



SUMMARY OF DESE ADVISORY ON TRANSITION SERVICES

On July 14, 2016, the Mass. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (or DESE) issued an advisory on transition services. This summary briefly explains the most important parts of this advisory, which can be found online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2017-1ta.pdf>

Introduction

- **Purpose of transition services:** Preparing students for life after high school is the essential (and sole) purpose of transition services. This is accomplished by helping students build the skills they will need to live successful lives as adult learners, workers and community members.
- **Scope of transition services:** Transition services, which begin no later than age 14, may include a wide variety of education services, experiences and instructional opportunities that are specially designed to teach transition skills to older students. Transition services can include the full range of special education and related services considered for students of all ages.

Principles established by the DESE advisory and special education law

- **Community-based services:** Research demonstrates that a community setting, where a student can learn with nondisabled peers, may be the only effective way to learn many transition services. For example, employment skills should be learned within authentic worksites in the community.
- **Least restrictive environment (LRE) principles:** LRE principles require that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities learn transition skills with peers who do not have a disability. For older students, this typically requires that transition skills be taught in the community with nondisabled peers.
- **Individualized services:** Transition services must be tailored to each student's unique needs, strengths, preferences and interests. Even students with similar education profiles may require very different transition services. Learning opportunities often must be provided in the community in order to be sufficiently individualized.
- **Result-oriented services.** Transition services must be "results oriented", which means that they must result in meaningful and effective progress towards achieving postsecondary goals regarding postsecondary education/training, competitive employment, independent living, and community participation as appropriate to each student. This requires generalizing skills to community environments and encouraging students to function as independently as possible.
- **Transportation skills:** Transition services may be inadequate if students do not learn travel skills. These skills include using public and paratransit transportation independently. Travel training must be provided to all students with disabilities (including students with significant cognitive disabilities) who require this instruction.
- **Sufficient range and continuum of services:** School districts must provide a sufficient range and continuum of coordinated transition services to meet the full range of each student's needs across the age span of 14 to 22 years. Partnerships with organizations in the community are necessary for this to occur.

For more information: For a more detailed discussion of the DESE advisory and relevant federal special education laws, see a posting on the Mass. Advocates for Children blog at <http://massadvocates.org/bills-blog-transition-services-part-i-2/>