
Graduation Options and Considerations

There are a few different graduation options for students with disabilities in the State of Utah. As part of the Transition IEP team meeting, your student may choose a regular or another type of high school diploma.

Regular High School Diploma

Your teen will be awarded a regular high school diploma if they have satisfied high school completion or graduation criteria as outlined by the district and their IEP, if applicable.

It is possible for the IEP team to amend graduation requirements and document them in the IEP. These amendments may include substitutions, and/or exemptions that accommodate the needs of your student but must still maintain the integrity and rigor expected for high school graduation. For instance, you could not replace a math credit by taking an art class, but you may be able to substitute an American Sign Language class for foreign language credit. Graduating with a Regular High School diploma will end your student's high school education.

Alternative High School Diploma

An Alternative High School Diploma is issued when a student completes their high school requirements by a method other than attending their local high school, such as passing the General Education Development (GED) test or attending night school. It is equivalent to earning a regular high school diploma and ends your student's high school education. The diploma is issued by the State of Utah, not a school or district.

NOTE: For students on an IEP, successful completion of the GED does not end their access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE).





Alternate High School Diploma

For students with a significant cognitive disability who meet requirements for participation in Utah's Alternate Assessment (UAA), an Alternate High School Diploma may be a good option. It allows a student the opportunity to learn rigorous standards-based content through the Essential Elements (English, Language, Arts, and Math) and the Extended Core (Science). Obtaining an Alternate High School Diploma will end your student's access to FAPE.

Certificate of Completion

A Certificate of Completion is given to students who have not met all of the state, district, or charter school requirements for graduation but have completed their senior year of high school. A Certificate of Completion does not end your young adult's access to FAPE. When they "age out" at age 22, however, FAPE will end. See "Aging Out of the School System" below.

NOTE: School districts are responsible for determining how students with or without disabilities who have not met graduation requirements participate in ceremonies where diplomas or Certificates of Completion may be awarded.

Career Development Credential (CDC)

This is a career-focused, work experience credential that is designed to show potential employers skills your student has developed while in school. It is available to your young adult if they are on an IEP or Section 504 Plan and working toward a regular High School Diploma or Alternate High School Diploma. This credential requires 120 hours of community-based work experience, completion of a transition curriculum class or coursework, and an internship. It helps direct the student's focus to career and work experience which can prepare them for adulthood by experiencing their transition services and supports in school.



Aging Out of the School System

If your young adult has an IEP and turns 22 any time after July 1, the district must continue to provide FAPE until the end of the school year that follows. Reaching the maximum age (age 22) automatically ends eligibility for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). If your student did not receive a Certificate of Completion after exiting high school, they can receive it now.

Summary of Performance

Under IDEA, a school must provide a student who is graduating with a regular high school diploma or exiting the school system at age 22 with a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance. This summary of performance (SOP), with the accompanying documentation, is important to assist the student in the transition from high school to higher education, training, and/or employment. It can also provide useful information when choosing to disclose a disability to an employer or Disability Access Center at a post-secondary school.

The SOP must include:

- A summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance
- A statement of the student's postsecondary goals, with recommendations on how to assist them in meeting their goals
- A statement of when and how accommodations were used for instruction and assessment