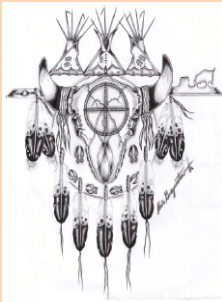


# Miniwakan Waonspekiye News



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## *Transition: High School Years and Beyond*

*By: Willie Davis, Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Member, SLC Consultant*

Living on a reservation can be very difficult when you have a disability. From going to school to finding employment, there are limited resources available to people with disabilities. While students are in the school system and receiving federal funds, they are required to receive a free public education. This is a right of all students in the US, regardless of disability.

Most schools have a Special Education Department that provides all disabled students with services to accommodate/modify their learning experience. On the Turtle Mountain Reservation, there are Special Education coordinators at each level – high school, middle school, and elementary school. All of the Turtle Mountain schools provide a management team to each child who is in the Special Education program or is on an IEP/504 plan.

Transition from school to post-secondary opportunities can bring on many confusing options. While in high school you are provided with services no matter what, accommodations and/or modifications based upon Federal mandated laws. Colleges, however, are only required to provide these services on a priority level and you have to take responsibility to request assistance in advance. Many services are provided to you by law, under Federal regulations, by IDEA or the 504 plan (however, most schools do not provide such services for transitions under 504). After graduation, people are left to follow up with the state or their local Vocational Rehabilitation program. If they are really lucky, their community will have a Transition Counselor, either in the school system or employed with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

When a student is in the process of graduating, usually at their last Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should be present or contracted to set up a transition plan beyond high school, including vocational training services, accommodations and/or modifications – classroom or placement.

For a copy of a transition plan, click here: [Electronic Filing Cabinet provided by Spirit Lake Consulting, Inc.](http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com/SpiritLakeConsulting/sharedfiles/file%20cabinet/) <http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com/SpiritLakeConsulting/sharedfiles/file%20cabinet/>. (Scroll down. The transition plan forms are at the bottom of the page. Feel free to download any forms that interest you.) Most schools will have this type or similar type of plan that will spell out services and provide them to the student. Parents, schools, communities, and other networks of support for students with disabilities need to encourage the student to prepare for life after high school. Preparation includes all types of independent living skills – vocational training or employment opportunities, money management, social interaction, and all other required skills to become a productive member of society.

Getting help is the first step in transitioning from high school. Even if the individual with a disability decides to work and stay home – they must have the opportunity to explore what their options are. It is the school, family, and community's responsibility to assist in making sure the individual is supported whatever decision they make. Sometimes, it is not the one we would like, but it is their choice!

### **What is a 504 Plan?**

*You may hear that a student does not qualify for special education but has a 504 plan. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees each student equal opportunity to a free public education that meets his needs and provides inclusion to classes with students without disabilities, as much as possible. It insures that all qualified persons have equal access to education regardless of the presence of any disabling condition. The law provides for individual modifications and accommodations for people with disabilities attending high schools and colleges. Physical accommodations in classroom and lab space, course substitutions, changes in classroom presentations, and modifications in testing are all possible ways to provide access for students with disabilities.*

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“Getting help is the first step in transitioning from high school.”

## *Transition from School to Work: The Importance of Planning*

*By Willie Davis, SLC Consultant*

I've had the opportunity to work with students in grades 9-12 on the Turtle Mountain Reservation as a Transition Counselor. This position has allowed me to work with these students by transitioning them from the high school setting to training opportunities that will prepare them to live more independent lives. This is accomplished through receiving feedback from student and/or parents at Individual Education Plan meetings. Most of these meetings take place during the student's senior year or if there is a special meeting scheduled that requires my input.

The students with disabilities or special needs who require transition services usually are not too concerned about what they want to do after graduating from high school, just as any other typical high school student would feel. It is sometimes very difficult to get them to focus on making decisions or at least start thinking about their career, especially if this decision is going to affect them for the rest of their life. Instead, they tend to focus on the present. I have found that what helps is to allow them to write down choices they would like to make and then prioritize them, based upon what they feel is most important. Then, as they reflect throughout the year, this list of priorities can help make their decisions easier by the time they graduate.

An important part of transition for students with disabilities or special needs when moving from high school to post-secondary training is their ability to stay motivated and task-oriented. The individual takes on more self-direction, but it is up to him or her to become more independent and plan their daily schedule. With help from their family and training provider (Vocational Rehabilitation or other Outreach Coordinator), they can become more productive and gain freedom.

Transition is a sum of many small accomplishments that include learning to manage money or planning lunch at the college cafeteria. These skills can be learned from working with a Case Manager or Special Needs Coordinator while in high school. Most schools provide all disabled or special needs students with a Transition Plan Process. It is up to the student and family to make sure that the appropriate services and/or accommodations are included in this form. Therefore, it is very important for those involved in this plan (school staff, student and parents) to be represented at meetings when this information is shared.

## *Ten Tips That May Help Ease Your Child's Transition to Adulthood* **By: Marcia Kelly**

Article adapted from *Pacesetter Magazine*, Summer 2005, Vol. 28, Issue 2.

Planning for your child's transition from adolescence to adulthood is one of the most important things you can do to pave the way to a successful future. In Minnesota, special education transition planning and services begin when your child is 14. From then on, you and your child will start learning new skills side by side. Your child will begin to take on more responsibility and you will find new ways to provide support. Depending on your child's disability, you may need to consider everything from post-secondary education to employment, from housing to finances. As you and your son or daughter plan for the future, consider these tips to help build a successful transition.

1. **Help build your son's or daughter's self-determination and self-advocacy skills.** All young people should have a strong sense of their strengths, abilities, and interests. If students have a disability, they should also be aware of how it might affect them at work, in the community, and in their educational pursuits.
2. **Help develop child's social outlets.** Although social isolation can be an issue for many young adults with disabilities, transition planning addresses opportunities for social relationships and recreation, which can build a bridge to success.
3. **Expand your network and explore community supports.** As children with disabilities become adults with disabilities, they may need support from a variety of sources. Look at adults in the community who have the same disability as your child to discover what kinds of support they use.
4. **Make sure your son registers with Selective Service at age 18.** All males, including those with disabilities, should register with Selective Service within 30 days of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Failure to do so can affect a person's ability to receive federal and state benefits, including student loans, job training, and government jobs.
5. **Explore post-secondary accommodations.** Students who receive academic programming and support in high school [will not automatically have the same support after they graduate. When you and your student visit a prospective school, visit the campus's Disability Services Office to find out what services they provide.
6. **Investigate SSI programs.** Financial planning is an important part of transition. Many people with disabilities are beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal program that provides a monthly benefit check that can help pay for living expenses.
7. **Encourage your child to build a resume by volunteering.** By volunteering, young adults can gain skills and build a resume that shows a prospective employer their abilities, initiative, and dedication to work. Volunteering can also help develop additional social skills, especially if it is done along with a parent, friend, or group of peers.

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8. **Help your child learn “soft” employment skills.** These include such things as being able to accept direction, ask for help, deal with conflict, and engage in interpersonal communication. Other soft skills include being prompt, having appropriate hygiene, and dressing properly for the workplace.
9. **Plan for health care management.** You should develop a clear plan on how to address health care needs once your child reaches adulthood.
10. **Call PACER Center for information and resources.** The transition staff at PACER Center can help you prepare your son or daughter for the adult world. Trained advocates can help you understand your rights and find resources to help with all aspects of transition. To speak with a transition expert, call (952) 838-9000 or visit [www.pacer.org/publications/transition.htm](http://www.pacer.org/publications/transition.htm) for online transition resources.



### *Upcoming News and Events*

#### **CANAR – Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation:**

Spirit Lake Consulting, Inc. will be an exhibitor at the Consortium of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation meeting in Washington, D.C. on February 19-21. We will be demonstrating our Disability Access, Caring for Our People and Leadership Training CDs. We will also be giving out free samples of all our latest products. Stop by and see what SLC can do to make life better for you, your family and those you serve.

#### **Altering your Perspective – 9<sup>th</sup> Annual “Educating the Bilingual Student” Conference:**

We will also be presenting at this conference, which is scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at UC Riverside, sponsored by the Graduate School of Education. This conference will provide information on successful practices of educating English language learners. Details will be included closer to that time.

***Did you get this newsletter forwarded from a friend or colleague? Want to get your own copy every other week? Email [Jessica@spiritleakeconsulting.com](mailto:Jessica@spiritleakeconsulting.com) to be added to our mailing list.***

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