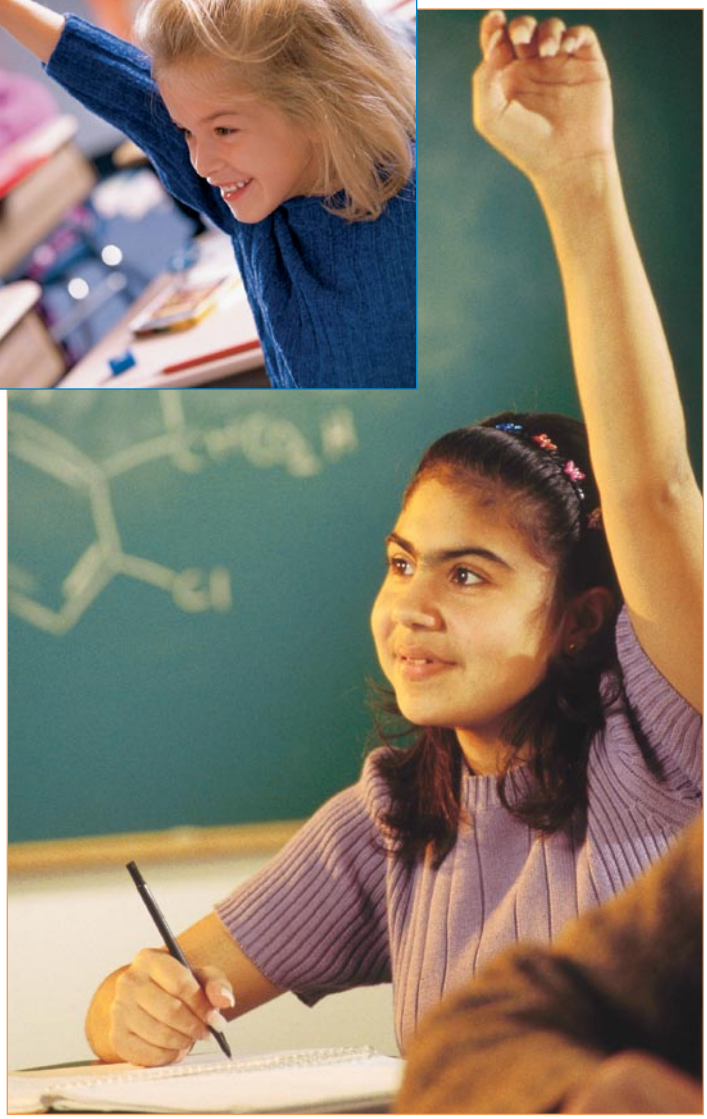
Transitions for Children and Youth

How Occupational Therapy Can Help



Transition is a part of every child's life.

Transitions from early intervention to preschool, kindergarten, middle school, and high school ultimately prepare a child for adult life.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognizes the importance of transition at two distinct points:

- The move from early intervention under IDEA Part C for Infants and Toddlers to preschool or kindergarten school services under IDEA Part B for Children ages 3–21
- The move from high school services to adult life after graduation under IDEA Part B

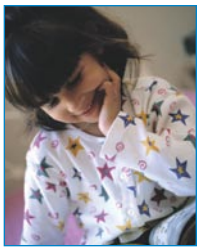
The overall goal of IDEA is to prepare students with disabilities for "further education, employment, and independent living."

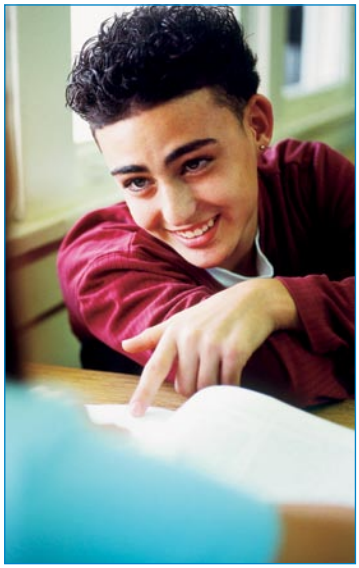
Transition planning and services are included in the law to benefit children and youth at these critical points to assure that the movement from one setting, school, program, or grade will be done appropriately and effectively and thus allow the child to improve both academic and functional skills.

Transition planning refers to the section of the individualized education program (IEP) that describes the services and activities needed to prepare for both early intervention and adult life. Transition planning in Part B must begin at age 16. The transition plan defines the student's long-term goals and desired outcomes following graduation.

Transition services are specified in IDEA to be provided to enable achievement of the goals of the transition plan. These services must be based on the individual child's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests. IDEA allows these services to include educational services and related services, including occupational therapy and community experiences.

Table 1: How occupational therapy practitioners support transitions throughout the lifespan

 **Early Childhood Transitions** Early Intervention to Preschool; Preschool to Kindergarten	**High School to Adult Life Transitions**
Prepare the family and child for changes in roles and routines	Prepare the student, family, and community agency representatives for changes in roles and routines
Educate the family and school staff on diverse needs of the child	Educate the family, school staff and community on diverse needs of the child
Evaluate supports for school participation, such as assistive technology	Evaluate supports for employment and/or further education through role assessment and activity analysis
Facilitate academic and functional living skills for school participation	Facilitate skills for employment and/or further education and adult living skills
Support self determination skills for successful school integration.	Support self determination skills for successful community integration
Enhance social skills development and leisure activities in the school environment	Enhance social integration in the community
Assist with school mobility, recommending adaptations, accommodations, and equipment	Assist with community mobility, recommending modifications and equipment
Collaborate with the transition team to coordinate youth health care resources and community-based services	Collaborate with the transition team to coordinate adult health care resources and promote self-advocacy skills



Services can be focused on such areas as development of independent living skills, evaluation of vocational interests, development of study skills, or identification of assistive technology needs that will support future work or study.

What is the role of occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy can support transition for families and children with and without disabilities in order to help children grow and learn to be as independent as possible.

Occupational therapy practitioners promote students' functional abilities and participation in daily routines. Occupational therapy helps children and youth function optimally and thus can be of great importance in successful transitioning. Occupational therapists can evaluate children's performance of school-related tasks and support student engagement by modifying tasks or the environment.

Occupational therapy helps individuals to "live life to its fullest." For children, that means successfully moving from early intervention to school services, and moving from school to adult life. (See Table 1.)

Occupational therapy is a primary service in early intervention and a related service in special education. Occupational therapy practitioners can be part of the transition team and have specialized knowledge and skills to:

Support positive transition outcomes for students during early childhood transitions to:

- achieve successful preschool and kindergarten experiences,
- develop balance for work and play, and
- learn independence in self-care and daily living routines.

Support positive transition outcomes for students during high school transitions to:

- develop and sustain positive work habits and skills, achieve success at technical schools or colleges, and
- learn strategies for successful community living.

Occupational therapy can support successful transition to adult roles by addressing areas including:

- Assistive technology
- Community mobility
- Supportive employment
- Social skills development
- Daily living routines (Activities of daily living and independent living skills)
- Wellness/Health promotion
- Sensory processing
- Leisure pursuits

Resources

http://www.aota.org
American Occupational Therapy Association

www.sharedwork.org
IDEA Partnership

www.ed.gov
Rehabilitation Services Administration

http://www.nichcy.org/resources/transition101.asp
National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc
National Early Childhood Transition Center

http://www.nectac.org/topics/transition/transition.asp
http://www.nectac.org/topics/transtoK/transtoK.asp
National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

http://www.nsttac.org
National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center

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For more information, contact the American Occupational Therapy Association, the professional society of occupational therapy, representing nearly 36,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students working in practice, science, education, and research.

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Occupational Therapy: Living Life To Its Fullest

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