



Bridging School and Adult Life

Supporting Students with Disabilities Through Transition Planning



Who We Are & What We Do

We are Independence Inc. Center for Independent Living (CIL) and we operate the Kansas Youth Transition Network (KYTN). Our mission is to empower youth with disabilities and their families through effective transition planning and support. Our team of specialists collaborates with schools, families, and community agencies to ensure students have the skills, resources, and confidence they need for successful lives beyond school.

We Focus On:

- **Individualized transition planning**
- **Career readiness and skill development**
- **Family education and advocacy**
- **Connecting to adult services and resources**

We were established under the Federal Pathways to Partnership Grant and serve youth ages 10-24 with any type of disability. KYTN operates under the oversight of KSDE, which is also the fiscal agent. We collaborate through Community Councils that include representatives from KSDE, the Kansas Department for Children and Families Rehabilitation Services, CILs, students, families, teachers, and other community members. We are proud to serve as part of the Kansas Youth Transition Network of Wyandotte County.



Why Transitions Matter

Low Employment Outcomes

Only 35% of youth with disabilities are employed within 4 years of high school graduation

Barriers to Independence

Students with disabilities often encounter limited resources, lowered expectations, and gaps in service delivery. These barriers may include technical accessibility challenges (such as lack of assistive technology), structural obstacles (like transportation or building access), and attitudinal barriers (such as stigma or implicit bias).

Improved Outcomes

Early and intentional transition planning improves employment, education, independence, and quality of life

Equity & Inclusion

Transition is more than compliance, it ensures equity, inclusion, and dignity for students.

What is Transition Planning?



Definition:

IDEA defines it as a coordinated set of activities focused on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests.



When to Start:

Although IDEA requires planning by age 16 (14 in Kansas per best practice), at Independence Inc. we begin working with students as early as age 10 to meet transitional needs and build skills over time.



Key Goals:

Goals written in the IEP include postsecondary education or training, employment, independent living, and community participation

Common Challenges



Families Unsure Where to Turn

Many families are unaware of available resources or how to navigate the transition process



Students Unprepared for Advocacy

Students often lack self-advocacy skills, confidence, or understanding of their rights



Compliance vs. Meaningful Planning

Educators are pressured to meet compliance deadlines, which can overshadow student-centered planning



Disconnect Between Systems

There are gaps between the K-12 system and adult service agencies, which can leave students unsupported after graduation



Cultural & Language Barriers

Some families face additional challenges accessing services due to language or cultural differences



Limited Community Awareness

Employers and community can manifest in practice and emphasize the importance of addressing them collaboratively

How Can Certified Staff Help

Elementary School

Students with disabilities often face resource limitations, low expectations, and service gaps even in the early grade.

As a certified teacher, you're in a strong position to reduce:

- **Technical Accessibility:** Ensure assistive technology is available and appropriately used.
- **Structural Barriers:** Collaborate with support staff to ensure classroom and school environments are accessible.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Set high, individualized expectations and promote inclusive classroom culture.

Embed self-advocacy and choice-making into early classroom activities to build confidence from the start.

Secondary School

In secondary settings, transition planning is key and so is addressing the broader barriers students face.

- **Technical Accessibility:** Students may lack access to tools or training to use them effectively.
- **Structural Barriers:** Transitioning between multiple classes or accessing transportation can be a major obstacle.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Watch for bias in expectations, grading, and participation. Encourage full student involvement in IEP planning.

Use student-driven planning tools and ensure course content connects to real-world goals and future planning.

How Can Paraprofessionals Help

Elementary School

Students with disabilities may face limited resources, lowered expectations, and inconsistent access to services.

As a para, you play a key role in recognizing and reducing barriers such as:

- **Technical Accessibility:** Some students may need help using devices or assistive tech in the classroom
- **Structural Barriers:** Younger students might struggle with mobility, navigation school spaces, or safely accessing transportation.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Early messages from adults' shape self-esteem. Encouragement and inclusion make a difference, your belief in students matters.

Use your close connection with students to advocate for tools or strategies that help them fully engage in daily routines.

Secondary School

Older students often experience wider gaps in services and expectations as they move toward adulthood. As a secondary para, you help students prepare for independence while still supporting their access.

- **Technical Accessibility:** Are they using tech independently? Do they need help advocating for assistive tools?
- **Structural Barriers:** Help students navigate the school and community, consider how school design or class transitions affect them.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Encourage students to speak up in class, share their goals, and challenge low expectations from others.

Help students practice self-advocacy by modeling respectful communication and supporting their voice during IEP or class discussions.



Our Role & Services



At Independence Inc., we offer a comprehensive range of services designed to meet students and families where they are and help them prepare for the future

Some Examples:



One-on-one work
with students in our
office

Small group
workshops and peer
groups

in-school meetings:
IEP/504
assistance/advocacy
and in-class
presentations

Community learning
opportunities

in-office computer
lab access



How We Partner With Schools

At Independence Inc., we build strong partnerships with schools to support students throughout their transition journey. We attend and contribute to IEP and 504 meetings to ensure transition goals are meaningful and student-centered. We offer workshops and informational sessions for both parents and students to demystify the transition process. Our team collaborates with school staff to develop individualized transition action plans tailored to each student's needs and aspirations. We also help educators identify and connect with community resources and agencies to include in their planning.

In addition to these services, we aim to have a more consistent presence within schools by offering dedicated hours each week on-site—whether in a designated office or conference room. This allows us to be more accessible to students, staff, and families, providing real-time support, guidance, and resource connection as needs arise. We also offer classroom presentations, professional development for staff, and serve as an ongoing resource that schools can turn to year-round.



Quick Wins For Educators

Start small, your support makes a big difference! Whether you're a certified staff or a paraeducator, here are easy and meaningful ways to support students with disabilities in their transition journey:

- Encourage students to participate in their IEP or 504 meetings. Help them practice introducing themselves, stating their goals, and explaining what supports work best for them.
- Invite transition agencies or community partners to speak with your students and families before their senior year to build familiarity and trust.
- Use person-centered planning activities and reflection tools to help students explore their strengths, interests, and future goals.
- Share age-appropriate information with families about guardianship, supported decision-making, and postsecondary options.
- Create opportunities for students to practice self-advocacy, such as role playing how to request accommodations or discuss classroom needs.
- Model inclusive, respectful behavior. Demonstrate belief in each student's potential through language and actions.
- Embed real-world life skills into daily instruction or support time (e.g., budgeting, navigating transportation, using assistive technology).
- Collaborate across roles, (certified staff and paras) to reinforce key transition skills throughout academic and non-academic settings.



CHASE PROGRAM



PILOT EPISODE WITH:
**ECHO
MILLER**



WATCH ON YOUTUBE:



IEPodcast: Listen & Learn

We're excited to share our upcoming IEPodcast, an innovative project funded through a small grant to engage youth with IEPs in Wyandotte County. This podcast will give students a creative, supportive space to talk about their goals, hopes, and what they'd like to see happen through their IEP. Many students don't feel comfortable speaking up or aren't given the chance, but we've found that the podcast format helps them find their voice. Episodes can be shared at IEP meetings or with teachers, staff, and parents in advance to ensure student perspectives are truly heard. Stay tuned as we launch this exciting new resource!



A New Opportunity for Youth with Disabilities

We're excited to introduce our Youth Vocational Training and Community-Based Employment Program.

Pathways to Purpose. Designed to help students with disabilities explore careers, build employment skills, and prepare for independent adulthood through real-world experience.

What this Program is About: This program provides hands-on, individualized training opportunities for youth ages 14-24 with disabilities. Students participate in community-based learning and employment experiences aligned with their interests and IEP goals. We partner directly with local businesses, schools, and families to ensure every student is supported throughout the process.

Students will:

- Receive job readiness and soft skills training (communication, time management, responsibility)
- Participate in workplace tours, mock interviews, and resume-building sessions
- Engage in internships with community employers
- Employment placement opportunities

Who Should Know About This? Special Education Teachers and Paras, Case Managers and Transition Coordinators, Related Service Providers, and School Counselors and Community Liaisons.

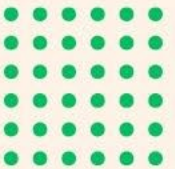
How You Can Help? If you know students who would benefit from this program: Use our referral sheet to share their information with us. Invite us to IEP meetings to help write relevant postsecondary goals. Reach out to schedule a classroom presentation or info session.



Any Questions?

Let's Talk!

Please share your questions, specific scenarios you encounter in your classrooms, or strategies you've already found successful.



Our Team



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