



# **Pre-IEP Prep 101: A Workbook for Students and Families**

**A workbook for students and their families to have a voice  
that is heard in the IEP process**

**Middle School (Grades 6 - 8)**



**RUTGERS HEALTH**

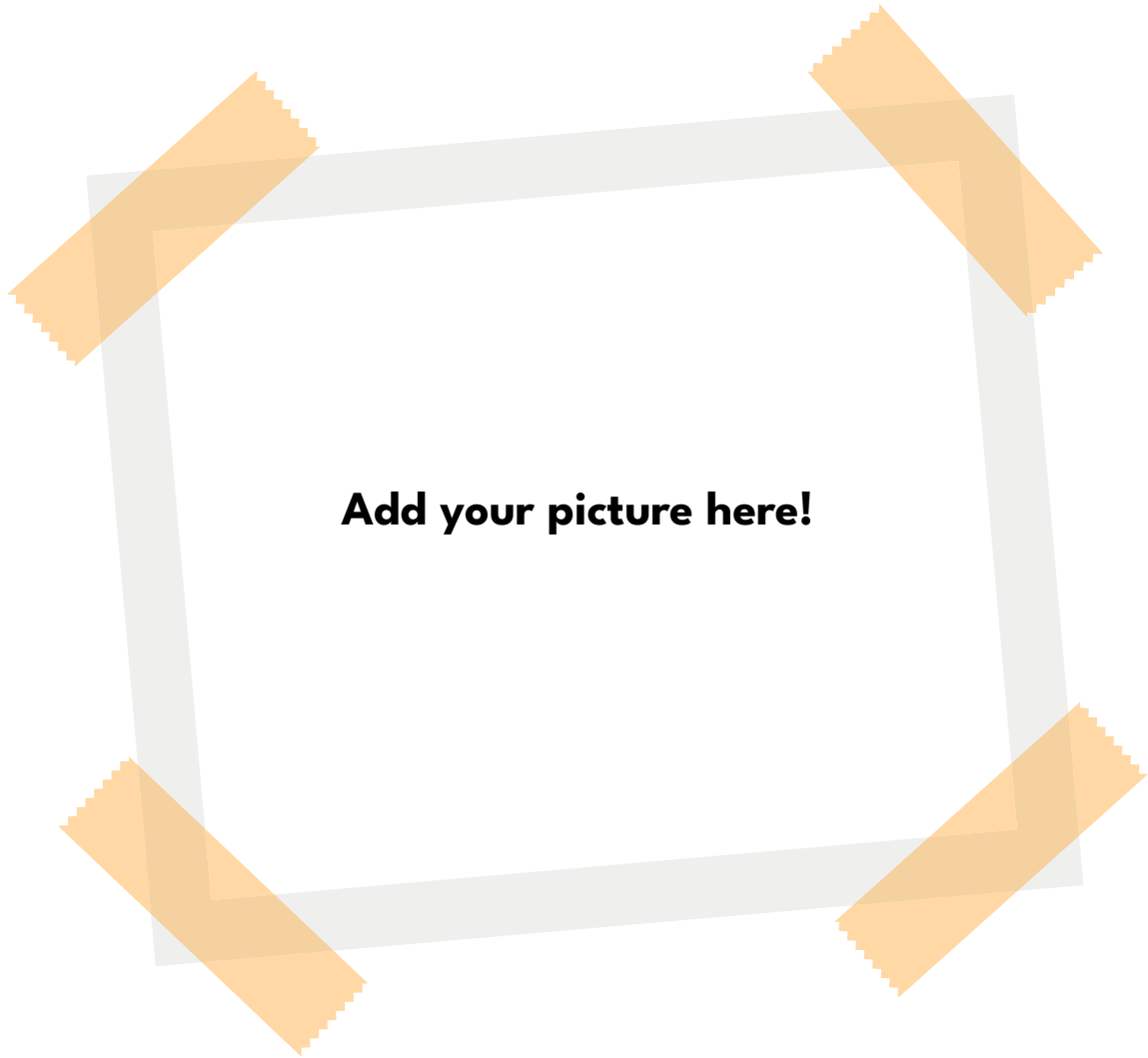
**The Boggs Center  
on Disability and Human Development**

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



Developed by The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development with the NJ Department of Education,  
Office of Special Education, funded by IDEA Part B 2024-2025. May 2025.

# This book belongs to:



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**Name**

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**Date**

# Dear students and families,

This workbook was developed to support families in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills that can support each child's path to a meaningful life.

The planning for a good adult life starts now. Self-advocacy skills are essential for all people and having them helps children express to educators and others what they need to succeed.

No matter the person's age, everyone has strengths and preferences that can be shared. If your child has a disability and is supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP), they also have an IEP team. Your child is invited to their IEP meeting any time transition planning is discussed (i.e., planning for adult life). The IEP includes transition planning beginning with the school year that the student turns age 14, or younger if appropriate. Parents and their child are a key part of this team and with their input, an effective IEP can be developed.

## Directions:

This tool can be used in part or whole to help bring person-centered information into the transition to adult life planning that is part of the IEP. You can share the information in these activities before and during the IEP meeting with your case manager.

For more information please visit the [New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy](#) webpage.

## More information about planning for adult life:

The [New Jersey Transition Toolkit](#) is designed to assist school staff and students with disabilities and their families in their efforts to prepare students with disabilities for entry into a successful adult life after high school. The work to prepare students for a successful adult life that is done by school staff, students, family members, agency staff, and others is referred to as "transition planning" and "transition services" since students are transitioning from school to adult life.



# Terms we use and what they mean:

**IEP:** The **Individualized Education Program** is designed to meet each eligible child's unique education needs and when appropriate, includes planning for a successful adult life.

**IEP Team:** Includes the parent, the student when appropriate, the case manager, teachers and other educators, and others as appropriate.

**DDD:** The **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** assures the opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive quality services and supports, participate meaningfully in their communities, and exercise their right to make choices.

**DVRS:** The **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)** works to enable eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities.

**Person-Centered Planning:** Is a holistic strength-based process that involves supporting people in making well-informed choices and identifying respectful supports.

**Self-Advocacy:** Being able to express to others what you want, what you need, and what you don't want.

**Self-Determination:** A process by which a person controls their own life.

**Modifications:** A modification changes what the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., the content of instruction).

**Accommodations:** An accommodation changes how the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., instructional methods used, support strategies, environmental factors, etc.).



# IEP Scavenger Hunt

Before you and your parents are able to contribute to the IEP, it is important to know what's in it. Work together to identify some key areas. Parents, for this activity, have a copy of your child's most recent IEP. If you don't have one, request one from your child's case manager.

## What to look for:

1. Circle the name of your **case manager** and the **date** of your last IEP.
2. Circle **3 people** who attended your last IEP meeting.
3. Do you have any **related services**? If so, circle them.
4. Circle your **strengths**, **interests**, and **preferences** in your IEP.
5. Circle **modifications** and **accommodations** listed in your IEP.



## Please answer these questions:

Has anything changed since your last IEP meeting that you want to put into your new IEP?

What are your new strengths, interests, or preferences since your last IEP?

Do any modifications and accommodations listed in your last IEP still help you?

Is there anything you would like to add, remove, or modify?

What do you want to make sure gets discussed at your next IEP meeting?

**Tip:** Accommodations versus Modifications. An easy way to remember the difference is that an accommodation changes the way the student learns, but a modification changes what they are expected to learn.

# My Inner Circle

Making big decisions and speaking up for yourself is easier when you have people you trust to help you. We call these people your **allies**!



## Directions:

For each question below, write the name of one person you trust. This can be someone who cares about you at home, school, or other place in the community. These can also be friends. Try to use each person's name only one time.

1. Who is the person you would call or text **first** when something really exciting happens to you?
2. Who is someone you would bring with you to a doctor's appointment if you were sick?
3. Who is a person you would want to spend your entire weekend with on vacation?
4. Who is someone that makes you feel safe at school?

A diagram for the 'My Inner Circle' activity. It consists of a large central circle labeled 'Me' at the bottom. Surrounding this central circle are four smaller circles, each with a number in a yellow circle at its top. The circles are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, corresponding to the questions in the list above. The circles are arranged in a square pattern around the central circle.

**Tip:** Decision-making is an important skill that we can learn over time. It is important to practice! Big decisions come from knowing how to make small decisions. Learn more about Supported-Decision Making by visiting: <https://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/supported-decision-making/>

# My Case Manager

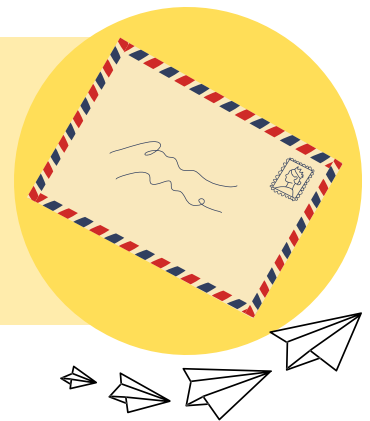
## What does a case manager do?

A **case manager** is someone from your school who helps you, your parents, and your teachers put information together in your IEP. If you are having a difficult time in school or have questions about your education, you can talk to your case manager any time, not just at an IEP meeting.

**My case manager's name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

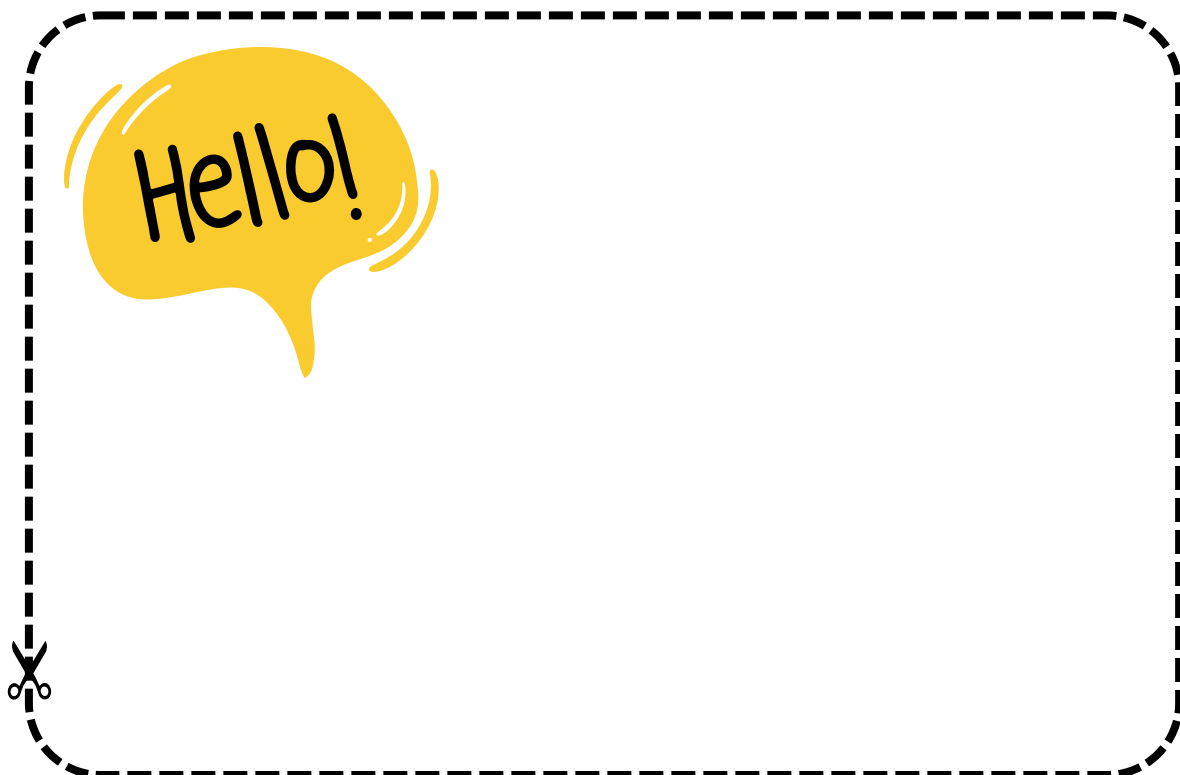
**My case manager's office is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the postcard on this page and the next to say “hello” to your case manager. Share something about yourself you would like them to know! When you're done, cut it out and mail it to them or bring it to their office.**



## Front

Use the front of the postcard to draw a picture of yourself or some of your favorite things to help your case manager learn more about you.

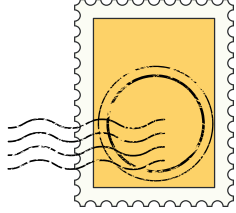




**Tip:** The case manager needs to know what is important to you and your parents and your hopes and dreams. Remember, decisions at IEP meetings put you on a path towards your future.

## Back

Write a message using the blank space on the left. Fill out the “to” section with your case manager’s name and office information. Fill out the “from” section with your name, teacher, and classroom.

<b>From:</b>	
	<b>To:</b>



# Great Things About Me

It is very important to tell others what your gifts and talents are and what you do well. Write **5 things** that you think you are awesome at doing.



**I am awesome at:**

1 ...

2 ...

3 ...

4 ...

5 ...

Ask your family what they like and admire about you. Write it below.

**My family likes and admires:**

1 ...

2 ...

3 ...

4 ...

5 ...

**Tip:** It is our strengths, gifts and capacities that help us ultimately be successful. Learn and own your gifts, share them with your case manager!

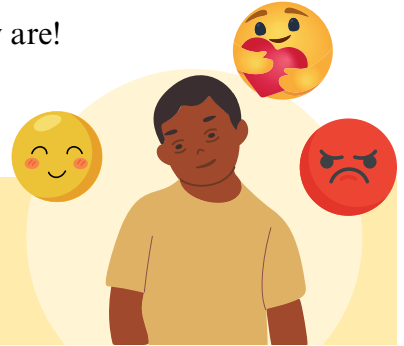
# My Tutorial

## Directions:

Develop a tutorial all about **you** so others can quickly learn about who you really are!

### Step 1: My Key Features

**What makes you happy? What/who do you really care about? What frustrates or aggravates you?**



### Step 2: My Instructions

**What can teachers do to help you be more successful at school? What does not help you at school?**



### Step 3: Troubleshooting

**What makes you have a bad day? Thinking about at school and at home, what helps? Is there something others can say or do to help you feel better?**



**Tip:** Over time, students can learn what works and doesn't work for them in and out of the classroom. This includes how their disability impacts them. Think about how to have these conversations, so that you become your best advocate at school, at home, and in the community!

# My Vision for the Future

What does an awesome high school experience look like for you? What classes would you take, what would you do for fun, what clubs, sports, etc. would you be involved in?



## High school dreams:

Let's think about your future after you graduate high school and when you are an adult. What does a happy and meaningful life look like to you? Think about work (i.e., your desired career), education (e.g., college, trade school, etc.), relationships, transportation, and what you will want to do in your free time (e.g., hobbies, sports, leisure activities)!

## Big future dreams:

# Goals and Action Steps

**List 3 things you want to try to do and/or learn in middle school.**



**List 3 things you want to try to do and/or learn at home.**



**Tip:** It is important to talk about the future and more important to connect those hopes and dreams to action. What can be done now to help you achieve your goals for the future? These are small steps that will help you define and reach your dreams!

# For students and families

What will make you most comfortable at the IEP meeting?



If you only had 2 minutes to tell educators what they need to know about your child, what would you share?

Would you feel comfortable having your child in the IEP meeting room? If not, why?

If not, how can the IEP team accommodate your child so you would be comfortable with them attending?

If your child does not attend the IEP meeting, what do you think they would want you to share on their behalf?

**Tip:** Think about some ways that you can prepare to attend the IEP meeting. Also consider sharing your responses to these questions with your case manager before the IEP meeting.

## Notes & questions I have:



# References & Additional Resources



## **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/>

## **New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/policy/index.shtml>

## **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)**

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/>

## **NJ Transition Toolkit**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/njtransition/>

## **PCAST Webpage**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/pcast.shtml>

## **SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**

<https://spanadvocacy.org>

## **The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development: *Transition to Adulthood for Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities: A Timeline for Parents***

<https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/transition-to-adulthood-timeline-for-parents>

## Special Thanks

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or clicking this QR code.