



The Arc of Texas supports **Sb 596 by Shapiro** to ensure an effective transition for students with disabilities from school to successful post school life including further education, employment and independent living.

Ineffective transition planning and services in schools is due to inconsistencies in expertise, skills, resources, quality standards and accountability, lack of communication and information provided to youth and families on adult services and benefits, lack of coordination and collaboration with state agencies, lack of supported employment services while still in school, lack of support for continuing education and independent living training, delayed transition planning and scarcity of follow up and outcome data.

**SB 596** as recommended in the Senate Committee on Education Interim report to the 81<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> legislatures, requires that transition planning, as part of the student's IEP **begin by age 14** to ensure a more effective transition. Although some schools are already doing this, most transition professionals agree that changing the age from 16 to 14 will provide a more consistent and effective statewide process.

The Interim report to the 82<sup>nd</sup> legislature also recommends that we hold schools accountable for outcomes for students with disabilities by adding transition indicators to the TEA PBMAS. **SB 596** requires TEA to add transition indicators to the PBMAS to determine the level of involvement of HHSC agencies in IEP meetings for students with disabilities who are 16 years old and to determine whether students are employed or enrolled in continuing education 12 months after they have left the school system. In addition to these indicators we should add PBMAS indicators that measure whether schools are providing age appropriate community based transition services and supports for students with disabilities while they are still in school. Providing students with real community based employment opportunities and/or support for community based continuing education is a major predictor of student success when they leave the school system. For some students they also need age appropriate community based independent living (mobility training, money management, social/recreational) training to help ensure their success when they leave the school system.

In addition to adding PBMAS indicators it is important for students and parents to be provided with timely and accurate information about quality transition planning and services, services from HHSC agencies, how to access these services and self advocacy for students with disabilities, through an online manual.

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An involved and knowledgeable parent and student is a necessary part of holding schools accountable. Schools should designate a transition specialist with knowledge and experience in quality transition planning and services. The transition specialist would not be an new FTE and would have knowledge about HHSC agency services, will develop relationships to ensure interagency and community/business connections, training for families, students, school and agency personnel and program evaluation.

The federal IDEA requires we prepare students with disabilities for post school life including further education, employment and independent living. We must measure and hold schools accountable for providing age appropriate community based transition services and collect data to determine the post school outcomes of students with disabilities.

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