



Postsecondary Education Transition and Planning Services: Barriers and Recommendations



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the Virginia General Assembly enacted HB1805, directing the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to examine the quality and consistency of transition Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities, with the goal of improving standardization and ensuring the timely provision of transition services and accommodations in higher education. This charge builds on the foundation established by HB509/SB21 (2024), which emphasized the acceptance of recent IEPs as sufficient proof of disability but underscored the need for stronger support to families and clearer distinctions between secondary and postsecondary processes.

Background

Transition planning is governed by two distinct federal frameworks: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which emphasizes specially designed instruction and preparation for life beyond high school, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates reasonable accommodations in higher education without fundamentally altering academic programs. Transition IEPs, developed annually beginning at age 14, are intended to bridge these systems by equipping students with work-based readiness, self-determination, academic, and independent living and adult living skills. However, gaps in documentation, preparation and communication often create barriers that delay or prevent students from accessing accommodations in college including ones that may come at a financial cost to the student and family. IEPs do not always contain the current and substantial functional limitation information (defined as restrictions to daily activities that an individual struggles to perform based upon a diagnosed disability) needed to make the determinations of appropriate accommodations that do not fundamentally alter a course of study. This information may include evaluation data displaying limitations to a person's cognitive, communication, mobility, self-care, and vision and hearing limitations. When institutions of higher education use the IEP lacking this information, they may still be able to accept it as proof of a disability, but rely on the student's self-advocacy skills to relay personal information on how their disability impacts them. Sometimes, the student is not equipped with these skills to make an appropriate determination, and an institution will have to seek additional documentation.

General Findings

The workgroup convened under HB1805, comprised of K–12 educators, higher education disability services staff and state agency partners, identified several emergent themes:



- Overarching Finding: While IEPs are often accepted as proof of disability, they rarely contain the current, substantial functional limitation information necessary for higher education institutions to determine reasonable accommodations. This gap forces students and families to provide additional documentation, causing delays and the potential to incur additional expenses to obtain such documentation.
- Key Findings:
 - Many challenges mirror those identified in the 2024 SCHEV report, including institutional inconsistencies and family misunderstandings about the differences between IDEA and ADA.
 - Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities face significant access barriers, including limited academic program availability and financial aid eligibility.
 - Families often believe IEPs or 504 Plans automatically transfer to college, creating confusion and delaying accommodation requests.
 - Students frequently lack self-advocacy and self-awareness skills, leaving them unprepared for intake interviews and self-disclosure in higher education.
 - Collaboration between K–12 and higher education staff happens informally and inconsistently since no formal statewide mechanism currently exists to create channels for better communication and collaboration across the sectors.

Recommendations

The committee’s recommendations focus on aligning secondary and postsecondary processes, improving documentation and strengthening collaboration. Key actions include:

1. Standardize Documentation
 - Incorporate [functional limitation](#) information into IEPs.
 - Finalize and adopt a statewide “My Summary of Performance” (see Appendix C) document as a relevant and comprehensive tool for students to present to institutions of higher education.
 - Update and disseminate “[Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities](#)” as a technical assistance resource for families and educators.
2. Strengthen Student Preparation



- Integrate self-advocacy, self-determination and independent living skills into transition planning.
- Provide case managers and transition staff with training on ADA requirements, higher education processes, and how these differ from IDEA, so they can better support students in developing self-advocacy, self-determination, and independent living skills.

3. Expand Postsecondary Opportunities

- Consider best practices, identify ways and means to expand Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs (IPSEs) across Virginia, reduce financial barriers and increase Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Education Program (CTP) designations.

4. Improve Collaboration and Support

- Establish formal partnerships among SCHEV, VDOE, secondary educators and disability services professionals through a new SCHEV agency position dedicated to the work outlined in this report with support from SCHEV's Disabilities Higher Education Access Committee.
- Encourage greater participation of higher education disability staff in secondary transition activities.
- Create digital repositories for students to securely manage and share documentation.

The HB1805 workgroup confirms that inconsistencies in relevant IEP content, limited student preparation and unclear processes between secondary and postsecondary education impede students' timely access to accommodations in higher education. This, in turn, impacts access, affordability and success for students with disabilities who are already the population in Virginia with the lowest college-going rate. By enhancing documentation, expanding inclusive programming, strengthening collaboration, and equipping students and families with knowledge and tools, Virginia can significantly improve the transition experience for students with disabilities.



PREAMBLE

Background

A 2025 Virginia General Assembly bill [HB1805](#) enacted into law directs SCHEV to “(i) study the quality and consistency of transition individualized education programs (IEPs) developed and implemented for students with disabilities across the Commonwealth that are dedicated to establishing the postsecondary transition services needed by students with disabilities (transition IEPs) or contain sections that are dedicated to establishing the postsecondary transition services needed by students with disabilities (transition sections) and (ii) make recommendations on strategies for improving the standardization of transition IEPs or transition sections contained in IEPs to help facilitate the timely provision of transition services and accommodations for students with disabilities by public institutions of higher education across the Commonwealth. The Council shall submit to the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the House Committee on Education by November 1, 2025, a report on its findings and recommendations.

The origin of HB1805 builds from the previous legislation and [report](#) for 2024’s House Bill (HB) 509/Senate Bill (SB) 21. Thus, a workgroup was convened to study the charge in the bill. The workgroup and subsequent report did not recommend uniform accommodations eligibility, but did recommend that the IEP, updated in the last three years, should be accepted as sufficient proof to establish a disability. Key findings of that report indicate the necessity to “highlight the need for greater support to students and families in understanding the transition from high school to college” and the need “to distinguish that determining eligibility for disability services is a separate process from determining specific accommodations for each student.”

Students with disabilities face unique challenges when transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education. A key factor is the shift from one legal framework to another in mandating processes for accommodations and modifications to coursework. While the Americans with Disabilities Act governs K-12 and higher education, it does not establish the same procedures and processes that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does only for K–12 education. The significant differences between these statutes create procedural and service gaps that can impede a student’s progress to higher education and independent adulthood.



IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education. The law mandates the development of an IEP that may include specially designed instruction, curriculum modifications and related services tailored to each student's needs. Beginning at age 14 in Virginia, schools must implement transition services and annually update the student's Transition IEP to address academic preparation, employment readiness and independent-living skills.

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in higher education and requires institutions to provide "reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids or services." However, unlike IDEA, the ADA does not obligate colleges or universities to modify curricula or academic standards. Postsecondary institutions may deny accommodations if they can demonstrate that such changes would "fundamentally alter" the nature of a course, program or service.

The sharp contrast between IDEA's proactive, individualized support model and the ADA's more limited accommodation framework creates potential barriers during the transition to higher education. Students accustomed to IEP-driven supports in K-12 settings may encounter reduced services and different documentation requirements in college. When transition planning is incomplete or when students lack strong self-advocacy and independent-living skills, these differences can result in unmet needs and decreased educational persistence.

Addressing this transition gap requires coordinated efforts among secondary schools, families and postsecondary institutions. Effective transition planning, clear communication about legal differences, and the development of self-determination skills are critical to ensuring that students with disabilities are prepared to navigate the higher education environment successfully.

Therefore, the scope of this study examines the Transition IEP, timely provision of transition services and accommodations. The previous work from Senate Bill 21/ House Bill 509 positioned SCHEV to undertake the charge of this legislation, report on the findings and make recommendations.



Process

Workgroup Formation

HB1805 directed SCHEV to consult representatives of public institutions and secondary school personnel. SCHEV staff issued a request to participate for the HB1805 workgroup (WG) members in May to previous workgroup members from SB21/HB509, Disabilities Access to Higher Education Advisory Committee members, Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) in Virginia public institution members, and the Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partners (VHEAP) public institution members. SCHEV conducted outreach via the Instructional Programs Advisory Committee (IPAC) for public institutions who did not respond to the initial outreach, including Norfolk State University and Virginia State University. Secondary school personnel outreach included transition coordinators in the Statewide Transition Leadership Academy (Cohort 1) through VCU's Center on Transition Innovations, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programming (GEAR UP) transition or special education staff, and outreach through William and Mary's Training and Technical Assistance Center.

Evaluation of the Transition IEP

The WG Plan developed based upon the focus of the charge:

- (i) study the quality and consistency of transition individualized education programs.
- (ii) make recommendations on strategies for improving the standardization of transition IEPs or transition sections.

To do this, the two June WG meetings focused on general information gathering from secondary school personnel and higher education staff members. Participants shared their interpretation of the barriers to transition as well as the quality concerns of transition individualized education programs. Therefore, the subsequent WG meetings in July focused on recommendations for strategies related to (i) the timely provision of transition services and (ii) the timely provision of accommodations. As a result, a document of questions was created (see Appendix B) that may be adopted into the required transition planning document outlined in code § 22.1-217.2.

In August, the final comments surrounding the document were recorded as well as any additional commentary on the general work. The last WG meeting concluded with an



examination of a potential summary of performance document that can be included in the Virginia IEP system or utilized in divisions not using the system (Appendix C).

EMERGENT THEMES

Findings

This section outlines emergent themes from the secondary school staff and the public institutions of higher education accessibility staff. The emergent themes include one overarching finding in addition to three key findings.

Overarching Finding

The IEP is often used to establish proof of a disability in higher education along with a student in-take interview. However, some students do not have the self-advocacy skills they need to communicate the impact of their disability on their education. So, disability services office (DSO) professionals seek current, substantial functional limitation information in the IEP, but this information is often not present. Therefore, the professionals will seek additional documentation to establish the functional limitations of the student to provide reasonable accommodations to reduce access barriers. The lack of information in the IEP can result in delays in providing accommodations while additional documentation is sought to detail the student's functional limitations. Seeking out providers for additional documentation to prove a disability and a student's functional limitation(s) may also be a significant financial barrier or burden on the student. However, there are spaces in the IEP where this information could potentially be provided.

Key Findings

The higher education DSO professionals as well as the secondary school staff members noted similar findings to the barriers present in [SCHEV's Eligibility for Disability Services: Report on Public Institution Processes, Barriers and Recommendations \(HB509/SB21 report\)](#) from September 2024.

Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities face specific challenges to accessing higher education, but institutions of higher education (including community colleges) enroll these students in higher education to audit courses rather than seek degree attainment. Institutional barriers and programmatic barriers exist for these students to receive federal financial aid and access services at the DSO as well as to pursue a degree or certificate.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) create specific differences in primary/secondary education and higher education that can be difficult for families to comprehend if they are not informed prior to enrolling in higher education. “Functional limitations” and “fundamental alterations” are two key concepts used in higher education that can be new language for students and families to learn and understand.

Barriers

The workgroup identified six key areas that create barriers for students and families in secondary education. These barriers impede the transition to postsecondary education and delay accommodation determinations by disability/accessibility offices at institutions of higher education. The following section outlines these barriers, followed by recommendations and next steps for addressing them.

The six barriers are:

1. Individualized Education Plans and the Transfer of Rights
2. Timely Provision of Transition Services
3. Timely Provision of Accommodations
4. Programmatic or Institutional Barriers
5. Barriers for Families
6. Collaboration

1. Individualized Education Plan and Transfer of Rights

Institutions often use the IEP to verify a disability, but the document rarely includes sufficient information to identify functional limitations—particularly for students with medical diagnoses. IEPs typically contain more information than higher education institutions need for accommodation determinations but often omit key details needed to understand the underlying impact of the disability. Updated functional limitation information, supported by psychological or educational testing, provides essential evidence for institutions to determine appropriate accommodations.

Transition and transfer-of-rights meetings provide natural opportunities for secondary staff to introduce families to terminology and processes used in higher education. Secondary staff seek clearer guidance from postsecondary institutions on the information needed to ensure timely accommodation determinations.

For students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), these meetings should also include information about available higher education options. Many case managers lack awareness of these pathways, which can prevent students from choosing the right diploma track early in their education. The workgroup noted that IEPs sometimes omit documentation of intellectual disability, which Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs require for eligibility. [IPSE](#) programs constitute college opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to learn alongside peers with and without disabilities.

For all students pursuing higher education, the transfer-of-rights meeting should serve as the point of connection to the disability services office to initiate the accommodation request process at the college or university. Students should receive copies of their IEP and their most recent educational evaluation at that time. Although many secondary staff strive to implement this practice, challenges remain. Clear, accessible procedures posted on institutional websites can guide families and students in the absence of direct communication during these meetings.

2. Provision of Transition Services

Many students delay contacting the disability/accessibility office, waiting until a week or two before classes begin rather than starting the process immediately after confirming enrollment. This delay prevents students from receiving timely accommodations, especially given the large caseloads many counselors manage.

Students entering higher education often lack familiarity with the assistive technologies available on campus. Disability staff must spend additional time training students to use these tools, particularly when they function as accommodations (e.g., screen readers).

Early collaboration with state agencies can improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Agencies such as the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), the Virginia

Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH), and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) provide critical transition support. However, workgroup participants noted challenges in accessing these services, especially in rural areas. Institutions view these agencies as valuable partners and welcome stronger coordination. Collaboration is especially vital for supporting students with IDD in IPSE programs, though it currently varies across institutions. These agencies also can supply up-to-date functional limitation documentation to support accommodation requests.

3. Timely Provision of Accommodations

Some accommodation requests require specific documentation that IEPs do not include, particularly when students seek course substitutions or program modifications. For example, requests to modify science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or foreign language requirements may require documentation beyond the IEP.

The workgroup noted that secondary case managers often lack knowledge about these documentation requirements, while disability/accessibility staff may not fully understand K–12 processes. This gap in understanding hinders communication and delays decisions. Participants emphasized the need to reinforce the principle that “accommodations provide access, not guaranteed success,” which remains a common misconception.

4. Programmatic or Institutional Barriers

Programmatic or institutional barriers exist for both higher education and secondary education in supporting students with disabilities and their families in making a smooth transition to postsecondary education.

Primary and secondary education: By law, public school divisions must designate a staff member responsible for transition services, but responsibilities vary across divisions. High staff turnover and teacher shortages limit institutional knowledge and continuity in supporting students with disabilities. Workgroup members also cited a common misconception that switching a student from an IEP to a 504 Plan in their senior year improves their chances of receiving college accommodations. In fact, the

IEP contains more useful information for disability/accessibility offices than a 504 Plan when the IEP is the appropriate document for the student's educational needs.

Postsecondary education: Disability/accessibility staff balance multiple responsibilities, including supporting students, advising faculty, and training campus personnel on ADA compliance. Many offices lack sufficient staffing to manage large caseloads, leaving limited capacity to attend high school transition events or IEP meetings.

Agency: DARS provides valuable support for students with disabilities in both secondary and postsecondary settings. However, collaboration between DARS counselors, school divisions, and higher education disability staff remains inconsistent. Without a formal process, higher education staff rely on students to initiate contact with DARS, limiting the agency's impact.

5. Barriers for Families

Students entering higher education often lack self-advocacy, self-determination, and self-awareness skills. Many encounter their first opportunity to discuss their disability and its impact during the intake interview with the disability/accessibility office. In secondary school, parents typically serve as the primary advocates, which can make the transition to self-advocacy challenging—especially for students with IDD.

Families also frequently misunderstand the differences between high school and higher education accommodation processes. Some expect IEPs or 504 Plans to transfer automatically, similar to academic transcripts. As a result, students may wait for the disability office to contact them, unaware they must initiate the process. In some cases, parents contact disability offices on behalf of their children or impersonate them, which violates institutional policies requiring student consent. This role reversal can discourage students from seeking accommodations if they feel unprepared to advocate independently.

6. Collaboration



The workgroup provided a valuable opportunity for secondary and postsecondary staff to share best practices and clarify accommodation processes. Participants agreed that continued collaboration would strengthen support for students with disabilities.

Some school divisions with community college navigators already facilitate connections between students and disability offices. Others rely on informal outreach, such as inviting college disability staff to transition fairs or parent information events. Urban and suburban divisions find this easier than rural ones, where geographic distance limits participation. Local community colleges often attend, but four-year institutions may lack the staff or resources to travel. Establishing more formal mechanisms for cross-sector collaboration would help close these gaps and improve continuity of support for students with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The workgroup offers the recommendations below relative to the scope of this bill as it pertains to a student's transition from high school to college and the transition IEP. The VDOE defines [transition](#) as “the process students and their families use to think about life after high school, to identify their desired outcomes, and to plan their community and school experiences to assure that the students acquire the knowledge and skills to achieve their goals.” So, the transition IEP is the document that outlines those goals and aligns accommodations and services to meet the goals. Following the list of recommendations are examples of actions to implement. Specific recommendations incorporate the overarching recommendation with action steps to follow.

Overarching Recommendation

Agency: Two positions at the Virginia Department of Education (a coordinator of transition and planning services and a secondary transition specialist) support transition initiatives and projects in K-12 public education. However, a position does not exist at SCHEV to facilitate these recommendations and lead the collaborative effort in the higher education sector. Creating and funding a dedicated position will be necessary to support the recommendations in this report.

Secondary school: A student who receives services with IEP should not be placed on a 504 Plan as they approach graduation. It does not make them more likely to receive services in higher education and may impede the accommodation and services acquisition process. The



IEP, even when missing data, is a better document for disability/accessibility offices as it contains more data than a 504 Plan.

Higher education: IEPs are accepted as proof of a disability, but specific accommodation requests often require more detailed, current information about functional limitations than the IEP or the student can provide. The workgroup found that including up-to-date functional limitation data—such as educational or psychological evaluation results—in the IEP would help ensure timely delivery of transition services and accommodations.

Student self-advocacy skills need to be developed to have a conversation about their limitations when the current functional limitation information is, especially, not present. The functional limitation information is not deemed current if it hasn't been updated within three years of submitting the IEP to the institution of higher education.

Recommendations:

1. Continue collaboration of secondary school staff and higher education staff on “My Summary of Performance” (see Appendix C) to reach a consensus on a document that may be widely used.
2. Incorporate the information provided on the “Documentation and Process FAQ” document (Appendix B) into Transition IEP meetings or other appropriate events with students and parents/caregivers.
3. Modify or adopt best practices on Transition aligned to the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) and Council on Exceptional Children (CEC) national standards into Virginia teacher preparation programs. Continue to improve the transition process through state-wide transition initiatives for teachers and students as well as collaborative partnerships with state agencies and other programs.
4. Examine resource allocation and best practices to create more higher education programs for students with Developmental and/or Intellectual Disabilities that leads to more students leaving programs with a credential or job.
5. Modify Virginia code § 23.1-401.3 to include the word “provisional or temporary academic accommodations.”

1) Recommendation: Continue to develop “My Summary of Performance” to include more input from K-12 staff members, higher education staff and students.

Participants in the workgroup indicated that the IEP is a large document that contains many pages of unnecessary information for higher education. Having a modified section in the IEP

with all the appropriate information for higher education may allow for a smoother transition to higher education. The workgroup created a draft document, “My Summary of Performance” (see Appendix C). This document requires the student to build their self-awareness skills as they contemplate the limitations they experience due to their disability and requires the transition specialist or case manager (whomever knows the student best) to input current and substantial functional limitation information. This document also needs to be further developed so it is applicable and useful for students who are not transitioning to postsecondary education.

Action 1: Create a new position at SCHEV to work with partners to update “My Summary of Performance” to a final state agreed upon by stakeholders.

- The SCHEV staff member in this dedicated position may work with SCHEV’s Disabilities Access to Higher Education committee to provide additional feedback from other institutions not in this workgroup. Their perspectives will be essential for updating “My Summary of Performance” (see Appendix C) to a more final state.
- The SCHEV staff member will work in partnership with VDOE transition staff and K-12 staff members to solicit input on the document as well as the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) and student input through “I’m Determined” (Determinators) and SCHEV’s Student Advisory Committee members.
- In updating the “My Summary of Performance,” input should be sought from stakeholders to determine its applicability for those not pursuing postsecondary education. Any modifications or additions that need to be made to enhance the universality for all pathways should be included. While the scope of this bill and this report is for postsecondary education, “My Summary of Performance” should be applicable to all existing students in the public school system.

Action 2: Update “Virginia’s [College Guide](#) for Students with Disabilities” with VDOE, SCHEV, secondary school staff and division leadership.

- The dedicated SCHEV position will work to update specific portions of the document in collaboration with VDOE. They will attend the VDOE work sessions to relay higher education information. The updates will be shared to the Disabilities Higher Education Access Committee. Should these secondary education or division leadership members wish to join the SCHEV Disabilities Higher Education Access Committee, they will be encouraged to do so.



- Student input from the Disabilities Higher Education Access Committee and SCHEV's Student Advisory Committee will be requested in updating this document as well as PEATC.

Action 3: Use the “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities” as a technical assistance tool for case managers or transition specialists to complete the “My Summary of Performance” document.

- The updated guide, which will include the “Documentation and Process FAQ” information in Appendix B, will combine input from both higher education and secondary education to better support families. The guide has not been updated since January 2003. Once the “My Summary of Performance” document is finalized, guidance on how students and special education staff should complete it will also be added to the resource.
- The guide will include examples showing what an “acceptable” and an “unacceptable” version of the “My Summary of Performance” document for higher education look like, along with guidance on how to correct common issues. Additional training videos may also be developed to help users complete the document accurately.
- These documents will be updated as necessary.

Action 4: Incorporate the finalized “My Summary of Performance” into the Virginia IEP System and distribute to school division special education directors, along with any necessary technical assistance. In addition, share “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities” with families and transition specialists to support effective planning and transition.

- The materials should be posted in an accessible format for students, families and educators across multiple sites such as the VDOE Special Education website and SCHEV's, family-facing, Level Up Virginia website.
- Special education directors and transition specialists should be informed of the document upon its adoption into the VA IEP System with a memo from the Virginia Department of Education.
- Adoption of this document needs to happen immediately upon its completion to ensure better transition procedures into higher education for students with disabilities.

Action 5: Create a digital repository for students to keep their documentation.



- Whether this is through Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, or a separate platform that maintains privacy and confidentiality, students need to take responsibility for this documentation. Once the “My Summary of Performance” is completed, case managers or special education staff should provide students with a paper copy of the document. A digital copy of the document also should be provided to the student during the transfer of rights meeting or before graduating from high school. A digital copy of the document ensures students have access to their necessary paperwork should they lose a paper copy or need to upload the file or email the file to a disability/accessibility office.

2) Recommendation: Adopt the “Documentation and Process FAQ” document (Appendix B) into the Transition IEP process.

This document was written collaboratively between higher education and secondary school staff. The questions and answers are meant to be a guide to ensure a smoother transition process from high school to postsecondary education for both educators, special education staff members, families and students. It is meant to serve as the information provided to families in accordance with § 22.1-217.2 for special education transition planning and materials Part A and B.

Action 1: Incorporate the information provided in the “Documentation and Process FAQ” document (Appendix B) into the Transition IEP process immediately.

- The information in the FAQ should be incorporated into meetings and communications with families as soon as possible, including the first Transition IEP meeting. It will eventually be included in the “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities;” however that will take time.

Action 2: Support DSO staff members through financial resources to perform the necessary evaluations.

- Because the information must be shared with families, students, case managers, and other special education staff, it will take time to incorporate the necessary evaluation data into the Transition IEP and complete the “My Summary of Performance” document. Increasing funding for disability services offices to conduct evaluations internally—or partnering with campus counseling departments—would allow these offices to obtain current, detailed functional limitation data without placing a financial burden on students. This approach could also improve the timeliness of services, as families would not need to find external

evaluators or wait for reports. The results could be sent directly to the Disability/Accessibility Office through campus counseling resources or staff.

- Secondary school staff also noted that those equipped to perform and analyze evaluations such as a school psychologist are not always available to update this information solely for a student to have available paperwork in higher education. Therefore, the student and family have to seek out an outside provider for this information.

Action 3: In developing the “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities” include information in Appendix B in the review process and update with more input from higher education.

- The information already provided by institutions of higher education as listed in Appendix B (“Documentation and Process FAQ”) should be implemented into “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities” as it was produced by both higher education and secondary school staff. This is a natural location for this information and may be expanded upon appropriately in a more formal document.

3) Recommendation: Improve transition services for secondary school students by continuing effective processes and implementing new initiatives.

[SCHEV’s 2024 report](#) as well as this study both indicate that transition is an area of concern and requires accountability from IHEs and high schools in order to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities in postsecondary education. The recommendations in that report still remain true. This section contains some additional or new recommendations to better adhere to the findings of this report.

Action 1: Build a transition teacher preparation degree or certificate program that meets the standards set by the Division on Career Development and Transition and the Council on Exceptional Children and modify current teacher preparation degree programs to meet the standards.

- To be nationally recognized as an approved program, The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) and the Council on Exceptional Children (CEC) require specific criteria. Virginia, currently, does not have any nationally recognized programs. Individuals may pursue their own studies but must adhere to the [standards set forth by the programs](#) to be certified under both entities. As well, since the programs are currently out-of-state, learners must pay out-of-state tuition fees, which can be a deterrent or a barrier to those wanting to pursue further education and certifications in this area. VCU currently has a [Disability Studies](#)

[Certificate](#). Perhaps, this program can be adjusted or modified so that it meets the required standards for DCDT and CEC. At the very minimum, those serving as Transition Specialists in public school divisions should be provided with the opportunity to grow their knowledge and professional capabilities with further educational opportunities or professional development.

- Current teacher preparation programs must include more information related to transition best practices aligned to the Council on Exception Children standards, and include relevant, Virginia-specific information. Degree programs should have comprehensive content on IEP completion aligned with the requirements established by VDOE as well as best practices for specially designed instruction for each of the disability type recognized by VDOE. Continuing education credits should be required for practicing special educators and transition specialists on updates to the Transition IEP and updates to best practices that support transition.
- While the creation of a new program aligned to the Division on Career Development and Transition and Council on Exceptional Children will take some time, it is best to continue the professional development opportunities that are currently offered through the Virginia Department of Education. The Aspiring Special Educators Leadership Academy (ASELA) continues to provide professional development through many cohorts and serves as an avenue of professional development regarding transition. As well, the Center on Transition Innovations at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in partnership with VDOE started [the Statewide Transition Leadership Academy](#) (STLA) to support more transition initiatives and build knowledge across the state. The second cohort has just begun, so continuing this initiative will be essential in further developing leadership and knowledge as well as communicating any best practices or updates to transition that are enacted according to the findings and recommendations in this report.
- For those supporting students in special education and not provided the opportunity to learn in ASELA or STLA, The Technical Training and Assistance Centers (T/TAC) provide professional development opportunities to improve teaching strategies and knowledge around transition. School divisions need to work with their regional T/TAC to enhance their professional capabilities. VDOE may look into how to compel school divisions to work with T/TAC, particularly on transition, in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Action 2: Fund the position for a dedicated Transition Specialist in every division.



- Continuing the recommendation from SCHEV's previous report, a transition specialist must be identified in every school division. To improve transition outcomes for students with disabilities, it is essential that staff be dedicated to this important step. Dedicated transition specialists should be certified to provide transition planning aligned with national standards: 1) Transition specialist standards; 2) Division on Career Development and Transition accredited programs; and 3) Division on Career Development and Transition certification.
- The transition specialist should be fully dedicated to working with families at the beginning of their special education journey even if a student starts receiving services in primary school. They should work with the family on building self-determination skills into the home as well. A student needs to understand their disability and limitations for the timely provision of services in postsecondary education. Particular attention should be paid to promoting the appropriate diploma track for the student, including highlighting specific credit accommodations that can be utilized for a standard or an advanced studies diploma.

Action 3: Establish relationships with institutions of higher education and the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), as well as securing collaboration that should occur between DARS and secondary school staff, families and students.

- In this workgroup, institutions of higher education indicated that a significant group of students are not connected to the services that DARS provides. While some institutions of higher education work with DARS to connect them to students, others do not have the relationship with regional DARS counselors. Establishing a formal process for collaboration will enhance the access to transition services and supports that students may need. Similar models have been explored in other states, [such as Ohio](#), and may be used as a model for enacting similar policies in Virginia.

Action 4: Improve training for DSO staff as well as higher education professors and staff, teaching assistants, and student workers.

- Institutional representatives on the workgroup emphasized the need for additional training for new disability/accessibility staff, particularly on K–12 special education processes. Such training would support a smoother transition into higher education. Training should include techniques and frameworks for conducting intake meetings, as well as clear explanations of how K–12 and higher education processes differ.



- Disability/accessibility staff also identified that career coaches or community college navigators working in high schools should receive training on disability services at the college level. Similarly, training for admissions counselors should have an accessibility component to it, so they may speak about services available to students at their respective institutions.
- Similar to the previous SCHEV report, disability counselors in higher education mentioned the need for improved Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance training for professors and higher education staff, such as teaching assistants and student workers. The requirements for training on this topic vary by institution and may not be annual. Required annual training as well as updated to include new ADA Title II regulations (related to digital accessibility) will ensure that professors and staff are aware of the legal rights of students under ADA, their own protections under ADA, and assist with the timely provision of accommodations barring any negative discussions or non-compliance from these individuals.

Action 5: Promote current resources while building a video library in universal language on transition topics related to higher education.

- [Virginia Commonwealth University's Center on Transition Innovations \(CTI\)](#) produces many resources and provides professional development on transition to students, families, and teachers. This is an excellent resource. [Level Up Virginia](#) also contains many resources for students, families and educators on higher education and disability. However, it is difficult to determine how many families, students and special education staff members are aware of these resources. Continued promotion of these resources needs to occur, particularly when a video library is created.
- Creating additional videos on transition topics that use universal language may be beneficial. These videos should be short (3-5 minutes) and accessible to educators and families. They should contain information related to higher education, documentation and the differences between K-12 and higher education for a student with a disability. One video should also reference a complete transition IEP that is acceptable to a majority of higher education institutions as well as one that needs to be improved and strategies to improve the document. One video also should explain how to complete the "My Summary of Performance" document (Appendix C) once it is ready for statewide adoption.



4) Recommendation: Expand Access to and Information on Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs.

[Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs](#) (IPSEs) serve students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, but exist primarily in the Central and Northern part of Virginia. Along with geographic barriers, financial barriers may exist for these programs. In order for a student to use federal financial aid, the program must be designated as a Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP). Not all of Virginia's programs have this designation, so students and families either have to fund their tuition or forgo the opportunity.

Action 1: Inform families, students and educators on postsecondary opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- While limited, Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program options are available to students. Making sure that special education staff members are aware of these options is the first step as they are the families' primary contact. Posting this information broadly and creating collaborative partnerships with school divisions also is key to ensuring that families and educators have the knowledge they need to make informed decisions.
- Special education staff and division transition specialists should start sharing this information as early as elementary school to help families make informed decisions about appropriate diploma pathways and credit accommodations. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be involved in their educational journey to build their capacity for self-determination and raise awareness around options available to them after high school.

Action 2: Expand the diploma types that are accepted at established Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs.

- Information provided to students and families about Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Programs should also include details on the appropriate diploma track required for participation.
- In recent years, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) encouraged school divisions to move away from the Applied Studies Diploma track for students with more support needs and utilize credit accommodations to move students onto a Standard Diploma track. A Standard Diploma is a federally recognized diploma, which provides more postsecondary education options. However, some IPSE programs continue only to accept Applied Studies Diplomas. Established IPSE programs need to update their requirements to match the efforts by VDOE. This



will ensure that an additional barrier is not created for families and students in limiting options.

Action 3: Study ways to expand IPSE programming to more institutions of higher education. A study should include all six of the objectives below to ensure its effectiveness:

1. Study the needs and barriers of existing programs to identify opportunities for enhancement.
2. Study avenues to expand student access to state-level financial aid, including scholarships for students enrolled in inclusive postsecondary education programs and align to the federal guidance for [Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Education Program eligibility definition outlined by National Association of Financial Aid Administrators \(NAFSA\)](#).
3. Study strategies to increase awareness of program options among K–12 students, families and educators to strengthen the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.
4. Study barriers to interagency collaboration and propose solutions to improve coordination across agencies.
5. Study sustainable funding models to ensure long-term program success.
6. Study methods for consistent statewide data collection on student enrollment, completion and employment outcomes in inclusive postsecondary education programs.

5) Recommendation: Modify Existing Code Language.

Action 1: Modify Virginia code language.

HB1805 established in § 23.1-401.3 for colleges and universities to provide temporary accommodations to students who seek additional documentation. This clause should include “provisional or temporary academic accommodations...” to read,

In the event that a student’s disability or need for accommodations has not been properly documented and additional time is needed to conduct the process by which the public institution of higher education determines eligibility for accommodations, the public institution of higher education shall grant such student provisional or temporary academic accommodations while such determination process continues.

- Institutions of higher education note that they are unable to provide temporary housing and dining accommodations to students. The clarity in the code language will allow institutions to offer that opportunity.

NEXT STEPS

This report finds that inconsistencies in the information provided to higher education—within Individualized Education Plans and through the interactive process at public colleges and universities—slow or hinder timely provision of transition services and accommodations for students. The lack of specific, relevant details within IEPs needed to determine appropriate services further delays the transition and accommodation process. To address these issues, the report outlines steps to improve consistency and support a smoother transition for students.

The State Council of Higher Education should have a dedicated position to support the work in this report. That position in collaboration with SCHEV's Higher Education Access for Disabilities Committee, additional stakeholders in secondary education and the Virginia Department of Education will update “Virginia’s College Guide for Students with Disabilities.” As well, they will finalize “My Summary of Performance” with input and discussion from secondary and higher education staff as well as current college/university students.

However, some of these recommendations require additional resources or consideration from the Virginia Department of Education and legislators. The Virginia Department of Education might consider how they may formally incorporate the points listed in the “Documentation and Process FAQ” (Appendix B) into the Transition IEP process to share with students and families.

As the next General Assembly session approaches, legislators might consider how to expand access to Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs in Virginia and examine ways to alleviate financial barriers to access for families. Lastly, legislators might consider whether or how to require the adoption of the SCHEV Best Practice Guidelines for Accommodation Practices and subsequent review tool and mandate required trainings at the higher education level to support students with disabilities for staff members, which includes incorporating



Universal-Design for Learning practices and aligning coursework to the ADA Title II updates required by April 2026.

Should federal funding supporting GEAR UP Virginia as well as other programming at the Virginia Department of Education be eliminated, the General Assembly may consider supplementing the state education budget to continue activities related to transition for students with disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SCHEV would like to express sincere gratitude for the time and effort dedicated to this workgroup and acknowledge: 1) The Virginia Department of Education and VCU Center on Transition Innovations' Statewide Transition Leadership Academy cohort participants who took time out of their summer vacation to participate and contribute, 2) the public college and university Disability or Accessibility directors and staff members for the amount of time dedicated to this study in addition to their preparations for a new academic year, 3) The GEAR UP Virginia program for providing a connection to secondary school staff members who participated in this workgroup, 4) any secondary school staff member not included in the list previously for giving up their summer break to dedicate time to this workgroup, 5) Virginia Department of Education staff and SCHEV staff who contributed to the workgroup and agreed to continue working collaboratively to achieve the shared goal of better access to higher education for students with disabilities.

APPENDIX A: PROCESS

HB1805 Workgroup

SCHEV staff invited all of the interested professionals to participate in the workgroup (WG) with the breakdowns as follows:

- a. Thirty-eight workgroup members in total.
- b. Secondary school representation included (with varying titles in similar roles): Special Education Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Director of Student Services, Special Education Resource Specialist, Lead Transition Mentor Teacher, Supervisor of Special Education, Transition Specialist, Special Education Teacher, Director of Special Education from 14 different school divisions across the state of Virginia. These included Westmoreland, Lancaster, Nottoway, Halifax, Hampton, Bedford, York, Williamsburg-James City, Richmond City, Chesterfield, Caroline, Northampton, Mecklenburg and Spotsylvania.
- c. Community college personnel participation included: Germanna, Rappahannock, Tidewater and Piedmont Virginia Community College.
- d. Baccalaureate institutions included: Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Mary Washington, Old Dominion University, UVA Wise, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, James Madison University, Radford, George Mason University and William & Mary.

One Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program Coordinator

- e. Two-year and four-year public higher education institutional representation included: Assistant Vice President for Retention and Transitions, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Experience and Strategic Initiatives, Disability Services/Accessibility Services Directors or staff and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinators.
- f. Advocacy organization representation included: Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partners and Virginia AHEAD.
- g. Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services Transition and Education Services Manager.
- h. Virginia Department of Education Transition Specialist and VDOE/SCHEV Postsecondary Access and Success Specialist.

- i. Supporting SCHEV staff: Associate Director for Strategic Planning and Policy Studies, GEAR UP Virginia Director.

The workgroup convened twice a month for a total of six meetings. Each meeting spanned one and a half hours.

- 1) Meeting dates: June 9, June 30, July 3, July 23, August 11, August 28, 2025
- 2) All meetings were recorded and transcribed.
- 3) There were varying levels of participation for each workgroup, but participants had the opportunity to respond in writing via email when the WG notes were sent post-meeting and before the subsequent one.
- 4) Participants also responded via Teams chat during the meeting, and those reflections were captured in the WG notes.

For higher education, SCHEV staff sought additional input from Disability Access to Higher Education Advisory members not on the workgroup (including students). For additional input for the K-12 and/or secondary school perspective, additional input was sought from additional VDOE staff and Technical and Training Center personnel from Virginia Tech and VCU.

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESS FAQ

-What does higher education want secondary school students to know about documentation?

Understanding your disability is key. Can you state your diagnosis/disability and how it impacts you functionally.

The IEP acts as confirmation of the diagnosis/disability and should provide clear “evidence” of your verbal statements identifying the disability through evaluations performed in high school, the date of the test, the provider, and identifying the functional limitations stated by the student. A functional limitation should be noted if it currently impacts the student with their daily living activities like learning and how much it impacts them.

If a student states a disability that is not listed in the IEP or documentation provided during the intake process, additional documentation will be needed to confirm, particularly if the student is unable to articulate the disability’s impact on them.

-What does higher education want secondary school students to know about accommodations?

Accommodations provide access, but do not guarantee success in higher education. Access in higher education as it pertains to a disability means removing barriers that impact a person’s everyday life. The barriers will vary from person to person, so accommodations are specific to a person’s disability. Removing barriers to access as well does not provide a student with a disability specially designed instruction like in high school.

Supports are in place to help you be successful in higher education (ex: tutoring center, counseling office) and those are not always an access need.

Your IEP is not going to provide enough information when requesting emotional support animals or specific housing requests, so additional documentation will be needed.

Some accommodations received in high school may exist to all college students. For example, tutoring, writing assistance and counseling services may be accessed at a university or college with existing services and are available to students with and without a disability.

Some accommodations received in high school may alter the college course, and thus, are not a permitted accommodation under ADA. The college/university disability personnel will make that determination based upon the student’s courses, disability and accommodation requests. One example,

modifications of a course are typically determined as a fundamental alteration in college but may have been allowable in high school.

-What does higher education want secondary school students to know about requesting services?

Starting the intake process as soon as the student puts down the deposit will help with the timely provision of services.

The disability services office will meet with the student at any time regarding accommodations but housing (for example) is a finite resource.

There may be longer wait times if information is not provided on a timely basis for the DSO.

Depending on the college/university, dining accommodations can be a long process (meeting with dining services and the disability service office) and medical paperwork may be required.

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) are not service/guide dogs and an institution of higher education policy may be explicit as to what or what doesn't qualify. ESAs typically serve a "supportive role" and not an "active role" but should be a "family domesticated animal." Student communication at the intake process about the ESA is key to explain the exact function and role they provide for the student.

ESAs can be removed from a student's room if not properly cared for. Allowing for an ESA does not mean that a student gets a single room. Safety considerations will also be made when considering an ESA and the "type" of animal that qualifies as one.

-What information do we need to have in the summary of performance or the IEP to assist higher education better?

Testing provider, date of evaluations, disability, brief description of functional limitations, helpful information in an evaluation (processing speed, working memory) and documenting all the disabilities that impact the student.

Identifying additional concerns for other disabilities and why it wasn't included.

-What do secondary school personnel want to generally communicate to their students about transitioning to higher education?

Students should request their IEP before graduation if not provided to them by their case managers, but can reach out to their former case manager if they need additional documentation for college.

Secondary students need to understand that they will be expected to meet the same standards, complete the same assignments, etc., as students without disabilities, though they may do them in different ways.

-For students pursuing applied studies diploma or those with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability who may find a traditional two/four-year degree pathway too challenging, what are their options?

Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs (IPSE) are postsecondary education pathways specifically designed for students with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities. There are several IPSE programs available in the state of Virginia. Students also may take classes at a community college, however, it may be difficult for them to receive accommodations through the disability/accessibility resource office since they are not a degree seeking student. Financial aid could also be a barrier if a family is unable to afford the tuition. [See a list of IPSE programs and learn more about financial aid.](#)

APPENDIX C: MY SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to capture the necessary data from the student and the school in order to promote better access to higher education. This summary of performance should include information from both the student and the school. Disability evaluation information should be included to the best extent possible to promote the timely provision of accommodations in higher education.

Documentation to establish a disability should include:

- Psychological/cognitive
- Neuropsychological
- Medical
- Communication

Additional documentation may include:

- Achievement or Academic testing
- Adaptive Behavior
- Social/Interpersonal observation
- ACT/AEPT Transition
- Vocational Assessment
- Community-Based Assessment
- Student Assessment
- Assistive Technology
- Independent Living Inventory
- Other

Section 1: To be completed by the student with school staff supporting

Background Information	Date Completed:
------------------------	-----------------

Student Full Name:	Date of Birth:	Year of Graduation or Exit:
Student's Current Address:		
(P.O. Box or Street)		(City, State, Zip)
Student Telephone Number:		
Primary Language or Communication Mode (ex: ASL, communication board):		
If English is not the student's primary language, what services were provided for the student as an English language learner?		
Specific Disability or Disabilities (circle all the categories listed on the IEP):		
Autism Spectrum Disorders Specific Learning Disability* Developmental Delay Emotional Disability* Intellectual Disability Sensory Disabilities* Visual Impairment Multiple Disabilities* Orthopedic Impairment Other Health Impairment* Speech-Language Impairment Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)		

*If you circled any of the categories with an asterisk beside them above, please specify further the specific disability (ex: dyslexia or a reading difficulty, deafness)

Section 2: To be completed by the school

School Produced Summary of My Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

This section should contain the most recent evaluation data for the documented disability. If this student has an intellectual disability or developmental delay, please include the most appropriate evaluation data to demonstrate the disability.

In certain cases, additional documentation that is not included in this section may be required.

Type of documentation	Assessment Name	Date(s) administered	Result
			Adult scaled norm: Yes or No
			Adult scaled norm: Yes or No

			Adult scaled norm: Yes or No
			Adult scaled norm: Yes or No

Section 3: To be completed by the school

The School's Perception of My Disability			
This section should be completed by an educator and provide an impact of the disability on the academic achievement and functional performance of the student with comments regarding successful accommodations and support.			
Area of Function	Observed or Documented (circle)	Rating (circle)	Description of accommodations and support (include supports that were considered but not implemented)
Self-determination skills: problem-solving, choice making, decision making, goal setting and attainment, self-regulation, self-advocacy, internal locus of control, self-efficacy, self-awareness	Known Unknown	- Needs urgent improvement - Needs development - No significant strength or weakness - A serious strength - Highly developed	

Academic	Known	• Needs urgent improvement • Needs development • No significant strength or weakness • A serious strength • Highly developed	
Learning	Unknown	• Needs urgent improvement • Needs development • No significant strength or weakness • A serious strength • Highly developed	
Communication	Known	• Needs urgent improvement • Needs development	
	Unknown		

		• No significant strength or weakness • A serious strength • Highly developed	
Social	Known Unknown	• Needs urgent improvement • Needs development • No significant strength or weakness • A serious strength • Highly developed	
Physical	Known Unknown	• Needs urgent improvement • Needs development • No significant strength or weakness • A serious strength	

How My Disability Impacts Me	
My disability is:	
My challenges	My disability impacts my job or volunteer opportunities.
	Circle: YES NO
	Explain why:
	My disability impacts my social life or recreation time.
	Circle: YES NO
	Explain why:

	My disability impacts my ability to learn in an academic setting. Circle: YES NO Explain why:	
	My disability impacts my ability to live in my community. Circle: YES NO Explain why:	
	My disability impacts my daily living activities (describe how next to each one you're impacted by)	-parking
		-personal care needs (ex: bathing, dental hygiene)
		-driving
-cooking		
	-laundry	
My supports	The supports or accommodations that helped me with my job or volunteer opportunities:	
	The supports or accommodations that helped me with my social life or recreation time:	

A list of the supports or accommodations that helped me academically.	
Setting: Examples: Quiet environment, separate testing environment	
Response: Example: Extended time on tests	
Timing/Scheduling: Example: Flexible attendance	
Instruction: Example: Note-taking assistance	
Assistive Technology Example: Screen Reader	
The supports or accommodations that helped me access my community:	
The supports or accommodations that helped me access my daily life: (describe how next to each one you're impacted by)	-parking
	-personal care needs (ex: bathing, dental hygiene)
	-driving

	-cooking
	-laundry
What strategies were tried but did not help?	

Team Participant Signatures:

Title:	Name:
Student	
Special Education Teacher	
School Diagnostician	
District Representative	
Other Service Provider	

APPENDIX D: WORKGROUP NOTES

SCHEV HB 1805 Study DRAFT Notes

Study Bill Language:

2. That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (the Council) shall, in consultation with representatives of public institutions of higher education and public secondary schools in the Commonwealth, (i) study the quality and consistency of transition individualized education programs (IEPs) developed and implemented for students with disabilities across the Commonwealth that are

dedicated to establishing the postsecondary transition services needed by students with disabilities (transition IEPs) or contain sections that are dedicated to establishing the postsecondary transition services needed by students with disabilities (transition sections) and (ii) make recommendations on strategies for improving the standardization of transition IEPs or transition sections contained in IEPs to help facilitate the timely provision of transition services and accommodations for students with disabilities by public institutions of higher education across the Commonwealth. The Council shall submit to the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the House Committee on Education by November 1, 2025, a report on its findings and recommendations.

See full text of the bill here: [1071952.PDF](#)

June 9 and 30 Summary Report with Barriers provided in more detail below:

- Summary page or a thorough summary of performance in the IEP identifying the student's disability and the impact of the disability.
- The IHE needs to know how the disability impacts the functional performance of the student, which they often get this information from the evaluation data.
- More collaboration with K-12 in a way that's not a burden.
- Students and families don't understand the differences (ADA vs. IDEA and higher ed vs. high school), so the student doesn't always come with the right documentation and the documentation can be very costly to produce.
- Students need to build better self-advocacy skills.
- Expand ADA Training for: professors, students, parents, staff and teacher preparation programs.
- There are misconceptions about the transferability of 504s and IEPs from high school to college. Do not push students out of an IEP to a 504 as it does not make them more likely to get accommodations in college or ease the process. Also, students may not reach out for services because they don't think they can get services.

Important Barriers and Limitations to Note for the Final Report

Functional Barriers

- For DSOs, timing is key. There are a large group of students asking the questions in the first two weeks; staffing is focused during that time frame on accommodations.

- Housing accommodations - information needs to be shared right away.
- Different accommodations for academics vs. housing, for example.
- Not every secondary school has a dedicated Transition Specialist because of staffing.
- Secondary school staff - turnover, new teachers, understanding the ability and putting it in the IEP - is not always there.
- Something that came from higher ed that helped the teachers writing the IEP to include would be key.
- Technology- differences in technology in K-12 and higher education.
- Geography - rural students are less likely to go and seek outside opportunities.
- Affordability of programs.
- Scholarship documentation requirements.
- 504 and IEP misconceptions - a 504 does not make it more likely a student will get services.
- Training issues in teacher prep programs and with college staff.

Barriers for Families

- Level of awareness for families as to what services are available in higher education as they are going through the process.
- Get connected to DARS in high school and have school divisions grow the connections to DARS.
- Families don't understand the differences between higher ed and IEPs; hard for the families to understand what it looks like going forward in college.
- Lack of self-awareness, self-advocacy skills and self-determination skills for the student with over-involvement from the parent acting as their child's voice.
- Need for resiliency in the process.
- Transition preparedness and awareness should start early to make students and families familiar with their options post-high school and to be sure they are on the diploma track appropriate for their post-high school goals. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs should be promoted in this early awareness of high school



transition for families. As well, this early outreach and exposure to more programs beyond high school could assist with rural students who have limited exposure outside their community.

- Perspective student webinars with disability support offices for families to have conversations about resources and processes.

Create Opportunities for Collaboration

- Invite outside agencies to IEP meetings to promote vocational rehab and outside services.
- DSOs may not be able to attend transition IEP meetings because of the size of their region but can still be invited to attend.
- Create opportunities where postsecondary staff engage with students and can share with the student what they will need as documentation to transition to higher ed.
- Have conversations about what is required by law in higher education and what is doable in terms of accommodations in higher education according to the law.
- DSOs can participate in Transition Nights to share information with families (Ex: TCC and GMU).
- RCC - using your high school navigator, connecting the navigator to those students to aid with transition.
- Utilize PEATC often as well as create SPED/Transition parent groups for IHEs to share information.
- Bring the IHE DSO staff into secondary activities (assemblies, classroom presentations, sporting events/practices) to share information with students.
- Utilize virtual opportunities to share information with families.
- Invite IHEs into preservice training so they can share with Transition staff about higher education generally and the accommodations process.
- Utilize admissions reps in informing families - provide the admissions representatives with enough information to share with families regarding connecting to accommodations and DSOs.

- Can the college and the school system allow for a release of documents regarding their testing? If the student agrees on a form or in an intake, will this help with more collaboration?

Differences in ADA vs. IDEA

- Stronger data requirements and better documentation guidelines from the IHEs for the secondary schools to ensure a smoother transition to higher ed.
- Community college level - maybe a little more relaxed on accepting documentation, having a process that provides acceptable documentation for four-year partners will work for community college.
- VCU: Spend less time on establishing a disability and more time on establishing the functional limitations and impact of the disability on the student.
- IEP is a different kind of document compared to the accommodations letter; contents are not always necessary to the review of the document; a lot of info there that's not needed in higher education.
- Virtual or asynchronous training or promotion of existing resources on transition for case managers/special education staff at the K-12 level on this topic.
- Handout that can be attached to a student's IEP explaining the differences as well or a student training that they have to watch before their transition meeting.
- Improve upon dedicated staff to transition in high schools.
- Students don't always have an understanding of their IEP and disability as well as the accommodations that they have. They are used to process from K-12.
- Lack of understanding in weakness vs. disability. (IHEs approve for disability-specific accommodations not for weakness.)
- A lot of expectations in college around disclosure. Sometimes the first meeting on their disability is in the DSO. And, then they have to go ahead and meet with professors. Don't always have the fluency to have that conversation. Resources around disclosure as a concept to students.
- Concept of a fundamental alteration - that line is in a much different place in higher education and subjective.

Study Bill Focus

Barriers in the IEP

- Expand upon the transfer of rights in the IEP meeting for what that means for the student moving forward and pull more language into that meeting that would relate to higher ed or clarify the differences better.
- Request for more evaluations can be problematic to get that student the psychological evaluation.
- It is costly for the student to do an outside evaluation. It is time-consuming for the division staff. The county may not even have the staff equipped to do the evaluation.
- Doing an evaluation at the secondary level when the diagnosis may not have changed could create some push-back from school staff who do not have the capacity to do more evaluations.
- Helpful if there was a standardized outgoing document that was focused on the diagnosis and the student and a breakdown of the accommodations provided, the student doesn't always bring the right document with them.
- Summary of Performance- before a student exits, a summary must be provided where they are academically and functionally, ensure that accommodations are listed on there and why, DARS is looking at the IEP for transition.
- Incorporate the test results into the IEP for IHE staff to review.
- Be specific as to what is needed in the summary section of an IEP that gives the IHE exactly what they need to reduce barriers to access.
- IEP doesn't always include the "why." The college needs to understand the underlying impact of the disability which is why they look at the testing for this information.
- More blending of the evaluation information and the IEP could be helpful in reducing the amount of gray that's present.

III. July 3 Summary Report

Timely Provision of Transition Services

- Transition services per the workgroup encompasses many activities: taking trips to local employers, job shadowing, interviewing, resume prep, transportation skills, transition mentor, career assessment, one-on-one interviews, study skills, informing the parents of their role, uploading documents into an LMS.
- Could be defined as the activities that help the person be successful in their postsecondary goals, as well as Assistive Technology, and academic instruction, self-determination skills (helping students learn how to explain their disability as well).
- Time management
- Improve explicit instruction on AT that IHEs are using.
- Significant barriers exist to the timely provision of services in rural areas, so relying on DARS and Pre-ETS is key for students to receive experiences.
- The collaborative piece - we need to ensure that the individual who delivers the services is able to do it in time with resources.
- Best practice from Spotsylvania: offer evening sessions to families with vendor/exhibitor, topic of the evening, three speakers, families have the chance to meet and interact.
- There is a stigma around the student/family thinking the IEP/504 will transfer to the IHE.
- Do not have a student “switch” from an IEP to a 504 Plan.
- “It’s your decision to reach out for accommodations.” Is this the wrong message?
- Yes--Encouraging them to come as early as possible maximizes their choices. (They can choose not to use the accommodations if they don’t need them.)
- A policy should not be in place, based upon the consensus of the workgroup, that would allow IHEs to reach out to schools to get necessary paperwork.
- The student should be provided with a copy of this at their transfer of rights meeting and carry it with them to college or reach back out to their high school for a copy of this paperwork.
- Connect families to documentation/information from the college the student plans to attend in the IEP meeting to assist with the timely provision of services.



- Connect families to PEATC resources and DARS as early as possible.
- IHEs and secondary schools should think of DARS, DBVI as someone who could assist with the timely provision of transition services.
- Certain accommodation requests for those with more support needs (think science classes) or substitutions (i.e. fundamental alteration) require good documentation to justify.
- IEPs don't address medical diagnosis.

IV. July 23 Summary Report

Timely Provision of Accommodations

- Temporary accommodations discussion - provide "limited" academic accommodations and work with the student to help them understand that they aren't going to be as comprehensive until the appropriate/necessary documentation is provided.
- Provide a semester at a time.
- Use the AHEAD guidance to reduce the burden on students and families.
- To improve the process: work with students better to help them understand their diagnosis/disability and accommodations, understand their documentation and what it means, realign the IEP to what IHEs need (include the specific diagnosis, testing provider, date of testing, and functional limitations, severity, frequency, and duration).
- Educate the student on the language for higher education: "accommodations provide access but do not guarantee success."
- Continue improvements to the transition process and educating case managers on higher education to better equip and work with families. (Use I'm Determined resources.)
- Work with families better to encourage the student to get involved in the IEP process sooner (this is especially important for students with IDD so they can better prepare and understand their diagnosis/abilities/limitations for independent living).

- More training (on techniques and structures) and support for disability service office professionals on the intake process (this process should be where professionals get the information from the student that they can't get from the documentation if gaps are missing) and should also be informed on the IEP process in K-12 to better understand the gaps.
- Establish clear, common language about the process across K-12 and higher education to make the process easier for the student.
- Suggestion: Case Management handbook for DSOs, AHEAD create a DSO training?

IV. August 11 Summary Report

- Applied studies diploma students seeking postsecondary education—VCCS is seeing students at the community college level with an applied studies diploma, not eligible for financial aid; makes it difficult for the DSO (as they are non-degree seeking students).
- Could be categorized as “not able to benefit” for VCCS?
- Inclusive postsecondary education program labeled “CTP” are eligible for Pell and workstudy.
- Incorporate this into an FAQ on the same page.
- Incorporate Fundamental alterations and universal services on the FAQ (ex: tutoring center, writing center, counseling services).
- Interacting with parents - having the transfer of rights conversation early because parents are requesting accommodations for the students (per one example).
- Language used at one university: Student is the “primary client” and “primary decision maker” because they're in the driver's seat even if the parent has signed consent with FERPA.
- UVA-Wise uses an additional form to FERPA.
- No further discussions of “temporary” accommodations.
- Use SCHEV's Accommodations Best Practices Guidelines to assist with meeting certain regulations of the bill (particularly informing students and families of procedures).

- Documentation for IHE.
- Summary of performance - include all the needed information (specifically) for IHE to include in this section.
- Strategies for support: Professional learning, document/video for people to see, hear, and shown explicitly what IHEs need and what they “mean” regarding what is “good” and what doesn’t meet the threshold of acceptable for transferability of the document.
- Enhancing support for transition specialists in divisions, providing a position for this, engagement with the transition specialist across divisions.
- What percentage of the expectations are necessary to communicate this transition information to students and families?

III. DRAFT Recommendations

- I. Update the temporary accommodations language: *eight weeks but not to go beyond one academic semester or “limited accommodations” rather than “temporary;” Any accommodations supported by the available documentation and intake interview.*
- II. DSO training for new staff- techniques and structures on how to conduct the meetings and information on the K-12 process and its differences.
- III. Increase the funding for disability services offices to do the evaluations potentially, increase the availability of an evaluator.
- IV. More opportunities for collaboration between higher ed and secondary schools.
- V. Clearinghouse for documents?
- VI. DARS Counselors regionally cover IHEs to support college students (ex: Ohio).
- VII. Helpful to have a video library in universal language and email those to families, be on different transition topics related to the transition services and accommodations.
 - a. Junior Year Plan of preparation?
- VIII. Potentially a list of colleges/IHEs for the disability support office at the IEP meeting for families to get connected to; prompt them to reach out early.

- IX. Potentially redesign specific forms to highlight the necessary information for IHEs to accept the IEP as proof of a disability in the VA IEP System. Or do we structure sections better and make sure all of the necessary information is in there? Or do we create a new form all together?
 - a. From the VDOE's efforts, we can enhance professional learning that targets students' Summary of Performance that is completed the end of their senior year.
- X. Have clear policies and guidelines from the IHE on what documentation they need exactly to make a determination of a disability and the impact that disability has on the student (ex: testing documentation) and create an expectation to reach out to the secondary school for further documentation (ex: psychological testing).