

# Your IEP, Your Voice



The Division of Specialized Care for Children's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) created this fact sheet to share helpful resources and tips from their personal experiences.

YAC members Zoe, Gloria, Mairead and Estrella share the questions you should ask at your IEP meeting:

If I'm interested in pursuing higher education, are there programs that can support me?

What programs can help provide training to gain work experience and enter the workforce?

What can I do now to prepare for the shift from an IEP to college accommodations?

What documentation will I need to give to the college disability services office?

Are there any parts of this [educational program or career path] that might be hard for someone with a disability? If so, what kinds of help or support are available?

How can the school and teachers better accommodate my learning style and needs? What classroom support options do I have?



## Advice on navigating your Transition IEP:

*“Look up all your options, attend college fairs, and do internships while in high school. There are programs that allow high schoolers to work or volunteer. It also exposes you to different environments to gain working experience. Focus on participating in any programs that can expose you to different professionals also.”*

*-Gloria, YAC member*

**In high school**, special education laws for transition services support your goals for work, further education and independent living. By age 14½ years old, your special education services team should invite you to your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

**In Illinois**, transition services are a set of planned activities that help youth with disabilities succeed in school and beyond. They help ensure a smooth move from high school to adult life.

One part of the Transition IEP is setting clear, specific goals for what you want to do after high school.

The areas you will focus on are:

- Employment (goals for a job)
- Post-Secondary Education (community college, four-year university and technical school)
- Post-Secondary Training (vocational/career training programs, career fields training, independent living skills training and apprenticeships)
- Independent Living (living independently, health and safety, self-advocacy, transportation, mobility, leisure and finances)

## Your job is to speak up about your future goals and interests.

What does it mean to be a good self-advocate?

- It starts with **self-determination**, or the idea that every person has the right to decide how they live their life.
- Speaking up for what you need and want is **self-advocacy**, which is self-determination in action!



## Self-advocacy in action:

***“Being able to advocate for yourself and your needs requires knowledge of special education laws and an understanding of how to speak up for yourself.***

***Self-advocacy is a skill toward independence. By speaking and letting others know how your disability affects you in everyday life or learning.***

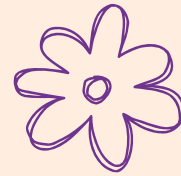
***An example of self-advocacy is asking for the support or accommodations you need to succeed in different settings. We should also speak out if your needs are not being met or not working, trying to figure out alternatives.”***

***- Zoe, YAC member***



## Laws that Protect People with Disabilities

- The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a law that makes sure all children with disabilities can get a free and fair education.
    - To learn more, visit [www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/individuals-disabilities/idea](http://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/individuals-disabilities/idea).
  - The **Rehabilitation Act of 1973** was the first law to help people with disabilities get equal access by removing barriers in buildings, jobs, and transportation.
    - To learn more, visit [www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973).
  - The **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)** is a law that helps students with disabilities get ready for jobs after high school.
    - To learn more, visit [www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa).
  - The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is a federal civil rights law that protects people with disabilities from being treated unfairly.
    - To learn more, see the Division of Specialized Care for Children’s Americans with Disabilities Act tip sheet at [dsc.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/73-INDEPENDENCE-Americans-with-Disabilities-Act.pdf](http://dsc.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/73-INDEPENDENCE-Americans-with-Disabilities-Act.pdf).
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## Resources

- **The School-to-Work Transition Guide** gives clear and current information to help students with disabilities in Illinois move from school into the working world. Find it at [ictw.illinois.edu/resources/school-to-work-transition-guide](http://ictw.illinois.edu/resources/school-to-work-transition-guide).

The guide covers:

- Who is involved in transition planning and what they do
  - Steps in the Transition IEP process
  - Key words and what they mean
  - Important laws
  - Tips and resources to help
- **Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center** offers self-advocacy skills training for students entering into their Transition IEP at 14 ½ and older. Learn more at [fmptic.org/](http://fmptic.org/).



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