

Transition services are an important part of providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). This law ensures that students with disabilities receive education and support that meets their individual needs. These services are designed to help them prepare for independent living, learning, and working.

#### What are four plus (4+) services?

4+ services are:

- For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) who continue to need special education services to achieve their IEP goals and/or graduation requirements.
- Designed to address unmet post-secondary transition needs for students up to the age of 21.

#### What is an unmet post-secondary transition need?

An unmet transition need is when a student doesn't have the skills they need to be successful in their next steps after high school in the areas of living, learning, and/or working. This means there is a gap between what the student can do now and their post-secondary expectations.

#### What is a post-secondary expectation (PSE)?

Starting at age 14, students with IEPs have documented expectations for living, learning, and working after high school. These expectations should reflect the students' dreams for their future and match their strengths, interests, and preferences. As a student gets older and continues through high school, these PSEs should become more specific on their IEP. The following are examples of PSEs:

- **Living:** A student's expectation might be to get their own apartment or live in a group home.
- **Learning:** A student may want to enroll in college or join a day habilitation program.

- **Working:** A student might aim to get a full or part-time job as a welder or bagging groceries.

#### How is an unmet transition need determined?

1. Transition assessments are conducted every year for students over the age of 14. These assessments are usually carried out by special education teachers. The results of the assessments are summarized at the beginning of the IEP and should help guide the discussions about the student's transition needs.
2. Transition assessments help identify PSEs, which should be aligned with the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.
3. The team should list the skills needed to meet PSEs and determine whether the student has those skills.
4. All unmet transition needs should be addressed by goals, classes, services, and/or supports. This is determined yearly at the IEP meeting.

#### What are the key features of 4+ services?

- **Services are individualized for each student.** Services could include a full or partial day and may not be required for the full school year. They could be provided at the high school, a work experience site, a community college, or in the community.
- **The resident school district is responsible for 4+ services.** The school may contract with a service provider or community college, but the school would pay for and monitor the services. Transportation is also the responsibility of the school district.
- **Once a student receives their diploma, the school's obligations are completed.** Students can walk across the stage with their class at graduation and may receive a certificate, but they will not receive their diploma if they are still getting 4+ services. A diploma will be given if they have met

graduation requirements and 4+ services are ended. 4+ services will be done when the student either decides not to participate any more or has met all of their unmet transition needs.

### What are some common misunderstandings about 4+ services?

**Misunderstanding #1:** *Students with an IEP automatically go to school until age 21.*

To qualify for 4+ services, a student must have an unmet transition need that requires special education services. Students may receive services until they no longer have unmet transition needs after high school or until the school year when they turn 21. The IEP team reviews this decision every year during an annual meeting.

**Misunderstanding #2:** *4+ services are only available when a “4+ program” exists in the district.*

4+ services should be individualized based on the student’s unmet transition needs and goals. Districts may have different names for their services, such as Senior+ or 12+, or may not have an established program. Schools have to make sure that services are created to ensure FAPE continues, even if the services are outside an established program.

**Misunderstanding #3:** *4+ services should only be discussed during senior year.*

Although the final decision will not be made until senior year, the earlier these discussions take place, the more effective the planning process can be. It should not feel like a surprise. Waiting until the last minute to discuss 4+ services could impact their effectiveness or the options available.

### What are some tips for IEP teams who are considering 4+ services?

- Have high expectations for each student.
- Be sure to have updated transition assessments from multiple sources (students, caregivers, teachers, etc.).
- Think outside the box when creating a plan. Consider many options and possibilities for the student’s future.
- Post-secondary expectations should be realistic. It probably isn’t realistic for a sophomore in high

school to have a post-secondary expectation of working as a professional basketball player if they haven’t played basketball on a team before.

- Consider including a case manager or other individuals supporting the student with ongoing needs in meetings and conversations.

### How can I partner with my student’s school about 4+ services?

Working with the school is important as students get ready for life after high school. Caregivers can share what they know about their student’s strengths and skills they have learned at home. They can also talk about areas where students may need to learn more to be prepared for the future. By collaborating and keeping communication open, teams can help students grow in all areas of their transition—living, learning, and working.

### Related Resources:

- 4+ Guidance- Iowa Department of Education
- 4,3,3,3 ASK Info Sheet
- FAPE ASK Info Sheet

### ASK Essential Questions:

- Does the IEP team have high expectations for my child?
- Have transition assessments been updated? What additional assessment information is needed?
- How can we address the needs identified in the transition assessment? What skills does my child need to work on to prepare for their next step?