

## Engaging Families in the Transition Planning Process

Families play an important role in planning for their child's future. They can provide information on their child's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs. Engaging families also has a positive impact on their child's work readiness, career exploration, and postsecondary education enrollment.

Transition professionals want the best outcomes for students with disabilities. One way to achieve that is to engage families in the transition planning process. The following information provides a closer look at why it's important to engage families in the transition planning process. Specific strategies for engaging families are provided.

### Involvement vs. Engagement

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First, it is important to understand the difference between family involvement and family engagement. Family involvement is when families take part in activities already determined by the school. This could include volunteering in a class or chaperoning at a school event. Filling out transition-related paperwork is another opportunity for family involvement.

Family engagement is different. It takes family involvement a step further. Family engagement occurs when families are active participants and are a part of the decision-making process. Family engagement could include playing an active role in drafting the IEP. Or it could include sharing the dreams of their family and child for the future.

### Importance of Families in the Transition Planning Process

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When they are engaged, families can make important contributions to the transition planning process. This is due to the unique role that families play in the life of their child.

Families:

- Know their child best
- Can be strong advocates for services and benefits

- Provide insight into cultural beliefs that may shape their vision for the child's transition to adulthood
- Can support their child to make informed choices across all settings
- Can help their child to become a strong self-advocate and leader

## Strategies to Better Engage Families in Transition Planning

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Here are some strategies that transition professionals can use to engage families in the transition planning process:

- Provide multiple opportunities for family participation through flexible scheduling, partnerships, and shared decision-making
- Give enough advance notice for any meetings or needed paperwork
- Ensure that families are listened to and their input is visibly appreciated
- Present information in a clear and understandable way
- Ensure that families feel comfortable participating and asking questions

## Engaging Families

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Engaging families in the transition planning process leads to better outcomes for youth with disabilities. As transition professionals, it is key to ensure that students and their families are active participants in the transition planning process and that their input is valued.

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