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# Opening Doors: A Transition Guide

## *Recommended Practices Protocol*

For close coordination and continuity of educational planning and services for blind, visually impaired, deaf-blind students, and their families in Nebraska.

### *A joint effort involving:*

- Nebraska Department of Education
- Local school districts and Vision Resource Teachers
- Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind and Visually Impaired
- Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Consumer and parent support groups



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Fold-Out Quick Guide:

A Continuum of Transitional Services

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## INTRODUCTION

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This protocol is the result of the dialogue and cooperation of the Nebraska Transition Team members and other statewide representatives. Members met for three sessions with a facilitator for the purpose of better defining roles, responsibilities, tasks, principles, and relationships between entities working with blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind children and youth. Those entities include groups working under the structure of the Department of Education (local schools, Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired/NCECBVI, Deaf-Blind Project and others); Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Commission); students and their families; consumer groups and others. The result of this collaborative effort is intended to foster a more comprehensive seamless transition model for children and youth - birth through adulthood. By drawing on knowledge from a wide variety of resources we are able to better leverage learning, provide informed choice, and produce individual programs that are creative and responsive to needed and appropriate services.

The unifying factor in this group was a common passion to provide the best possible services for blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind children and youth across the state of Nebraska. The goal is to use this mutual passion and our collective resources and experiences to energize our work together with both students and their families.

- We recognize the wide variety of experiences and broad range of opinions represented.
- We recognize the need to increase our understanding of each other's roles and organizations.
- We recognize the impact of history, misunderstandings, and assumptions that have affected our relationships.
- We recognize our need for respectful, frequent, and continuous communication in our relationship-building efforts.

Seamless transition is achieved through interactive decisions that satisfy our shared goals to ensure well-prepared students who experience a continuum of services characterized by cooperation, coordination, continuity, and timeliness from birth through successful adulthood.

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## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

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Recommended practice recognizes that transition begins early and must be revisited often. Recurring themes include communication, relationship building, and creativity.

1. Share information with each other in a timely, ongoing manner, including notification of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and/or Individual Educational Program (IEP) meetings, in a way that builds trust. Sharing must be done within the parameters of confidentiality requirements and openness to differing approaches. Informed choice is important for the student and family to support self-advocacy and self-determination.
2. Be mindful of the positive implication of collective support and the limitations of working alone.
3. At an early stage, understand that too many professionals may easily overwhelm students and families.
4. Explore differing approaches through direct personal contact. Openly communicate when differences occur with mutual respect for each other's uniqueness, environment, culture, interests, and experiences. This can happen through informal planning meetings apart from the formality of the IFSP/IEP meetings.
5. Take advantage of opportunities to understand and be comfortable with the environment of the rehabilitation setting or the school setting. Dialogue about perceived roles, responsibilities, and myths in a way that personalizes the communication and gives relationships the time and investment necessary.
6. Be considerate of boundaries, IFSP/IEP timelines, certification issues, and/or parental choices concerning confidentiality.
7. When making decisions, clarify the basis for the decision and assumptions already made to the entire team. Consider the continuity, consistency, and long-term implications of those decisions. Be open to learning from other team members, respecting the array of experiences and perspectives.
8. Bring creativity into those circumstances where there is not enough trained staff to meet the student needs. Be open to maximizing what is possible both within and outside the IFSP/IEP structure. Be willing to try something new, to explore and capitalize on differences, and to take risks.
9. When relationships are broken, work to re-establish them by framing questions and concerns in self-advocacy/student advocacy terms and through identifying the roadblocks or reasons for the disconnect, such as unfamiliar information, differences in training, experience, and qualifications. Keep in mind when relationships are broken or strained, those who suffer the most are the students and their families.

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## REFERRALS

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1. Any person can take the initial call or make a referral specific to the individual needs of the student, thus creating a “no wrong door” policy for referrals.
2. Initial inquiries must be referred to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district if they have not yet been contacted.
3. Recognize the needs of the students/families connecting them to the programs or resources available. Communication should encourage self-advocacy and should be guided by informed choice and self-determination.
4. First steps include building rapport and gathering information such as concerns, needs, motivation, student information, previous contacts, previous experience, resources tapped, and more.



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## CONTINUUM OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES SCHOOL EXIT THROUGH ADULTHOOD

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Implemented by: Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
(Commission)

Driving Document: Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or Independent Living  
Plan (IL Plan)

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is the Vocational Rehabilitation agency for blind and visually impaired persons in Nebraska. The Commission provides ongoing services as needed and necessary in accordance with the Independent Living Plan or the Individualized Plan for Employment.

The Commission provides a variety of services enabling blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind people, including those with all other disabilities who are also blind or visually impaired, to become fully participating, contributing members of society. Blind people lead normal lives, work in a wide range of jobs, have families, raise children, and participate in community activities. The following services provide the means by which blind persons can regain or retain a productive role in society:

- Vocational services including supported employment, placement, on-the- job training and vocational guidance
- Support for higher education
- Training center for the blind
- Technology support and training
- Independent living training
- Transition services
- Deaf-Blind services
- Referrals to ancillary services
- Business enterprise
- Digital voice newspaper delivery system (NFB-NEWSLINE®)

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## CONTINUUM OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES AGES 14\* THROUGH SCHOOL EXIT

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Implemented by: Individual Education Program (IEP) Team Members

Driving Document: Individual Education Program (IEP)

### NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) assures a free, appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, providing technical assistance to schools and monitoring the provision of services to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. NDE provides guidance, support, resources, and technical assistance for districts statewide and their students.

Under the structure of the NDE, the local school district, the vision resource teachers and other members of the student's educational team are responsible for developing and implementing an individualized education plan for each student as formalized by the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) and/or Individual Educational Program (IEP). The educational and transitional support for each student is intended to minimize the effect blindness, visual impairment, or deaf-blindness has on the student's education by using modified teaching techniques, adapted materials, and teaching specialized skills.

The IEP shall include: beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team. The IEP will be updated annually thereafter. The IEP requires appropriate transition components including measurable postsecondary goals and transition services to achieve these goals.

IEP Team Participants should include, with prior written consent of the parents/guardians, a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for the transition services. This may include not only the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, but also Health and Human Services offices such as: the Division of Developmental Disabilities, or Behavioral Health Services

Note that written consent is NOT required if the parent/guardian invites the outside agency representative or other individuals.

*\* Please note that IDEA and Nebraska Rule 51 require transition components to be in effect in the IEP when the child turns age 16.*

## LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

1. With written consent of the parents/guardian, invites staff from the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Commission) for planning and IEP meetings and helps coordinate the IPE or Independent Living Plan (IL Plan) with IEP team members.
2. With written consent of the parents/guardian, invites representatives of other agencies and organizations likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.
3. Shares provided information about Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) with parents/guardians annually and consults with NCECBVI regarding specific transition programs, services, and options.
4. Shares provided information about the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired with parents/guardians annually and accesses appropriate services and resources for students.
5. Shares provided information about consumer groups with parents/guardians and students.
6. Facilitates and encourages communication between entities to establish and maintain relationships.
7. Makes contact with organizations and agencies on behalf of families when requested.
8. When students graduate, or age out, provides the student with a Summary of Performance that identifies the student's post high school goals, needs, and supports. It is recommended the student share copies of this Summary of Performance with appropriate agencies.

## NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides the local school district with program and service information.
3. Provides information about additional agencies and organizations as appropriate.
4. Offers support for the local program through Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) materials and resources, center based programs, outreach services, skill training, summer events, assessment, and technical assistance.
5. Shares information and contacts about consumer groups with parents/guardians and students.
6. Offers independent living training, vocational training, and assessment as part of the transition process.

## NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides Commission programming, services, and contact information to the local school staff.
3. Offers support for family contact, training, role modeling, and peer connections in the home and community.
4. With the written consent of the parent/guardian, attends and/or contributes to the IEP meeting and participates in the development of transition goals.
5. If the parent/guardian initiates the invitation to attend the IEP, written consent is not required.
6. Upon written consent of the parent/guardian, develops the IPE or IL Plan in coordination with the IEP.
7. Offers individual and group opportunities in both career planning and community-based experience including job experiences, specialized skills training, and technology support.
8. Shares consumer group contact and information with parents/guardians, students, and educators.



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# CONTINUUM OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

## AGES 5 THROUGH 13

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Implemented by: Individual Education Program (IEP) team members

Driving Document: Individual Education Program (IEP)

### NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) assures a free, appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, providing technical assistance to schools and monitoring the provision of services to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. NDE provides guidance, support, resources, and technical assistance for districts statewide and their students.

Under the structure of the NDE the local school district, the vision resource teachers, and other members of the student's educational team are responsible for developing and implementing an individualized education plan for each student as formalized by the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) and/or Individual Education Program (IEP). The educational and transitional support for each student is intended to minimize the effect blindness, visual impairment, or deaf-blindness has on the student's education by using modified teaching techniques, adapted materials, and teaching specialized skills.

With written consent of the parent/guardian, IEP Team Participants should include a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing services to the student. If the parent/guardian initiates the invitation to attend the IEP, written consent is not required.

### LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

1. Shares provided information about Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) with parents/guardians annually and consults with NCECBVI regarding specific transition programs, services, and options.
2. Shares provided information about the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired with parents/guardians annually and accesses appropriate services and resources for students.
3. Shares provided information about consumer groups with students and parents.
4. Facilitates and encourages communication between entities to establish and maintain relationships.
5. Makes contact with organizations and agencies on behalf of families when requested.
6. As appropriate, consults with or invites other services, organizations and/or advocates to the IEP meeting.

NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides the local school district with program and service information.
3. Provides information about additional agencies and organizations as appropriate.
4. Offers support for the local program through Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) materials and resources, center based programs, outreach services, skill training, summer events, assessment, and technical assistance.
5. Shares information and contacts about consumer groups with parents/guardians, students, and educators.

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides Commission programming, services, and contact information to the local school staff.
3. Offers support for family contact, training, role modeling, and peer connections in the home and community.
4. With written consent of the parent/guardian attends and/or contributes to the IEP meeting and participates in the development of transition goals. If the parent/guardian initiates the invitation to attend the IEP, written consent is not required.
5. Shares consumer group contact and information with parents/guardians, students, and educators.

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# CONTINUUM OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

## AGES 3 THROUGH 4

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Implemented by: Individual Education Program (IEP) team members

Driving Document: Individual Education Program (IEP)

### NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) assures a free, appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, providing technical assistance to schools and monitoring the provision of services to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. NDE provides guidance, support, resources, and technical assistance for districts statewide and their students.

Under the structure of the NDE the local school district, the vision resource teachers, and other members of the student's educational team are responsible for developing and implementing an individualized education plan for each student as formalized by the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) and/or Individual Educational Program (IEP). The educational and transitional support for each student is intended to minimize the effect blindness, visual impairment, or deaf-blindness has on the student's education by using modified teaching techniques, adapted materials, and teaching specialized skills.

### LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

1. Shares provided information about Nebraska Center for Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) with parents/guardians annually and consults with NCECBVI regarding specific transition programs, services, and options.
2. Shares provided information about the Nebraska Commission for the Blind or Visually Impaired (Commission) with parents/guardians annually and accesses appropriate services and resources for students.
3. Shares provided information about consumer groups with parents/guardians.
4. Facilitates and encourages communication between entities to establish and maintain relationships.
5. Makes contact with organizations and agencies on behalf of families when requested.
6. As appropriate, consults with or, with written consent of the parent/guardian, invites other services, organizations, and/or advocates to the IEP meeting. If the parent/guardian initiates the invitation to attend the IEP, written consent is not required.

NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides the local school district with program and service information.
3. Provides information about additional agencies and organizations as appropriate.
4. Offers support for the local program through Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) materials and resources, center based programs, outreach services, skill training, summer events, assessment, and technical assistance.
5. Shares information and contacts about consumer groups with parents/guardians and educators.

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides Commission programming, services, and contact information to the local school staff.
3. Offers support for family contact, training, role modeling, and peer connections in the home and community.
4. With written consent of the parent/guardian attends and/or contributes to the IEP meeting and participates in the development of transition goals. If the parent/guardian initiates the invitation to attend the IEP, written consent is not required.
5. Shares consumer group contact and information with parents/guardians, students, and educators.

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## CONTINUUM OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES BIRTH THROUGH AGE 2

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Implemented by: Early Development Network Service Provider (EDN) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team members. Services and support are provided in the child's natural environment.

Driving Document: Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

### NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) assures a free, appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, providing technical assistance to schools and monitoring the provision of services to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. NDE provides guidance, support, resources, and technical assistance for districts statewide and their students.

Under the structure of the NDE the local school district, the vision resource teachers, and other members of the child's educational team are responsible for developing and implementing an individualized family service plan for each child as formalized by the IFSP. The educational and transitional support for each student is intended to minimize the effect blindness, visual impairment, or deaf-blindness has on the child's education by using modified teaching techniques, adapted materials, and teaching specialized skills.

### LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Through the Services Coordination process:

1. Shares provided information about Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) with parents/guardians annually and consults with NCECBVI regarding specific transition programs, services, and options.
2. Shares provided information about the Nebraska Commission for the Blind or Visually Impaired (Commission) with parents/guardians annually and accesses appropriate services and resources for the child.
3. Shares provided information about consumer groups with parents/guardians.
4. Facilitates and encourages communication between entities to establish and maintain relationships.
5. Makes contact with organizations and agencies on behalf of families when requested.
6. As appropriate, consults with or invites other services, organizations, and/or advocates to the IFSP meeting.

NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND  
OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides the local school district with program and service information.
3. Provides information about additional agencies and organizations as appropriate.
4. Offers support for the local program through Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) materials and resources, center based programs, outreach services, skill training, summer events, assessment, and technical assistance.
5. Shares information and contacts about consumer groups with parents/guardians, students, and educators.

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Refers initial inquiries to the special education director or appropriate administrator of the local school district.
2. Provides Commission programming, services, and contact information to the local school staff.
3. Through Services Coordination, offers information on family services, training, role modeling, and peer connections in the home and community.
4. Attends and/or contributes to the IFSP meeting and participates in the development of transition goals.
5. Shares consumer group contact and information with parents/guardians and educators.

## ENTITY DESCRIPTIONS

The following entities are accountable to students/parents and state and federal guidelines and policies. All recognize the need to partner with other educational and consumer groups to provide for transition needs early and continuously. All must recognize confidentiality issues. All have the common goal of striving to help facilitate full participation in transitional life experiences from birth through adulthood.

### Nebraska State Department of Education, Special Populations (NDE)

The Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE) assures a free, appropriate public education in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, providing technical assistance to schools and monitoring the provision of services to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. NDE provides guidance, support, resources and technical assistance for districts statewide and their students.

NDE provides certification of qualified teachers and other service providers and supports schools in providing accommodations within legal and financial parameters.

NDE hears and responds to concerns, interacting with schools to provide compliance and qualified services. When compliance is at issue, NDE can help with the decision-making process.

### Local Schools

Under the structure of the NDE the local school district, the vision resource teachers, and other members of the student's educational team are responsible for developing and implementing an individualized education plan for each student as formalized by the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and/or Individual Educational Program (IEP). The educational and transitional support for each student is intended to minimize the effect blindness, visual impairment or deaf-blindness has on the student's education by using modified teaching techniques, adapted materials, and teaching specialized skills. In addition to ensuring that the appropriate core curriculum is accessible, the team supports the expanded core curriculum and may access other entities for assistance. Strong, trustworthy relationships with parents and school personnel are important. Especially in rural areas, the teacher is often the primary "constant" for students and families.

### Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI)

NCECBVI provides center-based residential and outreach educational services statewide. The center-based school is located in Nebraska City. It offers functional skills and academic programming, providing curriculum and instruction as per the student's individual educational plan in coordination with the local school district.

Outreach services are provided for students, families, school districts, and educational service units. Assessment services and staff development training, individual education

plan/multidisciplinary team participation, and on-site consultation services are also available.

The Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) is housed in the same facility. Students registered with the NIRC have access to resources and consumable or loaned materials available through federal quota funds.

Student and family support programs are offered throughout the school year and summer. These may include parent training, family conferences, student activities, and summer camps.

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI or Commission)  
NCBVI is the Vocational Rehabilitation agency for blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind persons in Nebraska. The Commission provides a broad range of rehabilitation and education skills and techniques to persons who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind, including those with all other disabilities who are also blind or visually impaired, supporting them to be full participants in adult life both for employment and independent living. The agency complies with the US Dept. of Education Rehabilitation Act.

The Commission may be involved with students of any age. Involvement with younger students will generally be for the provision of independent living skills training or parent training, whereas services for students age 14-21 may also include vocational and other post-school goals. A staff member may participate in the IEP/IFSP process when invited by the student, parent, or school and when adequate notification of the meeting is given. A coordinated effort between the school and the Commission is critical.

NCBVI supports the school program through the following:

- offering education and training of parents and students,
- serving as a technology resource,
- providing specific skill training,
- offering connection to role models, mentors, and peers,
- offering access to transition programs, and,
- providing opportunities to interface with consumer groups.

# **TERMS**

NDE: Nebraska Department of Education

NCECBVI: Nebraska Center for the Education of Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

NIRC: Nebraska Instructional Resource Center

NCBVI: Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Commission)

EDN: Early Development Network

IEP: Individual Educational Program

IFSP: Individualized Family Service Plan

IPE: Individualized Plan for Employment

IL Plan: Independent Living Plan

Consumer and Advocacy Groups: contact Hotline for Disabilities at 800-742-7594 or <http://www.cap.state.ne.us>