

**An Act to Ensure Students with Disabilities Succeed as Adults:
Transition Coordinators
(H. 493)**

Lead Sponsor: Rep. Sannicandro

- This bill will help to ensure that students with disabilities receive essential special education transition planning and services. The legislation directs the Board of Education to revise regulations for educator licensure to provide an Advanced Certificate in Transition Services. School committees would be required to employ the number of Transition Coordinators necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities ages 14-22.
- Special education transition services, which are required by federal law, are critical to facilitate a student's movement to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.
- In Massachusetts, youth with disabilities:¹
 - ❖ Drop-out at a rate that is 80% higher than the drop-out rate of non-disabled youth.
(Drop out rate for students with disabilities is 5.5% compared to 3.0% for regular education students).
 - ❖ Are less likely to receive a regular high school diploma.
(36% of students with disabilities failed to graduate, more than twice the rate of 15% for nondisabled students)
 - ❖ Are three times more likely to live in poverty as adults. Nationally, youth with disabilities are employed full or part time 35% compared with 78% for their non disabled peers.
- The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education highlighted concern about unemployment rates for students with disabilities leaving school, and found: "One reason for these outcomes is that educators are inadequately prepared to provide the services required under IDEA" ²
- The Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Retardation, the ARC, and Families Organizing for Change conducted statewide regional focus groups regarding transition. Recommendations emphasized the need to employ transition specialists at local high schools to provide technical assistance to teachers, students and families to help them navigate the transition process³.
- Although schools rely heavily on special education teachers to implement and manage transition planning and services⁴, current state licensure requirements inadequately address this critical area.
- With transition coordinators prepared to provide the services already required under federal law, this bill will help to ensure that existing dollars are spent in a more effective manner and will improve outcomes for the approximately 58,000 students with disabilities ages 14-22 years old.

For further information, please contact Johanne Pino at Massachusetts Advocates for Children at 617-357-8431x234

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¹ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Harris Survey 2004

² President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2005)

³ See Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation summary report, *Transition from School to Adult Department of Mental Retardation* (July, 2007).

⁴ National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Information Brief Vol. 4, Issue 4 (August 2005)