

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

Our District is in the process of preparing for a DESE Coordinated Program Review that will take place this school year. The Coordinated Program Review will address the following programs: Special Education, English Learner Education, and Civil Rights. After reviewing the school district's procedures for these programs, a team from the DESE will make an onsite visit during which they will review individual student records, interview administrators, teachers and paraprofessional staff.

MONSON SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEPAC) UPDATE

The Monson Special Education Parent Advisory Council (MSEPAC) provided a Basic Rights for Special Education Workshop on October 24th and October 25th. The presentation will be available on the Special Education webpage shortly. The MSEPAC is in the process of planning events for 2017. More information coming soon!

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition planning is a coordinated set of activities focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student with disabilities to promote the student's movement from school to post-school activities. Post-school activities can include college, vocational training, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. Good transition planning is outcome oriented and focuses on results that help the student reach his or her post-school goals. For students with disabilities, transition planning occurs during an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

The following information is from the DESE Transition from School to Adult life information page:

Realizing successful post-secondary outcomes is a goal we have for all students. Depending on the disability and the support services required in adult life, successful transition from high school to adult life may require that planning activities begin in elementary school with students exploring their interests in middle school. Starting the process early prepares students with disabilities to think about what they want to be able to do in adult life. High school transition planning includes exploring post-secondary opportunities and employment options and may include connecting with the adult service agencies that may provide the student with services when he or she graduate or turn 22 years of age.

Statement of Needed Transition Services - *beginning no later than the first IEP developed when the eligible student is 14.*

Recognizing the need for students with disabilities to engage in effective transition planning, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that transition planning be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Beginning no later than the first IEP developed when the eligible student is 14, the Team considers the student's need for transition services and documents this discussion. If appropriate, the IEP includes a statement of needed transition services. The school district understands that it must maintain documentation of a full discussion of the student's transition needs, whether or not such discussion identifies needed transition services for the IEP. Such documentation must be reviewed and updated annually thereafter. Students must be invited to all educational meetings and allowed to participate actively when transition planning is discussed.

Linkages to Post School Options - *beginning no later than the first IEP developed when the eligible student is 14 and update annually.*

Beginning no later than the first IEP developed when the eligible student is 14, the IEP's of students should include a post school vision statement as well as identify the transition services necessary to support the vision. IDEA 2004 defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that -

- 1 Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- 2 Is based on individual strengths, preferences and interest; and
- 3 Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (P.L. 108-446, Sec 603 (34))

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Transition Planning Form

The Transition Planning Form (TPF) has been developed for transition planning that occurs either prior to or at the time of the annual development of the IEP. The TPF (28M/9) is a mandated form that is maintained with the IEP. As a mandated form, districts must use this format to document that transition planning has occurred. *Only* those aspects of this planning that translate to elements of the IEP are "mandated" to occur. We have deliberately designed the planning process to be more than what is required by special education in order to have a coherent and inclusive plan of action to help to prepare youth for adult life. This inclusive planning process does not require that all identified actions will be the responsibility of the school's special education program, but rather that parents, the student, general education services, other agencies, community partners, and special education services should all work together to assist the student in making a smooth transition to adult life.

The two-page TPF (28M/9) guides and documents the transition planning discussion. Page one features two sections:

- The post-secondary vision, which should correspond with the vision statement on IEP 1; and
- Disability related needs. The disability related needs section documents skills that require IEP goals and/or related services.

Page two of the TPF (28M/9) is the action plan for the student:

- It outlines how the student can develop self-determination skills, and
- Be prepared both academically and functionally to transition to post-school activities in order to achieve his/her post-secondary vision.
- The role and actions of school personnel (in general education and special education), family members, adult service providers and others in the community should be documented in this section.

A guiding question is provided for each transition field as part of the action plan, along with considerations for each transition field that will assist in guiding the transition planning discussion.

There is no required order to complete the various sections of the TPF (28M/9). After considering the student's post-secondary vision, some Teams will find it helpful to complete the action plan section and then the disability related needs section. Others may choose to consider the disability related needs section and then complete the action plan. The goal should be to document a thoughtful and reasonable transition

planning discussion.

Age of Majority - transfer of parental rights to student at age 18

In Massachusetts, regardless of the severity of their disability, students are considered adults and competent to make their own decisions at age 18 (Age of Majority). Unless there is a court appointed guardian or the student has chosen to share decision making with his or her parent, the school district must seek the consent of the student to continue the special education program. Students at age 18 have the right to make their own educational and medical decisions and must sign all consent forms. Parents and students must be notified about the transfer of parental rights to the student at least 1 year before the student turns 18 years of age.

Interagency Collaboration - develop supports and services necessary for adult life

The adult service system is complex and understanding it is essential for effective transition planning. When students with disabilities graduate from school or turn 22 years of age, they move from an entitlement to a non-entitlement system. While in school students receive services and supports mandated by federal and state law. As adults, while they may be eligible for services from adult service agencies, these services are not an entitlement which means they are not guaranteed. Consequently, it is essential that educators, parents and students understand the adult service system years before adult services need to be accessed. It is a sound practice to invite adult service agencies to speak to groups of students and individuals who live with and work with students with disabilities in order to understand the eligibility processes specific to each agency as well as the services that are available to adults with disabilities.

Adult Services - Chapter 688 Referrals and general referrals

For students with severe disabilities, a Chapter 688 referral should be made to ensure that students who will require ongoing supports and services from one or more public agency are part of the eligibility process for receiving services and supports as adults. For other students who require fewer supports and services and may not meet the eligibility requirements for Chapter 688, a general referral for services can be made to adult service agencies.

This information was provided by the DESE Transition from School to Adult Life. For more detailed information, please visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/links/transition.html>

Other helpful links:

http://fcsn.org/transition_guide/english.pdf

I hope that you and your family enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday!

Sincerely,

Suzanne Morneau

Director of Pupil Personnel Services