



What is A Transition Specialist Endorsement?

A transition specialist endorsement is a voluntary credential available to licensed special education teachers, guidance counselors, school social workers/school adjustment counselors and rehabilitation counselors to gain specialized knowledge in transition. Transition Specialists have attended a state approved transition specialist endorsement training program which includes courses and field work in the area of transition designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to prepare students with disabilities ages 14-22 for life after high school. ¹

Why is a transition specialist important?

Special education transition services, which are required by federal law, are essential to help students prepare for life after high school, including post-secondary and continuing education, vocational education, employment, adult services, independent living, and participating in their community. A transition specialist plays an important role in the education of youth with disabilities and is the person that helps create a bridge to life after high school through assessing, planning and delivering individualized services and supports that prepare youth for their future. Transition specialists coordinate services with adult agencies and community providers to ensure students transition effectively to life after high school. As stated in the report of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Taskforce on Integrating College and Career Readiness, "we have a responsibility to provide our children with a well-rounded education that prepares them not just to begin post-secondary education, but to access viable, living-wage, family supporting careers, and lifelong prosperity."² The transition specialist endorsement takes a step towards ensuring students with disabilities are prepared appropriately for life after high school.

What are the laws governing Transition Specialists?

In March of 2012 Massachusetts passed a law requiring the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create a Transition Specialist Endorsement. The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued regulations in December of 2012 as well as guidelines in October of 2013 to ensure teacher preparation programs had a clear understanding of the depth of knowledge and skills required for a transition specialist. Laws, regulations and guidelines all require transition specialists to have a range of knowledge including but not limited to:

- conducting individualized transition assessments,
- creating measurable post-secondary goals,
- fostering self-determination and self-advocacy skills,
- creating and delivering appropriate transition systems and services including employment, community and post-secondary education opportunities such as paid employment based on the student's identified interests, learning independent living skills such as utilization of public transit, or attending college classes or continuing/adult education.

Transition Specialists are an important resource for all schools and parents to consider. With the involvement of a transition specialist, districts will have a greater capacity to provide students ages 14-22 with the appropriate, individualized transition supports and services necessary to succeed when they exit special education. Transition specialists can attend IEP meetings, facilitate career development and higher education opportunities, and increase community participations.

There are a growing number of teacher preparation programs that offer course work leading to the Transition Specialist Endorsement including UMASS Boston, Lesley University and Simmons College.

The Guidelines are a useful resource for schools, parents, and others to understand the range of knowledge and skills necessary to address the transition needs of youth with disabilities and can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/advisories/TSEguidelines.pdf>

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¹ Educators who demonstrate significant course work and/or work experience in the field of transition can be grandfathered and receive the Transition Specialist endorsement based on their prior experience.

² "From Cradle to Career: Educating our Students for Lifelong Success - Recommendations from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Task Force on Integrating College and Career Readiness," MA ESE, http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2012-06/item1_report.pdf