

Transition Briefs for Families

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Entitlement vs. Eligibility- Understanding the Dilemma

As students with disabilities transition from school to work and community, there is a big difference between being “**entitled**” to services and being “**eligible**” for services. It is important for both families and youth to understand the difference. In Indiana, students who receive special education are “**entitled**” to these services under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, those students who have been identified as needing special education services must be provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as identified in his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP), until they complete the school year when they turn 21, or have met the Indiana requirements for a diploma. Upon completion of their school program, they are no longer “**entitled**” to services.

Now the dilemma! As young adults with deaf-blindness transition from school, they most likely will need some of the same services that were provided through their IEP from adult

service agencies, as well as additional services that may be identified for a successful transition from school to work and community. However, now, these young adults must meet the “**eligibility**” requirements of the adult service agencies that provide those services. If the youth meets the requirements for that agency, s/he is now “**qualified**” or “**eligible**”, but not entitled to the services.

Now another dilemma may surface! Just because the young adult is eligible or qualified for services does not mean that those services automatically will be available to him/her. Services from a particular agency may depend on available funds, staff and/or capacity to provide the services. Despite this potential problem, it is still important for the youth to become qualified.

So, what can you do to prepare yourself and your youth with deaf-blindness for the entitlement vs. eligibility dilemma?

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For More Information on Transition or
Other Topics Related to Deaf-Blindness

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- **START EARLY!** The Transition IEP, that must be developed by age 14, should address which adult agencies need to be consulted or considered for transition planning (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, agencies serving adults with hearing loss/deafness or vision loss/blindness). It is important to remember that for young adults with deaf-blindness, it is likely that more than one agency will be involved in the transition process and that each agency may have **different** eligibility requirements.
- **INVESTIGATE** the eligibility requirements for each of the adult service agencies that may be able to provide help for your youth. S/he may qualify for a number of services in the areas of post-secondary education (colleges/universities), employment (vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation agencies for the blind/deaf), and independent living (developmental disabilities, independent living centers) but you will need to know about the requirements for each in order to establish eligibility. At a minimum, you will need to make sure you have the following pieces of personal identification to begin the eligibility process: birth certificate (county health department), state identification card (Bureau of Motor Vehicles), Social Security card (Social Security office), medical and school records, Medicaid waiver information (if applicable).
- **ESTABLISH LINKAGES** to the identified agencies and providers well before the time your youth leaves the school system and the entitlement services that s/he has been able to use throughout his/her educational years. Call the agencies, introduce yourself and your youth, and, if possible, schedule an appointment to talk about the agency services and what needs to be done to establish eligibility for your young adult.

Who Can Help in Indiana?

IN*SOURCE

The mission of IN*SOURCE is to provide parents, families and service providers in Indiana the information and training necessary to assure effective educational programs and appropriate services for children and **young adults with disabilities**. With parents helping parents, everything that IN*SOURCE does directly relates to the provision of information, training, **individual assistance and support** primarily to parents of children and **young adults with disabilities**. There are parent specialists available throughout Indiana who can help you with transition planning. For a directory of parent specialists, go to IN*SOURCE.org and click on Staff Directory to locate a parent specialist in your area.