MEMORANDUM

To: Special Education Professionals and Other Parties Interested in Secondary Transition
From: Amanda Green, Secondary Transition Coordinator
Date: October 2014
Subject: Key to Terms and Phrases Used in the SPP/APR Indicator 13 Measurement

Indicator 13 Measurement: Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority."

(20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B))

“Aged 16 and above”

Federal law requires that transition planning begin for students when they are 16 years old, or younger if appropriate. Since Indicator 13 is a federal indicator, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) reports data for students who are aged 16-21 in the federal State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR). However, Massachusetts state law requires that transition planning begin for students when they are 14 years old, or younger if appropriate. Because of this state requirement, the Indicator 13 review includes the files of students who are aged 14 and older.

“Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals” (Question 3)

Postsecondary goals are appropriate when they are individualized for the unique student. All students must have at least one postsecondary goal in the area of employment and one in the area of education/training. If deemed appropriate by the IEP team, a student could also have a postsecondary goal in the area of independent living.

Example of compliant “appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals”: Samantha’s employment postsecondary goal is to be a pastry chef, her education/training postsecondary goal is to attend culinary school, and her independent living postsecondary goal is to have her own apartment
with a roommate.
It is not necessary for the Team to use full sentences or to label each postsecondary goal. As long as the ideas are there, the postsecondary goals are deemed to meet the standard for compliance. For example, the same student’s compliant postsecondary goal could be stated: “Samantha wants to be a pastry chef, go to culinary school, and live in her own apartment.”
The ESE determines measurability for postsecondary goals in a binary (yes/no) sense; they are either present, or they are not. While postsecondary goals are a key element in transition planning, schools are not accountable for students’ attainment of postsecondary goals. Numerous mediating factors will affect the realization of each young person’s vision.

“Annually updated” (Question 3a)

The Massachusetts Postsecondary Transition Planning Checklist requires the reviewer to note the presence of the TPF in the student’s file, as well as the date the form was last completed. It is a very common error for Teams to discuss and update the TPF and IEP but to forget to change the date on the TPF. It is also very common – and perfectly acceptable – for a student to have the same postsecondary goals two years in a row. Some students’ visions for adult life remain the same from year to year. The reviewer should carefully examine the current TPF and IEP, as well as the TPF and IEP from the previous year. Is the new one a cut-and-paste carbon copy of the old? For example, is the action plan on the TPF precisely the same and there is no evidence of discussion or updating? If so, annual updating did not occur. Question 3a should be marked “No.” However, if it is clear that a new discussion happened and was documented, the reviewer may disregard the incorrect TPF date and mark Question 3a “Yes.”

“Age appropriate transition assessment” (Question 3b)

Transition Assessment is best understood in light of Technical Assistance Advisory SPED 2014-4: Transition Assessment in the Secondary Transition Planning Process. The reviewer is urged to become familiar with this advisory before conducting the file review. The reviewer should also refer to the Massachusetts Postsecondary Transition Planning: Transition Assessments Example Sheet.

“Transition services, including course of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals” (Question 4)

“Transition services” are defined by IDEA as “a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—(1) Is designed to be within a results oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities.” [34 CFR 300.43(a)(1)]
For the purposes of this Indicator 13 data collection, the reviewer should consider all possible sources of evidence that would indicate the student is experiencing a “coordinated set of activities” designed to move the student closer to achieving his/her postsecondary goals. These could include information on the IEP, particularly on the Service Delivery Grid or under Additional Information. These could also include the student’s course schedule or transcript. The reviewer should ask him/herself the question: Does this student have transition services that will
reasonably enable the student to meet his/her postsecondary goals?

“Annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition services needs” (Question 5)

Any reader of an IEP for a student aged 14-22 should be able to see a clear linkage between the student's postsecondary goals and transition assessments, and the student's annual IEP goals and transition services. Given the student’s vision for the future, and given the student’s disability-related needs, the reviewer should ask: Are the IEP goals reasonably calculated to assist the student, over the course of one year, to build skills that will eventually enable him/her to realize that vision?

The IEP need not include – and the ESE specifically discourages – the inclusion of a Goal Focus labeled “Transition.” All annual goals on the IEP of a student aged 14-22 should prepare him/her for adult life. If any annual goal on an IEP does not build skills that prepare a student for life after high school, then that annual goal should be reconsidered. It is important to remember that a full range of academic and functional skills are necessary for success in adult life. Useful resources on this subject are the Massachusetts Definition of College and Career Readiness and the attached Massachusetts Postsecondary Transition Planning Goals Example Sheet.

“Evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed” (Question 6)

Without exception, according to federal law, all students aged 14-22 must be invited to their IEP meetings where transition services are to be discussed. Students are not required to attend their meetings, and there are many reasons why the student, his/her family, and/or school professionals may feel the student should not attend a full Team meeting. A conversation about the plusses and minuses of student attendance can occur after the invitation has been issued. Schools are reminded that if a student does not attend the IEP meeting, other steps must be taken to ensure that the student’s preferences and interests are considered.

Federal law does not require a written invitation; a verbal invitation is sufficient. Clearly, a verbal invitation may be difficult to document. School districts are advised to develop procedures which will create a record of student invitations.

The reviewer should look in the student’s file for a written student invitation. If none is present, the reviewer can check the meeting attendance list to see if the student was there. If so, the reviewer should assume that an invitation was issued. If not, the reviewer can speak with the student’s Team liaison to ascertain if the student was verbally invited.

“If appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority.” (Question 7)

Services from state agencies will be integral to the adult success of some students; therefore appropriate invitation is key. The reviewer should consider all of the interdependent conditions in Question 7 to make a determination:

1. Was it appropriate to invite a participating agency? Some students do not need agency participation; NA is the compliant response in these cases. [Note: schools should keep in
mind that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) has a referral process that is outside of the 688 process. Students for whom it would not be appropriate to file a 688 may still benefit from an MRC referral.]

2. Was it appropriate to invite a participating agency, but the district did not have the prior consent of the parent or student who had reached the age of majority? NA is the compliant response in these cases.

3. Will it be appropriate to invite an agency in the future, but for now the student is more than two years away from graduation or aging out? NA is the compliant response. Only if all Question 7 conditions are met will the answer be Yes (the agency was appropriately invited) or No (It would have been appropriate to invite the agency, but the district did not).

Reminder:

The Department expects and encourages districts to continually strive to achieve the highest possible quality transition planning and services. The Indicator 13 review seeks to ensure that your students enjoy compliant transition planning and services -- those that conform to the requirements of state and federal law. Additional resources are available for students, families, and Teams to support best practice in the area of Secondary Transition. Districts utilizing best practices in this area will easily demonstrate 100% compliance with the reporting requirements of Indicator 13.

If you have further questions or need additional information, please contact Amanda Green, agreen@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3368.