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## Transition to Adult Life Series Part 1: The Law

So we are going to go ahead and get started. Welcome to our first in a five-part series of transition to adult life. I am Beth I am here from the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center. For those of you who are on, if you move your cursor to the bottom of the screen. A section will pop up where you can find a chat feature. Type any questions. If you have questions as we go along. The best way to handle it is to type your questions in or to write them down.

I will go through the PowerPoint presentation I prepared and afterwards I will look at the questions and from there if we have time, I will open up the mic so we can do dialogue and questions. A couple things about this presentation. For those of you who don't know, I think you know who the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is, but we are Connecticut parent training and information center.

We are funded by the federal government to provide support to parents who are navigating the educational system with children who have disabilities. From children from birth to 26 years old and we provide that support through telephone, email, outreach at different organizations and outreach transition affairs. And through presentations throughout the state. If you haven't had a chance to look at our new website yet it has been up for about a month now and it is really pretty so, please going take a look at it. It may take a little getting used to, on how to navigate, but all the information is still there. My name is Beth Reel and I am a transition coordinator for CPAC. I am also a parent of two young men.

One navigated a special education system. not only have I worked in this field for a very long time. 17 or 18 years, but I also have this lived experience with my son. So this presentation is a brief overview because it is in webinar format. We don't like to do to our webinars because that's a long time. It is a basic overview of the laws that guide special education. Specifically, secondary transition. I'm just going to check the chat box really quick.

So let's get going. In this webinar. I hope that you have a better understanding of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement act also known as IDEA. also, the second part of the presentation will be information about the regulations in Connecticut. So the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act has been around since 2004. It has not yet been reauthorized, but that is okay because we don't want it reauthorized right now. This is the purpose of IDEA. This is the whole point of why we are doing what we are doing.

You will notice at the end and I have added some bold. The whole purpose of IDEA is to prepare students for employment and independent living. That is the whole reason why we have special education. So from the time children enter IDEA. Whether it takes them time to become eligible. This is what we are doing and it's very easy to lose sight of where we are going. I often will send families. This quote so that they can bring it in to meetings or use it for their personal use. So is the student prepared for further education, employment, and independent living as they are exiting school?

So this is what IDEA says about transition services in particular. I have provided the section numbers. I provided them pretty much all the way through. Not so we can go around quoting section numbers. We don't really find that necessarily helpful. But if you would like to look it up yourself and take a deeper dive into some of these laws so the information, I am sharing is the basic information. Sometimes there is a little bit more guidance that is offered.

Transition is to suppose to begin, not later than the first IEP. When the child turns 16. Typically that means that the PPT meeting that the district has with the family and the student when they are 15, the last ones before they have before they turned 16, transition planning should be put into place. That means a lot of the conversation around what we are doing and what goals are going to be created should really be filtered through the transition lens.

Everything we are doing at that point up until the student graduates or exits school should be filtered through the transition lens. You will notice that I added bold to the section that says or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team. That is a really important part of the law. It is often not looked at. Although more and more frequently. It's exciting because more and more frequently. I am seeing school districts that are starting to plan for students when they turn 14. That is a really good time to start planning.

At one time in Connecticut the transition planning age was 14 because they made a lot more sense you're thinking about where this child is going to go to high school and what classes are, they going to take and what classes are they going to be exempt from. I've always want to point that out because that is for every student. That means that families can bring this up. So keep that in mind when you're working with families or supporting your own child.

IDEA goes on to say that the IEP must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals. In Connecticut we call them Post School Outcome Goal statements. It's PSOGS. In Connecticut we like to change the names of things. In Connecticut we call it the PPT team and we are the only state that has it. So just know that the IEP must include these postsecondary goals. I am not going to go into depth around these postsecondary goals because we will get into that further in the webinar about the IEP. I just want to mention that this is part of it.

The post-secondary goals should be based on age-appropriate assessments. We are also going to assess in the IEP. We look at these areas of postsecondary education, employment, and independent living when appropriate. You will notice that that narrows the purpose of the law. We also need to look at the course of study or courses of study needed to support that student to achieve those postsecondary goals. To be prepared to achieve those postsecondary goals. Again that goes back to planning early. At the end of middle school so we can think more about that course of study or those courses of study.

So IDEA defines these transition services in a coordinated set of activities that is designed to be within a results-oriented process. Often times when I see an IEP. It doesn't have connection. We have these goals and objectives that don't meet the needs of the students or we have these activities going on that doesn't necessarily connect to the goals. That's where we come back to an IDEA and we want to focus on the academic and functional. And I have added that underlined in bold.

We want to look at the academic and functional achievement of the child. The reason I added bold to functional is because for quite a while. We had a trend going. I still see it. It's not as much as it used to be. Students who had achieved academic credits. They did quite well in their courses, and they were A and B students and they graduated, and we saw in their diploma. They were no longer receiving support in the school district. Yet these kids were not functional. they were not able to do things on their own and they were going to college and they were able to go to school without significant support from their families. They may have achieved their academic goals but with significant modification.

So in college. Maybe having to write a 10-page research paper and in high school. The modification was that they only had to write a one-page research paper. That person is not functioning at the level that is necessary to enter into college. I will not go on and on about that because we also have a webinar coming up about transitioning in college. If you have a student thinking about college. It is really important. The dropout rate is significantly high for all students and even higher for students with disability. So functional is a big part we need to look at.

IDEA outlines that we should be preparing students to go on to all of these different areas. This is not a complete list. It is just the basics. And then those coordinated set of activities. As I mentioned need to be based on the students' needs and looking at the students preferences and interests. It says a lot about that in the IDEA presentation as well, but we really need to be thoughtful about what and how we are creating goals and what goals we are creating, and do they actually match what the student wants to do.

Here are many areas to look at. Many times we aren't looking at all of these areas for kids. I think it's better we have some information come out from the state around looking at more than just academics.

It's not a complete list but it is a general list and you can see the range and variety. So in every state but Connecticut we have the PPT. During that meeting, we develop goals and objectives just like we do. If the student had been in special education for their school career. If the PPT meeting is being held to discuss transition, then the student must be invited to attend.

One of the things we often say in our general transition is that we hope that students are not just beginning to attend their PPT meetings at this age. So either 14 or 15. Or whenever transition planning begins based on what their team decides. We really hope students have been allowed to practice skills in a PPT meeting and that can look like a variety of things. One of the things students can do is come into their meetings. At the very beginning for maybe five or 10 minutes and read a previously written statement. Or they can come in and talk about it.

I know a teacher that has preschool kids if it's appropriate for them to have preschool students come in and hold up a picture they have painted or a craft they made and talk about it in front of the team. If we think about the skills a student is building when they come to a table with five, six, seven, sometimes 15 adults sitting at the table. Sometimes meetings can be rather large, and that student has just a few minutes to talk about whatever it is, the team decided the student will talk about. That is developing self-advocacy skills.

I think we are waiting way too long to get kids into these meetings. Then the families I talked with that. Have students in high school that have significant anxiety or are just done with the process. They don't want to go to these meetings. I realized sometimes it's not appropriate. I am probably preaching to the choir about getting kids when they are younger because of the nature of this presentation, but it is something to think about with families or if you have younger kids also. The law requires that they must be invited to attend. That means they get their own invitation mailed to them.

This says the same thing. If the student chooses not to attend the meeting. Then the district is still required to gather information about their preferences and interests. That can be having a conversation before the meeting, a student writing something that someone else reads during the meeting. So let's move on to the regulations of Connecticut State agencies. This first slide just indicates that Connecticut special education laws mirror IDEA. IDEA cannot be changed. The protections that are placed cannot be changed by the state, but they can offer more or additional protection over and above what IDEA says.

This just talks about how Connecticut has changed the term IEP to PPT meeting. Some general graduation requirements because graduation is always a hot topic. Many years ago there regulations were changed because for a long time, students weren't able to participate in graduation ceremonies. If they weren't actually receiving their diploma. The State Department started saying it's okay for students to actually participate in all of the graduation activities and the graduation ceremony, even if they are

not receiving a diploma. If the IEP determines that the student and the PPT meeting determines that the student is not going to receive their diploma.

This is a big thing because there are a lot of kids out there going on to age 18 and 21 considering receiving support because they're not yet prepared for postsecondary education, employment, and independent living, but they are very resistant because they think, what do you mean I can't participate in graduation. Luckily, we have this with the regulations in Connecticut. For many kids you will never know they are not receiving a diploma, so there is a graduation party at home, they walk across the stage. A lot of schools don't hand out the diploma, so they just don't receive that in the mail.

There are some provisions for awarding general education diplomas to students going on to 18 to 21 programs. Then the provision that education should continue through the end of the school year. If the student turns 21 in January. The program continues to the end of the school year. The school year is defined as July first through June 30. if a student turns 21 on July 1, they can receive services through that entire school year. If they turned 21 on June 30 they are not entitled to services or eligible for services.

Students can receive special education services through the age of 21 but this is a PPT decision. It's not a guarantee. I will often be talking to people and they will demand. My child has the right to receive services until they are 21 and they don't. You have to go back to the purpose of the law. Are they prepared for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living, if appropriate for that particular person? And if the answer is no, then perhaps they need another year of schooling. Some students only need one year, and some students need more so it is very individualized.

This is probably one area we have received the most around the end of the school year, we receive a lot of calls around this issue. So transfer of rights. When a student turns 18. The rights automatically transfer to them. unless someone has gone to a probate court and received guardian or conservator, the rights go to the student. In Connecticut back in 2013 we received some information in the regulations stating not all students are appropriate for guardianship or conservator, but they want to have help making educational decisions because they don't feel comfortable with that. When they turn 18, continue to make educational decisions on their behalf. The student can receive help to write the information that needs to be written.

This is the middle part in italics just says that it's just a little blurb. That's all it has to be. It's very simple and they sign it, and I suggest they bring it when we have it added to the file that goes to the school and also have it added to their permanent record at the central office. And they also want us to update that annually every year. Just changing the date.

There are some students that parents have not received court guardianship and there is that section that talks about, they are not able to make educational decisions on their own. They assigned that decision-making pattern to their self. If this is something you are trusted to looking at in that section. It just says that two separate professionals determine that the child is incapable of providing informed consent, then someone else can be assigned.

Most recently in Connecticut. We have an act concerning students with autism spectrum disorder and it basically says that students with diagnoses are now required to begin transition planning at 14. That takes the planning, back to where it originally used to be. It is possible to request transition planning for all students at that age, but this is now a requirement. In 2015 there was a program review investigations committee concerning transitional services for youth and young adults with autism spectrum disorder. This committee is a legislative committee that interviewed everybody they could talk to in the state that had anything to do with transition.

This is the link to the entire write up about this. It's very interesting, but what came out of it. In regard to education. They said that information needs to be shared with families that have autism and information around transition. Our State Department decided they would just create this transition Bill of Rights for everyone, so it is not specific to students with autism but that's where it came from.

If you are not familiar with this, when I send information about recording. I will make sure it is included and available on our website. It really goes through many of the things we already talked about today, but the rights for families and students with disability when it comes to transition. The link here is to our website. It is available in English and Spanish. Districts are required to provide this to families and students annually.

So that is the end of the information I wanted to share with you today. Here is some links to information that may be helpful. I will just check to see if the chat will pop up. I 100% agree with you. I have actually been thinking of doing a webinar on this. It's not in this series but their support and decision-making is a big one. Guardianship and conservator are not to be taken lightly. You go through the court to appoint them so people should be thoughtful about it. It is not appropriate for everyone, and it is appropriate for some. It is definitely an important consideration.

One of the things we do at CPAC is we have a conversation about what is going on so you can call our telephone number and talk to someone about transition and see what they are doing and what they are not doing. Are there things that we can help with and suggest to a parent to do first? CPAC is here to support parents. That being said, we understand. Sometimes this is much more than the family can handle. Sometimes they need that extra support system and we can help guide you. I have helped many families with language and even bringing in a copy of the purpose of idea. That can sometimes help and other times it doesn't help. If you can find an advocate that will be appropriate. My suggestion is to also

find an advocate that knows transition and knows the law. Sometimes people advocate things that are not appropriate so you really want someone who can advocate from that place of knowing what is appropriate.

>> I just wanted to put those other posts on their in earlier chat and I realized it only popped up to you. You can change it to all panelists and attendees. So I just wanted to point that out. That's all.

>> Let's just pop over to Facebook to see if there are any questions. Barbara asked what would be available for an 18 to 21 program who is a 17-year student in high school and is just now getting ready for college. There are many different types of 18 to 21 programs in Connecticut and it is important to find the one that is appropriate for your son. One of the places that you can look is on the State Department website. At one time we had a guide of 18 to 21 programs that help the state department. We sent out surveys to all of the departments and it was wonderful, but everything becomes outdated so quickly.

The number of programs we have now in comparison to then is significantly different. One thing we have on the State Department website. What I will do you have to click through about five different places to get to it. You get through and you can actually get to the listing of transition program in Connecticut. I have everybody's email address and I will send you the things that you need to click on to get to that list.

I don't know if it has been added yet but they're working hard to update the websites. You can take a look at the program and see does it look like something that would meet your son's or daughter's needs and there is usually contact information up there so you can call them. This time of year, several of them do offer an open house. Some school districts have 18 to 21 programs. We see more and more school districts that are looking to connect together to create 18 to 21 programs.

And looking at a program that will actually prepare your son or daughter. Someone that is going to a traditional college does not offer all of the supports of a student that maybe does not want to go to college. They just want to go into work. So I hope that helps answer your question and I will add that link and send it out in an email so you can take a look at that.

I'm going to try to unmute everybody. If anybody has questions, I am going to allow you to talk. If you have a question. There is a little picture on the mic.

>> In the lower left corner of your screen there should be a mic that pops up.



>> if you have a question either type it in the chat or unmute your microphone or use the raise your hand button. so if nobody has any questions, then that is the into the information that I have prepared today. If you find that you do have a question. You are always welcome to email me. My email is [breel@cpacinc.org](mailto:breel@cpacinc.org). Or you can email CPAC and they can forward it to me. I just wanted to share a little bit more information about the transition to adult life series.

This is part one. We have transitioning in the IEP. That should be a fun one to do in a short webinar series. Part three will be December 17 from 7 to 8 PM and that will be Connecticut resources guiding transition so we will look into the transition Bill of Rights, we will look at the documents the State Department has put out and the want CPAC uses most with families. January 14 is transitioned to work so I am hoping to have someone that actually works for the department of labor were one of the workforces boards and do that presentation with me and then part five is on February 11. Transition to college at 9 o'clock.

If you have students transitioning to college, it will be a really important webinar. And if you have suggestions, I am open to them and I am happy to prepare some information to share with you. So I want to thank you all for coming on today.

>> So when you archive this so I can share it with other parents will they be on the CPAC website?

>> It will be on the CPAC website. Everybody who signed up I will send it out to them with the PowerPoint presentation and the transition Bill of Rights and it will be added to the CPAC website. I want it added there. So parents can go and look at it.

>> Awesome. Thank you.

>> Thank you all for being here today and I hope you have a great rest of your day.