

Getting to Know You

1	Getting Started	5
2	Who Attends Your IEP?.....	13
3	Your Preferences and Interests.....	19
4	Disability and You	31
5	Services for You	47

Decisions and Goals

6	Making Decisions	55
7	Decisions and Informed Consent	67
8	Community Resources and Work.....	87
9	Resources for School and Living	101
10	Resources for Fun and Your IEP.....	119
11	Goals and Work	127
12	Goals for School and Living	139
13	Goals for Fun and Keeping Track	145

Your IEP Meeting

14	Small Groups and Body Language	157
15	How and When to Say Things	171
16	Meeting Participation	185
17	Your meeting, All Yours!.....	191

Getting Started

Outline: At your IEP meetings you plan for your future.

It is your meeting and you are in charge. You help your teachers and others make decisions about your education.

You start the Transition Planning Process in high school. Transition meetings are a bridge from school to the adult world of living and working on your own. You are in charge of your future.

Goal: You will learn about planning meetings and help make decisions about your school program.



Do you agree with this sentence?

“Before I get more involved in my transition planning meeting, I should know what it is.”

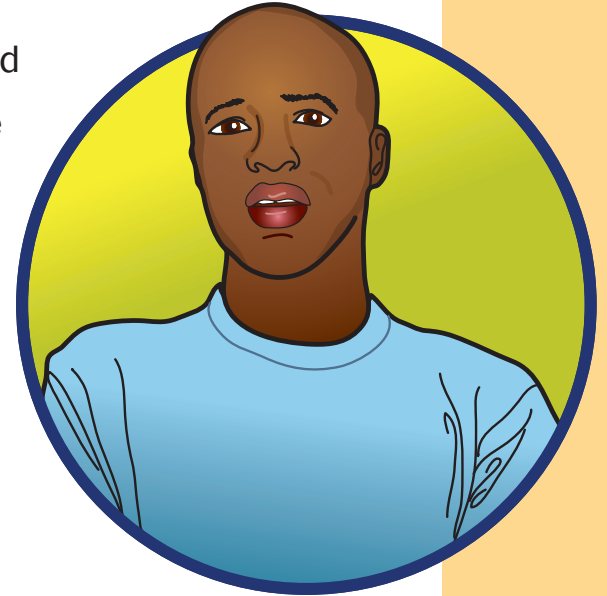
Agreed? We thought so! Every year there are planning meetings where people make decisions about your school program. Have you ever been to one?

If not, maybe it’s time for you to go. This chapter looks at the reasons why. Or, if you have been to one, think back on what happened there.



Many students your age have said they felt bad about the meetings they went to. They felt like other people talked about them but not to them.

They said a lot of the talk was about things they didn't do well. Like math, or English. They said they were bored. Very bored. And embarrassed. And glad when it was over. Sound familiar?



It doesn't have to be that way. Honest! But first, you have to learn what these meetings are about. So you can take charge. Because they are your meetings about your future.

For starters, you need to know what they call these meetings. And that they are about you and are your meetings. You can figure out some of that by their names, such as Transition Planning Meeting or Individualized Education Program, IEP.

So what do the letters I and E and P in IEP mean? They stand for **Individualized Education Program**. Let's look at each word.

Individualized — for one person, you

Education — what you learn at school = **IEP**

Program — what you do

An IEP meeting team makes decisions about your education. And you are a part of this team. You are the most important part of the team because the meeting is about you.



You have probably heard about IEPs. They are your regular meetings. They have been held several times a year since elementary school.

But when you turn age 16, you will also have Transition Planning Meetings. Sometimes Transition Planning is just part of your IEP meetings.

This book uses the word **transition** a lot. What does that mean? Think about a bridge that takes you from one side of a river to the other. The transition planning process is a bridge that takes you to your future. That means it prepares you for life after you graduate from school.



Transition skills are things you need to know to get from one point in your life to another. Like walking across that bridge from school to the adult world. Transition planning helps build that bridge.

Transition planning means making decisions about what you need to learn to be successful as an adult. You'll learn more about transition plans and goals as you go through this book.

It would be helpful for you to have a copy of the **transition planning form** that your school district uses. But your teacher may not have it on hand. That's okay. Ask to see it when possible. Or, volunteer to get it yourself. This isn't a top secret government document. You have every right to see it.

If they can't find one, there is a transition planning form in the Whose Future Instructor's Guide that your teacher can get for you. Got the form in hand? Take a look at it so you get a feeling for what this form is about.

FUN FACT:

Starting at age 16, transition planning must begin. Did you know that it says in IDEA that at age 16, your goals must be based on your plans for your adult life? It says your transition services must be "based on your needs, taking into account your preferences and interests." It's the law. They have to do it.

As you go through this book, you will work on getting ready for your transition planning meeting. But first, you should know some things about these meetings. They are held at least once a year. There are many reasons to hold IEP meetings:

1. To see if you can get services you need. Warning: You might have to take some tests to decide what services might help.
2. To make plans for your adult life. That's why you're in school.
3. To talk about how you did in school during the school year and set new goals for next year.
4. To change your class schedule if your school program does not meet your needs, or if your goals change.
5. To talk about graduation or make changes in your school program, if you don't need special services any more.

There are a number of subjects that your last planning meeting might have been about. Look at those listed below and see if any were discussed.

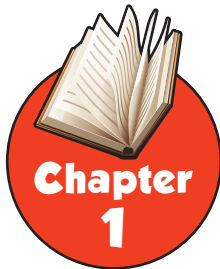
1. To see if you can get services you need to learn better.
2. To make plans for your adult life.
3. To talk about how you did in school during the year and set new goals for the next school year.

4. To change your class schedule.
5. To talk about graduation or make changes in your school program, if you don't need special services any more.

At the end of each session before the next one begins, there are a few things you have to have done. Don't worry, we're not talking major homework here.

Okay. So that's it for now. See you next chapter.

**Go to Your
Workbook**



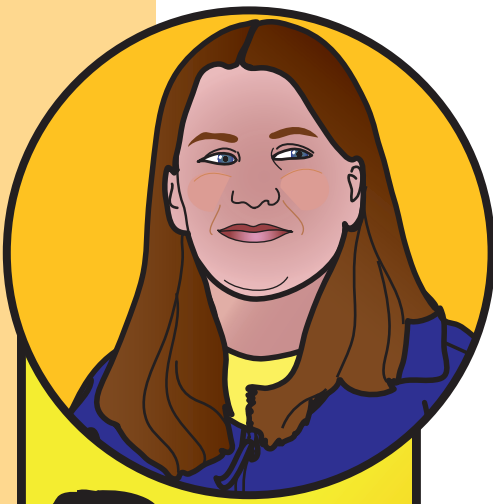
Chapter **2**

Who Attends Your IEP?

Outline: It is important for you to have certain people at your IEP meetings. First of all, YOU should be there. Your special education teacher and other teachers will be there. So will related service people and your parents. Friends, siblings, and your principal can come too. They are part of your education and have ideas that will help you plan your future.

Goal: You will choose people who you think should be at your transition planning meeting.





Who was at your last planning meeting, or IEP? Were you there? Were your parents, too? Which of your teachers were there? Many adults may come to your IEP because you are working with them on your goals for your future. With their help, you will make your future plans. This is a time to discuss your needs and your future.

You need to find out who has attended these meetings. Later on you can think about whom to invite.

So . . . who has been showing up at your meetings?

You don't really know? Well, no problem. Here is how you can find out. The people who come to your IEP meetings almost always sign a form. You can tell who was there by looking at that form.

So at the end of this chapter, ask your teacher to help you get a copy of your most recent IEP or transition file.

Here's who should be at these meetings?

1. **Teachers** almost always have to be there. They do a lot of work getting ready for the

meetings. They would like you to do more of the work, but that's another topic.

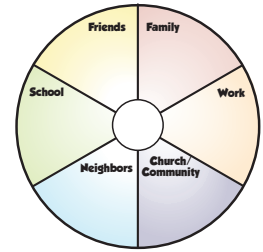
2. According to the law, someone from the school district, other than the teacher, has to be there, too. That might include your **Principal**, **Vice-Principal**, a **Diagnostician** (those folks who gave you those tests), or maybe someone from the **Special Education Department**.
3. **Related services people** do things that help you do better at school. Like **Speech Therapists**, who work with your talking skills. **Physical Therapists** help you exercise. **Occupational Therapists** help with adapted technology, or help you learn job skills. **Adapted Physical Education** staff help you exercise in the gym or at the rec center.

There are a lot of related services people. You may already know some if you are working with them.

Okay. To be honest with you, that's most of the people you can count on being at these meetings. Sometimes, more are there, but not usually. There is only one more group or person who probably was at your last meeting. Your mom or dad, or both.



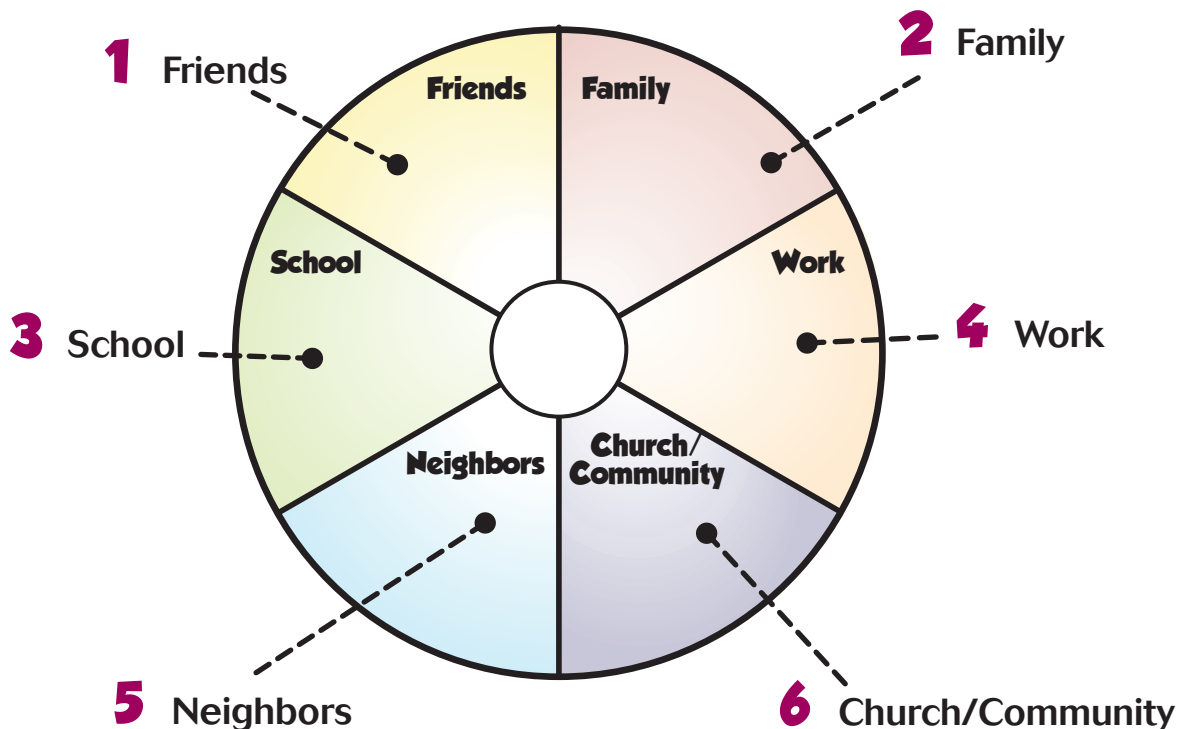
Here's what you can do to help you get ready for your next meeting.



Look at the circle that looks like this. It is called a **pie chart** because it is cut into different pieces. Like a pie.

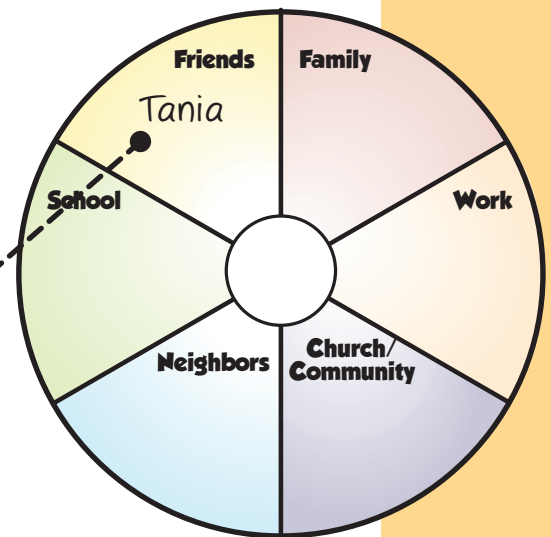
Your name goes into the center of the pie, because it is your meeting. Then your parents and other family members and friends go into the other pie slices. Next, your special and general education teachers and related services. Finally, your psychologist. Principal. Vocational rehabilitation counselor. Your advocate. Job coach. Neighbors.

Now, think of people you know. There are six pie pieces in the circle. They are for:



Think about the name of a person you know and like for each of the six pie pieces.

Start with **friends**. Who is your best friend? How about other friends? Who might you like to have as part of your planning team?



It is a good idea to have friends come to your IEP meeting. They know you as well as anyone. It is easy to talk to friends. They know what you are trying to say. But only invite them if you want them there. You have to make that decision.

Huh? What's a decision? Hang on! We will talk about that later.

Next, go to **family**. Who do you feel most close to in your family? Your mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin?

Go to the **school** pie piece. Who do you feel close to at school? Is there someone in your homeroom you would like to be part of your planning? Is it someone your age, a teacher, or another adult?

Do you have a **neighbor** who you talk to and trust?

In the pie piece for **church/community**, think about people you like and trust. Think about people at work, church, or any place you spend time.

Do not invite friends if you do not want to. The same thing is true for a brother or a sister, or any other family member.

Here is another thing to consider. If you are 16 or older, you are going to transition meetings. Or, at least your IEP meetings are partly about your transition plans. Make sure those who will help you be independent as an adult come to those meetings. That is why **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Job Coaches** or your **boss** from work should be there too.

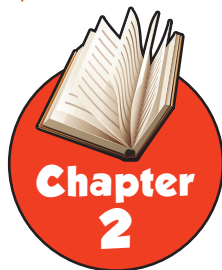
Just so you know, a vocational rehabilitation counselor might help you find a job. A job coach can help you learn the things you need to do on the job once you start. If you can think of anyone else who can help you live independently, invite them too.

Well, that's probably enough for this lesson.

OK. So that's it for now.

Later.

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Chapter **3**

Your Preferences and Interests

Outline: What do you want to do when you graduate?

What do you like to do? Some jobs may sound interesting and others, not so much. Think about what kind of job you would like to do and places you would like to live. Then consider your skills, and what you think you would be good at. Find a job that interests you.

Goal: You will identify your transition needs based on your preferences and interests.





elcome back. We have a question for you.

In Chapter 1 you read this: “IDEA says your transition goals must be based on your needs, taking into account your preferences and interests.”

What does that mean? Hint: ask yourself what your future plans are. Ask yourself what you want to do after high school.

Then ask yourself why you want to do that.

You are correct. Your future plans will depend on your needs and what your preferences and interests are. Like what kind of job you would be good at. Where you want to live. And how you want to live.

For example, do you really like to go to the movies? If so, then movies are an interest of yours. You might want to find a place to live near a cinema you can walk to.

See if you agree with this: “Before I lead my transition planning meeting, I should know my transition preferences and interests.”

Agree? We thought so.

IDEA was written to make sure your transition goals are based on what you want to do as an adult. That is why it is important to be at these meetings. Nobody knows better than you what you want to do with your future.

At your meeting, be clear about what your interests and preferences are. Then you can help others help you. To be ready, think ahead about what your interests and preferences are before the meeting starts.

Here's our question for you. Will you spend some time thinking about your interests and preferences? It's an important question because your future is important.

Your interests and preferences will be different from those of others. That is because every person is unique. That is why they are **your** interests and preferences. That does not make your interests better or worse than those of other people. Just different. Unique.

Unique means individual. That's why they have **individual** education plans, instead of **group** plans! Your transition IEP should be different from other students' IEPs. That is because it is based on your unique needs, and your unique preferences and interests.

So that is the first step. Knowing that you bring unique needs, preferences, and interests to the meeting. The next big step is letting others at the meeting know about your needs. That is another reason you have to tell people what you need, and what your interests are.





Let's back up a minute and think about your unique qualities. What makes you who you are as an individual.

Think about these things. What are you afraid of? Do you want to get married someday? If you were to invite six people to dinner, who would you invite?

Now, think about this: Would anyone else answer exactly the same as you did? Oh sure, some of your friends might invite the same people. Some might want to get married. Some would be afraid of the same things. But you are the only person who will answer exactly the way you did on all the questions.

So . . . it's time to put the "individual" back in IEP! Let's start by looking at the things you need for a successful transition from school to adulthood.

But first, why think about this now? That's easy to answer.

Someday soon you are going to be out of school. So you must be ready when that day comes.

Now, you might want to live with your parents the rest of your life. Telling you what to do and what you can't do. Giving you an allowance that is not enough for your needs. And boring. BOOORRRRING.

So you need to be ready to be independent and excited about what you're doing. The next few years of your school program are supposed to get you ready for that day. Let's think through this a little more.

Do you know what year you will graduate? If not, go ask your teacher. But for now, let's assume that your last day of school is the end of this school year.

Now, on June 1 of this year, where do you want to live?

Be specific. In a house or an apartment, or somewhere else?

In a city? What city? In what part of the city? Do you want to live alone, or with someone else?

Think about it and write down your answer on scratch paper.

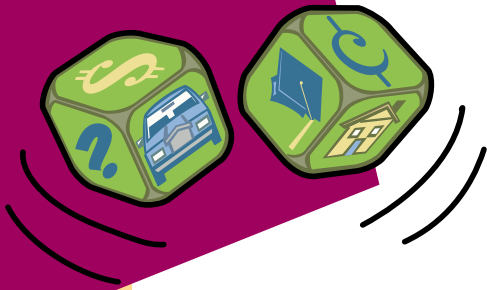
What do you want to be doing during the day? Working? Where? Doing what? Going to school? Where? Learning to do what?

How do you want to spend your leisure time?

Hint...those are things you want to do on your own time.

FUN FACT:

Did you know that according to IDEA, students who need extra services to do better in school might be eligible for school services past the age of 18? It changes from state to state and not all students qualify, but you may have the chance to stay in school longer. Good news or bad news? Depends how you use that time.



There are many things to think about before you graduate.

But what do you have to know to make them happen? That's what you have to figure out so that on June 1 of that year, you can begin to do these things. Instead of sitting at home. Bored. With no money. And nothing to do.

What do you need to do to be ready for your life after school?

You will need lots of things . . . right? Things like money. You have to have money to pay for a place to live. You might want to get a roommate or live in a small apartment. You will need to have money after you graduate. There are many ways to get money, but the most common way to get it is to earn it. To work for it.

Which takes you to your second area, what to do with yourself during the day. You probably will need to work. And want to work. Being at home all day with nothing to do is boring. And you won't make any money to do things you want to do. What did you write down about working? Do the jobs you listed pay enough money to live independently? Are there enough jobs like that in the real world? Do you have the abilities to do the job? What do you have to learn to do the job? How will you learn that?

These are important questions. This is why you need other people to help you make good decisions about your future. Seriously . . . there are a lot of questions to ask here. Figuring out what your transition needs are is hard. You need to be independent by the time you leave school. To do so you will need a lot of help. You will need a lot of transition services . . . everyone does!

You won't spend a lot of time right now talking about transition needs. That will happen when you get into the goals section of *Whose Future Is It?* For now, it's enough to know that your transition needs should be based on your interests and preferences.

So let's talk a little more about interests and preferences. Your transition services are based on them. But what do they mean, really?

First . . . it doesn't mean that everything in the world that you are interested in or you prefer will become a transition need.

FUN FACT:

IDEA says that transition services are activities that help students move from school to activities of adult life. Adult life includes college or vocational education, job training and work, living independently and participating in community activities. Such activities as movies, sports, and shopping.



You might prefer Fudge Brownie ice cream from Baskin-Robbins®. That doesn't mean you need to write a transition goal about ice cream. But, say you have been to Baskin-Robbins® many times, and watched how things work there. And what if that made you think you might want to be a manager at a Baskin-Robbins®? Learning what you need to know to work there would be a good transition activity.

It is pretty simple. Your transition services need to work on your transition needs, based on your interests and preferences. That means simply what you want to do as an adult.

But how do you decide what your interests and preferences are? Good question. Start by thinking about them.

First, think about what you do well. What you do best. Not what you like to do best, but what you DO best. Your abilities. They might be school skills like math, science, or reading. They might be things you learned at home like gardening, fixing a car, or playing the piano. They might be hard to learn, like working on computers. Or easy to do but take lots of practice to do well, like shooting a basketball.

You have to be realistic when considering your best skills. Some skills are hard to turn into jobs. For example, some students love to draw cartoons. You might be very good at that, but it is hard to find jobs in that field. Still, you might consider having a

transition goal that looks for drawing jobs. And that's okay.

But be aware that a vocational rehabilitation counselor might tell you that there are only a few jobs for cartoonists. And that those who get them are really good at it. Unless you are really good, too, it may be hard to find a job.

That does not mean you should give up. You have options. You could work hard to get good enough to get one of those jobs. Your guidance counselor will say you have to go to a top art school to improve your skills. That would take at least four years to finish, and you might have to beat out 100 other pretty good artists just to get into art school. Even then, there are not that many jobs for artists.

But it still depends on how badly you want it. And if you are willing to work three times harder than everyone else to do well. Are you willing to take other jobs you don't like to pay the bills while you struggle through art school? And then struggle to find a job?

It is a hard decision. Becoming an adult requires many hard decisions. But even if you don't go to art school, there are other jobs that use drawing skills. Ask your counselor about that. Or, you could decide to draw as a hobby. Maybe a transition goal would be to use the city recreation center to enroll in art classes. You could get to be a better artist, have fun, and meet others who are artists.



Another example of a skill is computer work. Many students like working on the computer and are good at it. You could consider that too. It might be more realistic.

Talk to vocational rehabilitation counselors to see what they think about computer work. Are you good at it? Do you like to do it? Is it realistic for finding a job? A counselor will say there are lots of jobs working on computers. You can do that right after high school if you learn some basic office skills. Or, you could go to a community college and learn more computer skills, and get an even better job.

Another option is going to a vocational training school and learning how to fix computer problems. There is great demand for computer technicians. But you have to already know the skills. Or be willing to learn the skills.

On the other hand, you may decide to keep your hobby interest in computers and use them just for fun. Nothing wrong with fun, and hobbies are a good thing. You might start talking online with others who like computers.

You see how this goes? You look at what you're good at and what you like. Then you explore your options. Find out what is out there for working, living, and playing as an adult. See how well things match.



That's one of the good things that transition planning does—it makes you think about what's out there in the real world.

Sure, you can still plan on being a rock musician or movie star. If you are willing to work for little or no money at jobs that are not nearly as much fun as you think. At best, you will earn enough to scrape by and barely pay the rent. If you are really lucky, you can spend all your time and money going to auditions for commercials or play late night gigs at dead-end nightclubs. And maybe you'll get that break, and then, if you have the talent, you might make a name for yourself.

In the long run, it is your choice. Your option. Your future. But being realistic from the beginning will help you make a good choice.

Okay. So that's it for now.
Later.

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