TRANSITION ASSESSMENT GUIDE

This guide is designed to help educators and transition planning teams better understand, select, and use transition assessments to support students with IEPs as they prepare for life after high school.

Transition assessments help uncover a student's **preferences, interests, needs, and strengths (PINS)** through collecting valuable data. This information shapes the **Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP)** and ensures the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is tailored to each student's unique goals.
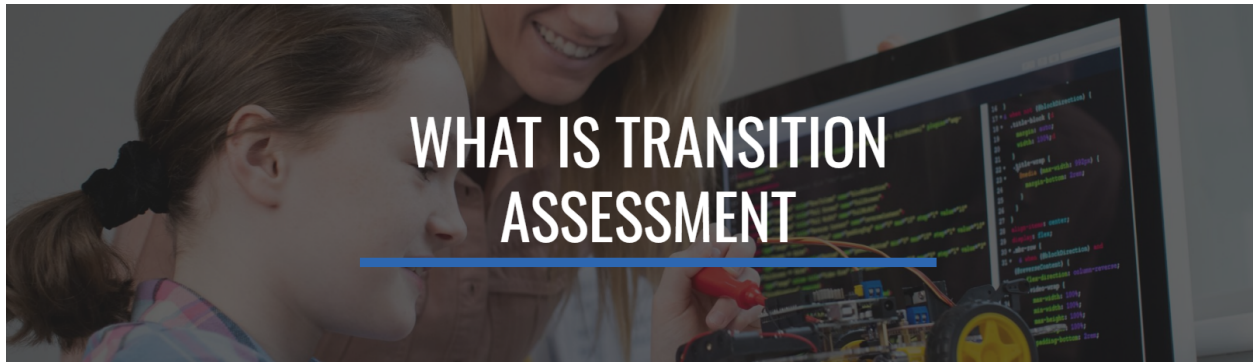
This Guide Will Help You:

- Understand what transition assessment is and why it matters
- Include students and their families into the transition assessment process
- Choose assessments that fit each student's needs
- Use results to inform the IEP and PTP for transition planning
- Incorporate culturally responsive and student-centered practices
- Support students in building the skills and supports they need for future success

Transition planning in Wisconsin begins by **age 14** and continues until the student exits high school. It is a collaborative process involving the student, family, educators, and various transition partners (ie, services systems, community organizations, employers, etc)

This guide is grounded in the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** and includes tools and resources based on evidence-based, research-based, promising, and local practices.

Note: Some resources may require a free account. Give yourself time to explore, there's a lot of valuable content!

WHAT IS TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

According to the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT):

> "Transition assessment is the ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments."

In simpler terms:

- Transition assessment is an ongoing process, not a one-time assessment.
- It gathers meaningful data over time to support individualized planning until a student's exit from high school.
- It ensures the student's voice, preferences, and culture are respected and reflected upon.

Transition assessments:

- Help students identify postsecondary goals.

- Clarify the support and services needed to reach those goals.

- Assist educators in designing relevant instruction and experiences.

- Engage families and transition partners in shared, meaningful transition planning.

Resource Highlights

Explore the *Transition Assessment- The Big Picture* training module on the Transition Coalition website to deepen your knowledge around transition assessment.

Note: To engage in the module, you will need to create an account on the Transition Coalition website. Once an account is created, click on training in the top navigation bar, click view modules, then the learning module will appear.

Use the *Transition Assessment Planning Form* on page 9 within the NTACT: The Collaborative Assessment Guide as a starting point to gather student data and determine areas of assessment to consider.

UNDERSTANDING
TRANSITION
ASSESSMENT

As stated in the previous page, Transition assessment is a key part of preparing students with an IEP for life after high school. These assessments help identify each student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths. The results guide the development of their Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP), which supports goals in education and training, employment, and independent living. For further information, click on the additional topic areas below:

- [Legal Requirements](#)
- [Types of Assessments](#)
- [Transition Assessment in the PTP](#)

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

- IEPs must include measurable postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments.
- To be compliant, the LEA must have conducted an age appropriate transition assessment prior to the IEP meeting in which the child has turned 14 years of age.
- The student's Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) must include a completed transition assessment(s) before the IEP meeting can take place.
    - If the assessment is not completed prior to the IEP Team meeting, the IEP team must reschedule until it is completed.

Resource Highlights

For more details about legal requirements related to transition assessment and planning, check out the [NTACT:C Regulations and Procedures](#) document. This helpful resource includes:

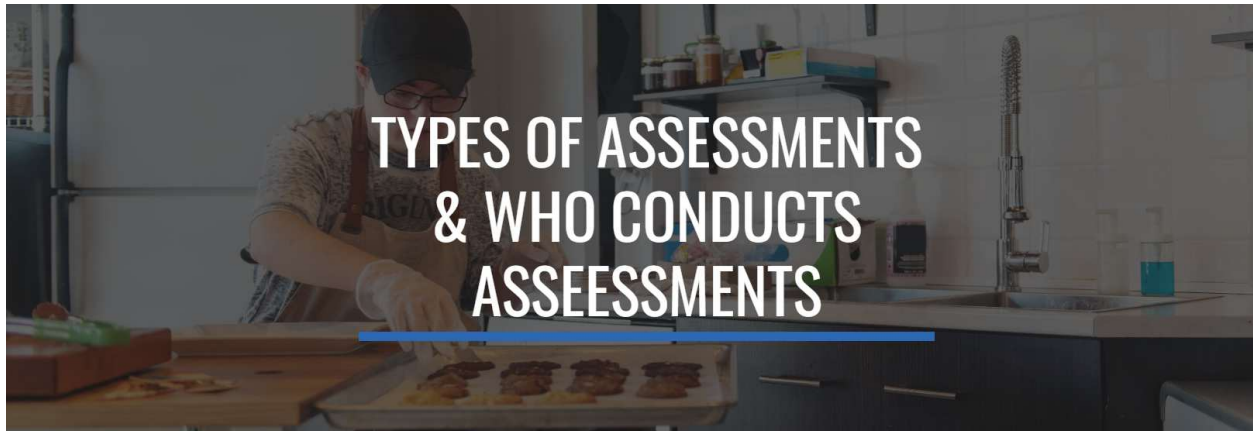- Federal Education Regulations (see page 1)

- Education Assessment Process (see page 6)

This resource also includes transition assessment information from Vocational Rehabilitation (Known as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in Wisconsin:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Assessment Laws & Guidelines (see page 2)
- VR Assessment Process (see page 8)

NOTE: Federal law requires that transition planning begins by age 16. However, in Wisconsin, state law requires that transition planning begins at age 14, or earlier if determined appropriate by the IEP team.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS & WHO CONDUCTS ASSEESSMENTS

There are two main types of transition assessments:

- **Formal Assessments**: These include standardized tests like aptitude or intelligence tests. They are often given by trained professionals and provide consistent data across students.
- **Informal Assessments**: These include activities like career exploration, interest inventories, interviews, questionnaires, and job shadowing. These help gather real-life insights about a student's goals and preferences.

Additional Informal assessments can also include:

- Researching college programs and support services.
- Exploring assistive technology tools.
- Touring postsecondary campuses.

When a student is unable or unwilling to participate in a transition assessment(s), the educator can gather insights from:

- Educator observations

- Family input

- Student records

- Transition partners

Assessments are usually completed with the student by:

- Special Education Teachers

- General Education Teachers

- School Counselors

- School Psychologists

- Transition partners (ie, agency representatives, mental health providers, etc)

Transition partners can support the student's goals by contributing insights into education and training, employment, and independent living options.

Resource Highlights

For more details regarding formal and informal assessment tools across domains, check out the [NTACT:C Tools and Resources](#) document. This helpful resource includes: Sample Assessment Tools, Learning Style Preferences & Personality Profiles, Additional Resources, and Disability Specific Areas of Need assessments and resources.

The [Job Accommodation Network](#) (JAN) offers free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations, which can assist in exploring accommodations when planning for informal assessments.

TRANSITION ASSESSMENT IN THE PTP

In Step 4 of the student's Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP), there are two specific questions related to transition assessment.

- Has an age-appropriate transition assessment been completed?
- Has the team reviewed information from the student's Academic Career Planning process?

See screenshot below.

A transition assessment must be completed to move forward with the IEP meeting. If the assessment is not completed, the IEP Team meeting must be rescheduled. This step also includes the student's Academic and Career Plan

(ACP), which starts in 6th grade for all Wisconsin students. The ACP can be used as part of the transition assessment and should be reviewed during the transition planning process. If a student doesn't have an ACP, contact the school's ACP Coordinator or School Counselor.

A well-developed ACP can help fulfill many of the transition services required in the PTP. Educators should promote collaboration between the ACP Team and the IEP Team to strengthen both plans. Building connections between these plans helps ensure students are ready for college, careers, and community life after graduation.

Resource Highlights

For more details regarding ACP, view the Department of Public Instruction [Why ACP Matters](#) video.

For more details regarding Creating a Career and Life Readiness Team, click [here](#) or visit the Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) [online learning webpage](#) to explore 10 micro modules on career and life readiness.

WHY TRANSITION
ASSESSMENT MATTERS

Transition assessments guide informed transition planning and assist educators to:

- Develop postsecondary goals that are both ambitious and attainable.
- Align IEP goals and services with students' aspirations.
- Highlight the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths.
- Identify and coordinate needed transition services.
- Design a purposeful middle/high school course of study.
- Foster collaboration with transition partners.
- Ensure goals are student-driven and culturally relevant.

Assessment results inform:

- Postsecondary Goals (education/training, employment, independent living)
- Annual IEP Goals
- Transition Services
- Course of Study
- Outside Agency Connections/Transition Partner Collaboration)

- Age of Majority Planning

With these results, the IEP team could then for example:

- Create postsecondary goals around the student's areas of interest
- Offer job shadows or youth apprenticeship opportunities
- Provide accommodations needed to complete their experiences
- Assist in developing a course of student that aligns with the students postsecondary goals
- Collaborate with outside agencies to connect the student and family, as well as work with the school district to offer transition services

Resource Highlights

Use the *Transition Assessment Planning Form* on page 9 within the [NTACT: The Collaborative Assessment Guide](#) as a starting point to gather student data and determine areas of assessment to consider

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

When students engage in their own assessment, they build self-awareness and confidence. This involvement helps them become more informed decision-makers and active participants in their transition planning. Self-advocacy is one of the strongest predictors of postsecondary success for students with an IEP. The transition assessment process is a key opportunity to build these skills.

Support students to:

- Understand the purpose and value of transition assessments
- Actively participate in the process
- Reflect on their results and what the information means for their future

Encourage students to:

- Ask questions about their assessment results
- Set individualized, meaningful goals
- Read sections of their IEP
- Practice self-advocacy skills throughout the proces

Educators aim to:

- Create space for the student to reflect and share their perspectives

- Honor the students cultural background when choosing assessments

- Model and teach ways to ask questions and express needs

- Give feedback and celebrate growth

As an educator, it's essential to keep in mind that the student is at the center of all transition assessment work. Their voice, choices, and active involvement are critical. Transition assessments help gather information about a student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths across three areas of their Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP): Education and training, employment, and independent living. Using a variety of assessment tools and approaches allows the ability to collect a fuller, more accurate picture of each student. This supports more personalized and meaningful transition planning.

Resource Highlights

For more details about student assessments, check out the [NTACT:C Collaborative Assessment for Transition Planning: Students](#) document. This helpful resource assists students to understand how assessments shape their goals and plans for the future.

For more details regarding self-advocacy, check out the following resources:

- The [TIG Self-Advocacy Guidance](#) provides educators with an overview of self-advocacy and includes tools to help students build and strengthen their self-advocacy skills.

- The [TIG WiTransition App](#) is designed to support youth in developing self-determination and self-advocacy skills. It also helps students and their families gain the knowledge they need to actively participate in the transition planning process, including during their IEP Team meetings focused on postsecondary goals.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Families are a key part of the transition assessment process. In most instances, they know the child best, including their preferences, interests, needs, strengths, and cultural background. This insight helps make both formal and informal assessments more meaningful and supports better transition planning. Families bring a valuable perspective and are the experts on their child.

Ongoing two-way communication with families helps ensure that transition goals reflect both the student's and the family's hopes and dreams for the future. To keep families informed and involved, be sure to:

- Share and explain assessment results in accessible ways
- Provide observations about the student and invite families to do the same (What does life look like for the student and family outside of school, ie. chores at home, interactions with others, time management, etc)
    - Information provided by families can be utilizied as an informal assessment.
- Provide opportunities to collaborate with transition partners and next steps

Including family input leads to more meaningful conversations with both the student and their family.

Using a variety of assessment methods allows students to demonstrate their skills and strengths in ways that reflect their cultural experiences, beliefs, goals, and comfort level.

Resource Highlights

For more detailed guidance, explore [The NTACT:C Collaborative Assessment for Transition Planning: Families.](#) This resource explains how families can support the assessment process and play an active role in helping shape their child's transition goals.

Also, utilize the [Culturally Responsive Transition Planning: Educator Reflection Guide](#) Age-appropriate Transition Assessment section to help reflect on your assessment choices. This tool can support in selecting transition assessments that meaningfully engage both students and families, honoring their experiences, cultures, and goals throughout the process.

The video [Consider Families and Communities as Experts on their Children](#) emphasizes the importance of honoring and integrating the unique insights, cultural knowledge, and lived experiences that families and communities bring to support their children.

ASSESSMENT EXPLORATION:
FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Transition assessment is not one-size-fits-all. Every student has a unique combination of preferences, interests, needs, strengths, and support systems. That's why it's important to use a variety of tools, especially those that are flexible and responsive to diverse learners, including students with more complex support needs, different cultural backgrounds, varying learning styles, socioeconomic backgrounds, and intersecting identities.

The assessment exploration section can help educators explore tools that support student individualized transition planning. Use the assessment databases and resources below to guide thoughtful discussions with students and families about their goals and next steps.

- **Transition Tennessee Assessment Database**

  This interactive tool helps users find transition assessments based on specific needs. You can filter by domain (like education, employment, or independent living), the focus of the assessment, how it's delivered, who gives it, the language it's in, and whether it's free or has a cost.

  ➤ TransitionTN Assessment Database

- **Pennsylvania Secondary Transition Assessment Finder**

  This easy-to-use search tool allows you to look for assessments based on specific areas to be evaluated. It supports the development of strong transition plans through intentional assessment selection.

  ➤ [Assessment Finder](#)

- **PA Transition Toolkit for Students with Significant Disabilities**

  This toolkit provides ideas and examples of how to use assessment with students who have complex needs.

  ➤ [Assessment Toolkit](#)

- **Zarrow Institute on Transition & Self-Determination (University of Oklahoma)**

  The Zarrow Institute offers a variety of tools focused on building self-determination and successful postschool outcomes.

    - **AIR Self-Determination Assessment**: This tool includes student, parent, and educator forms to evaluate a student's self-determination skills and help write IEP goals.

  ➤ [Assessment](#)

    - **Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG)**

      This suite of tools helps assess students' readiness for life after high school and generates customized transition goals.

It includes versions for students with complex support needs.

➤ [Assessment](#)

Together, these tools support teams in finding the best "fit" for each student, whether they're just beginning to explore goals or preparing to transition into adult life.

OPERATIONALIZING TRANSITION ASSESSMENT

Transition assessments are most effective when they're part of a thoughtful, ongoing process. The following reflection questions can provide guidance in making assessments meaningful, timely, and student-centered:

Getting Started

- What is already known about the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths (PINS)?
- Is there data from past assessments, observations, or student input?
- Are there areas to still learn more about?
- What data is already available?

Choosing Assessments

- What types of assessments (formal or informal) align with the student's goals and needs?
- Are there selected culturally responsive and appropriate tools?

- Has collaboration with families, service providers, community partners, etc taken place to gather more insight?

Student and Family Involvement

- Are there ways the student can help lead the IEP conversation or share their preferences directly?
- How will the student and family take part in the assessment process?
- What roles will educators, student, families, and team members play in collecting and interpreting data?

Timing and Planning

- When will assessments be conducted so they can inform the IEP and Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP)?
- How will the results be incorporated into the student's Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP)?

Monitoring Progress

- Is the student making progress toward their postsecondary goals in education/training, employment, and independent living?
- Are there new assessments needed to update goals or identify new supports?

Accessibility and Communication

- Are the assessments appropriate for the student's age, developmental level, and communication needs?
- Are the necessary accommodations in place to ensure the student can fully participate in the assessment process?
- Are the assessment results shared in a way that is clear, respectful, and accessible to both the student and their family, including in their preferred language?
- In what ways will the student take part in interpreting their assessment results and shaping next steps?

Next Steps

- Are there other areas, such as self-advocacy or workplace readiness, that need to be explored?
- How can assessment results be utilized to build skills and create new experiences?

By using these guiding questions, transition assessments can be a powerful foundation for transition planning. It ensures that each student's voice is heard and that their journey into adulthood is supported by real data, meaningful goals, and the right people supporting them.

RESOURCES

The resources below are meant to guide efforts in expanding knowledge and selecting the most appropriate transition assessments for each individual student. They include tools, strategies, and training opportunities to support effective transition planning. Some of these resources have been shared throughout this guidance, while others are new recommendations to explore.

NTACT: C Collaborative Assessment Guide for Transition Planning

This collaborative assessment series is intended to help develop a coordinated assessment approach for transition planning and service delivery. An accompanying recorded webinar is also available.

- ➤ Guide
- ➤ Accompanying Webinar
- ➤ Guide for Families
- ➤ Guide for Students
- ➤ Definitions Guide
- ➤ Tools and Resources
- ➤ Regulations and Procedures

NTACT: C From Assessment to Practice: A Model for Teachers

This model was developed to provide teachers with a process for incorporating effective practices into the transition planning process, from transition assessment to classroom instruction.

➤ [Guide](#)
➤ [Accompanying Webinar](#)

Northern Colorado Assessment Checklist for Wisconsin

This checklist, developed by the University of Northern Colorado, offers a resource with state-specific assessment checklists. The Assessment Checklist for Wisconsin delineates critical components like planning and integration into IEPs and facilitating meaningful transition plans.

➤ [State-specific checklists](#)
➤ [Wisconsin specific checklist](#)

Transition Coalition-Transition Assessment: The Big Picture Training Module

This module explores recommended practices in transition assessment. Various types and approaches for assessment, relating assessment to the transition process, and providing opportunities for applying these research-based ideas are provided.

➤ [Training Module](#)

TIG Introduction to the Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) - Online Learning Course

This course provides a solid understanding of the Wisconsin PTP application and provides educators with the tools and insights to create meaningful PTPs with the students they serve.

➤ [Course](#)

TIG Self-Advocacy Guidance

This guidance is a collection of online resources, including assessments, curricula, student-led IEP materials, and legal guidance, designed to support self-advocacy skill development. It features both TIG-created tools and resources from national partners. Since self-advocacy is a key predictor of post-school success for students with IEPs, the toolkit aims to support educators, students, and families in fostering these essential skills.

➤ [Guidance](#)

TIG WiTransition App.

The Transition Improvement Grant has developed a transition app to support Wisconsin youth in building self-determination and self-advocacy skills during the transition planning process. The app empowers students and families to actively contribute to the IEP Team Meeting and the development of the Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP).

➤ [Webpage](#)
➤ [WiTransition App. Access](#)

Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

This video emphasizes the importance of honoring and integrating the unique insights, cultural knowledge, and lived experiences that families and communities bring to support their children.

➤ [Video-Consider Families and Communities as Experts on their Children video](#).

IRIS Center's Student-Centered Transition Planning

This module will help users to better understand the benefits of student-centered transition planning, identify ways to involve students in collecting assessment information and developing goals, and be able to prepare students to actively participate in their own IEP meetings (est. completion time: 2 hours- earn a professional development certificate upon completion).

➤ [Module](#)

Department of Public Instruction-Academic & Career Planning (ACP) Webpage

This webpage outlines the purpose of Academic and Career Planning (ACP), provides a helpful FAQ section, steps to get started, resources, and more. ACP is designed to help students and their families make informed decisions about postsecondary education, training, and careers. It supports DPI's vision for all students to graduate high school ready for college, career, and life, which could be utilized as a transition assessment.

➤ [Website](#)
➤ [Video-Why ACP Matters](#)

➤ [ACP Equity/Special Populations Webpage](#)-Section g

TIG Career & Life Readiness Online Courses

The Transition Improvement Grant developed a series of 10 micro courses to address the underrepresentation of youth with disabilities in career and life readiness programming. These courses provide educators with tools and strategies to help students with disabilities build the skills and connections needed for success after high school. (est. completion time: 2 hours per course- earn a certificate of completion for each course).

➤ [Career and Life Readiness Courses](#)

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

This website provides free, expert guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. It offers practical solutions to support both employers and individuals with disabilities through its website, phone consultations, or live chat. JAN is a valuable resource for creating inclusive and accessible work environments.

➤ [Website](#)

Sample Transition Assessments

Transition Tennessee Assessment Database

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Zarrow Institute on Transition & Self-Determination (University of Oklahoma) Assessments

The Zarrow Institute offers a variety of tools focused on building self-determination and successful postschool outcomes.

AIR Self-Determination Assessment

- **ARC Self-Determination Scale**
- **Casey Life Skills**
- **Choice Maker Self-Determination Assessment**
- **Transition Assessment and Goal Generator (TAGG)**

➤ [Zarrow Assessments](#)