



Family Center  
on Technology  
and Disability

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# Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology and Transition Planning

## Planned Transitions are Smooth Transitions!

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# About the Family Center on Technology and Disability

The Family Center on Technology and Disability (FCTD) produces and distributes a range of informational resources on the subject of assistive and instructional technologies. The Center's goal is to strengthen the ability of organizations throughout the country to provide current, accurate, and useful technology-related services, resources, and materials to the families of children with disabilities.

Among the resources provided by the Family Center are the following:

- A fully searchable database of more than 900 abstracts of books, articles, videos, websites, and other resources concerning assistive and instructional technology
- A fully searchable database of information on approximately 3,000 organizations nationwide, that serve the disability community
- Monthly thematic newsletters on assistive and instructional technologies, featuring in-depth interviews with nationally-recognized experts
- Month-long online discussions of technology-related topics, moderated by national experts
- An annual Online Institute on Assistive Technology, for which participants may receive continuing education units
- A fully accessible website that provides the resources above plus an AT glossary, an introductory AT primer, AT success stories, an explanation of relevant legislation, and links to other relevant material
- An *Assistive and Instructional Technology Resources CD-ROM*, containing all of the information available on the FCTD website, updated annually

The Family Center on Technology and Disability is administered by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), in partnership with the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER Center), the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), and InfoUse. The Family Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

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*Planned Transitions are Smooth Transitions!*



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# How to Use this Guide

The FCTD *Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology and Transition Planning* includes the following sections:

- ▶ An Introduction to Transition Planning and Assistive Technology
- ▶ How Make a Successful Transition with Your Assistive Technology
- ▶ Laws Governing Accommodations and Transition in Birth-12 & Postsecondary Settings
- ▶ Glossary of AT and Transition Terms
- ▶ Additional AT and Transition Resources

We have included many website addresses throughout the guide. Whenever possible, we have listed the URL (the website address) that will take you to the precise page within an organization's website on which the relevant resource appears. That means that the URL may seem very long. Please don't let that stop you. On our website, the addresses are "hot links" so that you merely have to click on them. In the paper version, of course, that's not possible. To access the reference, type the URL into the address window of your Internet browser. Or visit our website at <http://www.fctd.info> and use the online version of the guide.

The information in the guide is accurate and current as of September 2009. You may copy and distribute portions of the guide without prior consent. Of course, we would appreciate it if you would give appropriate attribution to the Family Center on Technology and Disability. Products that are identified in the guide are meant only as examples. The Family Center and the U.S. Department of Education do not endorse specific products. There are many other fine AT devices and transition resources available in addition to those discussed here.

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# 1 An Introduction to Transition Planning & Assistive Technology

There is an old saying that the only thing constant in life is change. From the moment a child is born, both child and parents are launched on a path with twists and turns, some planned, some unexpected. Most changes in a child's life do not happen overnight, but instead take place over an extended period of time, during which the family and child make a transition from one phase to another. Periods of transition may last weeks, months, or even years. Some are so significant that special effort is needed to ensure that the child and those who support him or her are prepared to manage the challenges and benefit from the possibilities presented by a new environment and new activities. While this is true for all children and parents, it is especially true for children with disabilities.

Most children will enter pre-school, move from elementary to middle and then high school, graduate high school, go to work and live away from home. Many will go to college as well. Each of these transitions is exciting and hopeful and also a bit scary. While all families need to plan for such transitions, families of children with disabilities often find that their planning is more complex and requires more time.

Children who have been diagnosed with one or more disabilities may receive supports throughout their lives, to help them be as active, independent and self-determined as possible. Such supports can come from people (e.g., therapists, teachers, and advocates) and from adapted materials and equipment. They change as the child grows. Supports appropriate for an infant or toddler are not usually



appropriate for a middle school or high school aged child. Thus, children with disabilities and their families must continually prepare themselves for the next phase – new environments, expectations, new supports, new laws and rules, new materials and new terminology.

The purpose of this guide is to help families prepare for those times during which their child moves from one environment to another and from one developmental stage to another. The focus of the guide is on the role of assistive technology (AT) during those times – how to consider your child’s evolving AT needs, how to identify and address the AT issues that will arise as your child makes a transition, and how to develop and implement an AT transition plan.

## What is Transition?

One definition of **transition** is a time of change or “passage from one place or time to another” (Townsend, *Transition and Your Adolescent with Learning Disabilities*). Throughout a child’s life, there are key transitions when s/he moves from familiar places or activities to others that are not as familiar. While often exciting, these transitions can be stressful, scary, and difficult. Planning for them is a necessary process and makes the transition far easier. Key transitions for children and families are:

- from home to daycare or preschool
- from daycare or preschool to elementary school
- from elementary school to middle or junior high school
- from middle or junior high school to high school
- from high school to vocational education, college, university, work, and/or independent living (**postsecondary** activities)

While each of these is an important development in the life of a child, as educators and parents, we often focus on the transition from school to work and/or school to community. However, as the list above indicates, there are other equally critical transitions that occur and that require planning. For example, a key attribute of a successful elementary education program is the provision of appropriate “wrap-around services” to the student, for up to seven years. That is, from kindergarten through sixth grade (in some districts until fifth grade), students with disabilities are often served by the same professionals. They will have the same counselor, the same speech-language pathologists, the same occupational therapists,



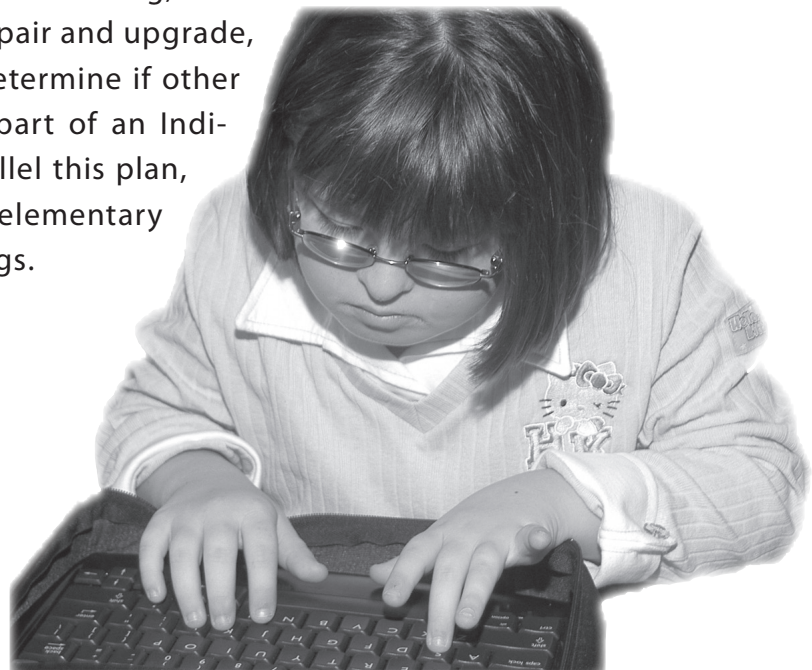


and in some cases, the same special education teacher. In that setting, the child's parents know the educators and have had years of consistent access to them. If they have a question, they've learned whom to talk to, where to go for an answer, and how the process generally works. With regard to AT, devices have been used within a consistent environment. While the student moves up in grade level, the facility (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, hallways), and staff have not changed. Similarly, the team of professionals involved in AT integration is often the same team that identified the need, evaluated its effectiveness, and developed the plan for successful use. The transition from a supportive wrap-around approach to the demands of a middle school environment, however, can present significant obstacles to a student's continued use of AT. Overcoming these obstacles requires proper planning.

**Accommodations are specific processes or tools that help a student access and complete the same school work and activities as his peers. Accommodations very often involve the use of assistive technology devices and services.**

A new school, with its unfamiliar environment, new tasks, new people, and new expectations presents both challenges and opportunities. While it takes time and effort to help teachers and support staff learn how to work with your child effectively, new faces often bring a fresh approach and energy to the task at hand. You have valuable information to share concerning the accommodations that have helped your child in the past. The teachers, therapists, counselors and staff in the new environment may have equally valuable information about AT devices and services appropriate to the more complex demands of the new school or program.

As a team, you need to develop a plan for this transition that includes all aspects of AT use, including both devices and services. The plan should identify who needs to be trained, who will provide the training, who is responsible for equipment maintenance, repair and upgrade, and how the student will be assessed to determine if other AT might be helpful. The plan could be part of an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) and/or parallel this plan, focusing primarily on the transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school settings.



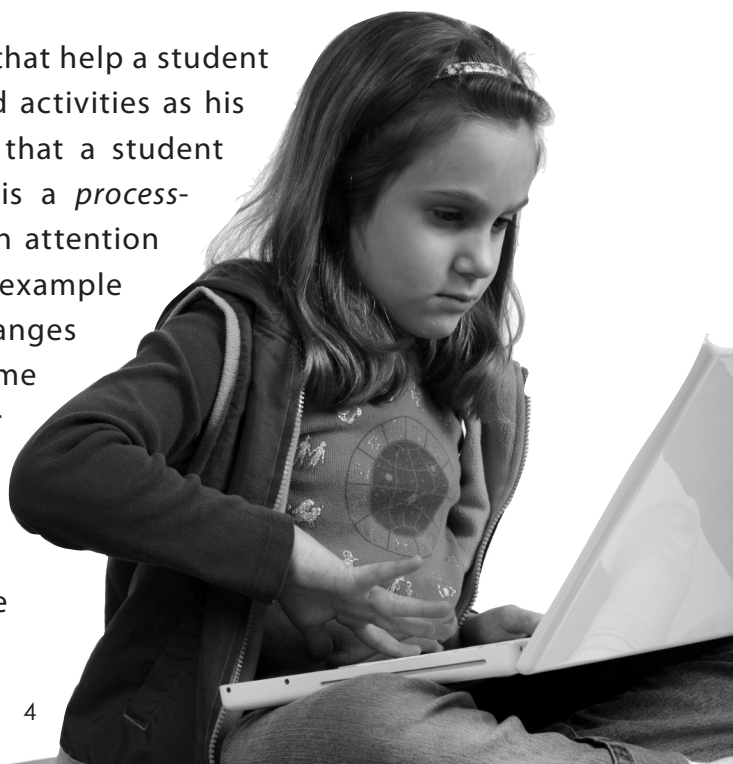
After leaving high school, the experience your child will have will be very different from the K-12 school experience to which s/he has been accustomed. Adding to the challenge, your child may be transitioning to more than one new setting at the same time – to vocational education and independent living, for example. Each setting will bring with it changes in both what is required of him and in the supports and services for which he is eligible.

Transition planning is especially important because most postsecondary settings are not required to provide accommodations and other support services to the degree that is required of K-12 schools. If your child needs accommodations, this altered level of support can be of concern. Poor planning will leave the family with more questions than answers, not knowing where to turn for support, not informed of their rights and unaware of available resources. If not planned for, an individual's quality of life and access to services, such as AT, are likely to suffer. The best approach, therefore, is to be prepared with a comprehensive transition plan.

## What Is Assistive Technology?

**Assistive Technology (AT)** consists of tools or devices and services. AT enables children to engage more fully in typical activities and routines at home, in school, and in the community by providing the support needed to overcome, or work around, individual disability-related limitations. *AT tools* can be very low-tech – magnifiers, raised line paper, or Velcro – or they can be very high-tech, such as electronic communication devices, screen reading computer software, or mobility devices. The goal of AT use, whether low- or high-tech, is to enable individuals to actively and fully participate in learning and other day to day activities. *AT services* include such activities as assessing a student's need for AT, training the student, teacher and family members in its use, and evaluating the student's experience with various devices.

*Accommodations* are specific processes or tools that help a student access and complete the same school work and activities as his non-disabled peers. Changing an activity so that a student with a disability can more easily perform it is a *process-type* accommodation. Providing a student with attention deficit a quiet room for taking an exam is an example of this kind of accommodation, since it changes the way that the activity is carried out. If the same student were to take the test on a computer screen with adjustable magnification, he would be using a *tool-type* accommodation. Accommodations for students with disabilities are mandated by federal and state laws (see



Section 3 of this guide for specific information.) In general, if an accommodation, including assistive technology, is listed in a student's IFSP or IEP, then schools, school staff, and support personnel must provide it.

If your child benefits from assistive technology and/or uses it as an accommodation, it is a key part of his life that helps him participate as fully as he can in school, work and life activities. Whatever AT equipment, software or services your child uses, those who work with him need to understand how the technology helps him. They need to know, as well, what they can do to make sure the AT is being used as effectively as possible. It is likely that your child's current teachers and support staff are aware of his disability, his present assistive technology, and how to best use it to support classroom activities and homework. They have learned how to program it, repair it, or make suggestions about upgrades or replacements if those seem necessary. They also know whom to contact if there is a problem that they can't address.

Teachers and support staff in a new school or postsecondary environment will need to be introduced to your child's specific disability and his strengths and weaknesses. They will also need to learn about the assistive technology that supports him, including how to determine whether he may need a new or upgraded type of AT. That is why it is important to include specific information about assistive technology in transition planning.

## **What Are Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and How is Transition Addressed in Each?**

Children with disabilities have educational and social needs that are specific to their individual cases. The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that children with disabilities must receive a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE). FAPE is partly achieved by requiring that appropriate goals, objectives, accommodations or supports, and transition services be documented in a student's **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** or **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.

Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an IFSP if s/he is under three years of age or an IEP if s/he is age three to majority (typically eighteen years old but up to twenty-one years old if necessary.) Both are individualized documents that address the specific situation of one student. The documents are created by an IFSP or IEP team and are updated annually, or as often as team members feel is necessary. They include such information as:

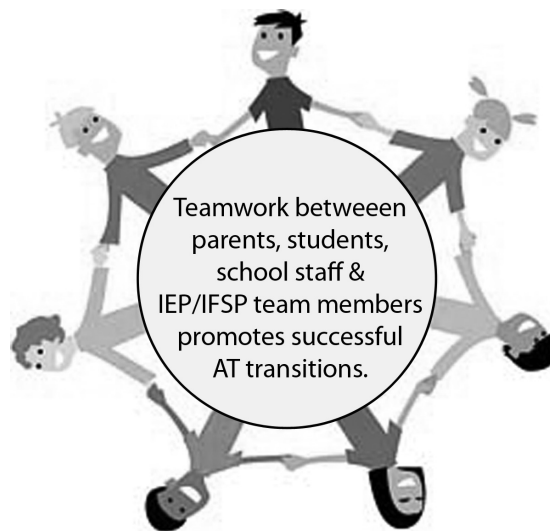
- The child's current ability level
- Measurable annual goals, outcomes and results for the child and the family, along with an agreed-upon timeline
- Available intervention services and/or special education provider to meet the identified needs of the child
- Consideration of whether AT is needed to assist in the student's educational development
- Identified AT devices and services and any training needed for the child, family, school, therapists, or support staff
- Services and steps needed for effective transition of the child and family into a following school or program

The IFSP, designed for very young children, also includes information about a family's concerns and priorities. It should identify resources that can help the family reach goals set for the child and family members.

IFSP and IEP teams are crucial resources and advocates for your child. They are typically made up of the following people:

- Parents or guardians
- At least one general education teacher
- At least one special education teacher or service provider
- A school district representative who knows about general and special instruction and the district resources that are available
- Someone who can interpret evaluation results and understand what they mean for instruction; one of the school personnel listed above may be appropriate
- Anyone who has knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel
- The child, when appropriate

You are your child's primary caregiver and advocate



until he is able to care for himself. The expertise of the IEP team is crucial, however, in helping you and your child set, follow, and transition his goals and assistive devices and services from one setting to another. An effective IEP – one that guides your child’s instructional and transition experiences – is one that reflects the input and commitment of the IEP team.

IFSPs and IEPs are important for transition because IDEA requires that a statement of transition services be included in the general transition planning twice in the child’s life:

- In the IFSP, before age three, in anticipation of a child’s move from a home setting or day care to preschool
- In the IEP, starting at age 16, in preparation for a child’s move from high school to a post-secondary setting such as vocational training, college or university, work, and/or an independent living situation

By requiring that transition information be included in the IFSP and IEP at these key times of transition, the law tries to ensure that the supports the child has found helpful in the past are not abandoned in the new setting. It requires that the demands of the new environment be considered and addressed with appropriate supports. Of course, reality sometimes falls short of the goal. That is why parents and other supportive individuals must take an active role in the process.

It should be noted that each and every IEP team must consider whether assistive technology is appropriate for the student with a disability. This does not require the *use* of AT for each and every child, but rather, its *consideration*. Such consideration is required by IDEA 2004 and needs to be more than a mere “check box” on a form. The IEP process should include thoughtful weighing of potential advantages and disadvantages of specific AT devices and services. If there isn’t adequate AT knowledge within the team, then external resources should be brought in. This might include a representative of a Parent Training and Information Center, a Community Parent Resource Center, a Technology Access Center, or other local individuals with knowledge of current assistive and instructional technologies.



# What Is Transition Planning?

**Transition planning** is the process of learning about a new environment and identifying the steps and supports a child with disabilities needs to move successfully from his familiar environment to the new one. A key part of transition planning is clearly identifying the roles and responsibilities of various agencies and support team members so that all involved know what needs to happen and what they must do. Such plans can result in less stress, improved educational and social outcomes and an improved quality of life for your child and your family.

Transition planning includes the identification of “needed transition services” within the student’s IFSP at age 2 and/or IEP at age 16. Additional transition planning should take place throughout your child’s life and transition-related goals, activities, responsibilities and outcomes can be included in any IEP, if the team agrees. For example, the move from elementary to middle school might benefit from certain transition items being listed in the IEP. Organization and personal productivity tools such as talking calendars, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and wristwatches with programmable alarms, could be cited as AT to help your child move from a one teacher/one classroom environment to a multiple teacher/multiple classroom environment.

*Assistive technology* transition planning is an important part of overall transition planning. It requires that you, your child, and his IEP team focus on what assistive technologies will help him in his new school or postsecondary setting. This focus often results in AT-specific goals and actions being added to the general transition services listed in the IFSP or IEP. Those involved may take on specific roles and responsibilities related to learning about and using supportive technology to enhance your child’s educational (or life) experience and outcomes.

As a student leaves high school, continued support and funding of his AT becomes dependent on adult or community service agencies. Who will identify those resources and facilitate the transition process? Who will provide the necessary training to integrate the technology in the workplace and/or community? The people involved in answering these questions are critical to the success of the transition, and should be present at any planning meeting.



# 2

## How to Make a Successful Transition with Your Assistive Technology

### What Is Included in an IEP Statement of Transition Services?

State and local education agencies (SEA's and LEA's) across the country address transition planning differently. However, all are guided by, and need to adhere to, national laws governing general and special education. Therefore, all states' procedures should incorporate certain basic principles and protections for families and youth. Families may find the language used in written documents and at meetings to be difficult to understand, as it may reflect the jargon of the education world. Don't be shy about asking IEP team members to explain words, phrases, and acronyms (abbreviations) with which you are unfamiliar.

In general, IEP transition plans should include the following information to help your child make a smooth transition from one environment to another:

- A statement of the skills your child currently has, the skills s/he needs to develop, and any supports, including AT, s/he uses
- A statement of the postsecondary activities and environments s/he plans to pursue
- Specific activities designed to prepare your child for the new environment



- Steps for preparing the service providers in the new setting(s)
- Statements about which routines, relationships, and settings will change, how new ones can be introduced, and how old ones can be maintained
- Identification of how to best communicate and interact with your child and your family (Are there language and/or other cultural issues to be considered?)
- A timeline and task line for each of the transition steps that clearly identifies the responsibilities of each agency and individual and the deadlines for each task

Additional information may include:

- Statements of key activities and dates such as graduation, school open houses and application deadlines
- Medical or mental health needs
- Mobility, communication and transportation needs
- Driver's education training
- Income support
- Insurance - health, auto, home, long-term disability and care
- Selective service registration
- Leisure activities
- Contact information and key contact personnel for relevant activities and settings

*Adapted, in part, from A Family Guide to Transition Planning, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community with IN\*SOURCE*

## **What AT Information Should Be Included in the Transition Plan?**

As noted earlier, general transition planning and AT transition planning are different but connected activities. Sometimes it is difficult to figure out where AT planning fits into the larger transition planning process. In order for your child to make a successful transition with her existing assistive technology and/or prepare for the devices and services she may need in her new setting, the following AT-specific information should be included in the statement of transition services:

- A description of your child's current technology use
- A statement of the AT requirements in the receiving environment (i.e., the school or setting she will be moving to)



- Information concerning the transfer of equipment, including user manuals and support documents
- Identification of key personnel involved in training, accessing funding options, and providing ongoing support
- Steps for using and maintaining the assistive technology
- An outline of the roles and training needs of team members
- Follow-up activities including assessment and evaluation
- An individualized timeline for implementation

*Adapted from the QIAT Consortium's Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services*

Remember that it is important to be specific and to include both AT devices and services because the accommodations and services available to your child will depend upon his documented need for them. Documenting existing accommodations in your child's IEP is strong evidence that he should receive the same accommodations and services in his new environment. If, for instance, you are expecting that, upon graduation, your local Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will purchase a piece of assistive equipment from the school system, that expectation should be included in the IEP.

Getting a Vocational Rehabilitation representative involved in the AT transition process, including attending IEP meetings, will serve you and your child well. S/he may facilitate the transfer of an AT device from the school to the student or family, or identify the process that needs to be followed to acquire a similar device if the school district will not relinquish it. This last point is critical to understand and to address in your planning. School districts are not obligated to relinquish an AT device purchased for and used by a student with a disability. No matter how long the student has been using the device or how critical it is for his ongoing development, if the school owns the equipment, they generally determine how it is released.

For example, if an augmentative communication device was purchased by a school district, education/special education cooperative or by another preK-12 entity, usually the device is owned by that entity. A child's longtime use of hardware or software, or the extent to which it has been customized for the child's specific needs, does not convey ownership or entitle the child to use it in a future environment. Generally the state or local education agency is the decision maker in determining the continued use of the particular AT device. While



some education agencies will develop plans to allow for the transfer of ownership to the individual or his/her family, others will not, leaving the family in a position where they will need to identify resources to replace the device. Thus, it is critical that the high school IEP team discuss AT continuation, identify agencies and key personnel, and plan for potential equipment replacement.

## **Supportive AT Transition Activities: Research, Assessment and Career Exploration**

Successful transitions move your child closer to his or her goals. Setting goals that are realistic and achievable is crucial for your child's functional and emotional success. The bar should not be set too low. Goals should be age- and skill-appropriate to promote positive self-esteem and motivation. Encouraging your child to participate actively in goal setting from an early age is the best guarantee that the goals set will be realistic and motivational.

Learning about careers early in a child's life gives her time to match interests and abilities with jobs that will be satisfying. It can help her focus her studies and work hard in high school. Thinking about the future at an early age also allows enough time to determine accommodations needed for career success. As your child grows, her goals, and steps for supporting them, can be incorporated into her IEP. In some cases, using a new assistive technology, or modifying an existing one, may be a necessary activity.

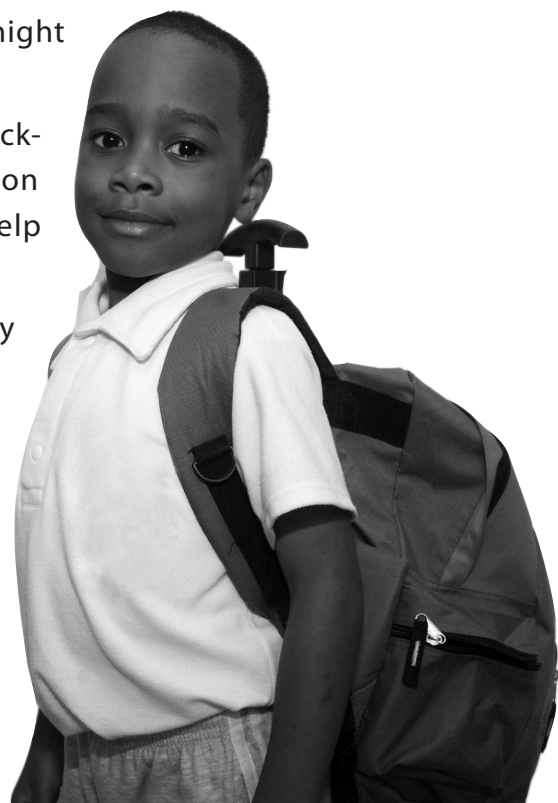
To help your child explore career options, you can learn about the environments to which she may transition and their cognitive, physical, and social/emotional demands:

- ▶ From an early age, take your child on field trips to stores, museums, parks, and other places throughout the community. Identify the jobs being performed by various people in those environments. In age-appropriate detail, talk about what each job entails and what knowledge and education a person performing that job might need to have. Pay attention to accessibility issues in each place, looking for those environments that seem to pose the fewest barriers to individuals with mobility and/or cognitive challenges.
- ▶ Explore post-secondary institutions if your child plans to pursue higher education. Identify colleges that offer strong support programs for students with disabilities. Meet with the disabilities support office and learn what accommodations the school provides and whether they adequately meet your child's needs.

- ▶ Connect with transition and adult services providers who can tell you about available transition programs and services, such as vocational rehabilitation programs and independent living centers.
- ▶ Explore employment and independent living situations. Talk with everyone you can to learn about expectations, needed skills, supports, and available accommodations. Schedule additional visits if needed.
- ▶ Consider the way technologies are used in the community and/or workplace. Widely available devices, such as cell phones, PDA's, and global positioning systems (GPS), might support an individual's needs if used in particular ways. Such equipment might be readily available in the workplace and thus not require additional advocacy or accommodations.
- ▶ Contact disability, advocacy, technical assistance or parent organizations to learn what you can expect and request when moving into a particular postsecondary setting. You may want to do this with a member of the IEP team.

Your state or school district may have planning tools – checklists, worksheets, and forms – for IEP teams to use to assess, inventory, and prioritize a child's strengths, interests, and preferences. The information gathered is used as support for the final annual goals or transition services plan developed by the team. To ensure that your child's needs are being accurately assessed:

- ▶ Review the assessment forms and protocols that will be used, to ensure that nothing important is overlooked in your child's IEP, including the statement of transition services.
- ▶ Request assessment information and tools from other states. You will see different forms and processes that might benefit your IEP team.
- ▶ Explore the guides, kits, forms, worksheets and checklists included in this guide's *Additional Resources* section and pass them on to your child's IEP team. They can help the team in its efforts to meet your child's AT needs.
- ▶ Since many transition guides do not focus primarily on AT, consider assessment tools that are specific to AT, for example, the SETT Framework. Such tools, which are often used as part of the IEP development process, may be modified and used to identify your child's needs and possible accommodations in post-secondary settings.



- ▶ Try various tools throughout your child’s life. Providing exposure to different devices is good practice for all involved.
- ▶ Work on goal setting and implementation on an ongoing basis. As with all activities, you will improve with practice.

Parents can also support the assessment and transition process by keeping up with evolving technologies and their use in different settings. By doing so, you will be better able to advocate for the effective use of appropriate AT in your child’s school and postsecondary school, work and living environments. Here are some suggestions for keeping informed about AT:

- ▶ The assistive technology field has a basic “language.” Learn the words and terms you should use to ask the right questions and understand the answers. See this guide’s glossary for many of those terms.
- ▶ Learn which AT devices have been shown, in research and trials, to be effective in supporting the functions and skill areas in which your child needs support.
- ▶ Identify local and state AT resources that are in place to inform parents, professionals, and individuals with disabilities about AT options. Many of these resources can help you arrange AT assessments and device loans for short-term trials. They may also be able to point you toward funding or low-interest loan opportunities.
- ▶ In addition to AT devices, learn what AT services are available, e.g., professional evaluation of your child’s AT needs and device training for him or her, as well as for family members, teachers and therapists.
- ▶ When looking for AT equipment, ask for devices that will support your child’s specific needs; not his or her disability. For instance, ask for help finding AT for a child who cannot physically turn a page; not for a child with cerebral palsy. To support this effort, engage the IEP team in appropriate AT assessment and consideration. There are a number of assessment tools that focus on functional difficulties rather than named disabilities.
- ▶ Identify centers where you can see AT devices demonstrated, try them out, and borrow them for a trial period. Every state and U.S. territory has such places, including Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs), Alliance for Technology Access Centers, and centers funded by the Assistive Technology Act. Many offer free workshops and training sessions to families,



educators, and disability professionals. Links to the websites that identify these centers and their locations are included below.

- ▶ Learn what resources are available for funding or buying AT at a discount rate. Determine who is responsible for providing and funding AT devices and services. Identify AT recycling centers.
- ▶ Learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of a device after it has been acquired for your child. Work with professionals and consultants to identify the task that the AT device will support and collect data on how the device is enhancing the task.
- ▶ There are many sources of general AT information available on the Internet. You can access them through a local library or school if you do not have access to the Internet at home or at work. In addition, some information providers offer print materials and CDs. You can request a free FCTD AT Resources CD-ROM at [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info) or (202) 884-8068.
- ▶ Use the Internet to locate AT conferences in your area. Many conferences offer free or low-cost access to the exhibition hall where you can learn about hundreds of AT products.

For general information about AT resources see the following websites (See also the *Resources* section of this Guide):

- Family Center on Technology and Disability: <http://www.fctd.info>
- Center for Implementing Technology in Education: <http://www.cited.org/index.aspx>
- State Assistive Technology Centers: <http://www.resna.org/content/index.php?pid=138>

The following sites have a great deal of product information:

- AbilityHub: <http://abilityhub.com/>
- ABLEDATA: <http://www.abledata.com>
- AbleNet: <http://www.ablenetinc.com/>
- Assistivetech.net: <http://www.assistivetech.net>

# Developing a Student Assistive Technology Portfolio

One of the most useful AT transition tools is the “student AT portfolio.” It contains a detailed record of your child’s past and planned accommodations and travels with her during transitions. An AT portfolio can justify continued accommodation in a variety of postsecondary settings.

Typically an AT portfolio consists of the following information:

- ▶ Demographic and identifying information about your child, including education history
- ▶ Documentation of your child’s disability, past accommodations provided, including AT, and eligibility for supports and services. This may include past and present IEPs, assessment reports, AT self-determination skills, and eligibility for vocational rehabilitation and other supports
- ▶ Information about AT devices, their purpose, where they were purchased, how they were financed, maintenance requirements, and where training for their use can be obtained
- ▶ An emergency plan with contact information, including AT loan and repair information if your child’s AT fails to function and needs servicing
- ▶ A transition resources document listing the agencies responsible for your child’s services, contact information, and the programs for which s/he is eligible

Perhaps the main benefit of the student AT portfolio is that it organizes your child’s AT information in one place for easy reference, making it valuable as a resource and advocacy tool.

Although all of this information gathering and site visiting is time consuming, there is really no better way to prepare for the future. The information you gather and the connections you make will help you, your child, and the IEP team set clear and realistic goals. It will help you create an appropriate transition services plan that outlines the coursework and personal growth activities your child needs to prepare for the future. Your child’s need for accommodations will be clearly identified and integrated in the plan, contributing to a successful transition.

# Postsecondary Goals and AT Supports

Transition assessments and career planning activities should help your child answer key questions as s/he prepares to leave high school. If she wants to continue her schooling, will she go to a 4-year college or university, a community college, or a vocational education program? If he plans to seek employment, will he look for mainstream or sheltered work? If independent living is a goal, what type of living situation will your child prefer? Each of these large decisions rests on a range of issues that include financial resources, physical and cognitive abilities, personality, and extended social network support. As you discuss the various options, remember to always include AT in your planning by asking:

- ▶ Will AT or other accommodations be needed to achieve this goal?
- ▶ Will the AT devices need to be changed or upgraded over time?
- ▶ When your child moves from one setting to another, what will be needed to ensure that his AT transfers, is adapted to the new environment, and is supported by the staff there?

As your child moves toward graduation day, you may find that s/he is meeting graduation requirements, but not transition requirements. In such a case, you or others can advocate for your child to participate in graduation ceremonies but not receive a diploma. In that way, s/he can remain in school to receive additional transition services. Many of these programs are operated off-site, that is, removed from the traditional high school building. In such programs, students spend a portion of their day in a home or apartment setting in the community. There, teachers and related service staff focus on adaptive skills developed in a contextually appropriate environment. Students learn about cooking in a real kitchen and the responsibilities of independent living within an actual house or apartment. Likewise, staff, parents, and the student can quickly discover how current AT needs adapt to these environments, including potential job placements. If the AT device needs further consideration, the IEP team (which remains in place until the youth is 21 years of age) can make modifications, examine additional options, and assess adequacy of the device within the appropriate post-secondary environment.

## Sharon & AT Accommodations for Higher Education

*Sharon is a first-year college student with a learning disability that affects her ability to read and write. In high school, she received audio book files and was allowed to type class notes on a laptop computer. She took her exams separately and was allowed extra time to complete them. During finals week, she had one exam a day instead of two or three as other students did.*

*Sharon decided not to request accommodations when she began her first year of college, because she didn't want her professors to think she was looking for special treatment. At mid-semester, Sharon failed two mid-term exams and became concerned about passing her classes. Sharon discussed her situation with her parents who suggested she contact the student disability services office. Sharon then met with the supervisor of support services, to whom she presented documentation of her disability and asked to receive some of the accommodations she had been provided in high school, along with some new ones that she learned of from an AT and Transition guide. Sharon also contacted her instructors and informed them of her disability and the accommodations she needed. After accommodations were provided, Sharon was able to do much better. She had greater success on exams, and she passed both of the classes that she had been failing.*





## Common AT Accommodations for Which a College or University Student May Apply

<b>Computer Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative mouse device</li> <li>• Alternative keyboard</li> <li>• Text-to-speech application</li> <li>• Speech recognition software</li> </ul>
<b>Lecture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign language interpreter</li> <li>• Note taking assistant</li> <li>• Digital recorder</li> <li>• FM listening device</li> <li>• Computer for taking notes</li> <li>• Real-time captioning</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking watch</li> <li>• Print or picture schedule</li> <li>• Voice output reminders for tasks and assignments</li> </ul>
<b>Studying/ Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal data assistants</li> <li>• Graphic organizer software</li> <li>• Digital recorder</li> <li>• Software for organization of ideas</li> <li>• Computer files provided by professor</li> </ul>
<b>Test-taking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended time</li> <li>• Low-distraction testing environment</li> <li>• Repeating directions</li> <li>• Oral testing</li> <li>• Use of computer in class</li> </ul>
<b>Math</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking calculator</li> <li>• Accessible math software</li> <li>• Calculation chart</li> <li>• Graph paper</li> <li>• Visual graphing software</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio book</li> <li>• Large-print, Braille material or computer Braille display</li> <li>• Text-to-speech applications</li> <li>• Scan-and read software and pen</li> <li>• Screen magnifier</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer or portable word processor</li> <li>• Electronic spell checker &amp; dictionary</li> <li>• Speech recognition software</li> <li>• Slant Board</li> <li>• Scribe</li> </ul>

# Common AT Accommodations for Employment

<b>Work Site Modification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wall partitions around workstation to minimize distractions</li><li>• Adjustable desks and seating</li><li>• Ramps, lifts</li><li>• Mobile arm supports and wrist rests</li><li>• Monitor risers</li><li>• Glare guards</li><li>• Modification of worksite temperatures</li><li>• Anti-fatigue mats</li></ul>
<b>Assistive Devices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adapted computer set-up</li><li>• Amplified phone or text telephone</li><li>• Augmentative communication device</li><li>• Electronic alarms and reminders</li><li>• Vibrating pager</li><li>• Assistive software, such as voice recognition and word prediction</li></ul>
<b>Flexible Job Schedules</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexible work hours and flexible use of leave time</li><li>• Part time hours</li><li>• More frequent breaks</li><li>• Telecommuting or working from home</li></ul>
<b>Human Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Readers</li><li>• Scribes</li><li>• Interpreters</li><li>• Job coach or mentor</li></ul>



## **Ramon, Nathan & AT Accommodations for Employment**

*Ramon is a young adult with attention deficit disorder who just started his first job working as a financial consultant. At first, Ramon was having difficulty concentrating because of the noise and distractions of co-workers around his work cubicle. Part of his job required that he write reports and the distractions were affecting his productivity. Ramon decided to talk to his employer about moving to a quieter area because he remembered that in school he had done well when taking exams in a quiet room. Fortunately, there was an empty cubicle away from the noise, and Ramon's employer agreed to let him move there. The employer also agreed to allow him to wear headphones while working to block out distractions. After making these adjustments, Ramon was better able to focus on his work and be more productive.*

*Nathan, who is deaf, applied for a job working in a packaging warehouse as a product inspector. Prior to hiring him, the employer had some concerns about Nathan's safety on the job because he would be working around forklifts and other large machinery. The employer contacted an employment accessibility specialist for advice on how to adapt the work environment.*

*The specialist recommended several environmental modifications to improve safety, including establishing designated paths and traffic rules for moving vehicles and pedestrians; installing mirrors along pathways for obstructed views; and use of a text messaging, vibrating pager for communicating with coworkers. Since the modifications were relatively inexpensive, the employer hired Nathan and made the necessary accommodations. Both Ramon and Nathan were able to identify solutions to potentially unworkable employment situations by using process and tool-based accommodations.*

The preceding table offers examples of workplace accommodations that can support employment and improve work performance. Although not a comprehensive list, these accommodations and others may help your son or daughter find and keep a job. Keep in mind that many of the accommodations for education settings discussed previously are useful for the workplace as well.

# Common AT Accommodations for Independent Living

<b>Home Living</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible control devices for TV, telephone, computer, lights, and other electronic appliances</li><li>• Remote paging system to call for assistance</li><li>• Home computer with adapted set-up</li><li>• Adapted self-care aids, such as a shower chair or dressing stick</li><li>• Accessible home design, such as wider doorways, railings, and ramps</li><li>• Emergency alert devices in bathroom and bedroom</li><li>• Personal attendant services</li></ul>
<b>Recreation &amp; Leisure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible arts programs</li><li>• Adapted clothing for indoor and outdoor activities</li><li>• Assistive listening and audio description systems in theaters</li><li>• Motorized shopping carts</li><li>• Adapted recreation activities and classes</li><li>• Accessible game controllers and TV remotes</li><li>• Adapted camping gear</li></ul>
<b>Transportation &amp; Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wheelchair accessible buses, vans, and taxis</li><li>• Vehicles with adapted driver controls, such as hand controls or pedal extenders</li><li>• Accessible parking</li><li>• Global positioning systems (GPS)</li></ul>

## Houda and AT Accommodations for Independent Living

*Houda is an 18 year old woman with cerebral palsy who is very independent. Her speech is labored, but she can be understood by most people. She uses a motorized wheelchair with hand and head switch controls to get around. She is able to use mass transit and, as a result, does her own shopping, goes to movies, and visits the local library.*

*Houda was told that her current apartment building was being sold and she would have to find another place to live. She found a very nice first floor apartment not far from the bus stop. Unfortunately, the inside doors were too narrow for her wheelchair, so she thought she would have to keep looking. Luckily, another tenant with a disability told the landlord that a tenant could legally make modifications to an apartment if the landlord agreed and the renter paid for the work. The landlord asked Houda if she wanted to have the doors widened and they agreed to split the cost.*

People with disabilities have many options for independent living — total independence, group houses, and assisted living, among them. In each setting, accommodations can make the difference between a good experience and an unworkable situation. The preceding table provides examples of accommodations that can enable a person with a disability to live independently, safely, and with dignity. Like the other tables, this one is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to spark ideas about adaptations for community living. Please note that many of the accommodations for education and work described above could be helpful in the home and community as well.



## **Bridget and Technology-based Job Coaching**

*Bridget is a 22-year-old woman completing an “18-21” educational program run by her local school district. The program has focused on developing adaptive living and workplace skills. Much of the program has been conducted in a duplex home, located in the community and operated by the school district. The duplex provides a “real life” environment that allows Bridget and her peers to quickly apply daily life skills that they are taught.*

*As part of her program, Bridget has worked at a local hair salon. Recently, Bridget’s continued work at the hair salon became jeopardized because of a reduction in the “job coaching hours” available to her. While the job coach attempted to gradually reduce her involvement, the multiple sequences required in Bridget’s job made that difficult to do. It became clear that without coaching support, Bridget would not be able to maintain her job.*

*After some investigation, Bridget’s school staff, vocational rehabilitation personnel, and current employer identified an assistive technology device that provides both audio and visual task prompting support. The device allows a caregiver to record instructions and provide pictures of each step in Bridget’s job (for example, towel folding and stacking.) The coach can even take pictures of Bridget performing each task at the salon. Watching herself successfully complete each step is particularly motivating to Bridget.*

*With the support of assistive technology, Bridget was given the help she needed to remain at her job. Her job coach was able to reduce her role to that of part-time consultant and Bridget has expanded her use of the device to help her make coffee in the morning, walk to and from work, and complete chores around the house independently.*

## **The Role of Advocacy During Times of Transition**

Advocacy is the action of protecting an individual’s rights and securing resources that will help him or her live a full and happy life. There are many types of advocacy and different people and organizations who serve as advocates in each context.

Legal advocates, for example, can help you and your child receive supports and services that the law says schools or employers must provide. Legislative advocates help you and your child in a different way: by trying to reform the laws and policies that govern supports and services for people with disabilities. Personal advocates help your child achieve goals or acquire supports in his or her education and community settings.

Of course, no one knows your child as well as you do. No one is better prepared to identify your child’s needs, strengths, likes, and dislikes. Until your child can effectively represent his

own needs, you will be his primary advocate. To be an effective advocate, you should continually learn about your child's needs and the legal, financial, social and technical resources that exist for him. You should learn how to communicate effectively with your child, his teachers, and other support personnel. Advocacy requires patience, creativity, a sense of humor, and a clear sense of what you want and need to accomplish for your child. There is no "advocacy formula." At different times in your child's life, different advocacy approaches and outcomes will be appropriate. If you would like to read more about advocacy, the FCTD website has both newsletters and online discussion transcripts on the topic. Other excellent resources are available on the Wrightslaw website at <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/advo.index.htm>.

## The Importance of Good Communication

Communication between families, school personnel, community agencies, and other service providers is always important. However, during periods of transition it becomes absolutely essential. There are obstacles to effective communication – limited time, bureaucratic processes, and differing agendas. Family members play a key role in making sure that all players work together as a team. The following tips can help in making smooth transitions:

- ▶ Keep a written record of all meetings, telephone conversations, letters, and documents that are generated while communicating about your child and her needs. Keep everyone in the "information loop" by making a copy of the record available to them.
- ▶ Supply a complete contact list of names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of those involved in your child's transition planning process to the appropriate people at each school, community organization, and agency. Be sure to identify clearly what roles and responsibilities each will have.
- ▶ Prepare a written agenda or at least some specific points that you feel the team needs to cover during each meeting. Follow each meeting with a short note to participants and other interested parties, summarizing the results of the meeting, what steps were decided upon, who is responsible for each step, and what the timeline is. Although this can be time consuming, it will save time and effort in the long run and will encourage professionalism by the team.
- ▶ Regularly emphasize that everyone on the team shares the same overarching goal – to enable your child to live an independent and productive life.
- ▶ If you are having difficulty communicating with your team members, consider engaging an advocate to assist you. Whether a family member, friend, or professional, this person can help you learn how to listen and speak to team members in productive ways that produce results.

# 3

## Laws Governing Accommodations and Transition in Birth-12 and Postsecondary Settings

Understanding the law can be difficult. Understanding the laws that govern accommodations and transition can be particularly challenging. However, laws regarding education, employment, public space, and commercial and government services affect and protect your child from birth–12th grade and in postsecondary settings. It is important, therefore, to have a basic understanding of them.

The information in this section of the guide is intended as an overview. For specific details of each law, please see the actual legislation or consult a lawyer or advocate with legal expertise.

### Accommodations and Transition: ADA, Section 504, and IDEA

Disability law was created to protect people with disabilities from discrimination; to ensure that they have an equal opportunity to pursue school, work and recreation; and to make public spaces, programs, and services accessible to them.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, the **Rehabilitation Act**, and the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** have had great impact on the disability community.



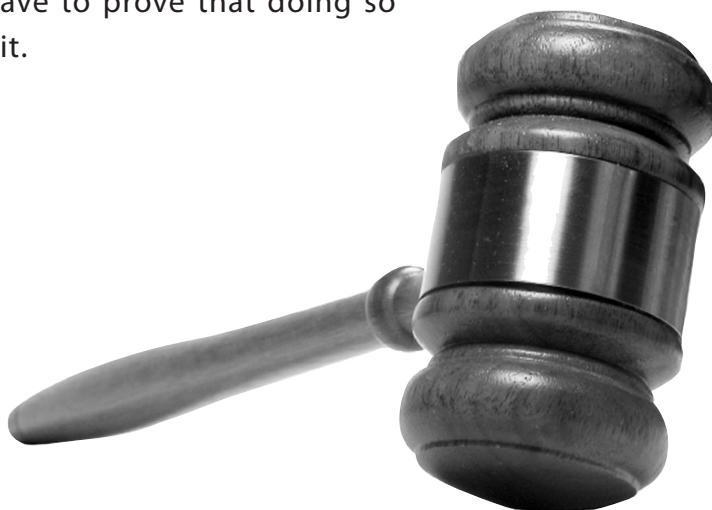
They are the primary laws that govern assistive technology accommodations in education, work, and public and private physical spaces.

The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and seeks equal opportunities for them, in part, by providing access to “reasonable accommodations” in:

- Employment
- State and local government services including K-12 and postsecondary education
- Businesses that provide public accommodations or commercial facilities
- Transportation and paratransit services

Because the ADA covers public environments and public and commercial services, it affects children with disabilities from birth through grade 12 schools and in all postsecondary settings. This legislation has been responsible for the implementation of widespread accommodations across the country. However, individuals with disabilities still face significant access hurdles, particularly in non-public (privately owned) environments. In those cases, it is often up to the family to negotiate accommodations.

In addition to the broad coverage of the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, particularly Section 504, focuses on making sure that people with disabilities are able to access federally-funded programs and activities. The law requires that school districts provide children with a “physical or mental handicap/disability” with a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE). Institutions of higher education are not required to provide FAPE, however. Instead, they must make appropriate academic adjustments, in part, by providing “reasonable accommodations.” Examples of accommodations are modifications to the delivery of a course or course materials or providing “auxiliary aides.” In fact, both Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA require colleges and universities, places of employment, and other businesses and services to provide “reasonable accommodations” to make programs and services accessible to people with disabilities. To be exempt from providing such accommodations, a school, business, or organization would have to prove that doing so would be “an undue hardship” for it.



“Reasonable accommodation” is defined differently depending upon the law. In the ADA, reasonable accommodation means:

- Making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities
- Buying or modifying equipment or devices
- Modifying course work, examinations, applications, training materials and certifications
- Restructuring or reassigning jobs and modifying work schedules
- Providing training and certification materials in accessible formats, such as Braille, to ensure effective communication
- Providing readers or interpreters and appropriate assistive technology
- Modifying policies, practices, and procedures
- Making transit vehicles, routes and facilities accessible or providing paratransit – a service through which individuals who are unable to use the regular transit system independently (because of a physical or mental disability) are picked up and dropped off at exact locations

Section 504 requires that public educational institutions up to grade 12 not only provide accommodations for children with disabilities, but that they evaluate students to identify those who need such accommodations. This law says that institutions of higher education only need to make minor modifications to curricula, course requirements, or exam content to ensure their accessibility for students who identify themselves as having a documented disability. Importantly, these institutions are not required to provide personal assistive devices. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of colleges and universities that choose to go beyond the requirements of the law, offering programs and services designed to provide individuals with a range of disabilities a rich academic and personal college experience.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides early intervention services for children through age two and special education services for children age three through the age of majority — 18 in most states. IDEA requires schools to identify students with disabilities and to provide any necessary accommodations that allow them to receive a free and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible. The legislation specifies who should be part of the IFSP or IEP team. (See pages 5-7.) It also requires schools to provide accommodations, including AT devices and services, that are included in a child’s IFSP or IEP. Transition services must be included in the child’s IFSP if he is

two years old and moving into preschool, or in his IEP if he is 16 and moving from high school in the next 2 to 5 years. When children move to a new school district, the new district must provide the same services and accommodations made available by the old district until a new IEP is developed. In such cases, the child's IEP should be transferred to the new district as soon as possible. IDEA is the only law that has specific requirements for transition planning.

IDEA also specifies that special education and related services should be guided by peer-reviewed research whenever possible. It is important to note that accommodations used by students at home or in school may not be allowable for state and district standardized tests. If your child needs accommodations for those tests, be sure they are included in his IEP and based on his specific demonstrated needs (e.g., magnification or high contrast materials for a student with low vision), not his disability (e.g., macular degeneration.)

**When children move to a new school district, the new district must provide the same services and accommodations made available by the old district until a new IEP is developed.**

When your child reaches the age of majority in your state, if she is competent, she has the right and responsibility to conduct her life as an independent adult. IDEA holds that she must be made aware of the rights and responsibilities that will transfer to her starting at age 16 and annually thereafter until she reaches the age of majority. Rights that might transfer to a child upon reaching the age of majority include the following:

- The right to refuse special education services
- The right to restrict records for review by others
- The right to override decisions that had been made previously by parents or guardians

In many ways, transition planning is about preparing your child for this moment of independence. By this time, you and her support team hope that she has the knowledge, skills, and tools to live her life well and to achieve her goals. Clearly, a child who has been made part of the decision making process throughout her younger years will be better prepared to assume the greater responsibility that the law conveys on her as she becomes an adult.

There are some other instances in which the law is important for you and your child. For example, there may be times when a student with a disability – particularly a mild one – might not like to disclose this fact. Or, she may prefer to keep the fact that she is receiving services as confidential as possible. In both cases, information contained in the student's file is considered part of her educational record and is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (the Buckley Amendment). Information may be released from the

student's file in only three circumstances:

- Court order
- With the student's written permission
- Internally within Student Disability Services based on a legitimate educational reason

There may also be circumstances in which a student feels the accommodations he is receiving do not provide him adequate access to college programs and services. If he wants to file a complaint, he must follow the college's grievance procedures which are *not* the same as the due process procedures in K-12 schools. All institutions must ensure that their grievance procedures allow a student to raise his concerns fully and must provide for the prompt and fair resolution of complaints. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a college grievance process, he or she may file a complaint against the school with the Office of Civil Rights.

Understanding the legal supports that exist for transitioning youth will help a student's family and IEP team create a realistic, achievable transition plan. You can find more information on laws aimed at protecting the accessibility rights of children and adults with disabilities at:

- The United States Department of Justice: <http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm>
- The United States Access Board: <http://www.access-board.gov/>



# 4 Glossary of AT & Transition Terms



This glossary contains a list of transition-related terms and definitions that have been adapted from federal laws such as IDEA 2004 and other transition resources. You can access additional FCTD glossary terms on assistive technology in our *Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology* at <http://www.fctd.info/resources/fig/Sec5.htm>. While the devices and services described are not generally tied to an individual's age, we have used language that reflects our focus on children and youth ages 0-25.

# A

**Access Utility** – An access utility is a software program that modifies a standard keyboard to simplify operation of the keyboard, replace the mouse, substitute visual cues for sound signals, or add sound cues to keystrokes. Many basic modifications can be made through software that already exists on your computer. Altering font size, color contrast, and adding or modifying audio alerts can all be done without purchasing additional software. “Sticky keys” are another very useful modification tool that can be made using existing software. Sticky keys allow an individual to type one key at a time, sequentially, and experience the same results as holding down multiple keys simultaneously. For example, instead of holding down CTRL-ALT-DELETE at the same time, the individual can select each key, one at a time.



*Photo courtesy of Freedom Scientific*

**Accommodations** – In the context of education, an accommodation is a change in the format or presentation of educational materials so that a student with a disability can complete the same assignment as other students. Accommodations can also include changes in setting, timing, scheduling, and/or response mechanisms. Students who receive accommodations may be allowed to: listen to audio versions of textbooks, record classroom lessons, use calculators, submit a drawn picture of key concepts rather than a written report, and work with a “study buddy” or notetaker. There are dozens of accommodations that can change a student’s experience from frustration to success if teachers, aides, and parents are creative.

**Activities of Daily Living** – Frequently used in national surveys as a way to measure self-care activities, ADLs include basic tasks such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, getting in and out of a chair or bed, and getting around at home. National surveys also measure another level of self-care – Instrumental Activities of Daily of Living (IADLs) – which include household chores, meal preparation, business activities, shopping, telephone use and mobility outside the home.

**Adaptive Technologies** – Adaptive technologies are a type of assistive technology that includes customized systems that help individuals move, communicate, and control their environments. Adaptive technologies are designed specifically for persons with disabilities and include augmentative and alternative communication devices, powered wheelchairs, and environmental control systems.

**Adult Services** – After an individual reaches the age of majority (typically 18), services provided to them are considered adult services. These are governed and administered by different laws and agencies and are not generally considered to be an entitlement, but rather are made available based on need and resource availability.

**Age of Majority** – The age of majority is the legal age established under state law at which an individual is no longer considered a minor and, therefore, has the right and responsibility to make the legal choices that adults make. In most states, the age of majority is 18. However, the parents/guardians of youth with certain levels and types of disability may apply to delay the transfer of decision-making authority.

**Aids for Daily Living** – Another category of assistive technology, these self-help aids help people with disabilities eat, bathe, cook and dress. A “low tech” example would be a fingernail brush with two suction cups attached to the bottom that could stick onto a flat surface in the bathroom.



Photo Courtesy of Grip Advantage



Photo Courtesy of Accessible Environments, Inc

Such an ADL would allow a child with limited mobility to clean her nails without having to grip the brush. There are also “high tech” ADLS, many of which contain computerized components.



Photo Courtesy of Don Johnston

**Alternative Access/Input Device** – An alternative access/input device allows individuals to control their computers using tools other than a standard keyboard or pointing device. Examples include alternative keyboards, electronic pointing devices, sip-and-puff systems, wands and sticks, joysticks, and trackballs.

**Alternative Keyboard** – Alternative keyboards may be different from standard keyboards in size, shape, layout, or function. They offer individuals with special needs greater efficiency, control, and comfort. For example, a traditional QWERTY keyboard may be confusing to a child with a developmental disability and can be replaced with a keyboard that lists letters A-Z in big, bold letters and doesn’t contain a lot of “extra” keys. This makes focusing on spelling and typing words a lot easier.



Photo Courtesy of Intellitools

**Ambulation Aids** – These devices help people walk upright and include canes, crutches, and walkers.

**Americans with Disabilities Act** – The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits employers from discriminating against people with disabilities and makes such discrimination a civil rights violation. Providers of public services, schools, public buildings and public transportation services also must provide accessibility to people with disabilities.

**Architectural Adaptations** – Architectural adaptations are physical changes in the home, school, workplace, or other area. Adaptations that remove or reduce physical barriers include ramps, lifts, lighting, altered counter top heights and widened door frames.

**Articulated Forearm Support** – An articulated forearm support follows the user’s movements and drastically reduces the muscle work involved in sustained keying or mouse use.

**Assessment** – An assessment is a formal process of gathering information about a child’s strengths, weaknesses and needs in order to plan his educational services. File and portfolio reviews, tests, and observations may be used to get information on cognitive, social, emotional, and functional abilities. An assistive technology assessment is designed to identify appropriate AT devices and services. The most useful assessments are generally those conducted within an individual’s “customary environment” rather than in an unfamiliar testing site. (See Ecological Vocational Assessment and Functional Vocational Assessment, which are related specifically to employment.)

**Assistive Technology Device** – An assistive technology (AT) device includes any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functioning of individuals with disabilities. It may be purchased commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such a device. AT devices range from low tech, such as a magnifying glass to high tech, such as a computer that responds to touch and allows a child to communicate more effectively.



Photo Courtesy of IntelliTools

**Assistive Technology Evaluation** –This functional evaluation of a child in his/her customary environment focuses specifically on the child’s need for assistive technology. While it is conducted by a team of professional evaluators, input from family members and other knowledgeable personnel is sought in order to identify the child’s strengths and challenges. Some people use the terms “assessment” and “evaluation” interchangeably, while others use “assessment” to refer to the process that takes place *before* a child receives an AT device, and “evaluation” to refer to the process (and resulting document) that studies how well the device has worked for the child.

**Assistive Technology Self-Determination Skills** – This skill category includes an individual’s ability to: 1) understand his or her need for AT accommodations based on his/her strengths and challenges; 2) identify the appropriate AT hardware or software to use under particular circumstances; 3) turn on and operate AT devices in a way that does not interfere with the surrounding environment; 4) communicate with others and ask for help when needed; 5) request new hardware, software, feature upgrades, repairs, and supplies when needed; and 6) implement a back-up plan when AT is not available.



**Assistive Technology Service** – An assistive technology service is one that directly assists in the selection, buying, designing, fitting, customizing, maintaining, repairing, replacing, and coordinating of assistive technology devices. It also includes the training of students, teachers, therapists and family members on the use and maintenance of the device.

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) System** –

An AAC system is one that increases or improves the communication abilities of individuals with receptive or expressive communication impairments. The system can include sign language, graphical symbol systems, synthesized speech, dedicated communication devices, and computer applications. AAC technology spans a wide range of products, from low-tech picture boards to high-tech speech recognition programs.



Photo Courtesy of Mayer Johnson

**Battery Interrupter** – A battery interrupter allows a user to modify battery-operated devices for switch input. It is placed between the battery and its connection point in the battery compartment. The compartment is notched to allow the cord to pass through when closed. The device is left in its ON position, with the switch plugged into the input jack of the battery interrupter.

**Braille** – This raised dot printed language is used by many people with visual impairments. Each raised dot arrangement represents a letter or word combination. A great deal of information about Braille is available through the National Federation for the Blind at [http://www.nfb.org/nfb/Braille\\_Initiative.asp](http://www.nfb.org/nfb/Braille_Initiative.asp).

**Braille Display** – A Braille display is a tactile device consisting of a row of special “soft” cells. A soft cell has 6 or 8 pins made of metal or nylon; the pins are controlled electronically and move up and down to display characters as they appear on the display of a computer or Braille note taker.



Photo Courtesy of Freedom Scientific

**Braille Embossers and Translators** – A Braille embosser transfers computer-generated text into embossed Braille output. Translation programs convert text that has been either scanned or typed into Braille that can be printed on the embosser.

**Captioning** – This is a text transcript of the audio portion of multimedia products, such as movies and television programs. Captioning is synchronized with the visual events taking place on screen. In addition to its usefulness for those with hearing impairments, it has been shown to be helpful to students with a range of visual and auditory processing problems. It has also been shown to enhance learning for those without disabilities.

**Career Awareness and Exploration** – A young person develops career awareness by learning what a career is and by being able to identify different types of jobs, and the functions of each, within different career paths. Career exploration takes the process a step

further by identifying specific career paths and jobs that might be suitable for a particular individual.

**Community Participation** – Community participation is a functional goal for most individuals with disabilities. To accomplish this goal, young people are encouraged to be interested in, and are taught how to engage in community-based activities. Assistive technology devices can be very helpful in facilitating community participation. You should not be afraid to ask others to help adapt appropriate environments; the Americans with Disabilities Act is on your side!

**Descriptive Videos** - Descriptive videos are those that have been enhanced with narration that describes the visual elements of action, characters, locations, costumes and sets without interfering with the production's dialogue or sound effects. They allow individuals with blindness or other vision impairments to enjoy a video in greater depth.

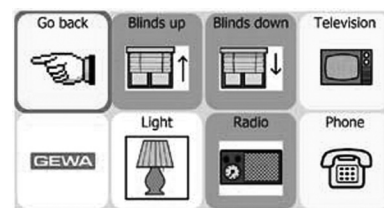
**Due Process Hearing** – Parents and/or guardians may request a due process hearing if they are unable to resolve differences with a school or school system concerning the special education services being provided to their child. A due process hearing is more formal than mediation (see below) and the parties are generally represented by attorneys and/or advocates. An impartial hearing officer hears both sides of the dispute and issues a written decision within 45 calendar days of the hearing request. If either the parents or the school disagree with the decision, they may appeal through the court system.

**Early Intervention Services** – Early intervention services are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which addresses the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities – from birth to age three – and their families. Services are made available based on a federal grant program which directs states to evaluate the needs of both the child and his or her family and to set measurable outcomes for progress in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

**Ecological Vocational Assessment** – Also known as a **situational assessment**, this specially-focused professional evaluation looks at particular employment tasks and job sites to determine whether the person with disabilities can perform necessary tasks and, if so, with what accommodations and other supports. It evaluates the degree to which the demands of a job and the skills of an individual are a good match.

**Electronic Pointing Devices** – These devices allow an individual to control the cursor on a computer screen (or other computerized device) using ultrasound, an infrared beam, eye movements, nerve signals, or brain waves. When used with an on-screen keyboard, electronic pointing devices also allow the user to enter text and data.

**Environmental Control Unit (ECU)** – ECUs enable individuals to control electronic devices in their environment through a variety of alternative access methods, such as switch or voice access. ECUs can control lights, televisions, telephones, music players, door openers, security systems, and kitchen appliances. These systems are also referred to as **Electronic Aids to Daily Living (EADL)**.



**Eye Gaze Board** – An eye gaze board is a clear Plexiglas board that is used as a simple communication device. Pictures are mounted at strategic areas on the board and the user communicates by looking at a selected picture.

**Evaluation** – Evaluation is both a product and a process. An evaluation is the result of assessment activities in which a team of professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, and/or service providers) determine whether a child is eligible for early intervention services (birth to three), whether the child has a disability, and what special education and other services s/he might need.

**FAPE** – This abbreviation stands for “free and appropriate public education.” It is the term used in the IDEA law, which states that school systems must provide children with disabilities with special education services and accommodations, including AT, at no cost to the parents. The law does not say what is considered an “appropriate” education, but it does refer to the need for children to be taught in the most typical classroom setting possible, often referred to as the “least restrictive environment.”

**Functional Vocational Assessment** – This is an assessment of a person’s ability and desire to do a job by observing his or her performance on various tasks in a variety of job settings. This type of assessment should record not only the ease or difficulty with which a person is able to complete particular tasks, but also affective information – whether the person appears relaxed and happy while doing the job or unduly stressed and agitated during or after completing the tasks. A functional assessment might also include an individual’s ability to get to and from a job and their ability to get along with co-workers.

**Higher Education** – Higher education refers to a course of study that takes place after high school, typically at formal educational institutions such as colleges, universities, or trade schools. As discussed earlier, institutions of higher learning are not required by law to provide accommodations; however, an increasing number are doing so as a means of encouraging student enrollment. The responsibility is on the student, however, to request accommodations and to provide documentation of need.

**Independent Living Centers (ILCs)** – Also known as Centers for Independent Living (CILs), ILCs are typically non-residential, community organizations that advocate for people with disabilities. The centers promote full access to housing, transportation, employment, recreation, and other support services.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)** – Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP should be a truly individualized document and include such information as present levels of functioning, future goals, and services to be provided. By law, the IEP process must consider the need for assistive technology. If documented in the IEP, schools must provide AT devices and services. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. At age 16, IEPs must contain a statement of services needed for successful transition from high school to a youth's next environment. An IEP team may, however, determine that a statement of transition services should be included in a younger child's IEP.

**Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)** – Like an IEP, an IFSP is a written statement of an infant's or toddler's (birth to age three) developmental status, information about his family's needs and abilities to support his learning and development, and a list of outcomes for the child and the family to achieve. The IFSP describes the services the child will receive, how these will be delivered and how the child will transition to his next environment. The document should identify a service coordinator to work with the family to monitor and achieve the goals established.

**Individualized Transition Plan (ITP)** - The ITP is the portion of a child's IEP that focuses on the issues associated with his or her transition from high school to higher education, employment, or individual living. The ITP should be as specific as possible, identifying the child's interests, goals, current educational status, remaining educational needs (such as credit hours), current and projected assistive technology needs, and the steps that need to be taken to help the child move smoothly to post-high school settings.

**Infrared Sender/Receiver** – This is a device commonly found in an environmental control unit (ECU). An infrared signal is sent to the control unit, which in turn sends a signal to the appliance. These are usually small and portable and vary in size and shape. They can be used in different areas of a room, but the remote must be aimed at the control box, with nothing in its path.

**Integrated Employment** – This is a category of employment in which a person with disabilities works alongside people without disabilities without major systemic supports.



Photo Courtesy of IntelliTools

**Keyboard Additions** – A variety of accessories have been designed to make keyboards more accessible to people with disabilities. **Keyguards** are hard plastic covers with holes for each key. Someone with an unsteady finger or using a pointing device can avoid striking the wrong key by using a keyguard. **Moisture guards** are thin sheets of plastic that protect keyboards from spills and saliva. **Alternative labels** add visual clarity or tactile information to the keys.

**Local Transition Councils** – LTCs are state interagency councils made up of representatives from the state agencies involved in supporting student transitions within K-12 education and, especially, transitions from secondary school to post-secondary activities.

**LRE** – The abbreviation LRE stands for “least restrictive environment.” This means that, to the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities are educated with children who do not have disabilities. Removal from a general educational classroom occurs only when a student cannot be successfully taught in that setting even with assistive aids and services.

**Mediation** –In the context of AT, mediation is a process to resolve disagreements between parents and school personnel. It is provided at no cost to the family or the school district. Both parties must agree to mediation. A neutral trained mediator facilitates the meeting to help both parties resolve their disagreements. Mediation is more structured than conciliation but less formal than a due process hearing. The most recent revision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) strongly encourages the use of mediation.

**Mentoring** – Mentoring is a process through which an individual with experience in a certain area provides information and insight to a less experienced person. Mentors can be matched with “mentees” through formal programs or through informal family friendships and connections, or community contacts. Mentors can be valuable sources of inspiration and support to young people. Their focus may be on education, career development, and/or independent living. Mentoring sessions may involve in-person meetings, but may also be based on email and/or telephone communication.

**Mobility and Transportation Aids** – This category of AT includes products that help mobility-impaired persons move within their environment and give them independence in personal transportation. Products include standing or walking aids, transfer aids, stair lifts, walkers, scooters, wheelchairs and three-wheeled chairs, adapted bikes and tricycles, car seats or beds, stretchers, ramps, strollers, adapted driving controls, vehicle conversions, patient and wheelchair lifts and carriers.

**Online Community Support** –Online communities and online support are websites, listservs, chat rooms, and other electronic ways for people to communicate with each other about a topic of mutual interest.

**Onscreen Keyboard** – Onscreen keyboards are software-generated images of a standard or modified keyboard placed on the computer screen. The keys are selected by a mouse, touch screen, trackball, joystick, switch, or electronic pointing device.

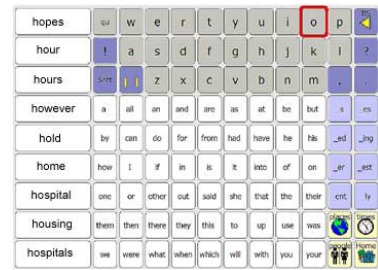


Photo Courtesy of Zygo, USA

**Personal Assistance Services (PAS)** – Personal assistance services help people with disabilities complete daily tasks needed for successful participation in school, work, and community living. They include, but are not limited to, dressing, eating, personal hygiene, shopping, and home/office organization.

**Postsecondary Accommodations** – Postsecondary accommodations in educational settings typically include: 1) modifications to the curriculum or educational tasks in college-level coursework or vocational training, and 2) tools, devices or services that help a student better access course material, participate in class, and submit assignments. Postsecondary accommodations in the workplace include equipment and services that help an individual get and keep a job. They include modifications to tasks, routines, and the workplace environment.

**Postsecondary Activities** – Postsecondary activities are those that a child with disabilities can pursue after leaving high school. They are both formal and informal activities, and may include education, employment, recreation, independent living, and community participation.

**Postsecondary Education** – Postsecondary education is formal education that a child with disabilities can pursue after completing high school. Examples are vocational programs, community college, college or university and continuing education. An increasing number of colleges and universities have programs designed to support students with a range of needs – physical, cognitive, and behavioral.

**Receiving Environment** – The receiving environment is the setting to which a child with disabilities is transitioning. For example, if a child is transitioning from high school to assisted living, the assisted living situation would be the receiving environment.

**Related Services** – Related services are any additional support services that a child needs in order to benefit from his or her education. Such services include, but are not limited to: school-related transportation, medical evaluation, parent counseling and training, developmental and corrective services such as speech pathology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, and recreation. Interpreters, while not specifically on the list, must be provided by the school system if needed for a child to benefit from education services.

**Screen Enlargement Programs** – Screen enlargement programs magnify a section of a computer screen, increasing visibility for users with limited vision. Most programs have vari-

able magnification levels and some offer text-to-speech options.

**Screen Reader** – A screen reader is a software program that uses synthesized speech to “speak” graphics and text aloud. This type of program is used by people with limited vision or blindness or with a print disability, such as dyslexia.

**Sheltered Employment** – Also known as **extended employment**, sheltered employment takes place in a facility that is dedicated to employing persons with disabilities who need extensive supports in order to work.

**Speech Recognition Programs** – These software applications convert words that are spoken aloud to text. Speech recognition is designed to respond to a wide range of voices, without prior “training” of the software. Voice or speaker recognition, on the other hand, involves the training of a device to recognize a specific individual’s voice. Both speech and voice recognition programs may be used to create written documents without the use of a keyboard, to control specially adapted equipment, and to operate telephone, cell phone and PDA (personal digital assistant) applications.

**Summary of Performance** – A summary of performance is an overview of a student’s academic achievement and functional abilities. It includes recommendations to help the student meet his or her postsecondary goals.

**Supported Employment** – According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “Supported employment facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with the most severe disabilities (i.e. psychiatric, mental retardation, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment provides assistance such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision.”

**Switches and Switch Software** – Switches offer an alternative method of providing input to a computer when it is not possible to use a standard keyboard or mouse. Switches come in various sizes, shapes, methods of activation and placement options. Some software programs have been developed specifically for use with a switch and can employ on-screen scanning. With on-screen scanning, the computer highlights the options available to the user, who then selects the desired action. When a visual or auditory prompt indicates a specific keyboard or mouse function, the user activates the switch and the desired function occurs. Other programs have built-in options for switch use.



Photo Courtesy of Tash

**Talking Word Processors** – Talking word processors are software programs that provide audio feedback as the student writes. As each letter is typed and each word is written, the device will “speak” it aloud. Many of these inexpensive writing programs also incorporate powerful tools for reading. Students with learning disabilities often find that having written material read aloud helps them to better edit, understand and organize their projects. These programs may offer other accommodations as well, such as enlarging text size and changing the color of text and graphics.

**Technical Assistance** – Technical assistance is a set of informational, educational, and related services intended to help an individual or organization build capacity and/or achieve goals.

**Text to Speech Programs** – This software converts written text, including Word documents, Web pages, PDF files, and emails into audio files that play on a computer, CD-ROM player, MP3 device, IPOD or other digital audio playback equipment. Developed for individuals with low vision or blindness, text to speech technology has improved greatly, with natural sounding voices, greater conversion speed, and improved ease of use.

**Transition** – Generally, transition describes a process of major change from one set of circumstances to another. For children with disabilities, transitions occur when they move from early childhood settings (e.g., home or daycare) to school and, later, between school phases (e.g., middle school to high school) or from secondary school to postsecondary education, work and/or community living.

**Transition Services** – Transition services are a coordinated, results-oriented set of activities – based on the strengths, interests, and needs of a child with a disability – that help the student move from a K-12 school setting to other postsecondary environments, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Transition services can include instruction, occupational and speech/language therapy, guided community experience, development of employment and other adult living objectives and, when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

**TTD or TTY** – This is a telecommunications device for the deaf. TTY/TTD is a device with a keyboard that sends and receives typed messages over a telephone line.

**Universal Design (UD)** – This is an approach to the design of products and environments that is aimed at making them accessible to all people, both those with and without disabilities. Examples of universally designed environments include buildings with ramps, curb cuts, automatic doors, widened doorways, and door handles (rather than knobs).



**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** – Universal Design for Learning is the design of instructional materials and activities that make learning goals achievable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, organize, engage, and remember. UDL is achievable via flexible curricular materials and activities that provide alternatives for students with differing abilities. These alternatives are built into the instructional design and operating systems of the educational materials; they are not added on after-the-fact.

**Video Phone** – A video phone has a screen that permits users to conduct real-time audio and visual conversations. It is useful for those who use sign language to communicate and for individuals who do not have access to medical and diagnostic personnel. Increasingly assessments, including assistive technology assessments, are being conducted at a distance using video phone technology.

**Vocational Assessment** – There are two types of vocational assessment: functional and ecological. A functional vocational assessment is an evaluation of a person’s ability and desire to do a job by observing her performance on various tasks in a variety of job settings. An ecological vocational assessment focuses on particular employment tasks within a designated job site to determine whether the person with disabilities can perform those specific tasks and if so, with what accommodations and supports.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** – Vocational rehabilitation services, sometimes referred to as “Voc Rehab,” are services provided to individuals with disabilities so that they can develop the skills and motivation to find, secure and hold a job.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Agency** – Vocational rehabilitation agencies are publicly-funded state agencies that assist youth with disabilities in their transition from school to work. These agencies seek to help such youth become integrated, independent, employed members of the community.

**Web Accessibility** – Universal accessibility to the World Wide Web means that all people, regardless of their physical or developmental abilities, have access to Web-based information and services. Making Web pages accessible is accomplished by designing them to work with adaptive technologies, such as screen readers. It also means making color, font size, and page design decisions that make it possible for the widest range of individuals to access the information.

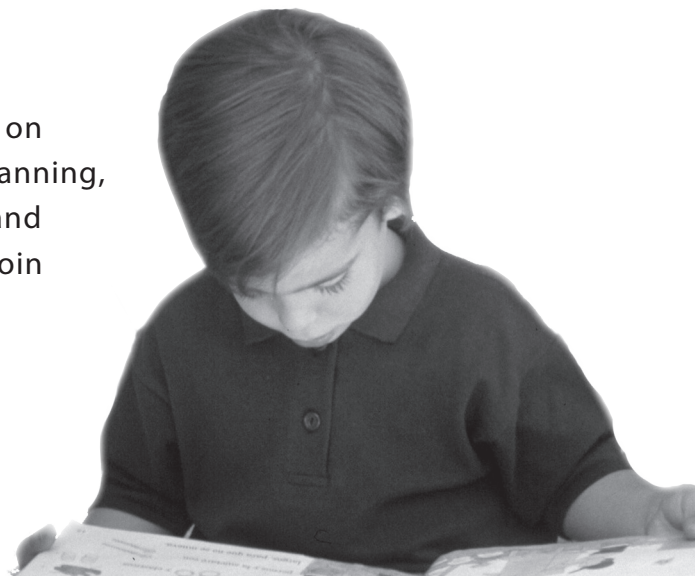
**Word Prediction Programs** – Word prediction programs allow the user to select a desired word from an on-screen list located in a prediction window. The computer-generated list predicts words based on the first or second letter(s) typed by the user. The word may then be selected from the list and inserted into the text by typing a number, clicking the mouse, or scanning with a switch.

# 5

## Additional AT and Transition Resources

### Websites and Organizations

- **DO-IT (Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking & Technology) Program:** DO-IT seeks to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging postsecondary academic programs and careers through the use of technology, mentoring, peer support, and universal design of academic environments. They offer many useful transition-related publications and videos. <http://www.washington.edu/doit/>
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Educational Resources:** Provided by the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy, JAN offers a comprehensive set of resources including the Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) system, designed to let users explore accommodation options for people with disabilities in work and educational settings. <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/soar/index.htm>
- **National Association of Parents with Children in Special Education (NAPCSE): Transition-Services Information for Parents:** NAPCSE provides information on transition services, transition planning, employment planning, AT, vocational assessments, travel and transportation, and more. To access the information, however, one has to join the organization (\$20 for one year; \$35 for two years). <http://www.napcse.org/site/transitionservices.php>



- **National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD):** The NCLD website provides links to a range of information resources on the transition of teens with learning disabilities to college and work. <http://www.nclld.org/>
- **National Center on Secondary Education & Transition (NCSET):** NCSET coordinates national resources, offers technical assistance, and disseminates information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities. The website includes over twenty-five transition-related topics, with links to policy updates, parent briefs, research to practice briefs, and other websites. A few of the informative resources offered on the website include: *Age of Majority- Preparing Your Child for Making Good Choices*; *Enhancing Academic Achievement and Transition Outcomes Using Technology*; and *My Future My Plan: A Transition Planning Resource for Life After High School*. <http://www.ncset.org/>
- **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth):** The NCWD/Youth's website provides information resources for transitioning youth, workforce development professionals, the disability community, employers, and policy makers. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>
- **National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC):** NECTC conducts research to identify and validate factors needed to create successful transitions between infant/toddler programs, preschool, and public school programs for young children with disabilities and their families. <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/NECTC/Home.aspx>
- **National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC):** In addition to supporting the transition activities of state and local education agencies, NSTTAC disseminates information to practitioners, researchers, parents, and students, designed to improve post-school outcomes. Among its web-based resources is a comprehensive *Age Appropriate Transition Assessment Guide*. <http://www.nsttac.org/>
- **Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA):** Administered by the PACER Center, this parent information and training project works to help families of people with disabilities better understand how to access and use services provided by the Rehabilitation Act. The project's website includes many transition-related links. <http://www.pacer.org/tatra/>
- **Think College:** An initiative of the Institute for Community Inclusion, Think College conducts research and provides training and technical assistance related to postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



The website features a searchable database of postsecondary education programs and a discussion board for students who are interested in sharing college experiences. <http://www.thinkcollege.net>

- **Transition Coalition:** This project website offers information, support, training modules and links for professionals, family members, individuals with disabilities, and others interested in the transition from school to adult life. Among its informative guides are: *It's More than Just a Law: People Make it Happen*; and *Transition and Your Adolescent with Learning Disabilities: Moving from High School to Postsecondary Education, Training, and Employment*. <http://www.transitioncoalition.org/>
- **U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy:** This government website offers resources to encourage successful transition planning and employment of youth with disabilities. <http://www.dol.gov/odep>
- **WNY Collegiate Consortium and Disability Advocates (CCDA):** Among the transition-related resources provided by this project are college and accommodation planning tools, including a free guide, *Effective College Planning*. <http://www.ccdanet.org/>
- **Youthhood.org:** This teen oriented website offers interactive tools to help young adults and their teachers, parents, and mentors plan for life after high school. Youth can explore different aspects of adult life – “The Job Center,” “The Health Clinic,” and “The Apartment” – and use the “Life Map” to develop and implement transition goals. <http://www.youthhood.org>

## Articles and Publications

- **IDEA 2004 Close Up: Transition Planning:** This article on the Great Schools website provides a concise overview of the transition planning requirements of IDEA 2004. Links to other useful organizations and resources are included. <http://www.greatschools.net/LD/school-learning/idea-2004-close-up-transition-planning.gs?content=933>
- **Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities:** This U.S. Department of Education publication explains the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities in post-secondary schools. <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>
- **Transition to Preschool:** This article dates to 2001, so references to IDEA are not current per IDEA 2004. However, it discusses, in a family friendly way, how to prepare a young child with disabilities for preschool. It identifies the information that needs to be shared

by families and school personnel to ensure a smooth transition.

<http://www.brookespublishing.com/email/archive/june01/june01EC1.htm>

- **Transition-Related Planning, Instruction, and Service Responsibilities for Secondary Special Educators:** This fact sheet summarizes research-based transition practices for which secondary special educators should be responsible. It identifies five categories — student-focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family involvement, and program structures – and lists tasks for each.

[http://www.dcdt.org/factsheets/DCDT\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Transition\\_related\\_planning.pdf](http://www.dcdt.org/factsheets/DCDT_Fact_Sheet_Transition_related_planning.pdf)

## Checklists, Guides and Toolkits

- **Assistive Tech and Transition:** A number of assistive technology and transition checklists can be found on this webpage from the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency (MBAEA). Resources are provided for students and members of the IEP team.

[http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/en/programs\\_and\\_services/integrated\\_services/special\\_education/transition/assistive\\_tech\\_transition/](http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/en/programs_and_services/integrated_services/special_education/transition/assistive_tech_transition/)

- **Charting a Course for the Future - A Transition Toolkit:** This extensive transition planning resource from the Colorado Department of Education offers material in both English and Spanish. It provides a great deal of valuable information (not state-specific) and includes sample worksheets and other tools for individualized transition planning. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/TK.asp>

- **Engaging and Empowering Families in Secondary Transition – A Practitioner’s Guide:** This guide from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides schools and agencies with planning tools and practical strategies to foster family partnerships. Cost: \$29.95.

<http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/orders/ProductDetail.cfm?pc=P5943>

- **QIAT 2005 Quality Indicators for AT Transition and Self-Evaluation Transition Matrix:** The QIAT Consortium of school districts, AT providers, consumers, universities, and policymakers has developed indicators for the provision of quality assistive technology services. Among the matrices of indicators provided is one specifically for transition. Others address AT consideration, needs assessment, IEP inclusion, implementation, evaluation of effectiveness, administrative support, and professional development.

[http://natri.uky.edu/assoc\\_projects/qiat/documents/QIATMatricesSept2009.pdf](http://natri.uky.edu/assoc_projects/qiat/documents/QIATMatricesSept2009.pdf)

- **Transition Assessment Resource Manual:** This 2008 manual from the Connecticut Transition Task Force includes a matrix and description of dozens of individual transition planning and assessment tools.

[http://www.ctserc.org/transition/transition\\_assessment.pdf?2fa6f942252db2ec6c621fe255459617=715e14a47e468b93aa4da657974451d7](http://www.ctserc.org/transition/transition_assessment.pdf?2fa6f942252db2ec6c621fe255459617=715e14a47e468b93aa4da657974451d7)

- **Transition from School... to Adult Life: A Guide for Families:** This guide, compiled by the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community in collaboration with IN\*SOURCE, offers checklists that cover transition planning steps, participants, roles, timelines, and quality indicators. Planning worksheets and surveys are included as well as a glossary of transition terms, state law, and a list of Indiana state resources. [http://www.insource.org/pdf/Transition-Guide\\_Families.pdf](http://www.insource.org/pdf/Transition-Guide_Families.pdf)
- **Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with Special Health Care Needs:** The Transition Timeline offers a concise list of what parents can do at different points in their child's life to make transitions as successful as possible. It is organized in seven stages of transition: birth – 3 years, transition to preschool, 3 – 5 years, 6 – 11 years, 12 – 18 years, 18 – 21 years, and transition to adulthood. <http://depts.washington.edu/healthtr/Timeline/timeline.htm>



# Conclusion

The goal of this guide has been to equip families, and the organizations that serve them, with the information they need to effectively prepare for and participate in periods of transition in their children's lives. Though some of the suggestions may seem daunting, remember that the best way to tackle any challenge is one step at a time. Begin where you are, take a step toward where you need to be, and keep going. Advocate for your child and help him or her learn to advocate for themselves. When you get tired, rest, then start again. Know that your actions have a tremendous impact on the outcome of your child's transition and that there are people and resources available to help you.

This guide can be read online, with active links to the resources, at [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info).

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