


# WELCOME!

This event will start shortly. In the meantime,  
visit us at [OhioFamiliesEngage.osu.edu](https://OhioFamiliesEngage.osu.edu)

Ohio Family Engagement  
— LEADERSHIP SUMMIT —

**Family Engagement**

BYDESIGN



**Engaging and  
Supporting Families**  
of Students with  
Disabilities in the  
Post-School  
Transition Process

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COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY



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# My Professional Journey

# Introductions

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**Please use the chat to introduce yourself!**

- Name/role
- What experiences do you have supporting students of families with disabilities in the IEP process and/or transition planning process?






# Questions We Will Explore Together

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- What does the transition to adulthood look like for adults with disabilities?
- Why is it so important to engage with families during the transition process?
- What is person and family-centered planning?
- What tools can I use to support me in this work?





# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004, Sec.300.322)

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Information provided to parents:

For a child with a disability beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, the notice also must—

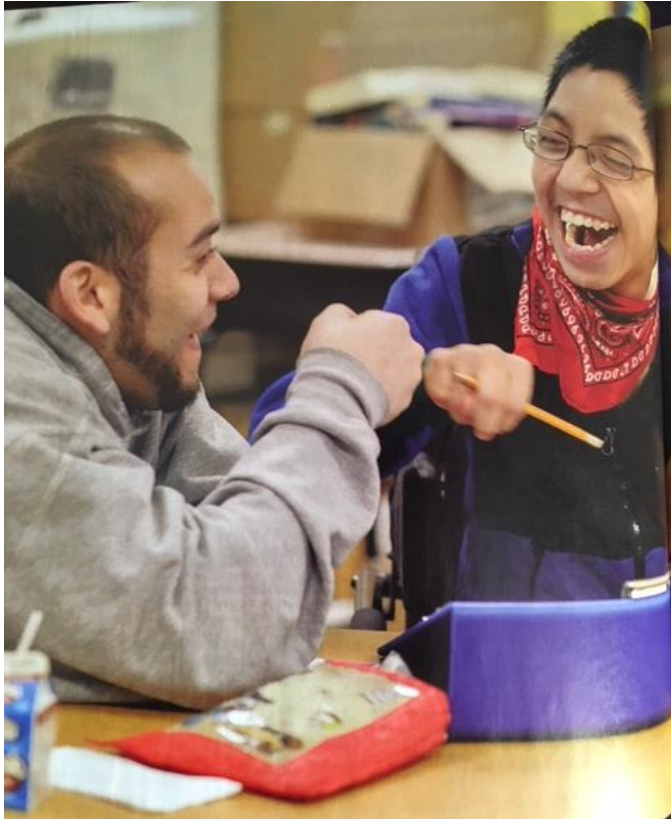
(i) Indicate—

(A) That a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the postsecondary goals and transition services for the child; and

(B) That the agency will invite the student; and

(ii) Identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative.

# The Importance of School-Based Preparation



**Transition** is a *coordinated set of activities* for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a *results-oriented process*, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to *facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities*. (IDEA, 2004)



# Differences in Outcomes Based on Race/Ethnicity

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- For racially minoritized students with disabilities, the landscape is especially rocky and treacherous.
- Transition outcomes are typically reported in aggregate based on disability, which does not tell the full story (NLTS-2).
  - 19.1% of African American young adults with disabilities enrolled in college and 48% employed in the community
  - 14.6% of Hispanic young adults with disabilities enrolled in college and 53.6% employed in the community





# What Happens When the School Bus Stops Coming?

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- Historically low employment rates persist for people with significant disabilities (American Community Survey, 2019):
  - **28.6% across the United States**
- Of those who are employed:
  - often underemployed (i.e., working at or below minimum wage in part-time jobs without benefits)
  - experience higher rates of poverty and social isolation
- During the pandemic, participation in the workforce decreased significantly for adults with disabilities and has been slower to recover (Sinclair et al., 2021).



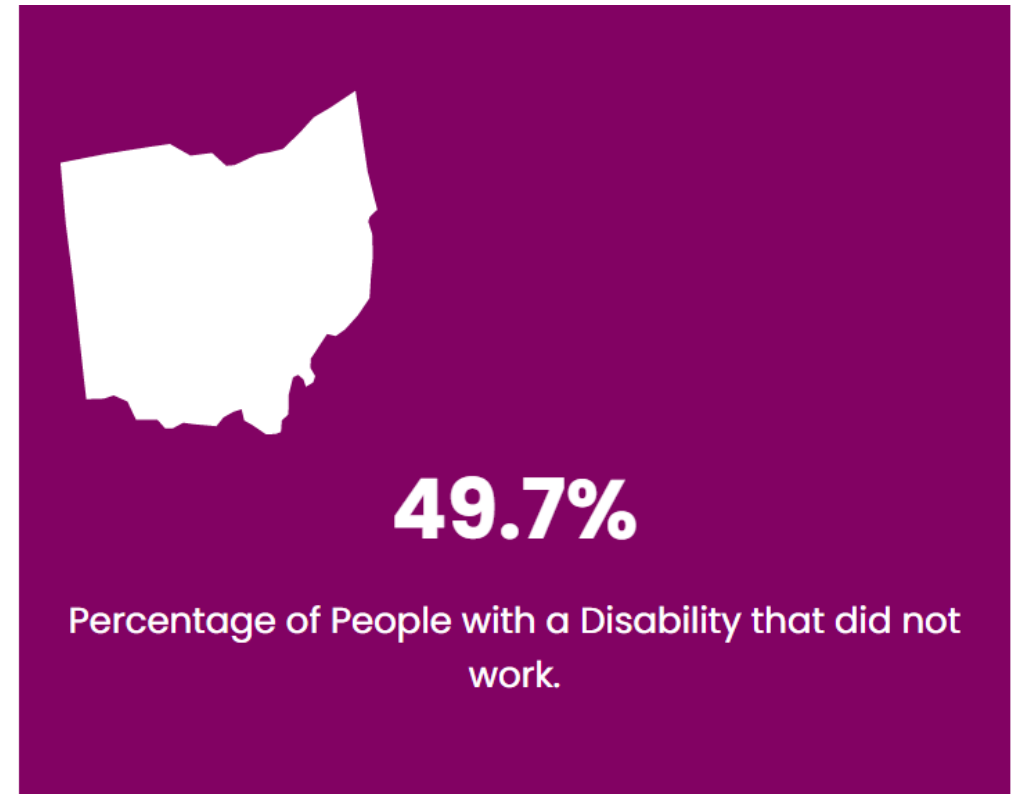
# Ohio By the Numbers

## Population and Employment Statistics<sup>1</sup>

Working Age Population with a Disability (18-64):  
848,809

- Percentage that did not work by Disability Type

Cognitive	52.6%
Hearing	36.6%
Ambulatory	64.8%
Visual	46.8%



<sup>1</sup> Data from [2022 American Community Survey](#)

# Kohler's Taxonomy of Transition Planning (1996)

- Transition involves ALL possible adult roles, responsibilities, settings, and activities
- Focuses on the transition “process” vs. the goals or outcomes
- Student development
- Student-focused planning
- Family involvement
- Interagency collaboration
- Systems/program development and management

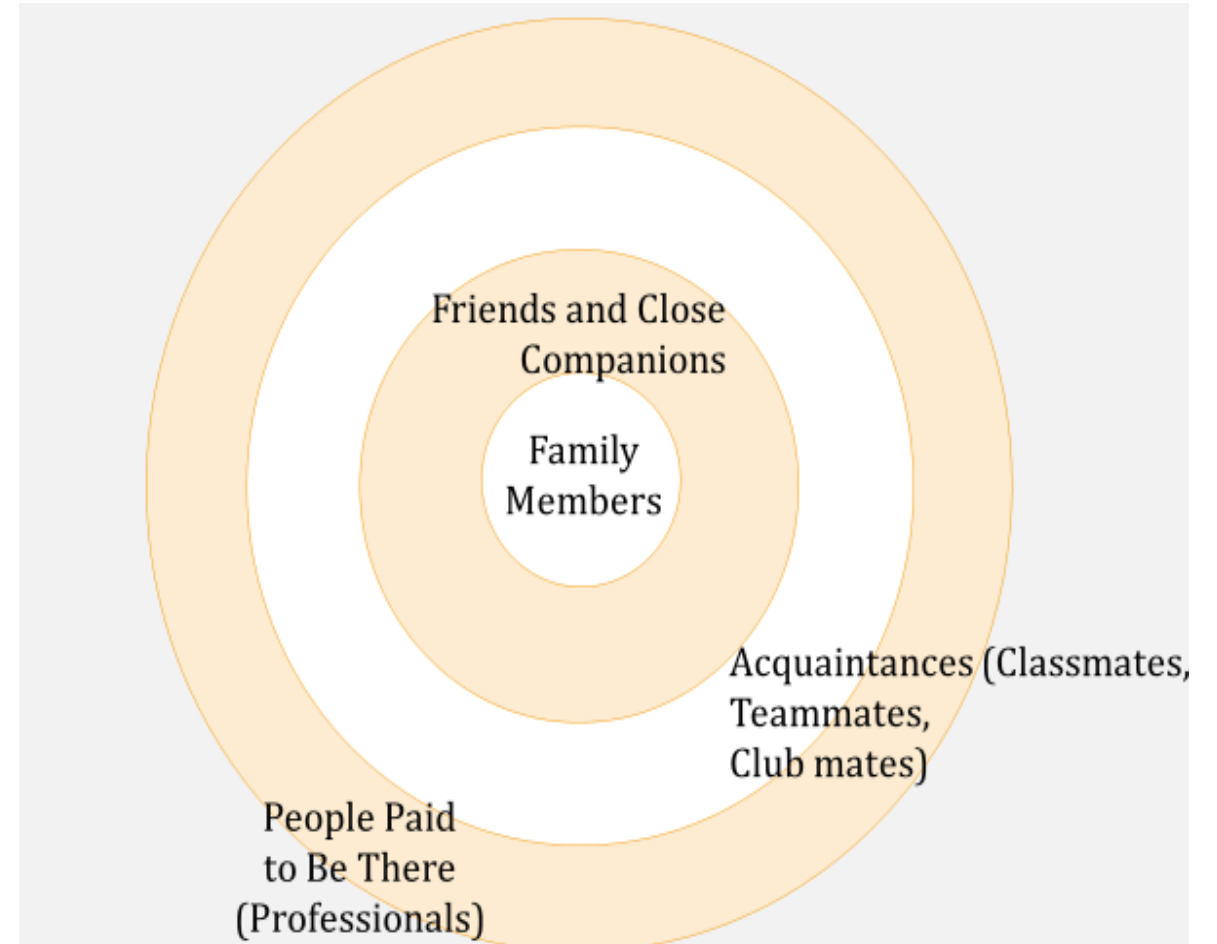




# Why Does Family Engagement Matter?

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- Amid the inconsistency of service systems, families remain the clear constant for children and adults with significant disabilities.
- Parent expectations are among the most prominent predictors of employment and postsecondary educational outcomes for people with disabilities (Blustein et al., 2016).
- Yet little is known about how parents view the employment prospects and priorities of their sons and daughters after high school and what factors influence those views.



# What Challenges Do Families Identify in the IEP Process?

- Parents' insecurity of knowledge
- Jargon/difficult terminology in the documents
- Confusion with the IEP and transition planning process
- Discrimination or misconceptions
- Staff lack of knowledge on how to support families
- Scheduling conflicts
- Lack of time to discuss goals and provide input on the process

*Montoya et al., 2022; Shikarpurya & Gilson, 2024; Blustein et al., 2016*

# Voices of Parents about the IEP Process

[At the first IEP meeting,] I was terrified because ... we don't expect 10 people there, I was like what is happening? What are we going to do? I was very scared and anxious because I didn't know what was going to happen with my son.

- Rosio

*They never told me you have rights or showed me laws that protect my son. I imagine they don't even want us to know it, so we don't fight, or we don't ask for something that the law says.*

- Luz

*At the beginning, I didn't say anything, I felt that I was just nodding saying yes, it is fine. At the first meeting, you think that you have no options. They tell you it is a legal document so sign it.*

- Martha



There must  
be another  
way...

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Let's tackle this using multiple perspectives!



# Multiple Perspectives Activity

- We will spend 15 minutes in breakout rooms exploring the same question three times from multiple perspectives
  - Introductions – 3 min
  - Personal perspective (e.g., educator, administrator, counselor) – 4 min
  - Professional perspective (e.g., sibling, parent, student) – 4 min
  - A new perspective other than your own (any of those listed with which you do not identify) – 4 min
- Elect a timekeeper, facilitator, and group presenter





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## Multiple Perspectives Activity

- Perspectives can be further defined based on other aspects of your identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, socioeconomic status)
- Identify your perspective as you share: “From the perspective of \_\_\_\_\_, I think family engagement in transition is \_\_\_\_\_.”
- We will come back whole group to share a summary of responses and reflect on how our perspectives evolved during the activity when we heard from others



# From Your *Professional* Perspective...

(Educator, Administrator, Counselor)

**What does meaningful family engagement in the transition  
planning process look like?**



# From Your *Personal* Perspective...

(Parent, Sibling, Student, Person with a Disability)

**What does meaningful family engagement in the transition  
planning process look like?**





# From A New Perspective

**What does meaningful family engagement in the transition planning process look like?**

# Welcome Back: Group Share

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- 1-2 people from each room share out a summary of their discussion:
  - Which perspectives were represented in the room?
  - How did the perspectives shift throughout the discussion?
- Example sentence starters:
  - “Having heard all of the other points of view, I now think...”
  - “I noticed that my/our responses...”

# *Person-Family Centered Transition Planning*

Achola & Greene,  
2016

Outcomes designed with the student and family's input at the center

Responsibility for transition services shared among families, educators, and community members

Relationships between families and post-school agencies are developed and maintained

Transition assessments based on family strengths

Adaptations reflect the sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of the family

Transition goals aligned with youth and family expectations

Goal setting process considers decision-making structures in each family



# What Can Educators and Practitioners Do?

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- There is no one-size-fits-all approach!
- Seek to understand each family's unique value systems and cultural expectations
- Explain the transition planning process in advance using simple language
- Share a draft of the IEP document well in advance of the meeting and provide space for families to give input and ask questions
- Collect information about the family's post-school expectations and preferred transition outcomes



# Examples In Practice

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- Establish relationships with families early in the school year
- Ask families about preferred communication styles and formats
- Share updates of the celebrations and joys (not just the bad days)
- Report progress monitoring data every four weeks
- Interview each student and their family (separately and together) about their goals for the future



# Start Early: Partner with Families



In Ohio, transition planning is required to formally begin at age 14.



However, it is important to start these conversations *earlier* than age 14 to make the process feel less daunting and overwhelming.



Acknowledge where the families currently are:

- Hopes
- Fears
- Goals
- Needs

A dark airplane is centered in the upper half of the frame, flying towards the viewer. Below it, a horizontal line of bokeh lights in various colors (red, orange, yellow, white) stretches across the width of the image. The background is a dark, gradient sky.

Acknowledge the feeling  
of “jetlag”

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**Let's reflect and  
take action!**  
What is one thing  
you can do in your  
own life to turn a  
barrier into bridge?



# References

Achola, E. O., & Greene, G. (2016). Person-family centered transition planning: Improving post-school outcomes to culturally diverse youth and families. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 45*(2), 173-183.

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Sinclair, J., Gilson, C. B., Whirley, M., & Li, Y. F. (2021). “It’s an opportunity to get opportunities”: A brief report on the working lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal, 1*(2), 7.



# Resources

- [Family Centered Transition Planning Resource Toolkit](#)
- [Transition Tennessee Family Resources](#) – free to access all resources but account is required
- [The Journey to Life After High School](#)
- [Zarrow Institute on Transition and Self-Determination](#)
- [Ohio State University Nisonger Center](#)
- [OSU Center on Education and Training for Employment](#)

Questions?

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Please feel free to email me to  
continue the conversation!

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Dr. Carly Gilson

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Thanks for your time and  
participation!



Family Engagement  
**BY DESIGN**



THANK YOU FOR WATCHING!

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Center**

—at The Ohio State University—



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