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ECC & Transition Readiness Guide for Families

Build skills, opportunity and a plan the student helps direct

1. Start with a life the student wants

Transition is preparation for education, work and community life. The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) helps identify disability-specific skills that support participation. Readiness is built through instruction and opportunity; it is not a test a student must pass to deserve support.

Invite meaningful student direction

- Ask what the student enjoys, wants to try, and wants more control over. Use their preferred language and communication.
- Identify barriers around them: inaccessible materials, lack of transportation, missing instruction, limited opportunities or unreliable support.
- Choose one meaningful activity to work toward. Break it into teachable steps and identify the tools, instruction and assistance needed.
- Recognize supported participation and interdependence. Independence does not require doing everything without people or technology.

Connect ECC and the IEP

The nine ECC areas are a professional framework. IDEA requires the IEP to address the child's individual academic and functional needs; the ECC helps teams find and describe those needs. It does not mean every student needs the same goals or service minutes in all nine areas. [1, 2]

Legal timing

Federal transition content begins no later than the first IEP in effect when the student turns 16, or younger if appropriate. Colorado requires it beginning with the first IEP developed at age 15, no later than the end of ninth grade, or earlier if appropriate, with annual updates. Skill building can start much earlier. [2, 3]

2. Review the nine ECC areas

Use these questions with the student and school specialists. Note strengths, opportunities already provided, unmet needs and the next instructional step.

Access and navigation

- Compensatory access: How does the student read, write, take notes, organize information and understand concepts through accessible media?
- Sensory efficiency: How does the student use available vision, touch, hearing and other sensory information effectively?
- Assistive technology: Can the student select and use needed tools, solve routine problems and request help?
- Orientation and mobility: What instruction and support enable travel in familiar and unfamiliar settings relevant to their life?

Participation and everyday life

- Social interaction: Can the student join conversations, understand context, maintain boundaries and build relationships?
- Independent living: What skills and supports are needed for routines, food, clothing, money, time and managing belongings?
- Recreation and leisure: Does the student have genuine choices, access and opportunities to pursue interests with others?
- Career education: Has the student explored real jobs and workplaces, practiced tasks and met people with varied careers?
- Self-determination: Can the student express preferences, make choices, explain access needs and take part in decisions?

Keep the assessment individualized

A checklist starts a conversation. Use observation and practice in meaningful settings to identify what instruction is needed. Avoid marking an area unnecessary solely because of low expectations or lack of prior opportunity. [1]

3. Make a transition plan that can be delivered

Connect five parts

- Assessment: Gather information about strengths, preferences, interests and support needs in realistic settings.
- Postsecondary goals: Describe intended outcomes after school in education/training and employment, and independent living when appropriate.
- Annual IEP goals: Identify measurable skills the student will learn this year to address needs and support those outcomes.
- Services and experiences: Specify instruction, related services, community experiences and courses of study needed to reach the goals.
- Accountability: Record who will provide each activity, when it will happen, how access will be arranged, and when progress will be reviewed.

Try a real-world example

For a student interested in college, explore an accessible course task rather than assuming grades show readiness. Practice obtaining an accessible reading, using notes to complete an assignment, traveling to a new classroom, and requesting access support. Assess which steps require instruction or assistance. This is an example, not a prescribed goal.

Coordinate without handing off responsibility

Invite appropriate outside agencies with the required consent, and clarify their eligibility processes and responsibilities. A referral alone does not complete the school's transition work. If a participating agency fails to provide IEP transition services, the school must reconvene the team to identify alternatives. [4, 5]

4. Choose the next 30 days

A small plan families can use

- The student selects one priority activity and explains why it matters.
- The team identifies a baseline: what happens now, which supports help, and what remains difficult.
- Name one instructional action at school and one optional practice opportunity at home or in the community. Family practice supplements school responsibilities.
- Identify the responsible adult, needed accessible materials or technology, and an achievable review date.
- At review, ask the student what changed. Use observations and work samples to decide whether to continue, adapt or add instruction.

Before leaving school

- Clarify graduation requirements, the intended exit credential and how exiting affects eligibility for school services. Ask questions early.
- Confirm who owns or will provide needed technology and how training and access will continue.
- Ask about accessible records, a summary of academic achievement and functional performance when IDEA requires it, and the student's next contacts. Adult-service eligibility is a separate process. [6]

Sources and use

This family planning resource distinguishes legal requirements from suggested actions. Follow the source links for the complete text. Historical professional resources provide background; they are not binding law.

1. Perkins — Expanded Core Curriculum booklet
Professional background; not law

2. IDEA § 300.320 — IEP and transition content
Binding law

3. Colorado ECEA, 1 CCR 301-8 — rules 4.03(6)(b) and (d), printed pages 47–48; effective May 15, 2025
Binding law; SOS current version checked September 12, 2026

4. IDEA § 300.321 — IEP team and transition participation
Binding law

5. IDEA § 300.324 — IEP development and special factors
Binding law

6. IDEA § 300.305 — Evaluation review and exit summary
Binding law