

Transition Services and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): College and Careers – That’s the Goal!

This document was created for family members to explain a new federal law called the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, and the related transition services provided to students by schools and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Families are an important part of the transition planning process and we hope this document is helpful to you. Several sections include links to more detailed information.

The goal of public education for all students to leave college and career ready means they will not just gain academic skills, but also plan for future work and community living. Students will become critical thinkers with the ability to communicate effectively, and work with others and solve real world problems to build skills for employment.

Educational Services to Support College and Career Readiness

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) students engage in a process to prepare for adult life. In Wisconsin, this process begins with a **College and Career Ready Individualized Education Program (CCR IEP)**. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/rda-ccr-iep-five-step-process.pdf>

Starting at age 14, the **Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP)** becomes part of the IEP, to set goals for what a student wants to do **after high school**. Goals are developed in the areas of education, employment, and independent living. The PTP also includes transition services that will be provided to support the student to reach her/his goals. Transition services listed in the PTP now align with requirements of WIOA (listed with WIOA information below). <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/about/state-performance-plan/indicators/13-transition>

Starting in the 2017-18 school year, all public school students grades 6-12, including those with disabilities, will participate in **Academic Career Planning (ACP)**. This process will assist students to think about and plan for careers they want to have after high school. Under this requirement, families must be informed at least twice per year about the Academic Career Plan created by their student(s). <http://dpi.wi.gov/acp>

WIOA – A Law about Employment

WIOA was passed in July 2014 and highlights the expectation that people with disabilities will work in their communities. <http://witig.org/wioa-have-you-heard-about-wioa.html> WIOA specifies the goal for all students as **Competitive Integrated Employment** and provides a definition.

Competitive Integrated Employment

Competitive Integrated Employment is full or part time work in the community where the person receives the same pay at or above minimum wage that a person without a disability would receive for doing the same work. This person is eligible for the benefits provided to all employees and has the opportunity for advancement. The person works alongside other employees without disabilities.

There are 3 key components of WIOA that are important for families to know:

- I. WIOA outlines a set of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) **schools and DVR together** must provide to students with disabilities as of July 2016. This list includes information about college and job training programs. Career exploration, work experience, self-advocacy, and independent living skills are also expected transition services under WIOA. The Pre-ETS categories in WIOA are:
 - 1) **Job exploration** counseling
 - 2) **Work-based learning** experiences
 - 3) **Post-secondary educational or higher education programs** counseling
 - 4) **Social and Independent Living Skills** training
 - 5) Instruction in **Self-Advocacy**, which may include peer mentoring

- II. WIOA says that schools must support community based job exploration and experiences and **cannot** pay for transition services involving work trials or experiences that are not in the community and do not pay minimum wage or higher. This part of WIOA also went into effect in July of 2016.
- III. Under WIOA, The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is required to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS) to all students with a disability (ages 14-21) in high school or a post-secondary training program, including those that have not been determined eligible for DVR services. Students that are potentially eligible will be required to provide documentation of their disability prior to them receiving PreETS. Students and youth up to age 25 with disabilities must try integrated community employment **before** they go to work for less than minimum wage. This requirement started in July 2016. DVR can work with students whenever they are ready to seek employment. This is typically about 2 years before high school graduation. DVR works with individuals to create an **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**, provides employment services and pays for vocational support providers from an approved vendor list to work with individuals to have evaluations, trial work experiences, and look for permanent employment. Staff at such agencies are sometimes called job developers, employment specialists, skills trainers and/or job coaches. A guide to different agency roles in transition services can be found at: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag.pdf. Find the DVR counselor assigned to your high school here: https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/school_liaisons.pdf

