

## Preface

In transition from school to adult life, one way to measure students' success is by looking at the linkage they have with adult agencies after exiting school. An appropriate placement requires a team effort by every stakeholder in the transition process.

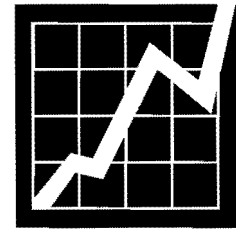
As the title *Adult Agencies* suggests, this book was also the result of a very large group of stakeholders involved in the transition effort nationwide. Many people assisted in the development of this book in addition to the authors.

The following individuals provided invaluable assistance in their respective areas: Tom Trost and Mike Hainer of the New Mexico Long Term Services Division (formerly Developmental Disabilities Division); Robert Wood and Priscilla Parish of the Social Security Administration; Linda Green of Eastern New Mexico University–Roswell, Jim Payne of New Mexico State University–Alamogordo, Dr. Larry Sharp and Trudy Myers-Arietta of Dona Ana Community College; Jim Kerlin of the Counseling Center in Alamogordo, New Mexico; Eddie Beagles and Charles Lehman of the New Mexico Department of Labor; Jerry Abbott, Policy Analyst, Office of Program Operations, Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education; Terry Brigance, Larry Borrego, Peggy Davis, Bob Lipe, Denise Tierney, Thad Brown, and Brenda Barreras of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; and Kelly Davis and Pat Putnam of the CIRCLE of Life Transition Project.

Gary Cozzens would specifically like to thank Dr. Ginger Blalock of the University of New Mexico, Dr. Bruno D'Alonzo of New Mexico State University, and Sandy Gladden of the Region IX Education Cooperative in Ruidoso, New Mexico for their help, guidance, and mentoring in this and other projects.

# CHAPTER 1

## Overview



### ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is not intended to be a study in theory. There are many other publications that do that. Rather, it is intended to be a hands-on reference for accessing agencies that provide transition services for students with disabilities after they exit school and for including those agencies in the transition planning process while the student is still in public school.

One of the authors has been told that “transition planning is the tail wagging the IEP dog.” Professionals who work in the transition arena know, however, that the transition portion of the individualized education plan (IEP), and especially the transition plan with its linkages to postsecondary providers, probably becomes the most important document written for a student with a disability. Here’s why: The IEP ceases when a student exits the school system, but the effects of transition planning and linkages with postsecondary institutions, agencies, and support can literally affect a student throughout his or her lifetime.

The intent of this book is to discuss ways of accessing those postsecondary agencies and services through transition planning. The following chapters will each focus on a different agency that may provide transition support, beginning with state departments of education in the next chapter. Each chapter will begin by identifying the law that mandates that agency’s participation in the transition process and the agency’s definition of a disability. Also included will be suggested strategies for dealing with the different agencies as well as some highlighted best practices for use throughout the United States. Remember, this book focuses on the broad overview of interagency collaboration and services available, and what is presented here may or may not work for you in your state or locally. Contact your own state or local agency for more specific information.

### ENTITLEMENT VERSUS ELIGIBILITY

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-117), special education services are mandated as an entitlement to students with disabilities in the public schools. As such, it is the intent of Congress to provide a free appropriate public education to all students in the United States, including those with disabilities. While planning transition options for students with disabilities, remember that law mandates that service providers and agencies be included in the planning process from the outset, as appropriate, to ensure support once a student exits the public education system.

On the other hand, once a student exits school, services and agencies become eligibility programs where a student has to qualify for services based on his or her disability and the policies of the agencies. This is a tremendous change for students and their families, and it is absolutely critical that these services be included in the transition process. For this reason alone, it is paramount to include

postsecondary agencies in all transition planning for students with disabilities long before they exit public school. IDEA mandates this linkage to occur at age 14 or earlier if appropriate.

Adding to this dilemma is the fact that eligibility definitions and qualifications differ for each agency and usually are not the same definitions and qualifications as for public schools. So, even when a student qualifies for special education services in public schools, that same student may not qualify for any postsecondary services and, in fact, may not even meet the definition of having a disability in the qualifications of those agencies providing services.

## **NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL EXAMPLES**

Every effort has been made to provide information that is relevant to all persons in the transition process. However, some examples may not pertain to every state or local stakeholder, and some terms and names used in this book may be different from those used locally by the reader. Many of the examples used are from the authors' states and local agencies. Usually there will be some type of corresponding organization to those examples used in every state. For example, New Mexico no longer has a Developmental Disabilities Division within the Department of Health. Earlier this year that division was renamed the Long Term Services Division. High school counselors and teachers should be able to offer assistance in connecting individuals with the appropriate agencies specific to each state.

## **SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND TRANSITION PLANNING**

Recently in New Mexico, an effort has been made to enhance the systemic change of transition planning in a variety of ways. In various forums, three questions have been asked of all the participants:

- Where are you now in implementing your transition system?
- Where do you want or need to go to improve your transition system?
- What resources do you need to get there?

It is that third question that we hope to address in this book. What resources are needed to complete the planning process while the student is still in school, and then what services are available to the student after exiting the public school system?

## **BOOK FORMAT**

In an effort to maintain uniformity throughout this book, Chapters 2 through 8 will be in the following format:

1. Source Document
2. Agency Definition of Disability
3. Eligibility Requirements
4. Array of Services
5. Accessing the System
6. Conflict Resolution