

## CHAPTER 1

# Understanding the Terrain of Assessment

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of information related to assessment for career planning including experiences youth need to support career planning, the role of person-centered planning, federal law supporting career planning and assessment, and general information on the range of assessment activities. The chapter also provides basic information on assessment methods and domains, which will be particularly helpful to those who have little experience in this area.

### EXPERIENCES THAT SUPPORT THE POSTSECONDARY PLANNING PROCESS

In this guide, transition is defined as the period of time when adolescents are moving into adulthood. This guide is designed to (a) help youth and the adults who work with them understand the role of assessment in transition and (b) describe ways to collect and use data

that will lead to informed choices based on accurate assessment of each individual's assets.

Additionally, youth with disabilities may need to access specific and individualized accommodations while they are in school, in training, or in the workforce. Youth with disabilities and their advocates should develop an understanding of reasonable accommodations, including assessment accommodations, that they can request and control in educational and work settings.

In order for youth to make informed choices about academic programs and career planning, they need access to a range of opportunities and experiences that allow them to explore their own interests and the many options available to them for postsecondary education and employment. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth has developed a list of these helpful opportunities and experiences (based on individual preferences, interests, goals and needs) called Guideposts for Success, (NCWD/Youth, 2004), described in Table 1.1.

**TABLE 1.1: GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS**

**GUIDEPOST 1:**

**School Based Preparatory Experiences**

*In order to perform at optimal levels in all education settings, all youth need to participate in educational programs grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options based upon meaningful, accurate, and relevant indicators of student learning and skills. These should include the following:*

- academic programs that are based on clear state standards;
- career and technical education programs that are based on professional and industry standards;
- curricular and program options based on universal design of school, work, and community-based learning experiences;
- learning environments that are small and safe, including extra supports such as tutoring, as necessary;
- supports from and by highly qualified staff;
- access to an assessment system that includes multiple measures; and
- graduation standards that include options.

*In addition, youth with disabilities need to do the following:*

- use their individual transition plans to drive their personal instruction, and use strategies to continue the transition process post-schooling;
- have access to specific and individual learning accommodations while they are in school;
- develop knowledge of reasonable accommodations that they can request and control in educational settings, including assessment accommodations; and
- be supported by highly qualified transitional support staff that may or may not be school staff.

**GUIDEPOST 2:**

**Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences**

*Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day or through after-school programs and will require collaborations with other organizations. All youth need information on career options, including the following:*

- career assessments to help identify students’ school and post-school preferences and interests;
- structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities;
- exposure to career opportunities that ultimately lead

to a living wage, including information about educational requirements, entry requirements, income and benefits potential, and asset accumulation; and

- training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills (sometimes called “soft skills”).

*In order to identify and attain career goals, youth need to be exposed to a range of experiences, including the following:*

- opportunities to engage in a range of work-based exploration activities such as site visits and job shadowing;
- multiple on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) that is specifically linked to the content of a program of study and school credit;
- opportunities to learn and practice their work skills (so-called “soft skills”); and
- opportunities to learn first-hand about specific occupational skills related to a career pathway.

*In addition, youth with disabilities need to do the following:*

- understand the relationships between benefits planning and career choices;
- learn to communicate their disability-related work support and accommodation needs; and
- learn to find, formally request, and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations in education, training, and employment settings.

**GUIDEPOST 3:**

**Youth Development and Youth Leadership**

*Youth Development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need the following:*

- mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings;
- peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities;
- exposure to role models in a variety of contexts;
- training in skills such as self-advocacy and conflict resolution;
- exposure to personal leadership and youth development activities, including community service; and
- opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.

**TABLE 1.1: GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS**

*Youth with disabilities also need the following:*

- mentors and role models including persons with and without disabilities; and
- an understanding of disability history, culture, and disability public policy issues as well as their rights and responsibilities.

**GUIDEPOST 4:  
Connecting Activities**

*Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and supports that help them gain access to chosen post-school options. All youth may need one or more of the following:*

- mental and physical health services;
- transportation;
- tutoring;
- financial planning and management;
- post-program supports thorough structured arrangements in postsecondary institutions and adult service agencies; and
- connection to other services and opportunities (e.g., recreation).

*Youth with disabilities may need one or more of the following:*

- acquisition of appropriate assistive technologies;
- community orientation and mobility training (e.g., accessible transportation, bus routes, housing, health clinics);
- exposure to post-program supports such as independent living centers and other consumer-driven community-based support service agencies;
- personal assistance services, including attendants, readers, interpreters, or other such services; and
- benefits-planning counseling including information regarding the myriad of benefits available and their interrelationships so that youth may maximize those benefits in transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

**GUIDEPOST 5:  
Family Involvement and Supports**

*Participation and involvement of parents, family members, and/or other caring adults promotes the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of youth, leading to better post-school outcomes. All youth need parents, families, and other caring adults who do the following:*

- have high expectations which build upon the young person’s strengths, interests, and needs and foster each youth’s ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency;
- remain involved in their lives and assist them toward adulthood;
- have access to information about employment, further education, and community resources;
- take an active role in transition planning with schools and community partners; and
- have access to medical, professional and peer support networks.

*In addition, youth with disabilities need parents, families, and other caring adults who have the following:*

- an understanding of the youth’s disability and how it affects his or her education, employment, and daily living options;
- knowledge of rights and responsibilities under various disability-related legislation;
- knowledge of and access to programs, services, supports and accommodations available for young people with disabilities; and
- an understanding of how individualized planning tools can assist youth in achieving transition goals and objectives.

Many youth with disabilities have not had the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers in terms of exposure to career preparation options. In the past, the career planning process for youth with disabilities often did not reflect the values of choice and self-determination. Many youth with disabilities were relegated to passive roles in their own career planning process, which often resulted in

- very few options being recommended or offered,
- options that reflected the low expectations of advisors,
- options that featured perceived needs for protection and support, and
- options driven primarily by community availability rather than an individual's choices.

As a result, many youth have not had the opportunity to pursue career options that they found motivating and satisfying. Today, education and vocational programs for youth in transition focus on the skills, knowledge, and abilities that youth can contribute to the work place. A large part of this effort lies in accurately identifying a youth's assets and sharing this information with the youth and those who work with him or her.

## FEDERAL LAW AND PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

Most major federal workforce development legislation is now written with the assumption that individuals will obtain services based upon an individualized plan of action that has been jointly developed by the individual and an organization acting on behalf of the government. Initials abound – IEP (Individualized Education Program), ISS (Individual Service Strategy), and CSP (Consumer Service Plan). What these plans have in common is that they are individualized and centered on the person's goals. This guide will use the term "person-centered planning" when discussing any of these approaches. It should be noted that the requirements for different person-centered planning processes may vary in detail, but good assessment services share a similar approach.

Person-centered planning processes are driven by an

individual's needs and desires. In transition, person-centered planning focuses on the interests, aptitudes, knowledge, and skills of an individual, not on his or her perceived deficits. It also involves the people who are active in the life of a youth, including family members, educators, and community service professionals. The purposes of person-centered planning are to identify desired outcomes that have meaning to the youth and to develop customized support plans to achieve them. The process closely examines the interests and abilities of each individual in order to establish a basis for identifying appropriate types of employment, training, and career development possibilities. A person-centered career plan identifies marketable job skills, articulates career choices, establishes individual outcome objectives, and maps specific action plans to achieve them. *Effective assessment, both formal and informal, is the foundation on which this process rests.*

Federal funding of workforce development programs for youth in transition arises from three key pieces of federal legislation. Each has provisions regarding certain services for youth. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds special education services in public schools. Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) addresses employment needs of traditionally underemployed groups such as high school dropouts, teen parents, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Title IV of WIA contains the Rehabilitation Act Amendments and reauthorizes Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services for individuals with disabilities. Table 1.2 describes eligibility requirements and services provided under these three pieces of legislation.

## OTHER FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Besides IDEA, WIA Title I, and the Rehabilitation Act, there are three other major pieces of federal legislation that support transition activities of individuals with disabilities. The first, the Perkins Act, provides funding for vocational training programs in individual states. The second, Ticket to Work, is designed to directly help individuals with disabilities (ages 18 to 64) with vocational services and, at the same time, provide incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities. The third, the Adult Basic Skills and Family Literacy Education Act (Title II of the

**TABLE 1.2: SELECTED TRANSITION COMPONENTS OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

	<b>IDEA Amendments— Special Education for Youth with Disabilities</b>	<b>WIA Title I— Provisions for All Eligible Youth</b>	<b>WIA Title IV—The Rehabilitation Act— Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Youth with Disabilities</b>
<b>Eligibility Requirements</b>  Individuals can be eligible in one, two, or three of these federal programs.	Individuals who are determined, through an individualized diagnostic evaluation, to be in one or more of 13 disability categories, who need special assistance, and are attending school.	Individuals who have barriers to employment, including disabilities. Some services may only be available to individuals with low income.	Individuals who have a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and who can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from VR services. The individual must require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.
<b>Age Requirements</b>	Transition services begin at age 16 or sooner if the IEP team decides. Most states will end services at high school graduation or age 21, whichever occurs earlier.	Transition-related services for youth can be provided from ages 14 to 21. Core adult services can begin at 18 with no upper age limit.	Depending on the state, services can begin as early as elementary school or junior high. No upper age limit.
<b>Assessment Services</b>	<p>Evaluations and reevaluations to determine whether a child has a disability, and the educational needs of such child. A variety of assessment tools and strategies shall be used to determine relevant functional, developmental, and academic information, including information provided by the parent, and in all areas of suspected disability.</p> <p>When appropriate, evaluation of assistive technology needs including a functional evaluation in the child's customary environment. Functional behavioral assessments may be provided in certain circumstances. Transition services include appropriate postsecondary goals based on age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills and functional vocational evaluation.</p> <p>Students with disabilities must be included in statewide achievement assessments via accommodations or alternate assessments, as appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Youth Programs:</b> Objective assessment of academic levels, skill levels, and service needs including basic and occupational skills, prior work experience, interests, aptitudes, employability, supportive services needs, and developmental needs. A recent assessment conducted by another program may be used if appropriate.</p> <p><b>Core Adult Services:</b> Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and supportive services needs shall be available.</p> <p><b>Intensive Services:</b> May include comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs which may include diagnostic testing, in-depth interviewing, and evaluation to identify employment barriers and goals.</p> <p><b>Job Corps:</b> Counseling and testing at regular intervals to measure progress in educational and vocational training programs including pre-graduation determination of capabilities.</p>	<p>Preliminary assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation including rehabilitation technology, if appropriate. Assessment means a review of existing data, or, if additional data is necessary, a comprehensive assessment limited to information necessary to identify rehabilitation needs and develop an individualized plan for employment, referral to rehabilitative technology services to assess work capacities, and periodic assessments during trial work experiences to explore the individual's capacity to work.</p>

(adapted from Timmons, 2003)

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<b>Educational Services</b>	Classroom instruction, community experiences, mentoring, tutoring, and development of postsecondary training, education, employment and independent living objectives. Supplemental services required under NCLB may also be provided.  Annual planning and review meetings. Beginning at age 16 or earlier, the IEP must address transition service needs.	Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to school completion or GED testing. Alternative school services.  Community service opportunities.  Supportive services.	May provide assistance with accommodations and assistive technology if student is not eligible for services under IDEA. Vocational training to gain skills for employment or to adjust to work. May include college or trade school tuition.
<b>Workforce Preparation For Eligible Youth</b>	A coordinated set of activities, designed within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic and functional achievement to facilitate 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.	Summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic and occupational learning.  Year round paid and unpaid work experiences including internships and job shadowing.  Year round occupational skills training.	Provides funding for workplace adaptations, and vocational supports.  Provides vocational counseling, interpreter services for people with hearing impairments, and/or reader services for people with visual impairments.  May provide placement services, job coaching, supported employment, and other related services.
<b>Other Related Services</b>	Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives based on students' interests. The IEP must include a statement of transition services including, if appropriate, a statement of each public agency's and each participating agency's responsibilities and linkages before the student leaves the school setting. Student participation is expected in the development of transition plans.  Youth who graduate with a regular diploma or age out of school will receive a summary of his or her academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations on the assistance needed to meet postsecondary goals.	Adult mentoring, follow-up services, comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral.  Intake and orientation.  Job search and placement assistance.  Career counseling.  Provision of labor market information.  Determination of eligibility for additional services.	Some expenses reimbursed during training or placement.  Transportation services.  Independent living skills training.  Personal assistance services.
<b>Primary Site to Initiate Services</b>	Local school district or local intermediate school district that provides special education programming.	Local One-Stop employment service sites, WIA-sponsored youth programs, or other state-sponsored employment service centers.	Federal or state sponsored Vocational Rehabilitation or Services for the Blind offices. May be in WIA One-Stop sites, in schools with special education programs, or at stand-alone sites, e.g., community rehabilitation programs or those contracting with the federal-state agency.

(adapted from Timmons, 2003)

Workforce Investment Act), provides educational opportunities to young people and adults who are out of the public school system but still are in need of instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and math skills; to individuals who seek to complete their secondary education; and to parents to support the educational development of their children.

**The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act** provides grants to each state to help provide career and technical education to youth and adults. These programs prepare individuals to enter directly into jobs that do not require a four-year degree. Funds are provided to individual states based on demographics and income of eligible participants, based on a set of criteria for distribution throughout the state. Specific career planning and assessment services are not described in the Act; these are determined by state or local agencies. The Perkins Act also provides for transition from career and technical education programs to postsecondary programs or employment.

**The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program** is an amendment to the Social Security Act and is designed to provide Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries with disabilities more choices for employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other support through the establishment of Employment Networks. Employment Networks are government or community agencies, businesses, schools, or individuals that can provide employment services to eligible persons. These service providers receive compensation from the SSA after participants find employment. Although none are mandatory, services may include career planning, career plan development, vocational assessment, job training, placement, and follow-up services. Persons wishing more information about Ticket to Work should contact a local SSA office.

**WIA Title II** is designed to help people who lack sufficient mastery of basic skills, those who have left high school prior to graduation or who have not completed the General Educational Development (GED) test, and those who have limited English proficiency. WIA Title II provides funding to states to administer educational programs for those eligible. Providers of these services may include local

educational agencies, community-based or faith-based organizations, voluntary literacy organizations, colleges, libraries, and other organizations with the capacity to work with people who have these needs.

## ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Understanding the requirements laid out in federal legislation is necessary, but these policies, in and of themselves, do not assure that youth will receive high-quality transition services. Helping all youth to make informed choices and achieve desired outcomes requires a structured, well-defined assessment process. This process should provide a full array of effective practices and coordinate the gathering of helpful planning information. To collect all needed data, assessment activities should include observations, interviews, record reviews, and testing/performance activities.

**Observation** is the process of watching or listening to an individual's behavior and performance and recording relevant information. This process can be structured or unstructured, formal or informal, obtrusive or unobtrusive. Observation has elements of the objective and the subjective, but objectivity should be emphasized. Also, because different observers may come to different conclusions, it may be important to have more than one observer.

**Interviews** are structured or unstructured conversations intended to gather information from an individual through a verbal question-and-answer format. Like observations, interviews can also be formal or informal. An interviewer can quickly gather key information about an individual, while at the same time building trust and a shared vision for the career planning process.

**Record Reviews** incorporate prior assessment results and should include records from schools and care providers, as available. A review of records can provide background information about academic achievement and performance, previous career planning and goals, and family involvement and support systems. Care should be taken that the information is up-to-date and from sources that have properly gathered the data. Legally obtained releases of information are usually required, and confidentiality

is essential when reviewing any assessment data or other protected records.

**Testing and Performance Reviews** account for a large share of the most common assessment activities of youth in transition. Testing “consists of administering a particular set of questions to an individual...to obtain a score” (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004, p. 6). Typically, scores are intended to be used for quite specific purposes. This type of data collection is generally more formal and structured and frequently requires specially trained persons to administer and/or score the test.

Performance reviews are activities that look at a whole spectrum of what has been learned and are more subjective, holistic, and qualitative in nature (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004, p. 252). Work experiences and related activities often are best evaluated using performance reviews. It is very helpful to have some written, objective standards for individuals to use in measuring behaviors. Observation rating forms are particularly valuable for recording behaviors and outcomes on various tasks and work experiences.

Written organizational procedures should guide the collection and review of available information, including observations, interview data, academic test scores, career interest profiles, work experience and job training histories, relevant disability diagnostic testing, etc. Care should be taken to avoid duplicating assessment activities. Information available from schools, family members, and referring agencies can fill important gaps in each youth’s academic or career planning profile. Appropriate releases must be secured to authorize the receipt and sharing of any confidential data or information. (Exhibit 1.1, at the end of this chapter, is a sample of an interagency release of information form.)

Assessment is not an end unto itself. The following principles should guide each step of the assessment process:

- Self-determination based on informed choices should be an overriding goal of assessment.
- Assessment is a dynamic intervention process.
- Assessment facilitates self-discovery of talents, goals, strengths, and needs.

- The purposes and goals of assessment should be clear.
- Assessment should be integrated into a larger plan of individualized services.
- Assessment should consider environmental factors affecting the individual.
- Formal assessment instruments should be carefully chosen with attention to their documented reliability and validity.
- Formal assessments should be administered and interpreted by qualified personnel.
- Assessment reports should be written in easily understandable language.
- Assessment activities should be positive and lead to self-empowerment.

## WHEN A YOUTH ENTERS A PROGRAM

The transition from youth to adulthood is a lengthy process. Career development is one aspect of transition that often involves a few false starts as youth explore multiple options. For those youth with disabilities who explore careers through structured programs, the process of transition may involve transferring from one program or service provider to another. Each time a youth begins working in a new program, the need for assessment should be revisited. It is important to remember throughout the interview and on-going transition process that many youth have had less than positive experiences with tests and testing which may color their responses to assessment opportunities.

Prior to beginning formal or informal testing or performance reviews, youth service practitioners can gather a lot of information by observing, interviewing, and reviewing records. Privacy and confidentiality must be maintained, and securing information from other agencies must be done ethically and legally, using signed consent forms when these are needed. (See Exhibit 1.1.)

**Initial Interview** The initial interview should establish rapport with the youth and his or her family, and

should help them develop a realistic understanding of what an agency has to offer. Personal information about health or disability issues may be part of the interview process and should be handled with tact and sensitivity. The Americans with Disabilities Act provides guidance and language in this regard (<http://www.ada.gov>).

While an interview should not be overly rigid, all youth should be asked essentially the same questions. To comply with nondiscrimination requirements, it is acceptable to ask questions about possible disabilities only if the same initial questions are asked of everyone, not just a select few. Depending on the answer to a given question, there may be a need for follow-up questions to probe for further details. Some questions may uncover a need for testing or referral for additional services. Exhibit 1.2 is a form that can be adapted for use when interviewing youth who are known or thought to have disabilities. With the youth's permission, many of these questions can also be asked of parents or family members to verify the information provided by the youth. With proper releases, teachers or other adults who have worked with the youth can also be part of the interview process.

Youth service providers, One-Stop centers, and other entities need to be aware of the nondiscrimination requirements of WIA Section 188. A Section 188 Disability Checklist is available from the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor to assist in compliance when conducting initial interviews and administering subsequent assessments (<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/section188.htm>). The elements of the checklist that apply specifically to the intake process are:

**5.1.9** The recipient [of WIA Title I funding] must not impose or apply eligibility criteria that screen out or tend to screen out an individual with a disability or class of individuals with disabilities unless such criteria can be shown to be necessary for the provision of the aid, benefit, service, training, program or activity being offered.

**5.1.12** An individual with a disability is not required to accept an accommodation, aid, benefit, service, training, or opportunity that such individual chooses not to accept.

**5.8.3** For employment-related training, does the recipient review selection criteria to ensure that they do not screen out or tend to screen out an individual with a disability or any class of individuals with disabilities from fully and equally enjoying the training unless the criteria can be shown to be necessary for the training being offered?

**5.8.4** Does the recipient prohibit pre-employment inquiries and pre-selection inquiries regarding disability? Note: Pre-employment and pre-selection inquiries are permissible if they are required or necessitated by another Federal law or regulation.

The checklist also requires that staff be aware of what constitutes legal and illegal inquiries in a pre-employment interview and that records and medical information be kept confidential.

**The Role of Family Members** Family members have very important roles in supporting and preparing youth for adulthood. As youth make this transition, there is a natural tendency to seek independence and to rely less and less on parents and other family members. Youth service practitioners must be aware that there is often a tension between a youth's wants and needs and those of the rest of the family—and that both the family and the youth may need support in the transition process. Additionally, parents and youth may have different expectations of schools and workforce development programs as well as different levels of access to information about transition and career planning. All participants in a youth's transition team should have a clear understanding of the ongoing and evolving roles they play in this process.

Youth with no family or from non-traditional family settings may not have adults in their lives who can give guidance and support. In these cases, extra effort must be made to ensure that the youth has access to caring adults to help make decisions (and sometimes share responsibilities) that are customarily handled by parents or other family members.

**Screening** A youth's assessment data may suggest previously unidentified or undiagnosed problems that may affect career planning and career development. These problems may include low literacy levels, inconsistent academic performance, limited vocabulary, or lack of proficiency in English. Learning disabilities,

behavior disorders, mental and physical health problems, or other hidden (non-apparent) disabilities may be present. A screening process may be needed to determine whether further diagnostic assessment (usually conducted by a specialist) should be provided.

Screening instruments may point to previously undiscovered physical problems (such as vision or hearing loss), academic problems (such as learning disabilities), or mental or chemical health problems. Schools and workforce programs should have specific policies about when to screen.

The ideal screening instrument or series of screening instruments are

- helpful in determining the need for future testing;
- inexpensive;
- quick to administer, score, and interpret;
- appropriate for large numbers of persons;
- narrow in purpose;
- able to provide a cursory assessment of several areas, such as language, motor, or social skills; and
- usable without extensive training of staff. (National Institute for Literacy, n.d.)

## THE FOUR DOMAINS OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment of transition-age youth falls into four major domains—**educational, vocational, psychological, and medical**. In these domains, there is quite a bit of overlap, and assessment in one domain will often lead to useful information or understanding in another. In the educational and vocational domains, assessments measure achievement, aptitudes, skill levels, interests, physical and functional capacities, and cognition. These data are then used to form educational, training, or employment plans specific to the individual's situation.

In psychological or medical areas, most assessment is conducted to identify or diagnose mental or physical problems that may impede an individual's academic progress or vocational growth, to develop treatment or

therapy plans to alleviate them, and to identify appropriate accommodations for school, home, and workplace. Medical and psychological assessments are conducted by licensed physicians or medical personnel and psychologists. Note that no assessment outcome stands alone and that data from all four domains are needed to have complete and well-documented plans in place for the individual.

## The Seven Areas of Testing and Performance Reviews

In testing and performance reviews, there are seven areas commonly considered when working with transition-age youth. These are **academic performance or achievement; cognitive abilities; behavioral, social, and emotional considerations; vocational interests; job aptitudes and skills; occupation specific certification; and physical and functional capacities**. Cognitive abilities may fall under the educational or psychological domain. Physical and functional capacities may fall under the vocational or medical domain. Chapter 3 has detailed descriptions of testing and performance reviews, along with information about specific, published assessment instruments commonly used with transition-age youth.

## EDUCATIONAL DOMAIN

**Academic Performance or Achievement Tests** are used by schools, school districts, and states and focus on educational performance or achievement in specific subject areas taught in school such as such as reading, spelling, or mathematics. These tests may have national norms or be based on specific curricula used by the school. Academic tests are used in early elementary school through postsecondary education. These tests also include the General Educational Development exam (GED) and college entrance exams such as the ACT (formerly the American College Test) and the SAT (formerly the Scholastic Aptitude Test). Individuals who use English as a second language or are English language learners are also tested to measure skills in reading, writing, and speaking. Academic tests are generally used to measure educational progress but can also be used for diagnostic purposes. School districts and states also use testing data as part of their accountability systems to determine effectiveness of schools or specific programs. Academic tests are administered and scored by teachers, proctors, counselors, or other professionals authorized by the test publisher.

**Cognitive Abilities Tests** are used by schools and workforce preparation programs to measure intellectual skills and to diagnose neuropsychological problems and learning disabilities. IQ tests are commonly used to measure cognitive abilities and measure individuals' skills in perceptual discrimination, generalization, motor behavior, general knowledge, vocabulary, induction, comprehension, sequencing, detail recognition, analogical reasoning, pattern completion, abstract reasoning, and memory (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004, pg. 121). Note that such test results could inaccurately represent a student's abilities if they are English language learners or have certain disabilities.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL DOMAIN

**Cognitive Abilities Tests** also include neuropsychological tests that are used to assess organic brain function and impairment and can be used to identify the need for rehabilitation programs for people with brain injuries and cognitive disabilities. Tests to diagnose learning disabilities serve to identify learning barriers and can lead to adaptive teaching techniques for individuals. Cognitive abilities tests are administered by licensed psychologists or other professionals with advanced training.

**Behavioral, Social, and Emotional Assessments** are used by schools and workforce preparation programs to identify, diagnose, and suggest treatment of mental health and chemical health problems. These can include behavioral disorders, emotional problems, social skills problems, and chemical dependency. Identification of problems in these areas may lead to special education services, counseling, and/or medical treatment. Licensed psychologists, social workers, or other specially trained persons generally conduct these types of assessments. Some less formal assessments can be conducted by teachers or others with appropriate expert support.

## VOCATIONAL DOMAIN

**Vocational Interests** are assessed in schools and workforce preparation programs to match an individual's interests, goals, and values to available employment, training, or post-secondary education programs. These assessments are most useful when done in conjunction with other vocational activities including work experiences, technology training, and assessment of vocational aptitudes. Teachers, work

coordinators, rehabilitation counselors, vocational evaluators, or other assessment specialists perform these assessments.

**Vocational Aptitudes and Skills** are measured in schools and workforce preparation programs to determine an individual's ability or potential to learn or perform in order to hold specific jobs or to train for specific careers. Work behaviors that will impact performance or compliance with employer expectations may be assessed. Formats may include pencil and paper tests (similar to many academic assessments), observations, and assessments of physical activities and work activities (work samples, on-the-job assessment, work experiences, internships, or job-seeking activities). These are usually done concurrently with other work-related assessments.

Some youth may participate in a comprehensive **Vocational Evaluation**. These evaluations utilize a systematic appraisal process to determine an individual's vocational potential and interests and to further his or her career development. Evaluations are conducted by trained and certified evaluators in simulated or real work settings using formal and informal assessment instruments, techniques, and methods. Comprehensive vocational evaluations result in in-depth vocational profiles with recommendations for planning, placement, and programming for individuals requiring more specific information than that provided by interest and aptitude assessments (Dowd, 1993).

**Occupation Specific Certification** tests are given by licensure boards, businesses, apprenticeship programs, and workforce preparation programs (such as community colleges, technical colleges, or workforce development training programs). They measure individual achievement and the ability to perform very specific work or jobs, are often compared to industry standards, and can be used to document the effectiveness of training programs themselves.

## VOCATIONAL AND MEDICAL DOMAIN

**Physical and Functional Capacities** assessments are provided in schools, workforce preparation centers, clinics, rehabilitation facilities, and at work sites to determine how an individual can physically perform in specific situations. These assessments measure physical abilities and functional limitations and also

**TABLE 1.3: FORMAL TESTING AREAS**

	<b>Major Area of Testing</b>	<b>What is Being Measured</b>	<b>Assessment Instrument Types</b>	<b>Primary Users and Purposes</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL DOMAIN</b>	Academic Performance or Achievement	Reading Skills Writing Skills Mathematics Skills Spelling Skills	Academic Testing	Used in schools to assess progress of students and by adult education programs and workforce development to determine need or eligibility for program participation and to develop plans.
			Achievement Testing	Used mainly by districts and states to monitor progress of students and as a key part of the education accountability system.
			Curriculum-Based Assessment	Used by schools to determine instructional needs of individuals in relation to established curriculum.
			GED (Writing, Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies)	Used by workforce development and adult education to gain a high school equivalency credential.
			ACT or SAT	Used by many colleges and universities as part of entrance requirements.
	Cognitive Abilities*	Intelligence	Intelligence Testing (IQ)	Used by schools to measure cognitive abilities such as discrimination, motor behavior, abstract reasoning, etc.
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL DIAGNOSTIC DOMAIN</b>	Cognitive Abilities*	Neuropsychological Involvement	Neuropsychological Testing	Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to diagnose and to suggest treatment and accommodations in these areas.
		Learning Disabilities	Diagnostic Testing	
	Behavioral Social Emotional	Emotional Behavior	Behavioral Analysis	Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to identify, diagnose, and suggest treatment in behavioral, social, and mental health environments.
		Social Skills	Social Adaptation and Work-Related Behaviors	
		Mental Health	Mental Health Screening and Assessments	
		Chemical Health	Screening for Drug and Alcohol Usage	Used by schools, organizations, and employers to detect the use of drugs or alcohol by participants.
	Chemical Dependency Assessment		Used by schools and others to detect dependency on drugs or alcohol by participants.	

**TABLE 1.3: FORMAL TESTING AREAS**

	<b>Major Area of Testing</b>	<b>What is Being Measured</b>	<b>Assessment Instrument Types</b>	<b>Primary Users and Purposes</b>
<b>VOCATIONAL AND CAREER DOMAIN</b>	Vocational and Career Interests	Interests, Preferences, Values, and Temperaments	Interest Testing	Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to match an individual's interests and values to employment opportunities.
			Personality Inventory	
			Career Exploration Experiences	
			Work Values Assessment	
	Job Aptitudes and Skills	Aptitudes	Assessing Potential to Learn and Occupational Abilities	Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to determine an individual's ability to find, perform, and hold specific jobs. Work experiences and other related activities lead to performance reviews to document actual work potential, skills, and needs.
			Situational Work Assessment	
		Work Behaviors	Job Seeking and Keeping Skills Assessment	
			Skills	
			Community-Based or On-the-Job Assessment	
		Occupation Specific Certification	Mastery of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities in Specific Occupations	Tests or assessment given at the end of apprenticeships, college programs, and other job training programs focused on one specific job or career area, and based on industry-validated skill standards
Physical and Functional Capacities*	Work Capacities	Work Tolerance	Used by workforce preparation programs to determine an individual's ability to handle specific work situations.	
		Physical Capacities Scales, Work Samples, Community-Based Assessments		
		Assistive Technology		Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to determine an individual's need for and ability to use technology and adaptive equipment.
		Work Accommodations	Used by workforce preparation programs to determine individual's need for accommodations in training programs or worksites.	
<b>MEDICAL DOMAIN</b>	Physical and Functional Capacities*	The Need for Diagnoses and Medical Therapies	Occupational Therapy Assessment	Used by schools and workforce preparation programs to determine the need for medical intervention, accommodations, and independent living supports and instruction. They are often used to determine eligibility for special education and vocational rehabilitation services and for entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare.
			Physical Therapy Assessment	
			Speech and Language Assessment	
			Hearing Assessments	
			Vision Assessments	

\*Cognitive abilities and physical/functional capacities each fall under two domains.

suggest recommendations for training or treatment. These kinds of assessments may also be used by programs to determine eligibility for services or financial assistance (such as special education, vocational rehabilitation, Social Security, or Medicare).

Independent living skills assessments are often conducted by teachers, counselors, or others to determine how well an individual can engage in activities of daily living. These assessments can be provided in conjunction with other medical assessments conducted by therapists or other medical personnel.

Work tolerance or physical capabilities tests are used primarily in the vocational rehabilitation field and are administered by vocational evaluators, work coordinators, counselors, or others to measure an individual's ability to handle specific work situations. Assistive technology (AT) assessments determine an individual's need for technology and ability to use technology with recommendations for training and specific adaptive equipment. Work accommodations assessments determine the need for adjustments to work sites, schedules, training procedures, etc., to improve a person's ability to do a job. AT and work accommodations assessments can be provided by AT specialists or rehabilitation engineers.

Medical therapies and diagnostics are performed by therapists, medical personnel, or others who provide treatment and education in alleviating physical problems. Occupational, physical, and speech therapists; vision teachers; mobility instructors; and audiologists most commonly provide these kinds of assessments. Their recommendations can lead to accommodations in the classroom, training setting, or workplace. Physical exams can also be considered assessments.

More information on the domains and areas of assessment is contained in Table 1.3.

## SETTINGS

Tests are designed to be administered in certain optimal conditions. The testing environment should be comfortable, and lighting, furniture, and ventilation should not be taken for granted. Since many youth with disabilities require accommodations when taking tests, tests should not be administered until all involved parties are completely clear about the impact of the disability on the results of a test. (Chapter Two has more information about testing and accommodations.) Youth in transition may be tested in any number of academic and community settings. The most common places an individual may be assessed are described below.

**Classrooms and Educational Settings.** Most academic assessments, such as achievement and aptitude tests, are offered in secondary and postsecondary educational settings.

**One-Stop Workforce Centers and Community-Based Organizations.** One-Stop centers and community-based organizations, such as youth employment agencies, youth development programs, and Welfare-to-Work programs, offer a variety of assessment opportunities for youth through an array of employment and training programs. These may include academic testing, work sampling, community-based assessment, computerized job skills assessments or full-fledged comprehensive vocational evaluation for people with severe disabilities and/or those facing the greatest vocational challenges, and other job development resources and interventions.

**Mental Health Agencies and Clinics.** Assessing mental health in social, behavioral, and emotional areas is generally done in mental health centers, hospitals, regional treatment centers, or the private offices of trained health care providers. Occasionally these assessments are conducted in educational or community settings, but always by licensed practitioners.

**Chemical Health Clinics.** Individuals who may have alcohol or drug dependencies benefit from assessment, diagnosis, and treatment from organizations or individuals having specific expertise in these areas. These organizations and individuals may be independent providers or connected to social services or medical facilities.

**Community Rehabilitation Programs.** Many youth are referred to community rehabilitation programs for evaluation services by secondary schools, WIA youth programs, and state vocational rehabilitation agencies. A community rehabilitation program may offer a range of assessment methods that are helpful to the academic or career planning needs of a youth. These may include screenings, career exploration, and comprehensive vocational or career assessments.

**Medical and Therapeutic Testing or Screening Clinics.** Medical diagnostic testing and physical health examinations are typically administered by trained health care professionals in medical clinics or hospitals having proper testing equipment and lab facilities. Specialized therapeutic testing services are provided by therapists in appropriately equipped health care settings. Some school systems also employ therapists; others may contract with a local health clinic for these assessments.

**Private Industries and Businesses.** Assessments may be provided in private industries and businesses that partner with schools, youth development programs, and other agencies serving youth. “Hands-on” situational work assessments, on-the-job assessments, career exploration experiences, and some occupational skills assessments can be provided in business settings with the participation of the employer’s staff.

**Community Settings.** Some assessment procedures call for the use of naturalistic community settings to gather relevant planning information. Behavioral skills, daily living skills, travel skills, and consumer skills are often assessed in community settings to better gauge a youth’s functional skills and support needs for independent living and how he or she may perform and behave in real work settings.

**On the Web.** Some paper and pencil assessments have been transformed into computer or Web-based instruments. These are available through state workforce development systems, career technology education, university career services, public libraries, etc. The federal government also provides such resources through O\*Net (<http://online.onetcenter.org>) and Career OneStop (<http://www.careeronestop.org>).

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- Salvia, J. and Ysseldyke, J. (2004). *Assessment in special and inclusive education*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
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### **Note: WIA Section 188.**

A Section 188 Disability Checklist is available from the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor to assist in compliance when conducting initial interviews and administering subsequent assessments, at <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/section188.htm>.

# EXHIBIT 1.1: SAMPLE RELEASE OF RECORDS FORM

## INTERAGENCY RELEASE OF INFORMATION

By signing and dating this release of information, I allow the persons or agencies listed below to share specific information, as checked, about my history. I understand that this is a cooperative effort by agencies involved to share information that will lead to better utilization of community resources and better cooperation amongst our agencies to best meet my needs.

*Agencies or agency representatives that will be sharing information:*

Name	Address	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

The information is to be released is: \_\_\_\_\_ History \_\_\_\_\_ Lab Work  
\_\_\_\_\_ Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_ Psychological Assessment  
\_\_\_\_\_ Summary of Treatment \_\_\_\_\_ Psychiatric Evaluation  
\_\_\_\_\_ Medications \_\_\_\_\_ Legal issues/concerns  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Evaluation \_\_\_\_\_ Performance  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

and is to be released solely for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_.

This consent to release is valid for one year, or until otherwise specified, and thereafter is invalid. Specify date, event, or condition on which permission will expire: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that at any time between the time of signing and the expiration date listed above I have the right to revoke this consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address City State Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature Date Witness Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian or Responsible Party Date Witness Position  
*(if student is under legal age)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian/Responsible Party Relationship to Student

Sample contributed by Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative

## EXHIBIT 1.2: COMPILING PERSONAL TRANSITION DATA

What follows are common starting points in compiling personal information for young people in career planning programs. Note that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) establish strict federal standards concerning the use of health, education, and human services information. (See Chapter 4 for more information.) Programs or providers who are funded by the Workforce Investment Act should also review the Section 188 Disability Checklist and local service plans for guidelines on acceptable inquiries, confidentiality, accommodations, and universal access.

### Transition Information Summary

#### Personal Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### Support Network

Family Contacts/Roles \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Adults/Roles \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Friends/Roles \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Living Arrangements

Current Situation \_\_\_\_\_

#### Education

Current Situation \_\_\_\_\_

#### Health

Current Situation \_\_\_\_\_

### Transition Goals

Training/Education \_\_\_\_\_

Employment, Short-term \_\_\_\_\_

Employment, Long-term \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation \_\_\_\_\_

Independent Living \_\_\_\_\_

Recreation \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Details

### Living Arrangements

Stability \_\_\_\_\_

Independent Supports \_\_\_\_\_

Training Needs \_\_\_\_\_

### Income/Monetary Status

Current Cost of Living \_\_\_\_\_

Current Expenses \_\_\_\_\_

Current Sources of Personal Income \_\_\_\_\_

Family/Other Sources of Income \_\_\_\_\_

Government Benefits \_\_\_\_\_

### Transportation

Currently Uses:  Public transportation  Drives own car  Drives family/other car  Supported transportation

Needs:  Drivers license  Buy car  Orientation/Mobility training

### Health/Behavior

Medical Conditions \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Conditions \_\_\_\_\_

Communication Issues \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Treatment \_\_\_\_\_

Medications/Side effects \_\_\_\_\_

History/Prognosis \_\_\_\_\_

Adaptive Equipment \_\_\_\_\_

Assistive Technology \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health History \_\_\_\_\_

Substance Use History \_\_\_\_\_

Counseling \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior at School \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior at Work \_\_\_\_\_

Contact with Courts/Law Enforcement \_\_\_\_\_

Incarceration/Probation \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Education Detail

### Background

In School      Where/Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Out of School      Highest Level Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Assessments Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Skills \_\_\_\_\_ Math Skills \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Skills \_\_\_\_\_ Other Skills \_\_\_\_\_

Memory Skills Issues \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Issues \_\_\_\_\_

Listening Skills Issues \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Schools/Colleges Attended

Most Recent \_\_\_\_\_

### Plans for Additional Education/Training

No       Yes

If yes, describe: \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Traits

Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_

Leisure Activities \_\_\_\_\_

Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

Things that Motivate \_\_\_\_\_

## Work History

### Recent Employment

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### Wages/Reasons for Leaving

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### Employment Details

Resume completed     Letters of recommendation     Skills certification

Transferable Skills \_\_\_\_\_

Work Speed/Quality/Productivity \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Experiences \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Volunteer/Other Positions

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Disability Issues

Accommodations \_\_\_\_\_

Adaptive Equipment \_\_\_\_\_

Job Supports \_\_\_\_\_

Job Coach \_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance Status \_\_\_\_\_

On-Going Medical Needs \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Issues \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Job Preferences

- Using my hands
- Using my mind
- Driving a truck or car
- Working with tools
- Working with machines
- Working with advanced technology
- Working with computers
- Working outdoors
- Working for a large company
- Working for a small company
- Consistent hours
- Flexible hours
- Daytime hours
- Early morning work
- Evening hours
- Part-time hours
- Using my education/training
- Jobs that require reading
- Jobs that require math
- Being challenged
- Doing physical labor
- Doing repetitious tasks
- Having a variety of duties
- Having frequent changes in routine
- Feeling needed
- Having others view my work as important
- Waiting
- Sitting for long periods of time
- Standing for long periods of time
- Doing heavy lifting
- Walking
- Working in loud, noisy places
- Being warm/hot
- Being cold
- Getting my hands dirty
- Working alone
- Working with others
- Being my own boss
- Having close supervision
- Having minimal supervision
- Being given detailed instructions
- Being given orders with no explanation
- Working in a relaxed atmosphere
- Being pressured to work fast
- Working toward a career goal
- Having the opportunity to be promoted
- Earning a lot of money
- Receiving company benefits
- Making new friends
- Being close to home
- Traveling
- Being home on weekends
- Working on weekends
- Taking the bus to work
- Traveling long distances to work
- Disclosing my disability

## Job Search Assistance Needed

- Working independently
- Working with agencies
- Working with schools
- Clothing
- Resume
- Disclosure/Disability issues
- Informational interviews
- Applications
- Reference letters
- Finding job openings
- Job interviews
- Other support

