

Transition Services

My name is Karen Simon, 82 Meadowmere Rd. Stratford, Ct. 06614

I am an education advocate and a parent of a 20 year old son with Autism, ADHD, Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes, Epilepsy and those are just the major ones.

I know the focus of today's meeting is geared to what to do after the school program ends.

However, I am in litigation with my school district right now over the remaining year of my son's transition program.

Christopher is not a high functioning kid nor is he low functioning. He has never fit the mold in any canned program.

He has incredible talent as an artist and his other interests are computers, animals, music and trains. He also cannot carry on a conversation, answers yes to most questions, has no fear and will elope and I mean hop a train whenever the opportunity presents.

The course work and focus in his IEP all through middle school and high school celebrated his artistic ability, he was able to be fully included with typical peers and remain on task and productive throughout his day. The recommendations from his art teachers said he should continue to study art in an art school or college. Along with the PPT we developed an individualized transition program that emphasized the four areas he needed for adulthood,

vocation, education, social and adaptive.

It had been a truly amazing year for Christopher, taking art courses at Fairfield University, becoming a part of the college and socializing with classmates, working part time at Goodwill, becoming more independent on grooming, time management, chores, even eating a wider variety of foods. He has also become more independent on his diabetes care and regularly works out by running the track at Fairfield University.

As his parents we have been thrilled with the growth we have seen this past year.

Yet when it came time for this year's PPT for his last year of transition services, the district, with a new special ed director, decided not to support his current transition program because the district has a program where all of the transition kids are placed and it is "appropriate" for all of them.

So without ever observing my son's program, doing any assessments, asking any of the teachers from high school who know him or even bothering to meet Christopher they tried to derail his current program in which he had made so many gains and instead assigned him to a room stuffing envelopes with all of the other kids with disabilities. This is a program in which he has no interest, cannot be independent and will elope at the first chance. In addition to this change in placement, they cut in half of the hours of service that he was receiving in high school.

I know that Christopher will always have to have support but crafting an effective transition program, and notice I said effective not appropriate, means tapping into Christopher's ability to produce works of art to sell which he can complete independently giving him a respectable quality of life that can be carried into the next phase of his development.

As an advocate I use my son as an example but please know that I am representing many parents today where this same scenario plays again and again.

What happened to the Individual in IEP when it comes to transition?

Are our kids just to be warehoused to what's available?

Are their splintered and unique talents ignored because they can't advocate?

Why are there so few options for our kids?

Should their quality of life and happiness not matter?

Thank you for your time. Karen Simon, (203) 257- 6520