



COLLEGE-BASED TRANSITION SERVICES

Dual Enrollment for Students with I/DD

While college and career readiness is a growing priority nationwide, these efforts rarely include students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD). School leaders are developing new, innovative programs called college-based transition services (CBTS) for these individuals, and Arizona should support this work.

What Are College-Based Transition Services?

CBTS programs are similar to traditional dual or concurrent enrollment programs, but they are uniquely crafted to serve students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) aged 18-21. Many students with I/DD remain in high school until the age of 21¹ to complete their graduation requirements and the transition services provided in their Individual Education Program (IEP). CBTS offers students with I/DD access to transition services on a college campus during their final two or three years of secondary education.

How Can CBTS Facilitate Transition Planning?

Transition planning begins at age 16² under federal law and must contain postsecondary goals “related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills.”

The plan includes activities to support these goals and may include coursework, community experiences, job training, and building critical life skills. Students with disabilities in school past age 18 will often participate in life-skills or community-based vocational programs, often only with other students with disabilities and typically still on their high school campus.

¹ Under both federal and state law, students with disabilities are entitled to education services until age 21 (or to age 22, if their birthday occurs prior to the end of the school year).

² Twenty-three states have lowered this age to 14 or freshman year. Two have gone as low as age 12.

How Can Students Benefit from CBTS?

CBTS immerses students with disabilities in college campuses where they can explore career planning opportunities, work experience, courses ranging from educational to life-skills or recreational, as well as inclusive social activities alongside their same-age peers.

CBTS programs are a new way to provide more age-appropriate, inclusive experiences for students that also meet transition requirements.

CBTS can kickstart a college education that offers more than just improved employment opportunities. Students have invaluable opportunities to build personal and professional networks, develop critical life skills and independence, and explore career and even recreational interests.

CBTS PROGRAMS IN ACTION

Approximately 100 programs nationally offer postsecondary opportunities for students with I/DD in a dual enrollment structure. And the University of Arizona is one of them.

Arizona's Project FOCUS

For over 10 years, the University of Arizona's [Project FOCUS](#) (Focusing Opportunities with Community and University Support) has welcomed Tucson area high school students into a unique dual enrollment program. Project FOCUS students receive [college-based transition services](#). It is a two-year program where participating students take typical college courses either for credit or audit and the graduates receive a Work Readiness Certificate.

- **How it's funded:** The project was developed with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education awarded in 2010. It is now sustained through a combination of tuition, school district funding, and fundraising.
- **Who it serves:** The program serves current high school students (ages 18-21) with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The University of Arizona has memorandums of agreement (MOA) with surrounding school districts that specify the amount of money the school district will pay for the required transition services.
- **What it offers:** Participating students gain access to the University of Arizona's academic courses, community-based internships, and campus life social events to increase their independence, communication, and employability while simultaneously completing their high school requirements.

Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative

The Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) funds partnerships between school districts and colleges and universities to improve academic and career success for high school students with ID/D. When this groundbreaking program began over 15 years ago, it created the first-of-its-kind dual enrollment structure for students with intellectual disabilities.

- **How it's funded:** The legislature appropriates funds for grants to institutes of higher education in partnership with school districts. There are three types of grants:
 - One-year planning grants for both residence life and non-residence life opportunities of up to \$30,000 per grant.
 - Five-year non-residence life implementation grants of up to \$105,000 per grant; and
 - Grants designed to support the design and implementation of residence life experiences for program participants.
- **Who it serves:** The programs are for transition-aged students with I/DD to receive their transition services on a college campus, rather than remaining in the high school. Currently, 13 participating partnerships serve over 250 students per year. Since 2007, over 1,200 students have had the opportunity to take part academically and socially in the life of the college.
- **What it offers:** Participating students enroll in college while at the same time receiving special education services through the school district providing that support. Their inclusive college experience provides access to college or university courses, social activities, internships, independent living and independent travel.

North Dakota Postsecondary Transition Grant Program

In 2021, North Dakota legislatively established the North Dakota Postsecondary Transition Grant Program.

- **How it's funded:** This program authorizes the state Superintendent of Public Instruction to reimburse colleges for eligible students that participate in these programs.
- **Who it serves:** Eligible students who have a documented intellectual or developmental disability are at least eighteen years of age but have not reached the age of twenty - two, have graduated from a public high school in the state or obtained an equivalent degree, and enroll in a postsecondary transitional program.
- **How it works:** The postsecondary transition programs are defined as “a degree, certificate, or non-degree program at an accredited post-secondary institution that is designed to support students with an intellectual or developmental disability who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction.” The State Superintendent reviews and approves programs.

College Steps

States don't have to create their own programs to get the benefits of CBTS programs. External partners, like [College Steps](#), can develop and administer the program that, in turn, partner with community colleges or universities.

[College Steps](#) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) that has partnered with 14 college campuses across six states to design and provide unique programming for students with disabilities. The four pillars of their approach are academic enrichment, social involvement (through peer mentors), independent living, and pre-employment training.

3 Ways Arizona Can Cultivate CBTS Programs

CBTS programs prepare students to succeed after school, both academically and socially. With a few strategic steps, our state can reach more students with I/DD with these life-changing programs.

1. Convene Stakeholders

ADDPC and the Arizona Department of Education could collaborate to host a convening to provide information and gauge support. This gathering could include high schools, community colleges, universities, and county school superintendents.

2. Spotlight Existing Programs

The University of Arizona has demonstrated how to launch a thriving CBTS and the existing mechanism of MOUs in state statute is sufficient to launch a program. All programs need to get going is a kickoff grant.

3. Develop Funding Sources

One-time grants are a proven way to launch new CBTS programs. Like other states, Arizona can determine ongoing funding through MOUs, and tailor each one to meet the community it serves.

They get the opportunity to be with their peers to experience life like you and I got to when we left our schools, and they're blowing everybody away with what they are able to do."

- American Association of School Administrators (AASA) School Administrator

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