



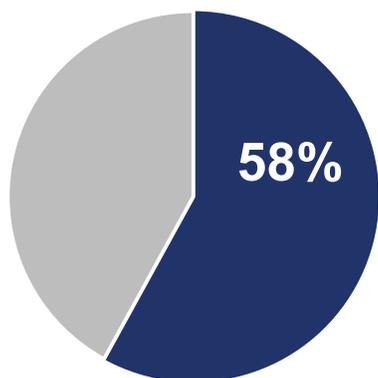
## Key Findings from the National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood

This fact sheet summarizes key findings from the National Autism Indicators Report which can be found here: [drex.lu/autismindicators](http://drex.lu/autismindicators). The Autism Indicators report tracks statistics about issues facing individuals on the autism spectrum. These statistics set the stage to discover whether quality of life for those with autism and their families is improving over time.

The Life Course Outcomes Research Program is building a base of knowledge about the things other than clinical interventions that promote positive outcomes for people on the autism spectrum and their families and communities.



**Federal law requires schools to have a transition plan for every special education student exiting high school.**



of youth with autism had a transition plan by the required age according to their teachers.

## Transition Planning Among Youth on the Autism Spectrum



Imagine if a business tried to open additional stores without having a plan for expansion. Lack of planning would significantly increase the risk for failure. The same logic explains why federal special education law requires every student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to have a transition plan that supports achieving postsecondary education, employment and independent living upon leaving high school.

Despite federal requirements, transition planning does not always happen as specified. Only four in 10 special education students have plans that meet federal timelines and contain measurable goals.<sup>1</sup> Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) indicates that 58% of youth on the autism spectrum received transition planning by the required age (which was 14 at the time youth were surveyed, but is now 16 years).

### What is transition planning?

In terms of special education, planning for the transition to adulthood is supposed to include determining student strengths and interests, assessing possible target outcomes that match these strengths and interests, setting goals for building skills necessary to attain targeted outcomes, and delivering services to teach these skills. From the perspective of the family, transition planning might also include financial planning for the future and thinking about where the youth will live in adulthood.

Planning may be a more in depth process for some students depending on levels of need. Regardless of intensity, planning should actively involve parents, students and non-school agencies (such as publicly funded vocational services for adults) whenever appropriate.

Most special education students say that employment is their primary intended outcome after high school, so transition planning often focuses on preparing for future employment.<sup>2</sup> Other times the plan puts more emphasis on continued education if the youth intends to go to a 2-year or 4-year college or a vocational/technical education program. Sometimes the transition plan concentrates on ways to support youth to live as independently as possible in their adult lives.

## Participation counts.

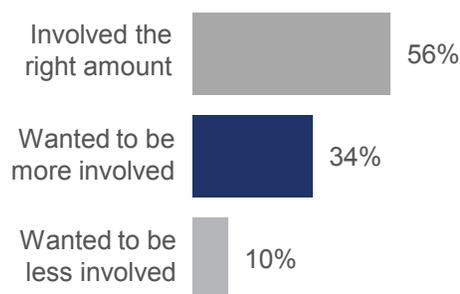
Special education law requires that families and students be invited to participate in the transition planning process. Approximately 60% of parents in the NLTS2 reported that they participated in transition planning. Over 80% of these parents felt that transition planning was somewhat or very useful. According to parents, 45% of youth ever met with teachers to plan for transition goals. Of these, 46% of students provided some input or took a leadership role in the transition planning process.

## The average age of transition planning for youth with autism in the NLTS2 data was 14.6 years.

### Youth self-responders wanted more involvement in transition planning.

We looked at what the group of youth on the autism spectrum who were capable of responding to NLTS2 questions reported about their transition planning experiences at the age of 17. Nearly 80% of students said that they had ever participated in transition planning. Over half (56%) of students who participated in the NLTS2 reported that their IEP goals were very or pretty challenging and right for them.

### One-third of autistic youth self-responders said they wanted to be more involved in their transition planning.



Percentage of youth self-responders

Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

## Transition Planning Factors

We explored factors that may be related to transition planning:

### Household Income

Nearly 60% of those from upper income households (>\$75K) received timely transition planning compared to 33% of those from the lowest income households (<\$25K).

### Race and Ethnicity

More Hispanic (77%) and white (60%) young adults received transition planning on time than black young adults (46%).

### Conversation Ability

Fewer young adults with the highest level of conversation skills (48%) received timely transition planning compared to 63% with the lowest conversation skills.

### Timely Transition

Approximately 58% students with autism did not receive timely transition planning beginning at age 14 (as law required at time of survey), although 95% had a transition plan by age 16.

### How to cite the source of this information:

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### Sources:

1. Landmark LJ, and Zhang D. (2013). Compliance and practices in transition planning: A review of individualized education program documents. *Remedial and Special Education* 34(2):113-125.
2. Cameto R, Levine P, and Wagner M. (2004). Transition planning for students with disabilities. A special topic report of findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

