



Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative

www.nlsec.org

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Graduation Due Process Requirements

Graduation Eligibility:

- Upon graduation from high school with a regular diploma; or
- Upon the student exceeding the maximum age for receiving special education services (special education services can be provided from birth until July 1 after the student turns 21 years old).

Team Decision:

- The decision that a student is ready to graduate is made by the IEP team on a case by case basis. The decision is typically made at the annual IEP meeting of their senior year.
- If a final decision cannot be made at the IEP meeting, due to concerns of the student successfully earning the necessary credits or meeting their IEP goals/objectives, an additional meeting needs to be held to discuss a plan and determine if a revision needs to be made to the “anticipated graduation date.”

Due Process Requirements:

- Team meeting notice must include: “discuss X’s proposed graduate date of...”
- Last IEP needs specific language regarding proposed graduation:
 - Anticipated Graduation Date confirmed and documented
 - Service Page -anticipated length of services ending on date of graduation
- Invite outside agency representatives to the last IEP meeting (VRS, county...)
- Prior Written Notice must be completed as graduation/exiting out of special education is a change in placement (services are ending).
- Summary of Performance must be completed.
- Progress Reports need to be completed with goals met and supporting data/narratives.
- Encouraged to conduct an exit meeting towards the end of the year to provide the student/family with final IEP, evaluation, PWN, progress reports and review Summary of Performance.

Prior Written Notice Documentation:

- It is a requirement to send parents/students a prior written notice indicating a discontinuation of services at the time of the student’s graduation from high school or their exiting due to aging out.
- It is recommended that the PWN be sent home approximately one month prior to graduation and it be accompanied with the Summary of Performance.
 - If a student is in limbo with earning sufficient credits and it may not be determined until final exams are completed, it is advised to explain that to the student and/or family and that the PWN and Summary of Performance will be completed once that information is available.
 - The team may also need to discuss if the student needs to complete summer school in order to earn sufficient credits, etc.
- If the student is 18 they will sign the consent form or if parents have guardianship, they will need to complete the consent form.

PWN Example (Please individualize based on your students):

1. The district is proposing or refusing the following actions for your child:
 - a. The district is proposing student will be graduating high school on June 5, 2021 per this proposed IEP. Therefore, special education services will be discontinued. Congratulations!
2. The reason that the district is proposing or refusing the action:
 - a. This proposal is appropriate for student since he will have met the graduation/credit requirements as well as his IEP goals and objectives. Student will no longer require special education services due to graduating. OR
 - b. The team has determined that student has met their IEP goals and objectives, has a post-high school plan in place and is ready to graduate.
3. Action is based on the following:
 - a. The team has based their decision on information from progress reports, grades, credit checks, parent, teacher, student, and service provider input in order to determine the proposed graduation date.
4. Other options considered:
 - a. The team considered postponing graduation, but determined student has met graduation requirements and progressed sufficiently on their IEP goals and objectives and should graduate with their peers. OR
 - b. The team considered student graduate early, but determined he had continuing transition needs that will be addressed.
5. Other factors considered:
 - a. No other concerns were identified by the team.

***If you have situations, concerns, questions regarding special circumstances, please reach out to NLSEC Secondary Transition Coordinator to problem solve.*

Summary of Performance:

- Districts are required to provide students with a Summary of Performance which they use to access services after high school.
- Options for delivery:
 - best practice would be to provide an exit meeting
 - phone call to confirm graduation decision, review summary of performance then mail home.
 - If unable to meet or talk on phone, mail home and document date to keep track of 14 days for consent.
- Final Paperwork to provide: IEP, evaluation, progress reports, PWN, and Summary of Performance, copy of Secondary Transition Resource Booklet.
 - Paperwork could be provided in a folder with an explanation that this information should remain in a confidential location in their home. They may need it when needing to show documentation of their disability for various services as an adult.

Please make sure to update contact information at the top of the Summary of Performance. Particularly make sure to include student cell phone numbers or personal email addresses and or parent's. This will enable NLSEC to contact them the following year to complete a Post School Outcome Survey that is mandated by the Department of Education.

Summary of Performance Example:

Academic Achievement:

- Describes academic career, course of study, etc. Might include; types of courses taken, MCA information, district tests, accommodations/modifications utilized, description of paraprofessional support, grades, strengths and needs, assistive technology, etc.

Example: James's recent academic achievement testing showed he is reading at approximately a 7th grade level. His comprehension is stronger than his decoding skills. His test performance has improved in his Social Studies and English class when tests are read to him and he has more time to complete the test. He uses books on tape for his English and history. James is at grade level with math. He has completed X classes with B's without modifications/accommodations. He does struggle with multi-step story problems however. In the area of writing, he is functioning at about 8th grade level. Spelling and content are a strength, while his punctuations and handwriting are areas of need. He does utilize technology to assist him. James seems to learn best when he hears things and is shown several examples.

Functional Performance:

- What is the student able to do in school and the community and address the level of independence and support needed. Talk about each of the transition areas; employment, postsecondary education/training, transportation, extracurricular/sports, living situation, cooking, etc.
 - Discuss general ability and problem solving -don't give the IQ score, but describe range(s)
 - teacher comments -general observations
 - attention and organization -timely, organ. tools, on-task, etc?
 - communication -written and verbal
 - social skills and behavior-interacts with peers and staff, general behavior
 - independent living skills -driving, cooking, money management, insurance, etc?
 - self-advocacy skills -able to describe disability, needs, strengths, etc? Ask for help?
 - career/vocational -describe types of jobs in and out of school
 - any additional concerns -attendance, VRS, SSI, other services in the community, awards, sports, etc.

Post-Secondary Recommendations:

- Make recommendations to assist the student in attaining their post-secondary goals in the following areas:
 - Education -apply for disability services, VRS, OJT, military, social services, accommodations, etc. Discuss courses student may not do well in and suggestions (part-time vs. full-time) summer classes.
 - Employment -apply for VRS, supported employment, specific jobs, apprenticeships, contact people that may assist the student, SSI counselor, etc.

- Independent Living (where appropriate and may include recreation/leisure, community living and/or home living) -examples may include that the student needs to: apply for social security, driver's license, access health care, housing, accessing county DD social worker/waiver, budget information, etc.

Students Continuing to 18-21 Transition Programming:

- If teams determine a student is not ready to graduate by the end of 12th grade, per district policy, the student may participate in the graduation ceremony, also known as “walking.” However, the student has not yet graduated and should not receive their diploma until the team determines they are ready to graduate and/or meet their IEP goals.
- Be cautious with utilizing the verbiage of “graduating” as this can be confusing for students and/or families when in fact they have not graduated but only participated in the ceremony.

***For some students, participating in the graduation ceremony may be too stressful or overwhelming. In those cases, please feel free to create an alternative ceremony, if parents prefer.*

April 2021