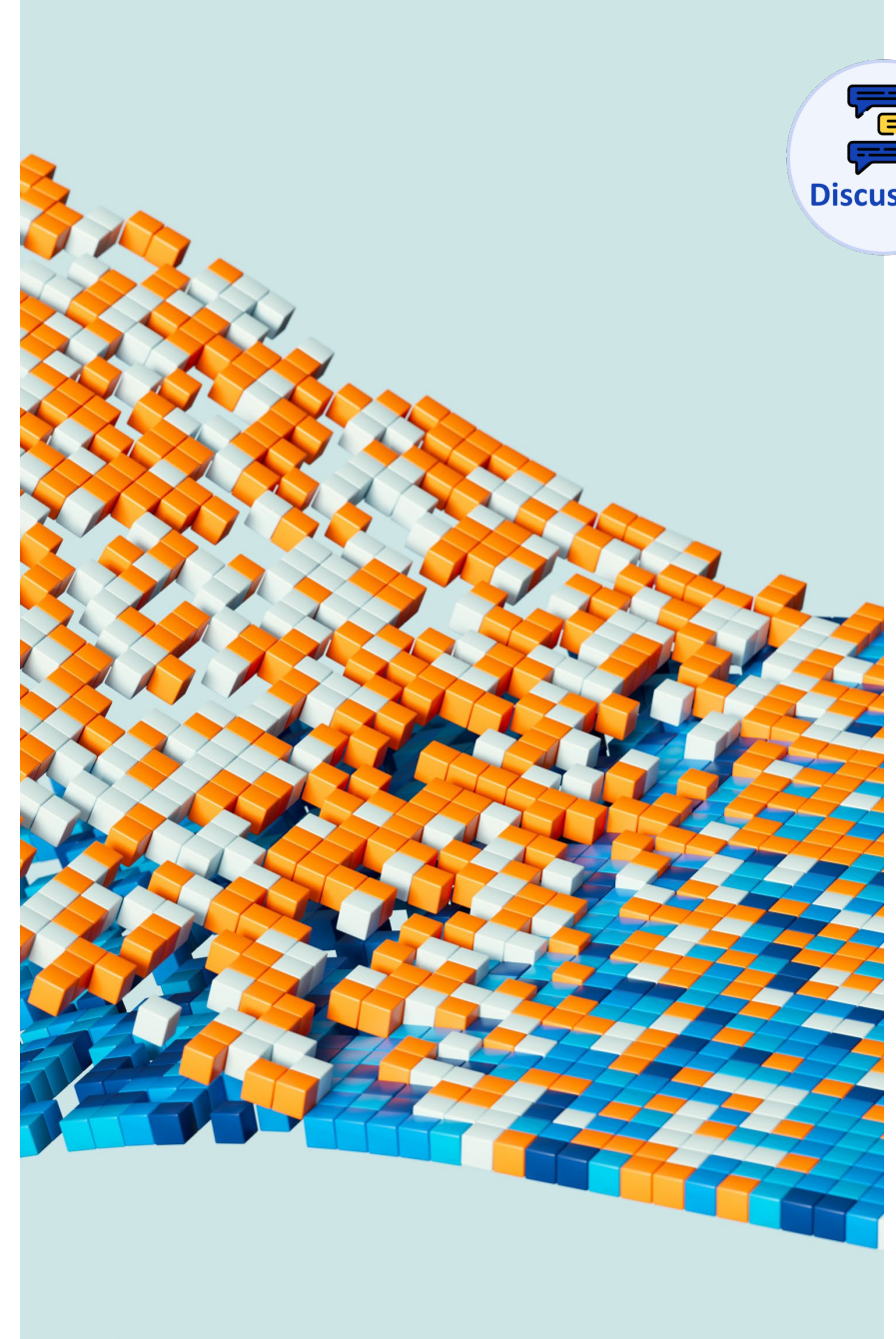


- What are my child's future goals?
- How will they achieve these goals?

Laying the Groundwork

When you think about transition planning...

- What does it mean to you?
- Has anyone at your child's school talked to you about transition planning yet?



Transition Laws and Guiding Principles



Federal Transition-Related Laws

American with
Disabilities Act
(ADA)

The Individuals with
Disabilities
Education Act (IDEA)

The Rehabilitation
Act

Workforce
Innovation
Opportunity Act
(WIOA)

New York State (NYS) Requirements

Students age 12 and over must receive an assessment to determine job skills, aptitudes, and interests.

Transition planning can start at an earlier age.

Transition planning must be in a student's IEP beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student is age 15.

Students are at the center of transition planning.

NYS Transition-Related Laws

**School Counseling/
Guidance Programs**

Section 100.2(j)

**Middle School
Instruction in
Career
Development**

Section 100.4(c)(1)
(xii-xiii)

**Initial Career
Assessment at
Age 12**

Section
200.4(b)(6)(viii)

**Transition
Services**

Section
200.4(d)(2)(ix)

**Diploma
Requirements**

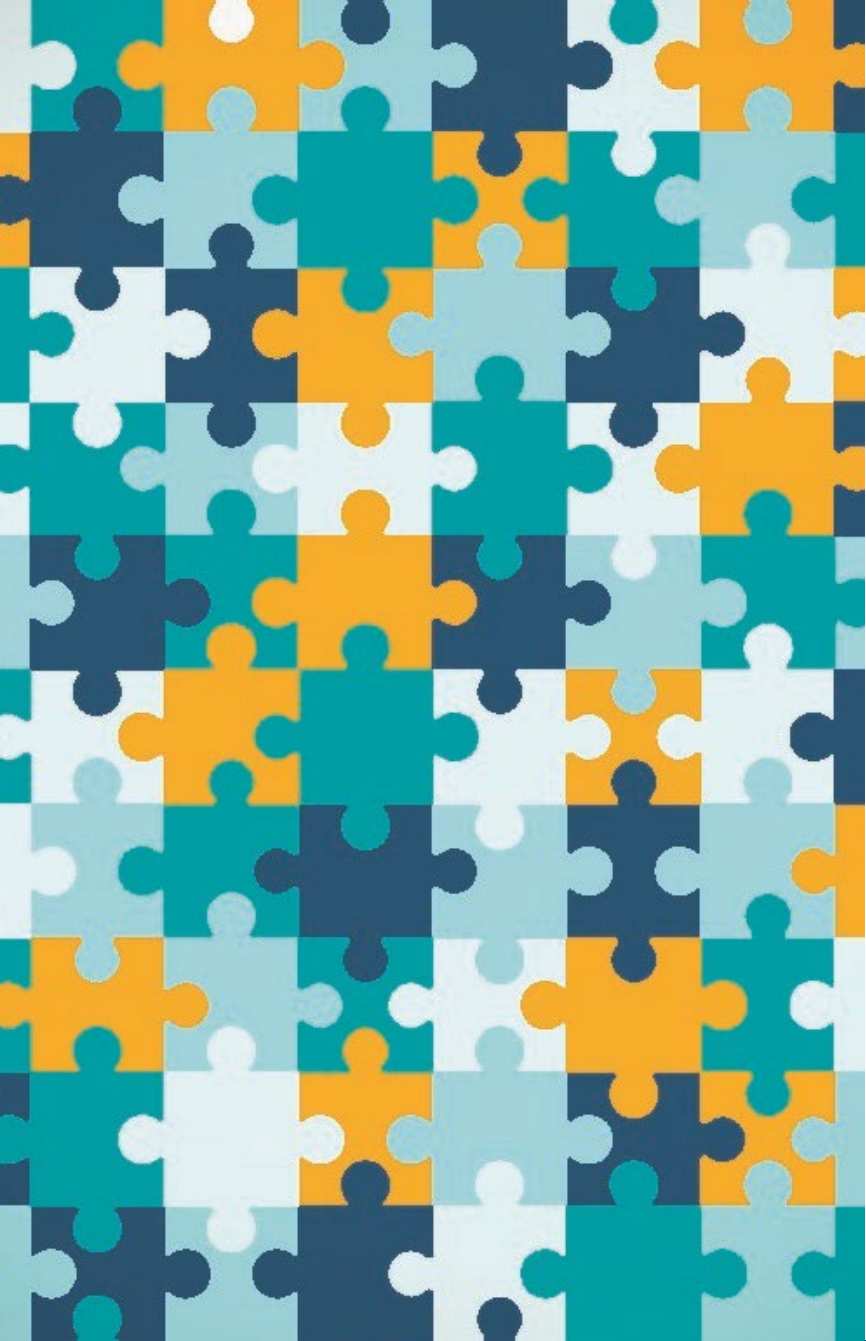
Section 100.5

**Discussion of
Diploma
Requirements**

Section
200.4(d)(2)(ix)(b-c)

**Student Exit
Summary**

Section 200.4(c)(4)



Share What You Learned!



Create a word cloud summarizing key ideas of the four federal transition-related laws.

Transition Planning in the IEP



How and When to Begin Transition Planning?

- **Preparing students for their future can begin at any time!**
- **By age 12**, the school must do an initial career interest/skills assessment.
- Transition planning is legally required to begin **no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student is age 15**. The plan should be updated every year after that while the student is in school.
- The **student must be invited to attend their CSE meeting** when the team begins discussing transition. The student can attend and participate earlier as appropriate.

Family Engagement in Transition Planning

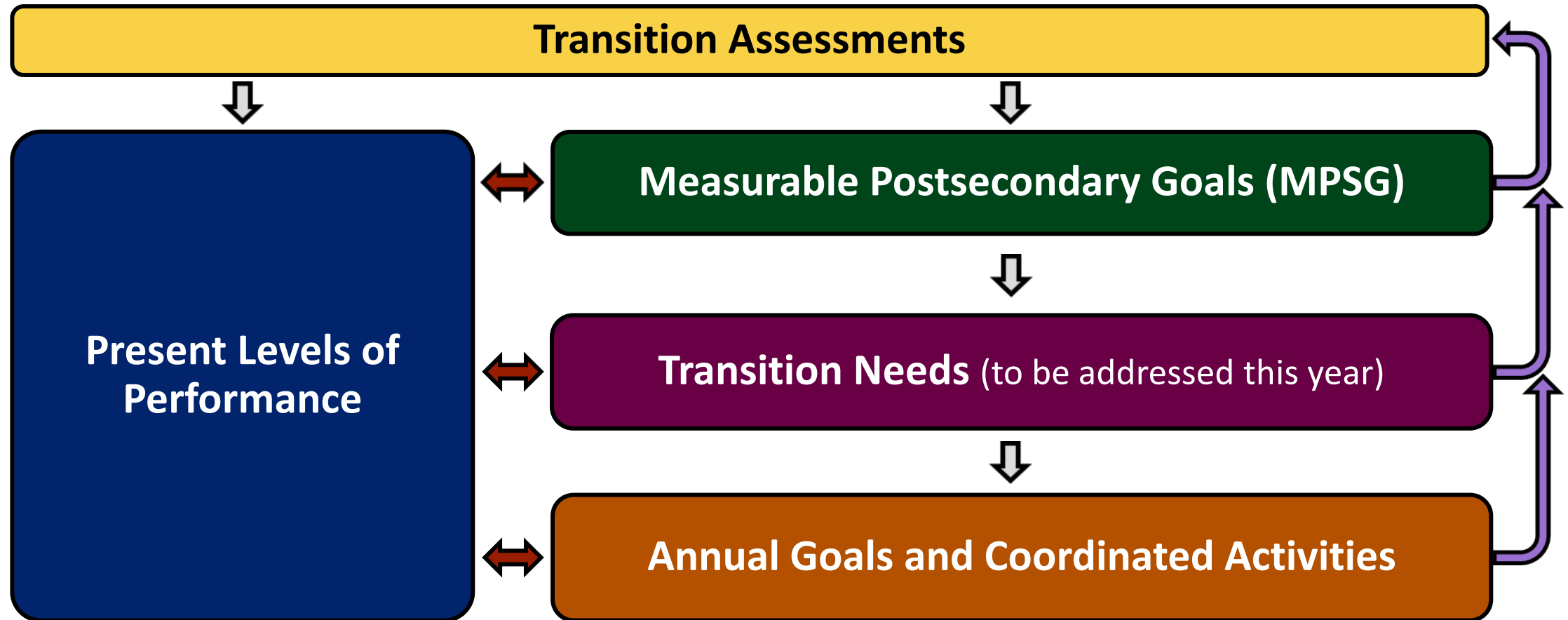
Video



What Is the Family's Role at the CSE Meeting?

- Families **must be** invited to CSE meetings.
- **At CSE meetings families provide information and knowledge on:**
 - Student's strengths, struggles, and development
 - Student's medical history
 - Cultural background, beliefs, and traditions that may impact the student's postsecondary planning
 - Student's experiences at home and in the community
 - Current strategies and instruction and if they are helping the student
 - Suggestions for change and improvement

Where Is Transition Found in the IEP?



Transition Assessments

- Gather information about the student's strengths, preferences, and interests as well as their post-school goals.
- Involve collaboration between the student, family, school district, and community agencies.
- Occur throughout the high school years.
- Should be discussed in the present levels of performance.
- Are used as the basis for creating an IEP that identifies and supports the student's identified goals for life after high school.

Measurable Postsecondary Goals— Three Areas

Education and/or Training

Where and how is the student going to continue to learn and/or develop skills after graduation?

Employment

Where is the student going to work or engage in productive activities after graduation?

Independent Living

Where is the student going to live and how are they going to access adult services, participate in the community, and have fun after graduation?

Transition Needs and Courses of Study

Transition Needs:

The skills, behaviors, and/or experiences the student needs to achieve their goals after high school.

Courses of Study:

The high school courses and programs that the student will take while in high school to prepare them to meet their post-school goals.

Addressing Transition Needs and Supporting Post-School Goals

Annual Goals Related to Transition:

Goals aligned with the academic, social, and physical skills the student needs to achieve their goals for life after high school.

Coordinated Set of Transition Activities:

Activities and services that will help the student gain the skills needed to meet their post-school goals.

Diploma Options



NYS Portrait of a Graduate

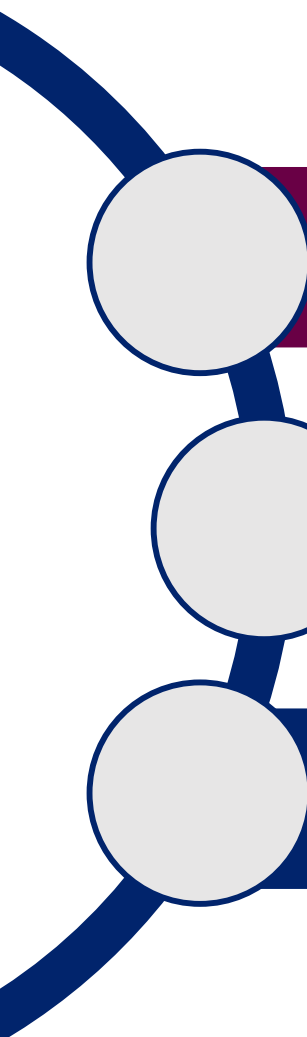
A NYS high school graduate will be:

- Academically Prepared
- A Creative Innovator
- A Critical Thinker
- An Effective Communicator
- A Global Citizen
- Reflective and Future Focused

Until specific changes are approved by the Board of Regents, the current graduation requirements remain in effect for all public-school students in NYS.



Current Diploma Types



Regents

Regents with Advanced Designation

Local

Safety Net Options for Students With Disabilities

Local Diploma via Low Pass Safety Net

- Meets credit requirements
- Meets assessment requirements for a local diploma by achieving a score between **55–64** on one or more of the required Regents Examinations
- *May* also **appeal** up to two Regents Examination scores between **52–54**

Local Diploma via Compensatory Safety Net

- Meets credit requirements
- Meets assessment requirements for a local diploma by compensating Regents Examination scores between **45–54** (on any required Regents Examination except for English Language Arts [ELA] and math) with a score of **65 or higher** on another required Regents Examination

Safety Net applies to:

- Students with disabilities with a current IEP
- Students with a Section 504 plan, if documented on the plan
- Students declassified from special education in grades 8–12, if recommended by the CSE

Superintendent Determination Option

For students with a current IEP only

- Student participated in and passed all relevant Regents level coursework.
- Student actively participated in all required Regents Examinations.
- Student earned the appropriate 22 units of diploma credit.
- Parent/guardian may submit a written request for the superintendent to review other evidence of graduation level proficiency (required credits and coursework) in the subject areas in which the student has not earned the minimum Regents examination scores.
 - If the request involves ELA and/or math assessments, students must ALSO earn the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential.

Exiting Credential Options (Non-Diploma)

Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential

- Available to students who are assessed using the NYSAA.
- Must document student's skills and strengths and levels of independence in academic, career development, and foundational skills.
- Provides learning experiences both in school and in the community.
- Not a high school diploma by State and federal standards.

Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential

- Cannot be earned by students who participate in the NYSAA testing program in all subject areas.
- Not a high school diploma by State and federal standards.
- Is a Board of Regents endorsed credential that recognizes the student's readiness for entry-level employment.

What Is the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential?

- This credential is **available to students who take the NYSAA** instead of the State's general assessments.
 - NYSAA measures students' performance on alternative, less complex standards.
 - NYSAA is for students with severe disabilities.
- It is **not** a diploma and does not meet the criteria for:
 - College admittance
 - Many postsecondary training programs
 - United States (US) military branches
 - Jobs where a high school diploma is required

What Is the CDOS Commencement Credential?

- This credential recognizes a student's preparation and skills for post-school employment based on the CDOS Standards.
- It is a certificate of **readiness for entry-level employment** endorsed by the NYS Board of Regents.
- It is **not** a diploma. However, it can help a student earn a diploma, supplement a diploma, or serve as a standalone credential for students who do not earn a diploma.
- The credential cannot be earned by students who participate in the NYSA A testing program in all subject areas.

Transition Assessments Activity

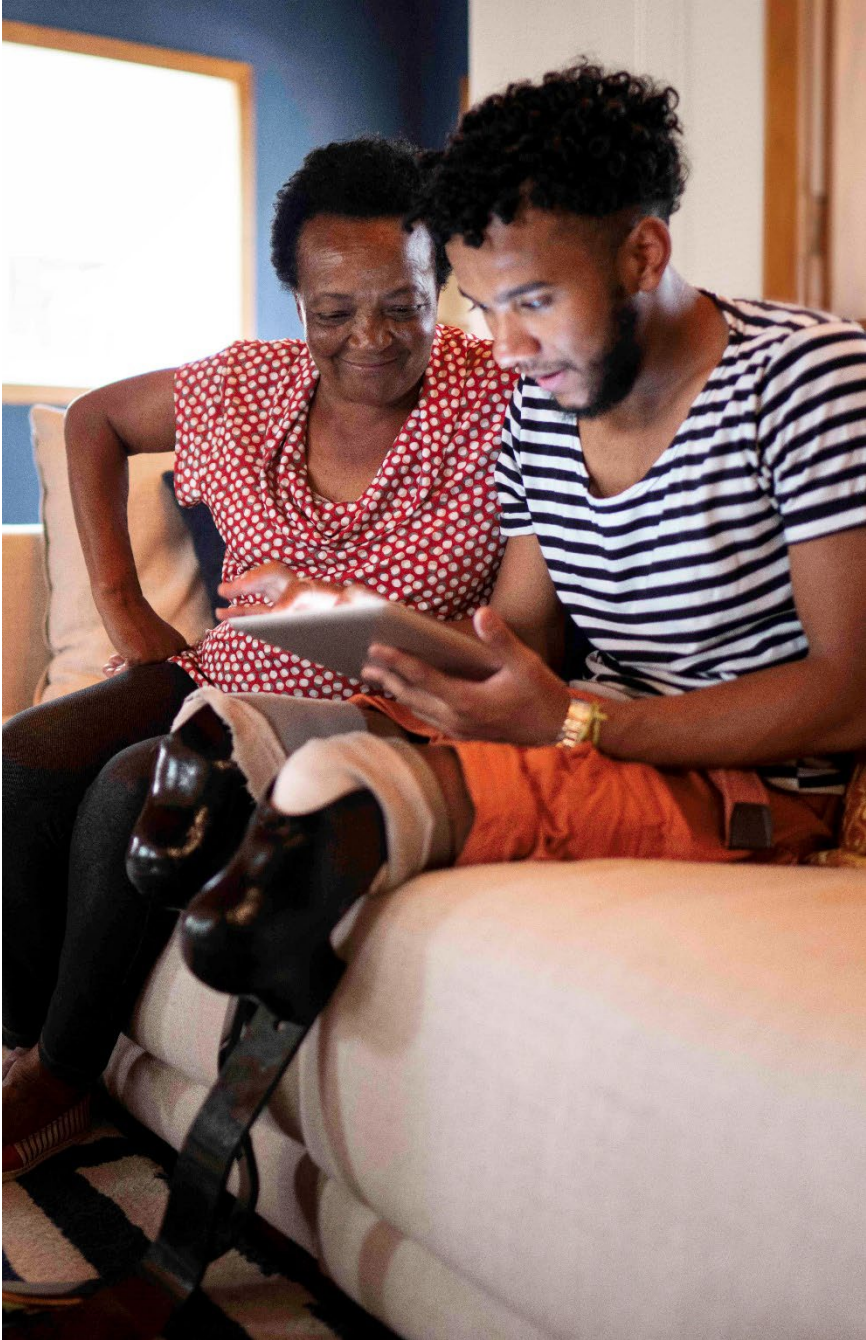


Appendices A, B, and C

- Look at Appendices A, B, and C.
 - Appendix A: Strength-Based Assessment
 - Appendix B: Informal Transition Assessment, Parent Interview
 - Appendix C: Preparing for a CSE discussion about NYSAA
- Choose one to complete with your student in mind.

How Families Can Support Transition Planning





Ways Families Support Transition Planning

- Communicating high expectations
- Monitoring student performance
- Supporting student learning at home
- Guiding the students' education
- Advocating for the student and coaching the student to develop their own self-advocacy skills

Having High Expectations



What Is the Student's Role in Transition Planning?

Students should be encouraged by supportive adults to:

- Understand their disability and how this impacts them in various settings
- Explore interests and options, and access resources and supports for postsecondary education, employment, and community living
- Identify and participate in career preparation, work-based learning (WBL), and paid employment opportunities
- Develop skills and competencies necessary to meet postsecondary goals for employment, education, and community living
- Develop self-determination skills
- Voice their preferences
- Build and use social capital
- Develop financial capability



Self-Determination Student-Friendly Definition

"Being self-determined means acting or causing things to happen as you set and work toward goals in your life."

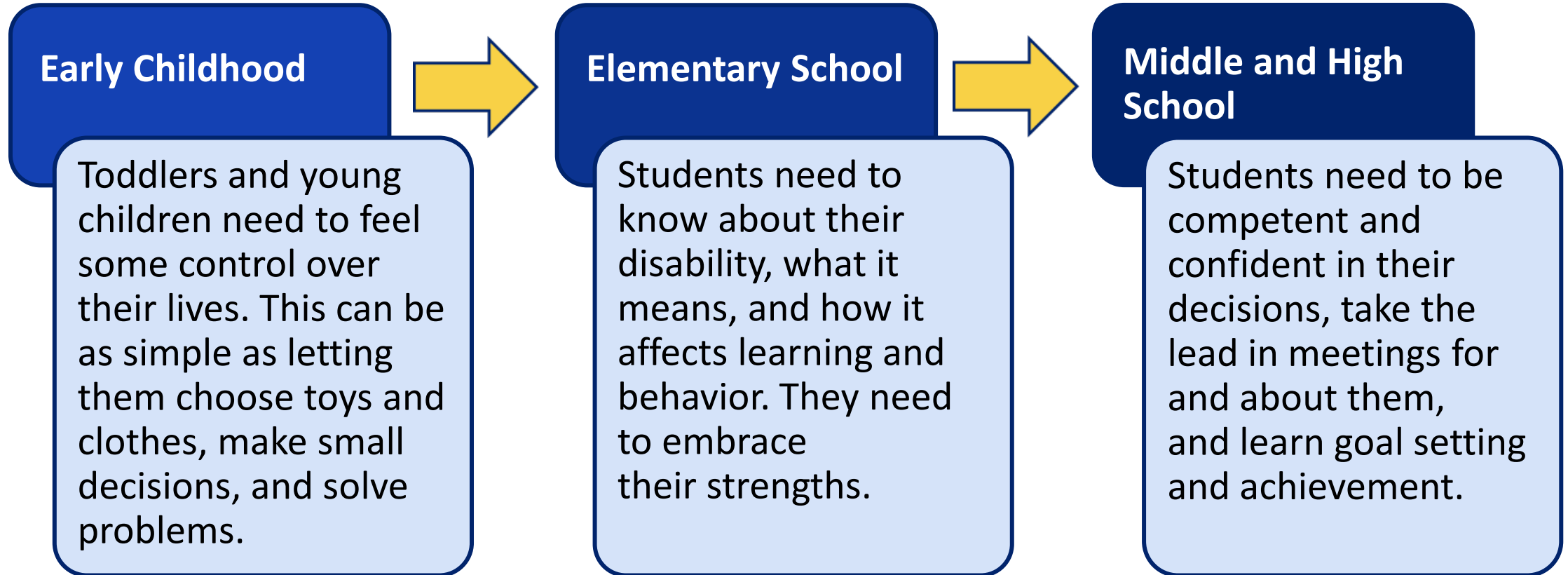
Connecting It All: Self-Determination in Transition Planning

When we center student voice and build choice-making skills, we're actively developing self-determination—the foundation of effective transition planning.

Elements of self-determination include:

- Choice-making
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Goal setting
- Self-regulation
- Self-advocacy
- Self-awareness
- Self-efficacy/Internal locus of control

From Choice Making to Leading



Share Your Plan!



Share 1–2 things you'd like to do (or continue doing) to support your student's transition planning and what next steps you'll take to accomplish this.

Post-School Planning



Transition Planning Works Best Together

Successful planning for life after high school happens when students, families, schools, and community partners collaborate. No single person has all the answers—strong transition plans come from shared ideas, information, and goals that support the student's future in work, education, and independent living.

Ways families can support post-school planning:

- Asking questions and staying informed about the transition process
- Learning about community agencies and supports
- Advocating for your student
- Working with the school and your student to set goals and identify next steps

Post-School Planning Options

As students begin to plan for the future, they should be exploring post-school options in following three areas:

Postsecondary
Education

Employment

Independent
Living

Employment

- Some students may choose to work during high school or after graduation.
- Students can explore different careers by participating in career exploration activities and transition assessments to help them identify what their strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.
- Through WBL experiences, like internships or job shadowing, students can build workplace skills, gain confidence, and learn what it's like to have a job.

Independent Living

- Some students may choose to live independently after high school, while others may live with family or receive support services. Transition planning includes thinking about living options and the supports a student may need.
- Independent living skills may include:
 - Money management
 - Preparing meals
 - Laundry and household tasks
 - Medication management
 - Transportation and getting around the community
- Students can build and practice these skills over time through school, home, and community experiences.

Postsecondary Education

- Some students with disabilities may choose to continue their education after high school. Options may include college or university, college experience programs, vocational programs, or trade schools.
- Early in the transition process, students are encouraged to:
 - Take courses that prepare them for their interests and future goals
 - Participate in school or community activities that explore career interests
 - Meet with school counselors to discuss education and career options
 - Take an active role in their IEP meetings and transition planning



Transition Checklists



Complete the checklist according to your student's age:

- Prior to age 12
- Ages 12–14
- Ages 14–17
- Ages 17–22



Self-Determination and Navigating Adult Services

- In order to navigate life after high school, self-determination skills are key.
- Students will need to understand their disability and their own preferences, strengths, and needs.
- Students will need to advocate with adult service providers and share their needs.
- Students will no longer have support from their school, or an IEP, to help with this.

How Disability Rights and Services Change After High School

School Age (Entitled)

- Students with disabilities who receive special education services are **entitled** to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under the law.
- Services, accommodations, and supports are written in the IEP.
- School district is responsible for identifying students who have disabilities.

After High School (Eligible)

- Individuals must apply and be found **eligible** for services.
- Services are not guaranteed.
- Individuals are responsible for seeking and coordinating services and accommodations.

IDEA vs. ADA

High School (IDEA)	Postsecondary (ADA)
Parents/guardians and students advocate	Young adults self-identify and self-advocate
Parents/guardians have access to student records	Young adults have sole access to their records unless consent is given
School district is responsible for student's evaluations at no cost to the family	Young adults are responsible for their own evaluation
Parents/guardians and teachers set goals and management needs for students, including time management and organization	Young adults must organize and structure their own time
Grading and curriculum standards may be modified according to students' needs if the student is alternately assessed	Young adults attending an education/training program have grades based on merit
Provides related services	Provides access to any activity sponsored by the institution and/or agency
Transportation is provided if necessary	Transportation is the young adults' responsibility

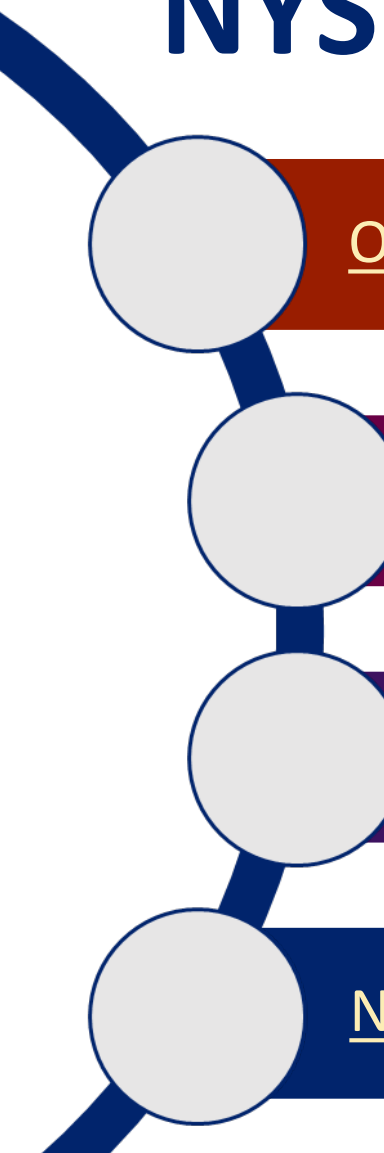


Which Agencies Are the Right Fit?

Considerations:

- Employment/continuing education
- Recreation/leisure
- Living arrangements
- Transportation
- Medical/health
- Financial/income
- Advocacy/legal guardianship services
- Personal/family relationships

NYS Agencies



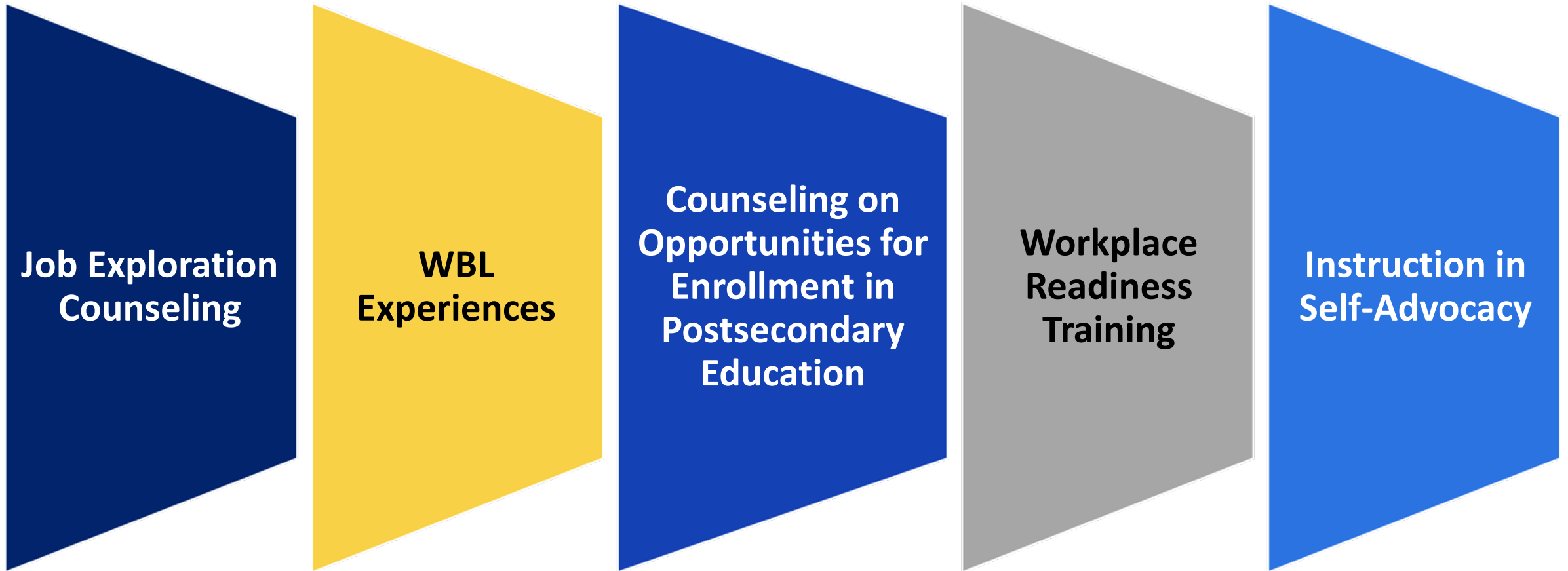
Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

Office of Mental Health (OMH)

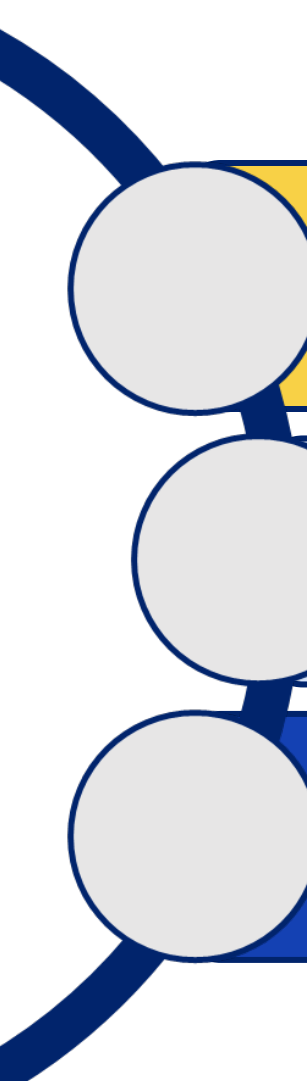
Adult Career and Continuing Education Services—Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)



Community-Based Organizations



Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

Provide a variety of services to individuals with disabilities including peer mentoring, skills training, resources, housing, transportation, and employment.

Workforce Development Centers

Aid individuals seeking employment by providing workshops, local career fairs, and career counseling.

College Disability Services

Provide reasonable accommodations for students who have a qualifying disability and who self-identify.

Explore Supports

Appendix E



Review Appendix E and choose one agency that seems like a good fit for your child. Then write down:

- One question you have about their services
- One way this agency could support your child's future
- One next step you will take (e.g., visit the website, make a call, or talk to your school team about getting connected)

Future Planning

Appendix F



- Use Appendix F to start mapping out your child's future in areas like work, education, and independent living.
- Write down one goal and one next step you can take now.



Reflection and Action Planning



- What is one takeaway you have?
- What further questions do you have?
- How might you use this information?

Resources (1 of 2)

[ACCES-VR](#)

[Appeals, Safety Nets, and Superintendent Determination](#)

[College Disability Services](#)

[I'm Determined](#)

[ILCs](#)

[NYSCB](#)

[NYSAA Policy Brief, 2025](#)

[NYSED Exiting Credentials](#)

[NTACT:C Topic Page: Pre-ETS](#)

[NYS Diploma/Credential Requirements](#)

Resources (2 of 2)

[NYS Portrait of a Graduate](#)

[OMH](#)

[OPWDD](#)

[OSE Educational Partnership Resources](#)

[Self-Determination Learning Center](#)

[SDLMI](#)

[Workforce Development Centers](#)

Contact Us

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Office of Special Education
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Technical Assistance Partnership
for Transition

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