



**Planning
the Transition
from School
to Adult Life:
Considerations
for Students
with Disabilities**

by Ira M. Fingles, Esq.,
S. Paul Prior, Esq.,
Maria Fischer, Esq.,
and Steven Morse, Ed.D.

Revised 2016



Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer
Attorneys at Law



Congratulations!

Reading this booklet means that you have already started the process of planning for the future.

If you have a student – or you are a student – in middle school or high school, chances are that you are now asking, “*What will happen after graduation?*” This is a difficult question for anyone, but for students in special education it may be even more so. That is why federal law requires transition planning for all students with disabilities.

ASAH’s members – over 150 state-approved private schools – are proud of every graduate. A recent study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University shows that graduates of ASAH’s private special education programs go on to college, jobs, and other fulfilling adult roles at higher rates than students with disabilities who graduate from public school programs.

We are pleased to partner with Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer to present this booklet, revised for 2016, to help parents and students navigate this important time in their school career. We thank the law firm for their ongoing support and for underwriting the cost of this booklet.



Gerard M. Thiers, Executive Director
ASAH



Dr. Steven Morse, President
ASAH



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Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, is a federal law guaranteeing students with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate public education. For every student eligible to receive special education services under IDEA, the local school district must develop and implement an individualized education program or IEP, describing the unique set of services and supports needed. For some students, this includes placement at a private school at no cost to the parents.

Since its initial passage in 1975, IDEA was reauthorized by the United States Congress on several occasions. Each time Congress reauthorized IDEA, lawmakers placed greater emphasis on improved outcomes. Revisions to IDEA in 1990 reflected congressional concern that, 15 years after IDEA's initial implementation, most students with disabilities were still denied opportunities to engage in constructive activities after graduation, such as employment or further education. Congress then added highly detailed and intensive requirements to aid in students' transition from school to post-school life. These requirements were further strengthened in subsequent amendments to IDEA in 1997 and 2004.

Transition planning provides a framework for identifying long-range post-graduation goals, along with services and strategies that will help students make the shift from school to adult life.



SECTION I - Transition Services

What are transition services?

The term “transition services” means:

A coordinated set of activities for a student designed within a results-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Transition services must be based on a student’s individual needs, taking into account his or her strengths, preferences, and interests. They include:

- Instruction
- Related services
- Community experiences
- Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives
- Acquisition of daily living skills
- Functional vocational evaluation

When does planning begin?

No later than age 14 – or around 8th grade – a student’s IEP should begin to reflect post-school goals.

These goals will vary from student to student, but generally outline the following:

- College or other higher education
- Employment
- Military service
- Vocational or technical training
- Independent living

Beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the student’s transition service needs describing, at a minimum, the courses required for graduation, and the plan of study the student will follow each year. This is also a time for the IEP team to consider other educational experiences, both in school and in the community, that can help the student achieve his or her desired post-school goals. This statement must be based on the student’s needs, preferences, and goals, and must be reviewed every year as part of the IEP process.



College bound?

Often, students with disabilities find out too late that the courses they took in high school did not prepare them for college or technical school. Such courses may include, for example, foreign languages. Think ahead and prepare so that the student has the classes required for admission, and he or she is ready to take any necessary standardized testing, such as the SAT or ACT. Read more on planning for students who are considering college on page 12.

When must services begin?

Beginning no later than the school year in which the student turns 16, the IEP must include a statement of needed transition services. The statement must describe the coordinated set of activities and strategies that will lead to the desired post-school outcomes, (such as a day program, community-based employment, vocational training, or college). The statement must also identify those responsible for providing the transition services and activities.

While this statement must be included in the IEP that will be in effect when the student turns 16, it can, and sometimes must, be included in earlier IEPs if more advanced planning is needed. This may be the case, for example, for a student with a severe developmental disability which requires significantly greater planning efforts to ensure a smooth transition as compared to a student with a hidden disability.

This statement of needed transition services is much broader than the statement of transition service needs required at age 14; both are necessary components of transition planning and required by law. Taken together, these two steps ensure the student is able to achieve long-term goals and is linked to the supports, services, and programs needed for success.

What strategies and activities must be included?

■ Instruction

Instruction can take place in a classroom, small group, or one-to-one learning. It can be provided in public schools, private schools, at home, or in a community setting.

■ Related Services

Related services may include transportation, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other supportive services necessary for a student to benefit from special education.

■ **Community Experiences**

Community experiences may be provided to the student outside of the school building, by school staff, consultants, private providers, or other agencies.

■ **Employment and Other Post-School Adult Living Objectives**

These services may lead to a job or career, and important adult activities. Schools or other entities could provide these services.

■ **Daily Living Skills**

These are the activities most adults do every day. Schools or other entities usually provide this type of instruction.

■ **Functional Vocational Evaluation**

These evaluations provide information about the student's job or career interests, aptitude, and skills. Schools or other entities could provide these assessments.

If the IEP team, which includes the student's parents, agrees services in one or more of these areas is not needed, the IEP must state so and provide the rationale.



Community-based instruction

Community-based instruction can be a very important part of a student's transition IEP. It involves learning by doing. The student receives instruction either 1:1 or in a small group in a community setting, such as a bank, supermarket, train station, college campus or job site, and learns functional everyday life skills through hands-on experiences, such as grocery shopping, using public transportation, ordering food in a restaurant, making change, or using a map. This instruction might be provided by a classroom teacher, a community organization, a job coach, or a paraprofessional.

Some areas for transition planning

Post Secondary Education

- Four-year college or university
- Community college
- Trade school
- Private school
- Adult vocational/technical school

Career Exploration and Development

- Vocational evaluation
- Career assessment
- Specialized transition assessments
- Community-based job exploration
- Community-based job sampling
- Shared time at vo-tech
- Paid work experiences
- Apprenticeships
- Part-time employment in chosen field prior to graduation

Functional Academics

- Math (budget, money management skills)
- Reading (identification and comprehension)
- Writing (filling out forms, signing checks, writing resumes)
- Computers

Self Determination

- Knowledge of one's own disability
- Knowledge of rights
- Self-assessment
- Learning styles
- Appropriate communication techniques
- Assertiveness skills

Independent Living Skills

- Community resource training (banks, post office, shops, libraries, train stations, bus stations, etc.)
- Residential living skills
- Mobility/transportation
- Communication skills

Adult Service Linkages

- DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation),
- CBVI (Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired)
- DDD (Division of Developmental Disabilities)
- DMHAS (Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services)
- Social Security Administration and DMAHS, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services
- Board of Social Services (by County)
- Centers for Independent Living
- DDS - Division of Disability Services
- Adult service providers (residential, employment, recreation, etc.)
- Other linkages in the community based on individual student need

Other Issues

- Guardianship
- Special needs trusts/estate planning
- Insurance
- Long-term permanency planning
- Family relationships
- Income and benefits maintenance

This list, developed for The New Jersey Partnership for Transition from School to Adult Life for Youth with Disabilities, has been updated.

Who is involved in transition planning?

Regardless of where the student attends school, the case manager at the local school district is responsible for the transition planning process, but there are many individuals who come together to help the student plan for transition including:

- The student
- The student's family
- Special education teachers
- General education teachers
- Related service providers
- Administrators
- Guidance counselors
- Others, as appropriate, including teachers and staff from the student's private school placement

Some schools have transition specialists who may be well-informed about resources and adult services in the community. In such cases, the transition specialist should attend the IEP meeting.



The role of outside agencies

Representatives from the following government agencies that provide post-high-school services should also be involved:

- The Division of Vocational and Rehabilitation Services
- The Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- The Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities

Although less common, other individuals such as staff from a local Center for Independent Living (CIL), potential employers, and staff or volunteers from provider agencies may attend meetings or serve as one-time or ongoing consultants to the team, sharing expertise or insight to help the team plan and make decisions.

What if an outside agency does not attend or fails to provide services?

If a representative from an outside agency is invited to the IEP meeting but does not attend, the school district must take other steps to obtain their participation. If an outside agency other than the school district fails to provide transition services described in the IEP, the district must reconvene an IEP meeting to identify alternative strategies to meet the objectives. A lack of cooperation from outside agencies will require the district to provide the necessary services itself.



TIP!

Self-advocacy and self-determination skills

Teaching students self-advocacy and self-determination skills can be an important aspect of the transition process. Students should learn about laws protecting people with disabilities from discrimination, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

What is the role of the student?

Students with disabilities age 14 and older must be invited to participate in transition planning. If the student does not attend the meeting when transition is being discussed, the district must take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

Graduation considerations

The vast majority of IDEA-eligible students are entitled to receive special education services through age 21. Although some students will complete the academic requirements for a diploma before that time, many will continue to need services. The decision to graduate and accept a diploma should not be made without careful consideration, because in New Jersey, once a student accepts a diploma, the district is no longer required to provide services under IDEA, and a student's ability to obtain needed services beyond the traditional senior year ends.

This is particularly vital to consider for those likely to need ongoing support services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities. The agency's new rules stipulate that they serve ONLY those age 21 and over. Therefore, if a student with developmental disabilities accepts a diploma before the age of 21, it is very likely that there will be a prolonged gap in services.

Even a student over the age of 18 who will not need state services in the future may continue to be entitled for service and support under the IDEA. In fact, college-bound students may require additional years of school for social skills training and generalization, mobility instruction, managing personal finances, and instruction in managing personal medical needs.



TIP!

Commencement ceremonies

There is an important distinction between participation in commencement ceremonies and accepting a diploma. In New Jersey, the law entitles a student to participate in graduation ceremonies with his or her class even if a diploma is not received.

What services might be part of the IEP for older students?

Depending on the needs of the student, services for those 18-21 might include:

- Continuation of services at the current placement
- Community-based instruction
- Job coaching
- Travel training
- Career assessment and job sampling
- Support or instruction on a college campus
- Social skills training and support
- Assistance with independent living, overnights, and experiences
- Ongoing related services, such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or counseling
- Civic awareness and training or instruction in legal standards for adult behavior



Considering guardianship

Eighteen is the age of majority in New Jersey. At that time, all rights are transferred to the student, and regardless of disability, an adult student has the right to make his or her own decisions, unless the parent has obtained guardianship.

At least three years before the student reaches age 18, the parent and student must be notified that all rights will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority.

Many students, including those with severe disabilities, are able to make some decisions on their own. However, many students, including those with hidden disabilities, can be easily exploited and taken advantage of. Parents should consider options for surrogate decision-making that maximize independence, while at the same time, provide necessary protections. Parents seeking guardianship must apply through the courts. Parents should retain an attorney to represent them in this process about 6 months before the student's 18th birthday.



Eligibility for government benefits: Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid are both “means tested” benefits. This refers to the fact that an individual’s income and resources are part of the test for eligibility. Prior to age 18, the family income and resources are counted toward the individual’s with disabilities eligibility. Therefore, most individuals with disabilities will not be determined eligible until they have attained the age of 18.

The following is a brief explanation of the eligibility for SSI and Medicaid:

1. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI is a federal program that provides monthly cash payments to eligible individuals in need. In New Jersey, individuals who are determined eligible for SSI are also eligible for Medicaid. An individual must have a disability (as defined by the Social Security Administration), low income, and resources below \$2,000.

2. Disabled Adult Child Status (DAC)

An individual with a disability is sometimes eligible for Social Security benefits based on the work history of their parent. This usually happens when a parent begins collecting his or her own Social Security benefits. Often, the amount provided to the individual with a disability is above the income limit for SSI; therefore, the individual loses both SSI and Medicaid benefits.

In some instances the individual with a disability may be eligible for continued Medicaid benefits as a DAC.

3. Community Medicaid

This program provides Medicaid to individuals unable to afford the health care they need. An individual must have a disability, low income, and resources below \$4,000.

4. New Jersey Workability

This program offers full New Jersey Medicaid health coverage to individuals with disabilities who are working. The individual is charged a small premium under this program. This program also has income and resource limitations.

What is the 'Summary of Performance?'

IDEA 2004 and New Jersey regulations require that a summary of performance be provided to each student prior to the expiration of their eligibility for special education and related services. The summary must include the student's Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, along with recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals in the areas of Postsecondary Education, Employment, Independent Living, and Community Participation.



SECTION II - The Children's System of Care

The Division of Children's System of Care (CSOC) under the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for determining eligibility and providing services for children and young adults with developmental disabilities under the age of 21.

DCF can provide:

- behavioral supports
- in-home supports
- camp stipends
- and, in some cases, residential placements

What are the criteria for eligibility for services from DCF?

The DCF definition of a developmental disability is the same as that of The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), (see page 16).



Residential services for students age 21 and younger

When is a school district required to provide a residential placement?

Placement in a residential program must be provided, at no cost to the parents, if it is necessary to allow the student to make meaningful educational progress. Often, residential placements are considered for students with behaviors, school avoidance issues, and similar needs.

When will DCF provide residential placements?

DCF will not provide a residential placement if it is only necessary to ensure the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Instead, in these cases, the student's school district may be required to provide the residential placement.

What happens when a student who is residentially placed by his school district attains the age of 21 and his educational entitlement ends?

In some cases, the Division of Developmental Disabilities will continue funding these placements. Often, families in this situation will need the assistance of an attorney to secure uninterrupted funding for a residential placement. Families should take action at least one year before their child's educational entitlement ends.

SECTION III - Considerations for the Future: College

At the college level, specialized education and accommodations are no longer a right or an entitlement. Students with disabilities get into college the same way all other students do: they research the schools that interest them, go visit those colleges, meet students and staff, and ask questions. They take entrance exams and complete college applications. Support through this process can be an important component of transition.

For the student planning to attend college, waiver of high school courses such as math and foreign language is not recommended. Colleges are not required to waive courses deemed essential to the curriculum or required for certification. It is important to understand that all colleges are different, and policies and procedures will vary from one to the next.

Are there alternative admissions criteria?

Students with disabilities should explore alternative options for college admissions. Many community colleges waive some admission requirements, for instance SAT and ACT exam scores and, in certain circumstances, a high school diploma may not be required. Following admission, most colleges will require students to take academic placement tests (accumulator). The purpose of these exams is to ensure a student is placed in the appropriate Math or English class. If the test shows a weakness in an area of study, the student may be required to take a class which does not earn college credit.

In other instances, students may place directly into a college-level class.

Increasingly, colleges and universities offer “college experience” programs for students with intellectual disabilities. These programs enable students to take courses on a college campus, and, in some cases, live in dormitories. Participation in such a program prior to graduation may be an appropriate component of a transition plan for a student still in the special education system. It is important to know that in most cases, these programs do not offer college credit and will not result in a college degree.

Students do not have to tell a college admissions office about a disability; however, doing so will allow the college to provide information about services. Many colleges allow students with disabilities to ask for special consideration during the admissions process, if needed.



Documenting disability

Students with a documented disability may be able to take the ACT, SAT, or other college entrance tests with accommodations, such as extended time, a reader, private testing area, or other supports. However, the testing companies REQUIRE recent evaluations (not less than 3 years old) in order to be considered for these accommodations. Therefore, parents should NOT waive re-evaluations, and should ensure that the IEP describes, in detail, all necessary accommodations and modifications on testing. It is up to each testing agency to determine whether to grant the request for accommodations.



Accommodations in college

In order to receive accommodations in college, it will be necessary to provide current documentation of the impact of the disability on the student. Colleges are not required to evaluate students, so it may be helpful to have the student evaluated during the last year of his or her special education program. All colleges are required by law to offer supports and accommodations to eligible students identifying themselves as having a disability, but these can vary greatly from college to college.

A growing number of colleges have specialized programs created to support and assist students with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities, dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome, and other conditions. Some are offered at no charge, while others require additional fees. High school guidance counselors and published guides to selecting a college can provide information to help locate these programs.

SECTION IV - Work and Day Programs: Services Through the Adult Service System

The government service system for adults with disabilities is multifaceted and long waiting lists exist for some services. Often, case management responsibilities fall on parents or the student. Parents and students need to be prepared for the responsibilities associated with accessing and managing their own services.

While under the protective umbrella of IDEA, it is vital that planning takes place and services are provided to ensure that students leave school with the academic, social, self-care, behavioral, and technical skills they need to pursue their goals, as well as the necessary linkages to service providers who can help them.

For students likely to need ongoing supports and services after graduation, it is wise to involve outside agencies in the transition planning process. Two key state agencies that provide services to adults with disabilities are the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS).

As part of the planning process, focus on agencies that can provide the necessary services:

- DDD provides day and residential services and supports to people with significant developmental disabilities. Over the years, DDD has provided transition programs with necessary links to the adult service system for graduates with developmental disabilities.
- DVRS can pay for job training, education, and adaptive equipment. It can also assist with job placement and workshop services. Eligibility for DVRS services turns on employability (including supported employability).



TIP!

Invite representatives from these agencies to the IEP meeting to assist with planning, and ask them to sign the IEP to indicate their agreement. If agency staff will not participate, check with their superiors.

The Department of Human Services has policies that compel the involvement of agencies like DDD in the transition process. If staff cannot attend, let the record show a willingness to accommodate their schedules. Send DDD and DVRS staff draft copies of the IEP, asking for input and approval even if they cannot attend.

The goal is to involve and commit the relevant agencies to the services necessary to enhance the likelihood that they will be available when needed.

SECTION V - Accessing Adult Services Through the Division of Developmental Disabilities

What services does DDD fund?

DDD funds three types of services for individuals with developmental disabilities who live in the community:

- day services, including supports for people who are employed;
- residential services, including individual supports that assist an individual living at home or elsewhere in the community; and,
- family support services that assist families caring for loved ones at home.

DDD also administers two Medicaid waivers: the Comprehensive Waiver and the Community Care Waiver.

How is eligibility for DDD services determined?

In order to be eligible for DDD services, an individual must meet the following criteria:

- Have a mental or physical impairment or combination of impairments;
- The impairment is manifest in the developmental years, before age 22;
- The impairment is likely to continue indefinitely; and,
- The impairment results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity:
 - Self-care
 - Receptive and expressive language
 - Learning
 - Mobility
 - Self-direction
 - Capacity for independent living
 - Economic self-sufficiency

When can parents apply for eligibility?

DDD will only accept applications for individuals with disabilities who are at least 18 years old.

Families should apply for services from DDD as soon as the individual attains the age of 18. This will help ensure that eligibility for DDD services is established before the individual turns 21 and the educational entitlement ends. Additionally, if there is any concern regarding an individual's eligibility for DDD services, applying early will allow an opportunity to address these concerns.

DDD takes the position it will only provide services to eligible individuals:

- 1) who have attained the age of 21 **and**
- 2) are Medicaid eligible. The current regulations require an individual to have Medicaid before services are provided.

Where can parents apply?

The application must be submitted to the Regional DDD office, which serves the area in which the individual with the disability lives. The application can be completed by the individual, or their parent or guardian.



Waiting lists

DDD's regulations allow it to assign people to waiting lists when services are not immediately available. This applies to both residential and day programs. However, in recent years DDD has been able to provide day services once the educational entitlement ends at 21. The same cannot be said for residential services or in-home supports. These services are provided under DDD's Community Care Waiver (CCW) and long waiting lists exist for the CCW. DDD maintains two waiting list categories for the CCW: Priority and General. The Priority waiting list is the only list that actually places people into services. The General waiting list is essentially a registry for people who do not meet the criteria for placement on the Priority waiting list.

How do parents have their adult child placed on DDD's CCW waiting list?

Individuals who meet the following criteria can be placed on the CCW waiting list with priority status:

- both parents are 55 years or older;
- the person is living with someone other than the parent who is not willing to provide care any longer;
- there is a risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
- one parent has a chronic condition, which significantly limits the ability to care for the person; or,
- the person's health or safety is at risk because of behavior or physical needs.

As it can take ten to twelve years to reach the top of the CCW waiting list, it is vital that individuals request placement on this list as soon as the criteria can be satisfied.

Although DDD's regulations permit a person to be placed on a waiting list for day services five years prior to graduation, and in recent years DDD has been able to provide day services for individuals who age out of their educational entitlement, there is often a gap in time between school services ending and DDD services beginning. It is therefore imperative that families work to secure services well in advance of graduation. For families of school-age children who have planned well, a waiting list should not be a problem and the gap in services, if any, should be minimal. However, if services are delayed or your child is placed on a waiting list, it may be illegal for DDD to refuse immediate services particularly if serious regression is likely.

The Role of Medicaid

Why is Medicaid vital?

DDD requires an individual to secure and maintain Medicaid eligibility in order to receive ANY service from DDD – day services, in home supports, residential services and self-directed services. DDD contends that any loss of Medicaid eligibility can result in the interruption or termination of services. Therefore, it is vital that families make sure they preserve Medicaid eligibility by ensuring that their family member with a disability keeps assets and income below certain limits, spends down excess assets, and/or has a special needs trust.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that individuals, parents and guardians understand the Medicaid programs available and take the steps necessary to secure and maintain eligibility. (See Box entitled Eligibility for Government Benefits: Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid, on page 10).

How are residential services and supports provided?

DDD states all residential services and supports in New Jersey must be funded through New Jersey's Community Care Waiver (CCW). This means that in order to receive residential services, an individual must apply for and be determined eligible for services under the CCW.

The importance of advanced planning

To ensure continued Medicaid eligibility, it is vital for families of an individual with a disability to create an estate plan including a Special Needs Trust (SNT). When a family plans ahead in this manner, the type of SNT created does not require a "payback" provision because the trust will be funded with assets belonging to the parents or other family members, not the individual with the disability. This type of SNT is commonly referred to as a "third

party" SNT. Absent proper estate planning, when the parents of the individual with a disability die, the individual may inherit assets that would jeopardize Medicaid eligibility. For more information on this topic, please visit our website at www.hinkle1.com/category/estate_planning/.



State Resources for Transition to Adult Life In New Jersey

Agency	Phone	Web Site
Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired	973-648-3333	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi
Commission on Higher Education	609-292-4310	www.nj.gov/highereducation/
Department of Education	609-292-0147	www.nj.gov/education/specialed/transition/
Division of Developmental Disabilities	1-800-832-9173	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd
Division of Disability Services	1-888-285-3036	www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds
Division of Mental Health Services	1-800-382-6717	www.nj.gov/humanservices/clients/mental/
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services	609-292-5987	jobs4jersey.com/jobseekers/disable/index.html
NJ Statewide Independent Living Council	877-917-4500	http://www.njsilc.org
NJ Transit Access Link	1-800-955-2321	www.njtransit.com/
Social Security	1-800-772-1213	www.ssa.gov/disabilityAdministration

About the Authors

Ira M. Fingles, Esq. has devoted his legal career to the representation of individuals with disabilities and their families. Fueled by his experiences growing up with his sister who has multiple disabilities, Ira received his J.D. from Temple University School of Law. He has provided legal representation in a variety of areas, including educational rights for students with disabilities, higher education, benefits, and services for adults with disabilities, guardianship, and estate planning. He has argued precedent-setting cases in federal and state court, and before administrative agencies in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He has written extensively on topics related to disability law and has presented to disability groups across the nation. He is a member of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Bars.

Maria Fischer, Esq. is personally committed to the field of disability law. The mother of an adult daughter with multiple disabilities, Maria's legal work focuses on guardianship, estate planning, and helping families of adults with disabilities access and retain appropriate services. She completed an internship at the New Jersey Department of the Public Advocate, where she conducted legal research and drafted papers on civil rights, healthcare, education and administrative law. She also interned with the Family Law Clinic at Seton Hall University. She has testified before the New Jersey legislature on housing issues related to individuals with developmental disabilities, and on controversial policies of the Division of Developmental Disabilities. She is an active member of the family advisory committee at The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey, serves on the Board of Directors of The Arc of Mercer County, and is first Vice-Chair of Special Olympics New Jersey. She earned her J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law. She is a member of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Bars.

Steven Morse, Ed.D. is an educator with more than 25 years of experience in private special education school leadership. He is the Superintendent of Garfield Park Academy, an ASAH member school in Willingboro, NJ, and he serves as President of ASAH. A lifelong advocate for students with disabilities, Dr. Morse serves on the board of the Teaching Family Association and the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC). He earned his doctoral degree from Widener University in Educational Leadership, and a Masters in Business Administration from LaSalle University. He is certified in the State of New Jersey as a Chief School Administrator, Principal, Supervisor, School Business Administrator, and is nationally certified as a Brain Injury Specialist.

S. Paul Prior, Esq. has spent his entire legal career representing people with disabilities. As the younger brother of a man with autism, he has a life-long commitment to disability law. His legal work has focused on special education, guardianship, financial entitlements, and access to appropriate services. A substantial part of his practice is devoted to assisting families in estate and trust matters. He has successfully argued leading cases before the New Jersey Supreme Court, Third Circuit Court of Appeals, as well as other state and federal courts. He served as a federal monitor overseeing conditions at state-operated institutions. He holds a J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law, and serves on the board of directors of The Arc of New Jersey and Autism New Jersey. Previously, he served on the Board of Special Olympics New Jersey and the Eden Foundation. He is a member of the Elder Law Section of the New Jersey Bar Association. He writes and lectures frequently on topics concerning the law and disability as well as issues affecting siblings.

About ASAH

ASAH ...Partnerships for Promising Futures, is a statewide not-for-profit organization of private special education schools and agencies in New Jersey. Our members provide highly specialized services to more than 11,000 infants, children, and young adults with disabilities.


Founded in 1974 by thirteen private schools, ASAH now serves more than 150 school locations. We developed the first code of ethics and standards for New Jersey's private special education programs, and we continue to advocate for legislative and regulatory changes to improve the quality of life for students with disabilities and their families.

ASAH is a member of the National Association of Private Special Education Centers.



2125 Route 33, Lexington Square
Hamilton Square, NJ 08690
info@asah.org
www.asah.org
609-890-1400

Toll Free Parent Assistance Line (PAL) 1-877-287-2724

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Be sure to visit our website for more resources and tools, including advocacy videos and our special education Placement Toolkit, with links to documents and other resources to help you advocate for your child.

About Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer, P.C.



Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer

Attorneys at Law

Representing people with disabilities and their families since 1974

Focusing on disability and elder law since 1974, Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer offers a full range of legal services for people with disabilities and their families, and seniors. Many of the firm's attorneys have a family member with a disability, allowing them to combine their legal knowledge with personal life experience. The firm's attorneys have argued many of the precedent-setting cases affecting people with disabilities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Practice areas include:

- **Special education**
- **Adult Services**
- **SSI/SSDI/Medicaid**
- **Guardianship and surrogate decision-making**
- **Estate Planning**
- **Special Needs Trusts**
- **Estate Administration**
- **Elder Law**

The firm maintains a multi-state practice, with New Jersey offices in Paramus, Florham Park, Lawrenceville, Cherry Hill, and Wall, and in Pennsylvania in Bala Cynwyd and Plymouth Meeting.

Attorneys are available to speak to parent groups at no charge on topics in law and disability.

www.hinkle1.com

609-896-4200



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