



4. Interpretation of the TPI-2 Results

In this chapter, we discuss how to interpret and use the TPI-2 results. We explain how to use the Profile and Further Assessment Recommendations Form in transition planning, explain how to interpret information derived from the Modified Form for Students with Significant Support Needs, and discuss how to develop transition goals.

After the School, Home, and Student Rating Forms have been completed, the person who is coordinating the student's transition planning process should compile the results on the Profile and Further Assessment Recommendations Form so that comparisons can be made across the three sources of information (school, student, and home). As mentioned previously, this form ultimately becomes the most important document for planning purposes, as it contains the results of all the ratings in a visual fashion, provides a mechanism for deciding on any further assessment that might be warranted, and serves as the framework on which transition goals and actions are based.

Interpreting the Profile and Further Assessment Recommendations Form

The following discussion will explain how to use the information that has been generated during the assessment process and transferred to this form. The first part of this discussion will focus on how to use the information in Sections 1-4 of the form. Most of the ensuing discussion will detail how to interpret the profile data in Section 5. The final part of this discussion will focus on how to develop a plan for conducting any further assessment that might be needed for specific transition areas, as indicated in Section 6.

Background Information (Sections 1-4)

The first page of the Profile and Further Assessment Recommendations Form is where information from a variety of other sources is compiled. This page includes the first four sections of the form. Each section was described in some detail in Chapter 3; in this chapter, we will discuss how the information that is obtained can be used for transition interpretation and planning purposes.

Section 1. General Information.

This section documents the general information part of the administration process. It is useful as a reference for when the Profile Form was completed and who actually completed the School and Home Rating Forms. Note that if the dates when these documents were completed are needed, this information can be retrieved from the actual Rating Forms. While this information is useful, it requires little interpretation.

Section 2. Likely Settings for Postsecondary Outcomes.

This section summarizes the various perspectives that respondents have in regard to where they believe the student will work or go to school/receive training and live. As this section

allows for comparisons of these beliefs from everyone who completed a Rating Form and provided this information, the perspectives of the various respondents may differ—and they often do—and thus require discussion. Discrepancies are expected, as noted, and should provide points for future discussions.

We have always felt that the transition planning process (a) involves the recognition that there will be differences of opinion and perspective, (b) offers the opportunity to talk about these differences, and (c) sets in motion a way to come to some agreement about the future based on reasoned discussion and interpretation of the results obtained through the TPI-2 forms. When differences of opinion about a student's future do occur, it is essential that time be devoted to discussing these future scenarios. For instance, the realities of living on one's own (e.g., the costs associated with paying rent and utilities) should be addressed in a straightforward, non-emotional way. Doing so may change one's perspective and open the student's eyes to what it really will take to live independently.

Section 3. Student's Preferences, Interests, and Strengths.

This section, albeit restricted to a few lines, is where key preferences and interests of the student—and, when appropriate, those of his or her parents—can be recorded. We feel that this information is critical to guiding the transition discussion, not only because the law requires it but also because it is the student's future on which this process should be focused. His or her thoughts about the future are essential. This section is clearly related to the information listed in Section 2; however, the nature of the comments is more specific in this section. This section should also be used to restate the student's strengths, as transition planning must be based not only on areas of need (a given) but also on those areas where the student demonstrates prowess. Interpretation of the student's strengths will be important in setting priorities for IEP goals and services.

Section 4. Results of Other Assessments.

This section is delegated for recording the results of any other existing information, particularly assessment data that has bearing on the transition planning process. Such information/data help develop the most comprehensive and realistic picture possible of the student. Some students will have an extensive amount of collateral information; others may have very little. In those situations where much information exists, the space provided will not be sufficient to summarize it, and as a result, additional documents may need to be appended to the protocol. Some examples of collateral information that might exist for a student and be useful for planning purposes are adaptive behavior results, behavioral intervention plans, social skills assessments, study skills assessments, reading and math performance data, and career preference and interest data. Note that the information posted to Section 4 should be recent. We believe that many types of information (e.g., adaptive behavior data) should be within the last 6 months; some data may have a longer shelf life (e.g., behavioral observations) if the challenging behavior is still operative. Professional judgment will be needed to decide the relevance of the information recorded in Section 4.

Profile Information (Section 5)

This section typically becomes the focal point of the transition planning discussion. The responses from all three sources (School, Student, and Home Rating Forms) should be transferred to this section of the form. This process does require a little time to

transfer the data from the forms (estimated time: 8-10 minutes for all three forms); however, it is worth the effort to have all the information in one location and available in a format where it can be examined visually.

Typically, the person who is coordinating the transition assessment/planning process (e.g., IEP case manager/teacher or a school staff member) will transfer the data from the Rating Forms to the Profile Form. Given that the data in this section will be shared with the IEP team at some point, it is often possible to have reliable students transfer their responses and those of their parents (Home Rating Form) to the Profile Form, thus saving teachers time and indirectly starting the discussion process for students, as they see how their parents perceive their competence.

Once the data from the individual forms are transferred to Section 5, the actual profile in the Profile and Further Assessment Recommendations Form, the transition planning personnel can analyze the responses from the different sources. The graphic interface allows a quick way to determine the extent of need associated with any of the TPI-2 items in the 11 transition domains. The case study of Jimmy (included in the next chapter) shows how a completed profile looks. We recommend the following strategies when analyzing a student's TPI-2 profile:

- If an item received a rating of 0, 1, or 2, suggesting a low level of perceived competence, it will appear in a shaded portion of the profile. All statements, from any of the three sources, that fall into this shaded area need to be examined and most likely discussed. When two or three sources rate a statement in this range, discussion of it must be undertaken if the need area is directly related to the student's postsecondary outcome goals.
- An NA ("not appropriate") response, if shared across sources, implies that an item truly is not appropriate for the individual and should be disregarded. If only one or two of the three sources respond NA, the statement needs to be discussed to determine its appropriateness. The school representative should probe the respondent who rated an item NA to find out what he or she meant by the rating. Did the respondent choosing NA mean "not appropriate at this time for planning" or "not appropriate for the school to address at all" because of lack of relevance to the student or because of family values that prohibit the discussion of this topic? Schools should honor parent or student views that a competency area is not appropriate for planning because of family values.
- A DK ("don't know") response indicates that the person does not have information regarding the level of competence for an area. If two or more sources respond with DK on a statement, pursue this transition item further to try to determine whether the student demonstrates competence on the item. Often, this scenario implies that further assessment of some type is warranted. Remember, a DK response indicates that the item is applicable! If only one rater indicates DK, some discussion should occur. For example, if one rater marks DK, some consensus should be reached on the usefulness of the other one or two ratings for making planning decisions. It could be important to consider who made the DK ratings.
- When a respondent does not provide any response to an item (i.e., a nonresponse), the reason for doing so needs to be considered. When this happens, it is usually a result of the respondent (typically the student or parent) not understanding what the statement means. If information is available from two of the other respondents, an unanswered statement can be dealt with at the meeting where transition needs are being

covered. In other cases, however, nonresponses need to be investigated further. Most of the time, the dilemma can be solved by referring to the item descriptions for the various forms that elaborate on what the item means (see Appendixes A-C).

- When there is a major discrepancy among ratings, reasoned discussion is almost always needed, leading to the need to gather more information. A discrepancy within the shaded area on the profile (i.e., ratings of 0, 1, or 2) is not a major discrepancy, because all raters believe that the student does not demonstrate the competency. The same is true if the discrepancies are at the opposite end of the rating continuum (i.e., ratings of 3, 4, or 5). However, ratings that are more spread out (e.g., if the ratings on one transition statement were 0, 3, and 5) reflect more significant discrepancies. A question of interpretation also arises with ratings such as 0, 2, and 5, or 0, 0, and 5. It is important in the interpretation to consider who made the various ratings and who is closest in agreement. The outlying ratings in discrepancy situations are typically, but not always, the student's ratings. As discussed earlier, students will often rate themselves higher than might truly be the case. The primary decision in interpretation is whether there is useful information for making planning decisions or whether further assessment is necessary before any decisions can be made.
- If a student or parent frequently checks DK or marks ratings that differ from the other two raters, further assessment should help that person provide more accurate ratings or move from unrealistic perspectives to more realistic ratings.

Further Assessment and Information (Section 6)

This section is where decisions regarding further assessment are documented. Further assessments will be needed to better understand certain transition areas about which there is disagreement or about which respondents do not feel they have a definitive perspective on which to make a rating. This part of the form also connects areas needing further assessment, as identified in the profile, with the more detailed analysis that is possible when additional resources are used.

Section 6 offers a way to document additional assessments that may be needed. The section is organized according to transition domains and allows school-based personnel to indicate which type of additional assessment techniques might be needed. Descriptions of the key components of Section 6 and a recommended sequence on how they can be used follow:

1. The first task is to recognize which transition domains have been targeted for further assessment. A brief note on what areas are targeted can be written in the first column under the appropriate transition domain.
2. The second step is to identify the items on the Comprehensive Informal Inventory of Knowledge and Skills for Transition (Level 2)—found in *Informal Assessments for Transition Planning—Second Edition*—that might be able to clarify an item from the profile. To do so, circle the appropriate item number in the second column. The item numbers that are presented in this column correspond to the items in the rating forms for that transition domain.
3. The third step, also involving the second column, is to indicate specific formal or informal assessments that might be helpful. One set of informal instruments

that can be used for this purpose is provided in *Informal Assessments for Transition Planning—Second Edition*. The reference guide in Appendix E of this manual aligns the informal instruments in *Informal Assessments* with each of the 57 items on the TPI-2 rating scales. This resource also lists the number of items contained in the Comprehensive Informal Inventory of Knowledge and Skills for Transition for each item on the rating scale.

4. The fourth step involves the third column in Section 6, which is used for recording results from any additional assessments that might have been conducted. While the information from further assessments can be organized in a variety of ways, this column provides a way to document the results that keeps all pertinent information in one location. Note that additional reports or other documents with assessment information may be appended to the Profile Form.

Further assessment is not restricted to TPI-2 materials. Other formal or informal assessments may be used to contribute to a better understanding of a student's levels of competence in key transition areas. Space is provided in the second column for indicating instruments from Level 3 of the TPI-2, or any other instruments that will be used. More information on transition assessment options and techniques can be found in *Assessment for Transitions Planning—Second Edition* (Clark, 2007), *Transition Assessment for Students with Mild to Moderate Disabilities* (Miller, Corbey, & Lombard, 2007), *Transition Assessment: Wise Practices for Quality Lives* (Sax & Thoma, 2002), *Assess for Success* (Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte, 2007), *Informal Assessments for Transition: Employment and Career Planning* (Synatschk, Clark, Patton, & Copeland, 2007), *Informal Assessments for Transition: Postsecondary Education and Training* (Sitlington, Patton, & Clark, 2008), and *Informal Assessments for Transition: Independent Living and Community Participation* (Synatschk, Clark, & Patton, 2008).

Interpreting the Modified Form for Students with Significant Support Needs

The primary purpose of the Modified Form for Students with Significant Support Needs is to expand the usefulness of the TPI-2 to groups of students who have more significant challenges and needs. A PDF of this form is provided on the CD. Although we designed the TPI-2 School, Student, and Home Rating Forms to work with all students with disabilities, feedback indicated that practitioners in the field who worked with students with more significant needs desired a more specialized form. In general, the Modified Form for Students with Significant Support Needs includes the basic features of the other forms with the following exceptions:

- Only one form exists; both school personnel and parents complete copies of the same form.
- The Modified Form contains only three sections: Student Information, Likely Settings for Postsecondary Outcomes, and Planning Areas Inventory.
- The scoring system differs from the standard forms. Instead of the numerical rating scale of the standard forms, the scoring system on the Modified Form is based on the use of supports. Student competence is evaluated on three key levels: *independently competent*, *competent with support*, and *not competent*.

- School-based personnel who have regular contact with students with significant support needs will be able to complete this form quickly and easily.

In terms of interpretation, the Modified Form bridges the gap between determining the student's level of competence and the need to generate instructional and linkage goals. This process involves making some interpretations. These decision-making features are incorporated into Section 3, Planning Areas Inventory. In addition, space is provided in the last column to indicate recommended supports and additional assessments that the student might need. This column can be used to indicate more in-depth measures (e.g., the *Support Intensity Scale* by Thompson et al., 2004) that can be used to determine support needs.

An example of the Modified Form's use for transition assessment is provided in the case study of Sonia on the CD.

Individualized Transition Planning

Once a student's transition needs are known, individual planning should ensue. The formats used across the country for writing transition plans vary greatly. Unfortunately, some states dedicate only a small section of the IEP for a statement of transition services. Regardless of transition plan format, the TPI-2 can be used effectively to assist with the generation of transition plans, including IEP goals (Rehfeldt, 2007; Rehfeldt, Clark, & Lee, 2012). If careful assessment has been done using the TPI-2, the resulting data will provide ample information for meeting the transition requirements of any state. In our opinion, if a thorough transition needs assessment is conducted and appropriate interpretations are made, as can be done by using the TPI-2, the planning phase should evolve without too much difficulty.

Developing Meaningful Transition Goals

We believe that it is very important for transition-related personnel to be able to generate useful present levels of performance statements, on which appropriate and meaningful academic and functional goals are based. In an effort to provide practical tips for moving from assessment to developing individualized transition plans in the IEP, we have included detailed case studies on the CD. Each case study provides an easy-to-follow progression from background information on a student, to assessment, to the development of transition goals.

As we have stated on many occasions, transition planning involves a number of crucial elements. For students whose needs are extensive, it is important to prioritize goals for each annual IEP. Priorities for planning are based on two primary factors: what the student's postsecondary outcome goals are and which planning needs are most critical at the current point in time. For many students with multiple needs, it may be impossible to cover every area of need given limited time and resources. Instructional needs to meet academic achievement goals should be addressed in IEP goals in the context of the student's course of study and appropriate instructional and performance accommodations. Recommended transition planning practice requires that for all linkage-type goals, someone be assigned responsibility for seeing that the linkage activity occurs (Clark, 2007). In addition, as with all planning, a timeline for accomplishing a specific goal is needed.

Even though transition-related goals may not be required for every transition area that is covered in the TPI-2, those areas directly related to a student's postsecondary

outcome goals in which responses indicate lower levels of competence should involve some academic and/or linkage goal planning. As presented in Figure 1.2 (Chapter 1), the generation of goals is a critical outcome within the transition planning process. Other purposes for conducting a transition needs assessment may exist; however, from a school perspective, instructional goal and linkage goal development are critical for developing useful transition plans for students. An explanation of the differences between these two types of goals follows:

- **Instructional Goals:** One of the most important outcomes of transition assessment should be to generate instructional goals in any of the following areas, when appropriate: academic, vocational/occupational, social/behavioral/affective, and community living. A comprehensive transition needs assessment should identify a student's strengths and needs in a number of transition areas. Where appropriate, these needs should be addressed in the student's IEP and course of study while in school, and they should be documented as academic, behavioral, social, and/or personal measurable annual goals in his or her IEP. Far too often, too few functional performance goals are generated in students' IEPs to address adult-referenced areas where knowledge or skill acquisition is needed.
- **Linkage Goals:** Perhaps the most common outcome of transition needs assessment has been to identify goals that serve to link the student and his or her family with important services and supports that will be needed now and in the future. Linkage goals may involve short-term "action items" (e.g., applying for a bus pass) or more involved activities to put in place long-term services and supports that may be needed now (e.g., related services, supplemental aids/services) or in the future (e.g., employment, living on one's own).

Each identified area of transition needs should be analyzed to determine which type(s) of goals should be generated to address that area of need. Although one does not have to spend time planning for areas where no need exists, all areas should be examined (i.e., assessed) for possible need. Some students will have few needs; others will have many. Some students will have needs that require both instructional and linkage goals. For example, a student who plans to enter a postsecondary educational setting and who has significant problems in the area of test-taking skills should have an instructional goal written into his or her IEP to develop skills associated with test taking. In addition, a linkage goal should be generated to connect the student with services to help with this area at the student's chosen institution of higher education. Other needs may require only one type of goal.

In our opinion, goal generation is essential for addressing postschool needs while a student is still in school and for ensuring a seamless transition to successful adult functioning. "Reasonable" transition planning is based on an assessment phase that school-based personnel can implement efficiently and effectively. Implicit in the idea of reasonable transition planning is access to tools that allow for the generation of key assessment information on which transition goals can be based.

Transition Education

Even if great transition plans are developed, they are meaningless if appropriate action is not taken on the identified goals. Transition education (i.e., instruction-related activities that help to prepare students for the demands of adulthood, as depicted in Figure 1.2