



Transition Services for Native Students with Disabilities

Empowering Youth for Life Beyond High School - What Are Transition Services?

Transition Services are individualized supports and activities included in a student's IEP (Individualized Education Program) that prepare them for life after high school. These services focus on education, employment, and independent living.

Why They Matter in Tribal Communities

- Native students with disabilities face unique challenges and opportunities. Transition Services honor cultural identity while building pathways to success.
- Bridge to Adulthood: Helps students move confidently into college, vocational training, employment, or community life.
- Culturally Grounded Planning: Integrates tribal values, language, and traditions into goal-setting and life skills development.
- Self-Advocacy: Encourages youth to speak up for their needs and rights in education, healthcare, and employment.
- Family & Community Engagement: Involves families, elders, and tribal programs in shaping the student's future.

Key Components of Transition Services

Area of Focus	Examples of Support
Postsecondary Goals	College prep, vocational training, tribal scholarship guidance
Employment Readiness	Job coaching, resume building, internships, tribal enterprise partnerships
Independent Living	Budgeting, transportation, housing, cooking, self-care

Cultural Integration	Navajo language instruction, traditional arts, community service opportunities
Agency Collaboration	Coordination with VR, tribal education departments, disability services

How Schools & Families Can Support

- Start Early: Begin transition planning by age 14 (or earlier if appropriate).
- Include Tribal Voices: Invite tribal liaisons, cultural mentors, and local service providers to IEP meetings.
- Use Accessible Tools: Provide materials in Navajo or other Indigenous languages when possible.
- Track Progress: Monitor goals and adjust plans to reflect the student's growth and changing interests.

Advocacy in Action




Transition Services are a right, not a privilege. Tribal communities can advocate for:

- Increased funding for culturally relevant transition programs
- Stronger partnerships between schools and tribal agencies
- Training for educators on Indigenous disability perspectives

Contact for Support

For assistance with transition planning or disability rights contact:

Native American Disability Law Center

 Farmington, NM |  (505) 566-5880 |  www.nativedisabilitylaw.org