Guiding Document for
Assistive Technology Transition

Transition plans for students who use assistive technology address the ways the student's use of assistive technology devices and services are transferred from one setting to another. Assistive technology transition involves people from different classrooms, programs, buildings, or agencies working together to ensure continuity. Self-advocacy, advocacy and implementation are critical issues for transition planning.

1. **<u>Transition plans address the assistive technology needs</u> of the student, including roles and training needs of team members, subsequent steps in assistive technology use, and follow-up after transition takes place.**

   <u>Intent:</u> The comprehensive transition plan required by IDEA assists the receiving agency/team to successfully provide needed supports for the AT user. This involves the assignment of responsibilities and the establishment of accountability.

Transitions can be from early intervention to early childhood special education (Part C to Part B of IDEA services), early childhood special education to K-12 education, classroom to classroom within the same school, from school to school, or from school to adult services. There are themes and needs that are consistent across all transitions, and planning for transitions of any kind can help to ensure that the student's use of AT continues, uninterrupted.

As students prepare to transition to new settings within the same school or in a different location, it is important to plan for and address the continued need for assistive technology (AT). When the transition is to a postsecondary setting, the transition plan, which is part of the individual education program (IEP), is developed by the IEP team and includes a specific focus on transition. IEP teams determine who is important to include on the new team, and membership expands to include key stakeholders from the receiving environment, vocational rehabilitation or other agency personnel as appropriate.

It is essential to identify training needs, assign individual responsibilities, and establish specific roles and tasks to facilitate accountability. During the initial transition period, teams establish the expectation that AT will be used in the new environments and identify, in writing, the specifics of why, how, when, and where it will be used. The plan includes supports and services needed to ensure functional use in the receiving environment.

Once a plan is developed, teams assign individuals to take responsibility for all aspects of implementation. An individual team member is assigned to monitor implementation of the overall plan and the student's progress toward meeting IEP and post-secondary goals.

Example:

Aaron was transitioning from an elementary school to a middle school within the same district. At the elementary school he was using a laptop with word prediction software which assisted him in the writing process. He was also utilizing digital text with supported reading software to access his textbooks. A transition plan was jointly created between the team at the elementary school and the lead teacher and the AT/case manager from the middle school.

During the meeting, the team members worked together to identify concerns that needed to be addressed. Aaron would be transitioning from a single classroom to a setting where he would have to move between classes. Concerns included laptop transportation, laptop battery life, charging responsibilities, printer access, assignment completion, and identification of accommodations needed for testing. The challenges in the new setting included interactions with multiple teachers, security from possible theft, and receiving teachers' attitudes towards technology.

Based on the jointly created written transition plan for Aaron, the team at Parkhurst Middle School attended a summer workshop to learn the operational features and functional use of the laptop that he would bring with him from his elementary school. The receiving case manager began the process of acquiring his new textbooks in a digital format. All of the concerns were addressed with team members accepting specific roles and responsibilities to make sure each concern was addressed. Aaron was included in the roles and responsibilities to ensure that the laptop was charged and to inform the case manager immediately if there were any additional issues, such as not being able to print.

The case manager for the Pankhurst Middle School team wrote a description of Aaron's needs, the accommodations that would be a part of his program, and established a one month review date to include his elementary school teacher, so that Parkhurst teachers could consult with her and ask clarifying questions about the implementation of his technology in middle school instruction.

Key Questions
- Does the agency have clearly written guidelines for documenting AT transition needs in the IEP?   - What is the process for systemically disseminating the guidelines?   - Does the IEP team demonstrate working knowledge of these guidelines?   - How are transition IEPs monitored to make sure that the AT needs of students are addressed?   - How do sending and receiving teams participate in the development of an IEP that includes transition?   - How are roles and responsibilities to support the transition documented in the IEP?   - What supports and services will the team include in the transition planning?   - How will the plan be communicated with all stakeholders in the receiving setting?

2. Transition <u>planning empowers the student</u> using assistive technology to participate in the transition planning at a level appropriate to age and ability.

<u>Intent</u>: Specific self-determination skills are taught that enable the student to gradually assume responsibility for participation and leadership in AT transition planning as capacity develops. AT tools are provided, as needed, to support the student's participation.

Self-determination is the ability to be a causal agent in one's own life. Direct instruction in the skills needed for self-determination in relation to one's AT can begin as soon as a student starts to use AT devices. Wehmeyer & Field (2007), in their book entitled *Self-Determination: Instructional and Assessment Strategies,* list choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving, goal setting and attainment, self-regulation/self-management, and self-advocacy and leadership as critical skill areas. When specific instruction is provided in these areas, students develop more self-awareness, self-knowledge, and more positive perceptions of control, efficacy and outcome expectations. Students can also develop self-determination skills like problem-solving and choice making as those skills relate to AT. Using skills like these helps students to increase their own independence and involvement in transition planning and be successful in the new setting.

Students who have been appropriately involved in IEP development throughout their school experience are better prepared to participate in transition planning. As members of their IEP team, students are empowered to participate in planning for their needs and preferences, regarding use of AT and other aspects of their program. Over time, students take increased responsibility for participating in AT transition planning, including learning self-determination skills at a level commensurate with their age, ability and comfort level.

The students' use of AT during transition planning can ensure that the students have greater access and independence during transitions. This can include tools and strategies that help the students plan the agenda, organize ideas, present thoughts, or use an AT device as a planning tool (e.g., use a speech generating device (SGD) during transition planning meetings).

Examples:

> *Emily was a junior at Lincoln High School. During her IEP transition planning meeting, she used her SGD to advocate for herself. She also made and showed a computer slide presentation to tell the team about the kinds of work she was hoping to be able to do when she completed high school. Emily used her SGD to ask questions about the kind of assistance she could expect if she entered college or a vocational-technical program. Emily's personal goals and ideas were included in her plan. Another meeting was planned after Emily visited two post-secondary settings and learned what strategies she would need for successful transitions.*

Lisa was19 years old and had two more years before transitioning from Lincoln High to a post-secondary setting. She used partner assisted mobility, an SGD and required maximum support for many activities of daily living. She used picture symbols effectively and was learning concepts related to vocational, educational and supported living options. During her IEP meeting she used the symbols on her SGD to express her choices and preferences throughout the transition planning process. At the most recent meeting, she communicated that she wants to visit two of the living options that were discussed.

Key Questions
- How will the student be a participating member of the transition team?   - What instruction has the student received to learn and demonstrate self-determination skills at an appropriate level?   - When appropriate, does the student use AT to support and increase participation in transition planning?

3. Advocacy related to assistive technology use is recognized as critical and planned for by the teams involved in transition.

Intent: Everyone involved in transition advocates for the student's progress, including the student's use of AT. Specific advocacy tasks related to AT use are addressed and may be carried out by the student, the family, staff members or a representative.

As students transition to new environments, advocates support the students' continued use of AT, provide technical assistance when it is not working, and help determine when new devices are needed. While some students can be their own advocates, parents or caregivers and others in the new environment may be identified to provide additional encouragement and support for the students' continued AT use. Advocacy activities that help to ensure the students' continued progress are specifically planned with roles and tasks assigned to individuals. To the greatest extent possible, students learn and use self-advocacy skills and apply them before, during, and after transitions.

Person-centered planning assists students, educators, family members, and other advocates chosen by the student to identify dreams, goals, and concerns for the future. It also helps to create a type of "map" which helps students take leadership and advocate for their own quality of life. Person-centered planning is often used in the development of formal transition plans. When AT is included in person-centered planning discussions, everyone on the team can better understand the purpose of AT use in new environments.

When students who use AT have good self-advocacy skills, they are able to participate in making decisions about AT use as well as other aspects of their transitions. For some students, the complexity of the disability makes it difficult to self-advocate. In situations like these, it is important that there is a family member, supportive adult, friend or professional who understands the student's AT use, the student's preferences for future use of AT, and who can be an advocate during and after the transition. Without someone to advocate for continued AT use, the chances that AT will be a part of a successful transition are significantly reduced.

Example:

> *In the fall Sven was moving from the one-story ninth-grade center where all classes are in a pod to the two-story high school where his classes would be scattered throughout the building. In his spring transition planning meeting, Sven's mother reported that he had expressed concerns about navigating his wheelchair safely in the crowded halls of the high school. Sven described his concerns about independent mobility not only related to his wheelchair, but also about carrying books and materials from place to place, getting set-up to work in many different classrooms and how to manage emergency situations. Sven requested that a time be arranged for his mother and him to visit the high school during class change time to determine accessibility, maneuverability, distances between classes, and the length of time for transitions between classes. The visit was arranged and a follow-up meeting scheduled, so that both the sending and receiving team members could meet with Sven and his mother to determine options that would work for him in the high school setting.*

Key Questions
- How do team members actively advocate for the student?   - Who will be identified to advocate for the student's use of AT in the new environment?   - How are self-advocacy skills taught to the student?   - How will the student employ self-advocacy strategies during planning?

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4. <u>AT requirements in the receiving environment</u> are identified during the transition planning process.

Intent: Environmental requirements, skill demands and needed AT support are determined in order to plan appropriately. This determination is made collaboratively and with active participation by representatives from sending and receiving environments.

Agencies develop transition processes for students moving from school to school or from school to community. These processes include opportunities for communication

between settings; visits by the students, parents, and teachers; and planning meetings that include all needed team members.

Team members in both the sending and receiving environments work collaboratively in transition planning. In order to plan appropriately, team members identify environmental requirements, new tasks, training needs, services, service providers and other supports that will be needed in the receiving environment. Examples of new AT-related tasks include moving the technology from class to class, using the printer for written assignments, use of a new computer platform, or communicating with new teachers, school staff, and peers. Team members in the sending environment help prepare the student by providing experiences and practice in using these new skills that will be needed before the time for the transition arrives.

Example:

> *Shayna used a talking word processor and word prediction software for all writing tasks of more than three sentences. As Shayna's team began to plan for her move to middle school, the middle school team members pointed out that the new school has Windows platform computers rather than the Macintosh computers used at the elementary school. The team made plans to help Shayna with her transition by acquiring a Windows platform computer and the Windows based version of the software she used for reading and writing. The team developed a plan to provide training for her in the operational use of the Windows computer and software during the spring before she moved to her new school.*

Key Questions
- What will the receiving environment need to know about the student's AT use?   - How will information about the student's current AT needs and skills been conveyed to the receiving environment (e.g., written descriptions, video, observations)?   - What does a review of the new environment reveal about the requirements and the range of tasks that the student will need to be able to complete?   - What changes, if any, are required in the AT the student uses to participate and achieve in the new environment?   - What opportunities will the student have to practice needed skills before the transition?

5. Transition planning for students using assistive technology proceeds according to an <u>individualized timeline.</u>

<u>Intent</u>: Transition planning timelines are adjusted based on specific needs of the student and differences in environments. Timelines address well mapped action steps with specific target dates and ongoing opportunities for reassessment.

Federal law requires that, no later than age 16, an individualized timeline is developed and documented for transition. In some states, the age required to begin

transition planning is earlier than age 16. It is important to know the specific rules for your state when beginning transition planning. AT needs and activities that require the use of AT in addition to all of the other essential components are addressed in the timeline. The timeline may include tasks such as acquisition of a new device or software, practice using the AT in the new environment, direct instruction in communication with new people or independence in the use of AT, as well as visitations to potential settings, meetings with service providers, and other typical steps.

Timelines are adjusted based on specific student needs or changes in the environment, tasks that the student is required to do, and changes in student abilities. Timelines include action steps, when they will be taken, persons responsible for those actions, and target dates for completion. Skills and use of AT are reviewed periodically, and the review includes plans for ongoing re-assessment before, during, and after the transition. New timelines and new use of tools may be necessary based on data gathered.

Example:

> *Kristoff was introduced to his SGD during his early elementary years. As he moved from setting to setting, including from elementary to middle school, the SGD moved with him. Before each transition, there were several meetings scheduled to share information with staff in the new setting regarding how Kristoff used his device to communicate, new skills he was working on, strategies for including him in the classroom, development of new vocabulary, etc.*
> *Because of Kristoff's complex communication needs and the number of teachers involved, planning for his transition to high school started in February prior to the transition. The team from the high school attended training sessions on his device in May, so that they were aware of basic operations of his SGD and had a plan to address potential issues. They also visited the middle school to observe classroom strategies that were effective for him in that setting. A contact person was identified from both the middle school and high school to quickly address any issues that might arise. They also met with the high school vice-principal about Kristoff's needs and their plan to address them, so that she would be aware and informed should they need specific support from her.*

Key Questions

- When is the timeline for preparing for transition developed?
- Is it well documented, clearly defined and based on specific student needs and goals?
- When will the timeline be reviewed and adjusted, based on student performance data?
- How are responsibilities defined for reviewing the timeline and reporting the data?
- Where are timelines and responsibilities documented in the IEP or transition plan?

6. Transition plans address specific <u>equipment, training and funding</u> issues such as transfer or acquisition of assistive technology, manuals and support documents.

<u>Intent</u>: A plan is developed to ensure that the AT equipment, hardware, and/or software arrives in working condition accompanied by any needed manuals. Provisions for ongoing maintenance and technical support are included in the plan.

Equipment, training and funding are identified and addressed when students transition to new environments. A review of the tasks that the student will complete in the receiving environment includes an evaluation to determine if the student's current AT is appropriate in the new environment or if different equipment is needed. If new equipment is needed, local funding options are explored as appropriate. A plan to obtain equipment, training, and supports for the student in the receiving environment is developed. Next steps are identified, roles are assigned and appropriate agencies are notified. If necessary service providers have not been identified, the plan includes developing strategies to include the needed providers.

Example:

> *Ahmed and his transition planning team, which included representatives of the school district, developmental disabilities services, the sheltered workshop, and the group home to which Ahmed was moving, identified the specific equipment he had been using at school. This included a direct select communication device with 32 options, a single talking switch used to ask for assistance and a jig for an electric stapler that allowed proper insertion of the papers to be stapled. The sheltered workshop had the equipment needed for the stapling task but was not able to provide either of the communication tools that Ahmed would need after his transition. The team determined that additional funding would be needed to purchase the two communication devices. The school provided a portfolio of information about how Ahmed used the communication devices. The transition team also realized that services available to Ahmed did not include a speech therapist. A community-based speech therapist was identified, and the team acquired funding through Medicaid for periodic review and updating of vocabulary on Ahmed's SGD.*

Key Questions
- Who is the owner of the AT the student currently uses?   - Will the student be able to use the same AT device in the new environment?   - Have funding options for purchase of new AT been identified and accessed?   - When new AT is needed, how will it be acquired?   - What are the plans to provide the student with needed AT if new equipment will be needed?

- What services will be necessary after the transition?
- What steps have been taken to identify appropriate service providers for support after the transition occurs?
- What are the referral processes for the agencies that should be contacted?

Reference
Wehmeyer, M.L. & Field, S.L. (2007). *Self-determination: Instructional and assessment strategies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.