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# *Preface*

**T**he Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) directly addresses transition assessment. It also mandates that each student be provided with a Summary of Performance (SOP) before he or she exits the school system. Both of these additions hold tremendous potential for integrating the results of transition assessment into the transition planning process for the student—via the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Preparing for transition into all aspects of adult life is like taking a long trip. To proceed effectively it helps to have an itinerary, a timetable, and a map. As with any trip, it is important to make frequent progress checks to be sure you are still on the right road and are moving along at the speed you anticipated. Also, frequent progress checks allow for orderly course corrections, side trips, and changes in destination. Transition assessment is an individualized, ongoing process that helps students with disabilities and their families define appropriate personal destinations or goals and check progress along the way.

The vision for life beyond school should begin to be conceived in the elementary and middle school years. IDEA 2004 mandates that by age 16 the IEP must reflect a clear timetable and itinerary for accomplishing specific goals. (We believe that this process should start much earlier—and no later than age 14.) Assessment is crucial in establishing this timetable and in keeping the IEP team on track. However, deciding what to assess and how assessment data will be collected and used can be a challenge.

This is the second edition of this handbook, and we have made a number of changes in this edition. This handbook is designed to be used by everyone on the IEP team, including the student, family members, general and special educators, and adult providers, as they assist a student of any disability and functioning level in defining his or her vision of the future and in reaching this vision. The assessment process described in this handbook builds upon a variety of information emphasizing the use of transition assessment techniques and community-based settings in gathering the information needed for transition planning.

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The first chapter provides an overview of the transition assessment process, including its purpose and the laws requiring that transition assessment be carried out. Chapter 2 approaches transition assessment within the context of career development and provides a checklist and set of assessment questions to help teachers pinpoint where along the awareness, exploration, preparation, and assimilation career path a student is functioning.

Chapter 3 presents the role of the student in the transition assessment process and the development of self-determination skills to assist the student in this role. The focus of Chapter 4 is on integrating the results of transition assessment into the IEP. Sample case studies and transition goals are provided. Chapter 5 discusses the role of the individual, family members, special education and general education teachers, support staff, and adult service providers in the assessment process.

Chapter 6 then presents an overview of methods that practitioners can use to collect information about the student's needs, strengths, preferences, and interests throughout the transition planning process. This chapter also presents methods of gathering information about the demands of current and potential future living, working, and educational environments. The final chapter presents a format for making the best match between the demands of these environments and the needs, strengths, preferences, and interests of the student. This chapter also presents questions that need to be asked during the transition process and procedures for developing an assessment plan.

Transition assessment is not a magical process. It is simply assisting students in identifying where they would like to live, work, and learn when they become adults and in determining the supports, accommodations, and preparation they will need in order to reach their goals. We hope that this handbook will help you as you assist students in this process.