

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (Section 1414) indicates results from assessments related to training, education, employment, and when needed, independent living skills be used to develop postsecondary goals. The law uses the plural form of assessment to indicate two or more transition assessments need to be used (Prince et al., 2014). While many types of transition assessments exist, those most frequently used focus on employment and life skills.

What are Employment and Life Skills Assessments?

Employment and life skills assessments consist of published or teacher-made tools designed to measure a variety of specific skills and needed student supports related to work and independent living skills. Typical employment assessments examine skills such as arriving to work on time, work quality, work speed, and responsiveness to supervisors' feedback. Life skill assessments generally examine independent living skills including meal preparation, house cleaning, care of clothing and home safety skills.

What the Research Says

When students with disabilities are prepared with employment and life skills before exiting high school, they are more likely to be employed after high school (Mazzotti et al., 2021). However, when teachers and parents of students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities rated their students' strengths and needs, three of the four lowest rated areas were employment and life skills (i.e., daily living, community participation; Carter et al., 2014). These results highlight the importance of conducting employment and life skills assessment to meet the needs of students with significant disabilities. For work, employers have identified critical skills for entry-level positions: (a) basic skills (e.g., listening, speaking); (b) higher

order thinking skills (e.g., problem solving, self-advocacy); (c) basic work skills (e.g., punctuality, task completion); (d) social skills (e.g., accept criticism, socially acceptable language); and (e) personal traits (e.g., honesty, adaptability; Ju et al., 2012). Like employment, life skills also comprise a variety of skillsets (e.g., hygiene, food preparation, money management, cleaning; Burns et al., 2019). To evaluate employment and life skills, assessments come in a variety of formats (e.g., online surveys, paper assessments, interviews, observations) and cover a variety of areas (e.g., career interests, career-decision-making skills; Herbert et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2015; Stevenson & Fowler, 2016).

Special education professionals should collaborate with others (e.g., student, family, adult service providers) to conduct ongoing employment and life skills assessments. By using only one person's assessment of a student's skills, education professionals risk providing an incomplete perspective of the student's strengths and needs (Carter et al., 2014; Rowe et al., 2015; Stevenson & Fowler, 2016). The importance of employment and life skills assessments cannot be overstated. Using ongoing assessment across multiple areas (e.g., employment, life skills) ensures educators can provide a tailored approach for students with significant disabilities to prepare them for adult life (e.g., employment; Carter et al., 2014).

Guidelines for Practice

Students need to become actively engaged in the transition assessment process (Field et al., 1998). Specifically, students need to be involved as much as possible in deciding what needs to be assessed, completing student versions of assessments when available, and using transition assessment results to assist in building their Individualized Education Program (IEP; Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013). This can be accomplished by reviewing online and paper-pencil assessments with students and asking

them to pick the employment and life skills assessments they would like to complete. Ask students to complete the student version of the assessments. If student versions are not available, complete the assessment with the student. Once scored, explain the results to students and ask them to summarize the results at their next IEP meeting.

Additional Resources

Numerous assessments examine student employment and independent living skills. Some of these possess ample supporting validity evidence while others only have a little or none. Table 1 provides the name of the assessment, indicates if it has ample supporting validity evidence, and lists the website where the assessment may be obtained.

The assessments in Table 1 all address employment and life skills. Only two of these assessments focus only on employment or life skills: (a) the Employability Skills Assessment and the (b) Life Skills Inventory. Besides examining employment and life skills, the other tools assess additional skill areas important to overall transition success.

Table 1

Employment and Life Skills Assessments

Assessment Name and Website
Transition Planning Inventory – Third Edition Complete Kit* www.proedinc.com/Products/14865/tpi3-transition-planning-inventory-third-edition-complete-kit.aspx
Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale* www.aaid.org/dabs
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale - 3rd Edition* www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Behavior/Adaptive/Vineland-Adaptive-Behavior-Scales-%7C-Third-Edition/p/100001622.html
Scales of Independent Behavior - Revised* riversideinsights.com/p/scales-of-independent-behavior-revised-sib-r-complete-package/

Informal Assessment for Transition www.proedinc.com/Products/14376/informal-assessments-for-transition-planningsecond-edition-book.aspx
Enderle-Severson Assessments www.estr.net/
Employability Skills Assessment www.ocali.org/up_doc/ELSA_14_21.pdf
Life Skills Inventory www.sped.sbcsc.k12.in.us/PDF%20Files/tassessments/Independent%20Living/Life%20Skills%20Inventory_Independent%20Living.pdf
Casey Life Skills lifekills.casey.org/
Employment Support Indicators ouhsc.edu/Portals/1154/EasyDNNnews/Uploads/4226/5_EmploymentSupportIndicators2.pdf
Personal Preference Indicators ouhsc.edu/thecenter/Publications/Publication-Details/personal-preference-indicators

Note. Items with an asterisk (*) have ample validity evidence.

Only one type of assessment exists to examine the support needs of transition-age youth with extensive support needs. This rather new assessment examines an area (i.e., support needs) that no other tool has previously examined (see Table 2).

Table 2

Support Needs Assessments

Assessment Name and Website
Supports Intensity Scale – Children (Ages 5-16)* www.aaid.org/publications/bookstore-home/product-listing/sis-c-user-s-manual-and-25-interview-forms
Supports Intensity Scale (16 and older)* www.aaid.org/publications/bookstore-home/product-listing/sis-a-user-s-manual-and-25-interview-forms

Note. Items with an asterisk (*) have ample validity evidence.

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