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## **TRANSITION PLANNING: A TEAM EFFORT**

### INTRODUCTION

The completion of high school is the beginning of adult life. Entitlement to public education ends, and young people and their families are faced with many options and decisions about the future. The most common choices for the future are pursuing vocational training or further academic education, getting a job, and living independently.

For students with disabilities, these choices may be more complex and may require a great deal of planning. Planning the transition from school to adult life begins, at the latest, during high school. In fact, transition planning is required, by law, to start once a student reaches 14 years of age, or younger, if appropriate. This transition planning becomes formalized as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Transition services are intended to prepare students to make the transition from the world of school to the world of adulthood. In planning what type of transition services a student needs to prepare for adulthood, the IEP Team considers areas such as postsecondary education or vocational training, employment, independent living, and community participation. The transition services themselves are a coordinated set of activities that are based on the student's needs and that take into account his or her preferences and interests. Transition services can include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and (if appropriate) the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational assessment.

The student and his or her family are expected to take an active role in preparing the student to take responsibility for his or her own life once school is finished. Where once school provided a centralized source of education, guidance, transportation, and even recreation, after students leave school, they will need to organize their own lives and needs and navigate among an array of adult service providers and federal, state, and local programs. This can be a daunting task one for which the student and his or her family need to be prepared.

This Transition Summary provides ideas and information on how students, families, school personnel, service providers, and others can work together to help students make a

smooth transition. In particular, this document focuses on creative transition planning and services that use all the resources that exist in communities, not just the agencies that have traditionally been involved. This publication also provides:

- \* definitions of some terms used in transition planning,
- \* lists of individuals and agencies that can help the IEP Team create a successful transition plan,
- \* guides to finding the groups and agencies that provide transition services,
- \* examples of creative transition plans, and
- \* ways to improve the transition system by working at the community level.

## A BRIEF LEGAL OVERVIEW (\*) OF TRANSITION PLANNING

If students are to mature into independent, productive adults and become increasingly responsible for their actions and accomplishments, they need to acquire the skills that are of value in the world of adulthood. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) acknowledges this and contains provisions meant to encourage student involvement and shared decision making.

Since 1990, transition services have been a requirement of law for students who are 16 years or older, or younger if deemed appropriate by the IEP Team. The services are planned at the IEP meeting to which students must be invited. Thus, the 1990 IDEA legislation provided students with an enormous new opportunity to be involved in planning their own education, to look into the future, to voice their preferences and concerns and desires, to be heard, to share in making decisions that so directly affect them.

Now, under the latest reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 (IDEA 97), this involvement has been expanded. In addition to transition services beginning at age 16, a statement of transition service needs is required at age 14. At this time, and updated annually thereafter, the IEP Team looks at the child's courses of study (such as advanced placement courses or vocational education programs) and determines whether or not those courses of study are leading the student to where the student needs to be upon graduation. What other courses might be indicated, given the student's goals for life after secondary school? Beginning to plan at age 14, with an eye to necessary coursework, is expected to help students plan and prepare educationally. Then, at age 16, or younger if appropriate, transition services are delivered in a wide range of areas.

IDEA 97 has also outlined procedures for the transfer of parental rights to the student when he or she reaches the age of majority under State law. Both the parents and the student must be notified of any transfer of rights that will take place at that time. Students are to receive the notification at least one year before they reach the age of majority. A statement must be included in the IEP that the student has been informed of the rights, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. After the student attains the age of majority, if rights transfer, the school must provide any notice required by the law (e.g., procedural safeguards notice, notice regarding an upcoming IEP meeting) to both the student and the parents. In states where rights transfer, all other rights accorded to the parents transfer to the student. (If the student is determined incompetent under state law, then the rights remain with the parents.)

Many students, however, may not have the ability to provide informed consent with respect to their educational program, although they have not been determined under state

law to be incompetent. To protect the interests of these children, IDEA 97 provides that each state that transfers rights needs to establish procedures for appointing the parents (or another appropriate individual, if the parents are not available) to represent the student's educational interests.

This transfer of rights is obviously an enormous step forward toward empowering students as adults and encouraging them to inform themselves about and become deeply involved in their education and particularly in planning for their future. Educators will need to provide additional training and opportunities for students to understand the impact of this responsibility.

(\*) This legal overview was taken directly from the approved OSEP IDEA 97 Training Package, Module 9, pp. 9-11 through 9-13. This document is available from NICHCY.

## TRANSITION TEAMS

This section looks at ways to create effective transition teams. Collaboration between team members and participating agencies is an essential part of the process [see section below entitled What is Collaboration?].

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## WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

There are basically four ways in which people can interact to establish or improve services and plan for young adults preparing for transition from school to post-school activities. Let us look at these methods briefly.

Through networking, people gain an awareness of available resources and discover how to access or refer individuals to those services. An example of networking might be a transition coordinator talking with local business owners to identify possible job training sites for students. While networking is an essential step in collaboration, it will not be enough for students who have complex transition service needs.

Service coordination assists in the selection and scheduling of services. In coordinating, people arrange for a student with disabilities to receive specific services from different agencies (for example, one agency making a phone call to another agency to determine their respective roles and to schedule activities).

With cooperation, people look for ways to support and complement one another's transition services. For example, an adult services agency may accept a student's recent test results from his or her school to determine the student's eligibility for services. This would prevent the student from being tested twice and would save the adult services agency time and expense.

Collaboration begins with networking, coordination, and cooperation and then requires team members to share decisions, responsibility, and trust. It requires that team members invest time and energy to come up with options and design strategies for carrying out these plans. Because collaboration requires lots of time and energy, it is impossible to make all decisions collaboratively. In some instances, the desired result can be achieved

through networking, coordination, or cooperation. Working together, or collaboratively, invites participation of multiple service providers and the use of multiple resources. See the Student Stories below for examples of collaboration in action.

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## Individual Transition Team Members

This Transition Summary provides ideas and information on how students, families, school personnel, service providers, and others can work together to help students make a smooth transition. In particular, this document focuses on creative transition planning and services that use all the resources that exist in communities, not just the agencies that have traditionally been involved.

## COMMON COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND THE SERVICES THEY MAY OFFER

Vocational Rehabilitation Agency assists persons with cognitive, sensory, physical, or emotional disabilities to attain employment and increased independence. Funded by Federal and state money, VR agencies typically operate regional and local offices. VR services typically last for a limited period of time and are based on an individual's rehabilitation plan. If needed, an individual with disabilities can request services at a later time, and a new rehabilitation plan will be developed.

### Examples of Employment Services:

- \* vocational guidance and counseling
- \* medical, psychological, vocational, and other types of assessments to determine vocational potential
- \* job development, placement, and follow-up services
- \* rehabilitation, technological services and adaptive devices, tools, equipment, and supplies

### Examples of Postsecondary Services

- \* apprenticeship programs, usually in conjunction with Departments of Labor
- \* vocational training
- \* college training towards a vocational goal as part of an eligible student's financial aid package

### Examples of Adult and Independent Living Services

- \* housing or transportation supports needed to maintain employment
- \* interpreter services
- \* orientation and mobility services

Mental Health & Mental Retardation Agencies provide a comprehensive system of services responsive to the needs of individuals with mental illness or mental retardation. Federal, state, and local funding are used to operate regional offices; local funding is often the primary source. Services are provided on a sliding payment scale.

### Examples of Employment Services:

- \* supported and sheltered employment
- \* competitive employment support for those who need minimal assistance

#### Examples of Adult and Independent Living Services

- \* case management services to access and obtain local services
- \* therapeutic recreation, including day activities, clubs, and programs
- \* respite care
- \* residential services (group homes and supervised apartments)

Independent Living Centers help people with disabilities to achieve and maintain self-sufficient lives within the community. Operated locally, ILCs serve a particular region. ILCs may charge for classes, but advocacy services are typically available at no cost.

#### Examples of Employment Services:

- \* information and referral services
- \* connecting students with mentors with disabilities

#### Examples of Postsecondary Services:

- \* information and referral services
- \* connecting students with mentors with disabilities

#### Examples of Adult and Independent Living Services

- \* advocacy training
- \* auxiliary social services (e.g., maintaining a list of personal care attendants)
- \* peer counseling services
- \* housing assistance
- \* training in skills of independent living (attendant management, housing, transportation, career development)
- \* information and referral services
- \* connecting with mentors

Social Security Administration operates the federally funded program that provides benefits for people of any age who are unable to do substantial work and have a severe mental or physical disability. Several programs are offered for people with disabilities, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Medicaid, and Medicare.

#### Examples of Employment Services:

Work incentive programs which may include:

- \* cash benefits while working (e.g., student-earned income)
- \* Medicare or Medicaid while working
- \* help with any extra work expenses the individual has as a result of the disability
- \* assistance to start a new line of work

#### Examples of Postsecondary Services:

- \* financial incentives for further education and training

#### Examples of Adult and Independent Living Services

- \* medical benefits
- \* can use income as basis for purchase or rental of housing

Other individuals or agencies may serve as one-time or ongoing consultants to the team, sharing a particular expertise or insight, while others may be valuable sources of specific information that helps the team plan and make decisions (see Potential Consultants to the Transition Team below). Consider the useful information to be gained from any of the following:

- \* Postsecondary education and training providers such as representatives from colleges, or trade schools, who can help the student explore types of training available as well as remind the group that lifelong learning for all individuals is important;
- \* Department of Labor job services agencies, which offer transition services and employment programs, although not usually with a disability focus;
- \* School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) program representatives, who can tell the team about job training available under STWOA to help students prepare for their first job or further education and training;
- \* Community leaders such as religious leaders, directors of recreation programs, and county extension agents, who may help the team address a particular need that a student has;
- \* Community recreation centers such as Boys Clubs, YMCA, or 4-H Clubs, which may provide job counseling and youth development activities; and
- \* Employers, who can provide training and job opportunities and who can explain the expectations that the business community has for future workers.

## POTENTIAL CONSULTANTS TO THE TRANSITION TEAM

### Potential Consultant: Relationship to Transition Services

Adult Education Representative: provides information about lifelong education options

Advocacy Organization(s) Representative: may offer self-advocacy training or support groups for young adults

Assistive Technology Representative: provides expertise on devices that can open doors to opportunities

At-Risk/Prevention Specialist: offers counseling and support on teen pregnancy, alcohol, and drugs

Business-Education Partnership Representative: provides links between schools and local businesses and industry

Community Action Agency Representative: may link team to resources for traditionally underrepresented groups

Correctional Education Staff: provides incarcerated youth with continued learning opportunities

Drop-Out Prevention Representative: provides youth with alternative to dropping out of school

Employer: offers insight into expectations; promotes hiring of people with disabilities

Employment Specialist: provides job development, placement, coaching

Extension Service Agent: offers programs in parenting, homemaking, independent living

Guidance Counselor: provides information on curriculum, assessment, graduation requirements, college

Health Department/School Nurse: provides guidance on community health services and health care advice

Higher Education Representative: provides information on postsecondary services to students with disabilities

Housing Agency Representative: assists in developing housing options

Leisure Program Representative: knows available program options within the community

Literacy Council Representative: coordinates volunteers to teach basic reading and writing skills

Local Government Representative: funds many local services; can provide information on local services

Local Disability Representative (e.g., UCP): provides information and training (often serves all disabilities, not just one)

Parent Training and Information Center Representative: provides training on transition planning and advocacy services to families

Religious Community Member: can provide social support to young adults and their families

Residential Service Provider: can help access specialized housing

Social Worker: provides guidance and arranges for case management, support, respite care

Special Olympics Representative: provides sports training, competition, and recreational opportunities for youth

Therapists: provide behavioral, physical, occupational, & speech services in the community

Transportation Representative: offers expertise about transportation options and training

United Way Representative: funds many community programs that may offer options for young adults

Very Special Arts Representative: provides information on art programs and opportunities for youth

Vocational Educator: provides job training; teaches work-related skills

YMCA/YWCA: offers recreation and leisure programs

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Team members do not necessarily have to come from social service agencies. Students and their families may also invite a relative, friend, or advocate who can provide emotional support, access to their personal networks, or other unique expertise. If possible, it is also helpful to have team members from similar language and cultural backgrounds as the student. These members can help the team understand how cultural or language issues impact the transition process. Some typical transition outcomes, such as going away to college, getting a paying job, moving out of the family home, and making decisions independently of the family are valued differently by different cultures.

It is very important to invite service representatives and other individuals identified as transition consultants to IEP meetings that will be focused on only transition. They do not need to be at every IEP meeting of the student. If they cannot attend the meetings focusing on transition, talk to them about the IEP and bring their ideas or comments to the meeting.

## CREATING THE TRANSITION PLAN

After the IEP Team identifies the student's preferences and interests and identifies the agencies and resources that may be helpful in planning the student's transition, it's time to sit down and figure out a way to make all the pieces fit together. This takes time, creativity, and patience, but the rewards are worth the effort. Remember that other people have done this before. Consult school professionals, disability groups, parent organizations, and other families for their suggestions.

Planning an effective transition can involve many different individuals and agencies. The three Student Stories below illustrate the types of collaboration involved in creative planning. They show plans for three different components that every transition plan should include plans for employment, plans for education and/or training after high school, and plans for living independently. Following these Student Stories are tables (Planning for Employment, Planning for Education After High School, and Planning for Living Independently), that show the steps that a transition team may need to take in order to meet the student's goals.

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### STUDENT STORIES

#### (A) Marcia's Employment Path

Marcia, a 20-year-old student with mild cognitive disabilities and a mild hearing impairment, has a transition goal of full-time employment upon graduation this year. Marcia has a one-year-old child. Marcia's transition planning team includes her and her family, the vocational educator, special educator, vocational rehabilitation counselor, mental retardation case worker, hearing specialist, social worker, and occupational therapist. Starting at age 17, Marcia had begun exploring job opportunities through job shadowing and internship experiences. Both Marcia and her parents reported that she likes working with people, that she likes working inside, and that she would prefer an office setting. Marcia's vocational education teacher observed her in a simulated work experience and reported that Marcia followed instructions when given visual cues from a co-worker. The vocational educator and vocational rehabilitation counselor identified a small business that needed office assistance. Marcia, working with the vocational rehabilitation counselor and her special education teacher, set up a job interview at the small business and was successful at obtaining a part-time job as an administrative aide. The counselor/special educator team observed the work setting and identified the work and social demands of the job. The IEP transition team identified that Marcia would need the following supports to work: visual cues outlining the steps of the job; co-worker to assure safety (for example, in an emergency); monitoring for errors; a flashing light on the telephone; transportation training; and child care for her son. The special educator and rehabilitation counselor provided training to the employer and other employees who, in turn, agreed to provide the natural supports Marcia needed and develop the visual clues for the steps of the job.

The occupational therapist and the family developed a plan for Marcia to learn how to travel using the city buses. The social worker identified a good low-cost child care

setting, and the Department of Social Services agreed to cost-share these services with Marcia (who receives SSI) until one year after graduation. The social worker also agreed to coordinate Marcia's participation in a parenting class offered by the Health Department. The IEP Team recommended a consultation with a representative from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide guidance on benefits and the use of any work incentives.

The local school agreed to provide a job coach initially, and the Department of Mental Retardation Services agreed to pick up this cost six months prior to graduation. The rehabilitation counselor, who specializes in working with students with hearing impairments, agreed to act as job monitor for this placement and to follow up with Adult Education or the Literacy Council for Marcia's continued education options. The rehabilitation counselor continued to work with Marcia, and by the time she exited school Marcia had secured a full-time position at the business.

### (A) Planning for Employment

#### What Does This Students Need?

ASSESSMENT that identifies current strengths, needs, interests, and preferences for post-school employment, independent living, and postsecondary training and/or education.

DEVELOPMENT of job and job placement options and awareness of skills needed.

MATCHING of student and job.

School- and Work-based TRAINING & PREPARATION

PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG

Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend For Assessment:

- \* interview youth regarding vocational interests and preferences (use other methods to assess interests and preferences of nonverbal students)
- \* conduct situational assessment (observation in a work setting) to assess endurance, strength, aptitude, social skills, interests, interactions
- \* conduct formal vocational evaluation by a trained evaluator
- \* self-assessment
- \* develop student's awareness of different jobs
- \* discuss health care issues that may impact employment

For Development

- \* analyze local labor market (contact employment services for state and request information for the region; contact local vocational advisory council; contact local chamber of commerce; review local want ads; contact employment agencies) to

identify job openings and local labor needs

- \* get a range of work experiences: explorations, job shadowing, mentoring, and internships
- \* identify community programs offering job placement or training
- \* build network of employer and community program contacts
- \* provide training to employers on issues related to employees with disabilities

#### For Matching

- \* analyze the demands and expectations of the job site (e.g., duties, skill requirements, hours, location, transportation, wages, benefits, social skills)
- \* list the supports the student needs to be successful on the job
- \* match the student's assessment and the list of needed supports to the job demands, including transportation to the job
- \* identify current gaps and needs for success
- \* identify needed natural supports, job accommodations, adaptive equipment, and support services

#### For Training and Preparation

- \* provide instruction to youth on job-seeking skills
- \* provide community-based work experiences related to career development
- \* identify potential service providers
- \* provide natural supports and accommodations
- \* provide instruction and training (pre-employment or on-the-job)

#### For Placement and Follow-along

- \* work with employer to determine employee's response to the job demands and identify strategies to capitalize on strengths and minimize limitations
- \* provide natural supports and accommodations
- \* monitor progress and readiness for job advancement
- \* monitor changing need for natural supports
- \* make adjustments, as needed

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### (B) Carlos's Plan for College

Carlos, a 16-year-old junior in high school with a significant learning disability, plans to attend college upon graduation. Carlos loves working with computers and demonstrates skill and interest in using computers for graphic design. (Carlos's team includes him and his family, guidance counselor, independent living center representative, postsecondary education support services provider, and a student with a learning disability who had graduated two years ago and is currently attending college.) Since Carlos is interested in pursuing a career involving computers, but is still undecided about what he would like to major in, the guidance counselor provided a list of colleges that offer a variety of computer-related degrees, including graphic design, programming, and management information systems. Carlos agreed to attend the local College Fair, and his family agreed to take him to visit campuses and observe and inquire regarding the support Carlos may need. The team agreed that, in order to be successful in college, Carlos would need a college that offered small class size, student mentoring services, and note-taking services.

The team agreed that Carlos had depended on others to advocate for him. They recommended that Carlos improve his self-advocacy skills. The representative from the Center for Independent Living invited Carlos to participate in their next self-advocacy program as a means of meeting this transition service need, and the school division agreed to pay for the costs of this service. The postsecondary service provider told Carlos, his family, and the other professionals that a local college was offering an orientation for new students which would give Carlos a flavor for the demands of the college setting. Funding for this was possibly available from the local advocacy group representing individuals with learning disabilities. The special educator reported that the advocacy group was looking for individuals to apply to their program. The guidance counselor set up an appointment with the family, to discuss options for college financial assistance.

## (B) Planning for Education After High School

### What Does This Student Need?

ASSESSMENT that identifies strengths, needs, interests, preferences for postsecondary education.

DEVELOPMENT of postsecondary education options.

MATCHING of student and postsecondary education setting.

PREPARATION for postsecondary education.

PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG.

### Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend For Assessment:

- \* assess student's self-advocacy skills, academic preparation, and college bound test scores
- \* assess student's technical skills, social skills, independent living skills
- \* interview youth regarding educational setting interests and preferences—size, setting, programs (use other methods to assess interests and preferences if student is nonverbal)
- \* identify youth's long-term career goals
- \* develop a list of supports student needs to achieve postsecondary education goals
- \* discuss health care issues that may impact student in postsecondary setting
- \* identify needed natural supports, academic or physical accommodations, and support services

### For Development:

- \* visit campuses
- \* participate in college night
- \* have college students with disabilities talk to youth
- \* research colleges and universities that offer special services to students with disabilities
- \* discuss financial issues
- \* discuss preferred location of college

### For Matching:

- \* analyze the demands and expectations of the postsecondary education setting—accessibility, support services availability, academic rigor, social culture, independent living setting
- \* match the student's assessment and list of needed supports to the demands of the postsecondary education setting

For Preparation:

- \* provide developmental academic support and coursework needed to prepare for postsecondary education goals
- \* assist youth with applications, interviews, and test preparation
- \* identify potential service providers
- \* develop natural supports
- \* provide self-advocacy training

For Placement and Follow-along:

- \* monitor progress in the postsecondary setting
- \* monitor changing need for natural supports
- \* monitor changing need for services
- \* advocate for changes and adjustments, as needed

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(C) Mark's Independence

Mark, a 20-year-old youth with mental retardation, will be finishing high school next year. Mark has long expressed a strong desire to live independently after leaving high school. His older brother has his own apartment, and Mark associates living on his own with being an adult. Living independently is part of Mark's transition plan, which also includes employment and attending a community recreation program for adults with disabilities. Two years ago Mark's family, working on the advice of the other IEP Team members, put him on a waiting list to be matched with other individuals who are looking for housing. Over the past three years, the IEP Team has worked on improving Mark's advocacy and independent living skills. Mark's family contacted the local Arc and was able to connect with a mentor to help Mark strengthen his self-advocacy skills. The occupational therapist at school focused on improving the critical living skills Mark needed to live on his own. At the beginning of this school year, Mark's family contacted the county agency that serves adults with disabilities. The agency assigned a service coordinator (sometimes called a case manager) to work with Mark and his IEP Team. The service coordinator, along with the IEP Team, determined the level and types of support Mark needed, and arranged for the necessary supports he needed to keep a job and live with others. The IEP Team, including Mark's family and the service coordinator, determined that Mark could live with individuals with other disabilities in a house or apartment on a cost-share basis as long as he received daily assistance. A residential support person would visit Mark every day to monitor that his needs were being met, to help with finances and nutrition, and to set up recreational activities. Mark also would need training on how to use city transit system, so he could travel independently from home to job and the community recreation center. His IEP Team established an IEP goal

for Mark to learn how to use public transportation. The Department of Rehabilitative Services counselor reported that rehabilitation services could assist Mark in purchasing the assistive devices he will need on the job. The service coordinator agreed to monitor Mark's integration into the community over the year following graduation.

### (C) Planning for Living Independently

#### What Does This Student Need?

ASSESSMENT that identifies strengths, needs, interests, preferences for adult and independent living, including recreation and leisure.

DEVELOPMENT of adult living placement options, including recreation and leisure (not needed immediately, but for planning purposes).

MATCH youth to adult living placement options, including recreation and leisure.

TRAINING and PREPARATION for adult living.

PLACEMENT and FOLLOW-ALONG.

Actions the High School Transition Team May Recommend

#### For Assessment:

- \* interview youth and family regarding adult and independent living interests and preferences (use other methods to assess interests and preferences if student is nonverbal)
- \* observe youth in independent living or recreational setting
- \* interview youth and family regarding medical needs
- \* interview youth and family regarding financial plans
- \* identify transportation skills and needs
- \* develop a list of supports student needs to be successful
- \* identify needed natural supports, accommodations, and support services

#### For Development:

- \* analyze adult living options in the local area (for example, group homes, supported living homes, roommates)
- \* analyze locality for leisure/recreation options in the local area
- \* coordinate with other families and youth looking for adult living options
- \* provide training and education for families and youth regarding living and financial options for transition-aged youth
- \* analyze community for transportation options

#### For Matching:

- \* analyze the demands and expectations of the adult living and community participation options
- \* match the student's assessment and list of supports to the demands and expectations of these options

#### For Training and Preparation:

- \* provide instruction to prepare youth to enter identified adult living and community options
- \* identify potential service providers for needed supports and accommodations
- \* develop natural supports
- \* provide opportunities to participate in the community in the identified settings

For Placement and Follow-along:

- \* monitor progress
- \* monitor changing need for natural supports
- \* monitor changing need for services
- \* make adjustments, as needed

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## HOW TO FIND RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Creating a dynamic transition plan like the three described above is not easy. Keep in mind that in many places needed services have long waiting lists or are simply unavailable. Unlike school services, adult services are not mandated by federal law. Transition team members must keep digging, networking broadly, and thinking creatively in order to help each young adult live as productively, independently, and happily as possible. Knowing a wide range of possible contributors will be the key to creating a collaborative transition plan with supports tailored to an individual's needs.

Your school district should have much information on transition services that are typically used, such as transportation services and housing. Team members should talk with special education teachers and administrators, as well as parents who have already gone through the transition process with their son or daughter. Team members can then focus their efforts on personalizing and supplementing with other nontraditional services and resources to meet the student's transition goals. It is important that transition teams look beyond familiar agencies and services when exploring supports for individuals with disabilities. But the team must also be selective and choose supports that reflect the individual student's needs.

Sometimes, finding transition services or options resembles detective work. Transition team members, especially the parents, students, and special educators, may need to make phone calls to agencies and organizations and take notes. The white, blue, and yellow pages of the local phone book are a good tool for discovering transition resources. Let Your Fingers Do the Walking in Transition Planning, below, provides some helpful hints on how to find possible service providers or programs.

Modern technology can enhance planning. For example, local libraries have information on local government, and many now have computers with Internet access. Increasingly, agencies and organizations use Web sites and e-mail to find and share information. Some of the terms listed below may also be useful in key word searches on the World Wide Web.

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## LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING IN TRANSITION PLANNING

### White Pages:

The Table of Contents may include references such as "Community Service Numbers" or "Disabilities, Services for Individuals with."

Some of the headings you will find that might relate to the varying service needs of youth with disabilities include:

Adult Protection  
Disabilities Services  
Education  
Employment  
Financial Aid  
Handicapped/Disabled  
Housing  
Human Rights  
Human Services  
Mental Health & Mental Retardation  
Recreational/Social Development  
Rehabilitation  
Social Security Administration  
Social Services  
Transportation  
Volunteer Opportunities

### Blue Pages:

Local, state, and federal government listings can always be found in the Blue Pages of the phone book.

Local Listings might have some of the following headings:

Employment Opportunities & Information  
Housing  
Human Resource Management  
Mayor's Office on Disability  
Social Services

State Listings might have some of the following headings:

Children  
Clinics  
Education  
Health Services  
Housing  
Labor  
Libraries  
Museums & Theaters  
Social Services

Local, State and Federal Government Listings will include numbers for all state and government agencies. Examples of these would be:

Employment Commission

Medicaid  
Mental Health  
Mental Retardation  
Rehabilitation Services  
Social Services  
Transitional Living Center  
Transportation Department  
Vocational Evaluation Center

Yellow Pages:

Check out the Index of commonly used terms. Using key words, here are a few examples of what you might find:

Disability: Access Unlimited; Adult Care Services; Assisted Living; Charter's Mobility Center; Paradapt Services

Associations: Arc; Boy Scouts; Families for Children with Mental Health Concerns; Information & Referral-United Way; Learning Disabilities Council; Neighborhood Housing Services

Mental Health: Alliance for the Mentally Ill

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Part of transition planning involves collecting information from the community to use for both immediate needs and anticipated needs. However, sometimes making a "cold" phone call to get information can be intimidating. See the Transition Services Phone Interview Guide below for some ideas on how to gather information. Some state disability rights agencies provide information and referral services. National information services, such as the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) and the National Transition Alliance, offer Web sites to provide users with easy access to information (see "Organizations," at the end of this publication). Every state has a parent training and information center, known as the PTI, where people can call to get information on agencies and services within their state. PTIs also offer training in transition planning, as do other major disability groups such as the Arc, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), Centers for Independent Living, and others.

**TRANSITION SERVICES PHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

When you are starting your cold calling and search for service providers, start with agencies that can refer you to other organizations, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or an Independent Living Center.

Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person You Spoke with \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample phone script:**

"Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a (teacher, parent, family member, administrator, coordinator) of a youth (young adult) who is" [OR if you are the student, then "I am" \_\_\_\_\_ (exploring career options, exploring where to live after graduation, interested in a recreational program, or whatever fits your ultimate goals). I am looking for information to help in planning for my (own, son's, daughter's, family member's, student's) future. I found your organization through \_\_\_\_\_ (another agency, the yellow pages, a publication) and I am interested in learning more about what services you provide (or what your organization does). Could you tell me who in your organization I should talk to about this? Thank you.

Please tell me about your agency/organization. Who do you serve? What services do you offer?

How does one get involved with your agency/organization? Are there special eligibility or admission requirements? How does one apply?

Are there costs involved in participating in your agency's or organization's programs? If so, how much are they? Do you offer special rates?

Do you have any ideas about how your agency or organization might help meet a need such as: [Describe a "specific problem or need" that you might have, for example: youth has a visual disability and needs assistance changing buses; youth has physical disability and is interested in playing a sport; teen parent with a learning disability needs child care so that she can go to work after school; and so forth.]

Could you refer me to some other people, agencies, or organizations that might offer some services to meet this need?

Do you have any written materials describing your agency (or organization)? If so, could you please send them to me \_\_\_\_\_ [your name] at \_\_\_\_\_ [your address]. Thank you for speaking with me today. This information is very helpful in planning my (own, student's, son's, daughter's) future as a member of our community. Best wishes for fulfilling your agency's (or organization's) mission.

## COMMUNITY LEVEL TRANSITION TEAMS

While many people are involved in helping improve transition services for students at an individual level, there is a movement to improve the transition system at the community level. Many states have created community groups that help with planning at the local level. They may be called by different names, such as "community transition team," "interagency community council," or "local transition advisory group." No matter what they're called, these teams usually include representatives from disability-related agencies and the community who come together with the mission of improving the transition of young adults with disabilities from school to adult life. The idea behind developing these

community transition teams has been that they are operated locally and therefore are able to:

- \* share resources and funding,
- \* hold information fairs,
- \* try out new ways of serving youths and young adults, and
- \* help change or influence policies and procedures.

Transition teams can be a strong force within the community. Their primary purpose is to assess how a community's transition services system works and to develop policies and procedures to make this system work better. They can identify the best ways to meet the needs of youth with disabilities leaving the local schools within their community. They can promote actions through school boards and other governmental entities in areas such as policy and funding.

To find out if your community has a transition team and how you can get involved, contact your:

- \* Local school or school district's department of special education: Ask to talk to the person in charge of the transition of students with disabilities in the district.
- \* Parent Training and Information Center (PTI): If you don't know how to get in touch with your state's PTI, call NICHCY for the number.
- \* State Transition Systems-Change Project: Call the National Transition Alliance or National Transition Network (see "Organizations," at the end of this publication).

If a community-level transition team does not already exist in your area, you can take steps to create one. When participating agencies and the community at large support community transition teams, they have the potential to create a well-connected, culturally diverse, and very responsive transition services system. Here are some steps you can take to get a community transition team started:

- \* Find out what your community is already doing. Assess the range of transition services going on in your school and community by talking with school professionals, parents, and community and parent groups.
- \* Identify areas that need improvement. Decide what transition services are lacking and which of these service gaps you want to address.
- \* Make a plan. Talk with school professionals, parents, community and parent groups, and others about ways to address these service gaps (e.g., starting a career development center at school, holding information meetings, doing research on other communities' transition systems).
- \* Measure your success. Agree on what you will use to determine if your efforts are successful (e.g., every student will be involved in at least three job shadowing experiences, the school district will hold two transition information fairs each year).

See the Publications section at the end of this publication for more resources on starting teams.

### CONCLUSION: TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

To improve transition results for young people with disabilities, individual transition team members and community transition team members must work creatively. Many services exist in every community. If transition team members cultivate relationships

with these resources and combine successful teamwork methods with the services available in their community, they will be able to create dynamic individual plans. Here are some starting steps.

#### Students:

- \* Write down your long-term goals and what you think you need to do to reach these.
- \* Read your IEP and transition plan and decide if the plan is being implemented.
- \* Tell your teachers you want to lead your own IEP meeting and ask them to help you learn what to do.
- \* Learn about your civil rights under the law, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- \* Learn about your disability, how to explain to people your strengths, and how to ask for reasonable accommodations.
- \* Practice job interviews and/or asking for accommodations.
- \* Talk with your doctor and parents about your health care needs so you will be ready to take responsibility for them.
- \* Ask your teacher how to get involved with your community's transition team.

#### Family Members:

- \* Observe your son or daughter's independent living skills, work behaviors, social involvement, dreams, and hopes.
- \* Call your child's teachers and ask that transition services, including financial planning, be addressed at your next meeting.
- \* Help your child learn about his or her disability and how to ask for the supports he or she needs.
- \* Give your child responsibility for chores at home.
- \* Role play different situations with your child (e.g., interviews).
- \* Discuss your child's medical needs with him or her and facilitate discussions with your doctor.
- \* Introduce your child to adult role models with disabilities.
- \* Look in your phone book and Yellow Pages and identify three new possible resources to help your son or daughter's transition to adult activities.

#### School or Agency Administrators:

- \* Evaluate transition services in your system.
- \* Look into establishing or strengthening your community transition team.
- \* Make a phone call to develop a new community agency contact.
- \* Find some funding to share across agencies or for service development.
- \* Set up a meeting with staff members to learn each person's expertise in transition.
- \* Develop a cooperative agreement with another agency specifying how to coordinate transition.
- \* Encourage your staff to be creative in problem solving.

#### Special Educators:

- \* Talk to students and families about transition services.
- \* Ask to attend a conference, workshop, or other learning opportunity related to transition.
- \* Teach students about their civil rights under the law, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- \* Pledge to conduct collaborative, needs-based IEP meetings that empower youth and families.

- \* Provide youth with step-by-step activities that familiarize them with the IEP process and prepare them to take active roles.
- \* Call the local rehabilitation counselor or mental retardation case manager and coordinate a meeting.
- \* Use the Transition Services Phone Interview Guide in this publication (page 16) and call one community agency or resource.

#### Vocational Educators/Educators:

- \* Contact a special educator and find out when IEPs are scheduled for your current or future students.
- \* Offer to provide a tour of your program and share your knowledge and expertise in job competencies, job development, and job placement.
- \* Identify one student receiving special education services and work with him or her to provide vocational counseling to help define realistic career goals.
- \* Develop a plan to coordinate your work-study program with all the special education community-based work programs.

#### Guidance Counselors:

- \* Create a workshop for students on self-advocacy skills that would promote success in postsecondary education or employment settings.
- \* Ask to attend a workshop, inservice, or other training to learn about community agencies and resources.
- \* Ask a college representative about services for students with disabilities.

#### Community Agency Service Providers:

- \* Attend a workshop, inservice, or other training to learn about community agencies and resources.
- \* Develop a folder that contains some of the wealth of information you have about community resources and how to access them, and share with IEP Team members, transition councils, families, students, and administrators.
- \* Identify three things that could help you actively participate in the IEP process when appropriate, and share these with the high school administrator or special educator/transition specialist.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors:

- \* Schedule regular office hours at schools that you work with.
- \* Support activities and use of assistive technology for students in high school that result in employment.
- \* Serve on a local transition committee.
- \* Share your knowledge of the job market and job assessments.

#### Any of the Above:

- \* Identify two ways you can add to the collaborative transition planning process; share this with administrators, special educators/transition specialists, or other service providers.
- \* Offer to take the lead to develop a community transition resource directory for your community.
- \* Most of all, take any one proactive step in your community towards collaborative transition planning and observe the results.

You can work to improve the system of transition services both at the individual level and in your community. It's worth it!

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## ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), 2175 East Francisco Blvd., Suite L, San Rafael, CA 94939. Telephone: (415) 455-4575. E-mail: [atainfo@ataccess.org](mailto:atainfo@ataccess.org). URL: <http://www.ataccess.org>

Americans with Disabilities Act Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs). Telephone: 1-800-949-4232. (The DBTACs provide information, referral, TA, and training on the ADA.)

The ARC National Employment & Training Program, 500 East Border, Suite 300, Arlington, TX 76010. Telephone: 1-800-433-5255; (817) 277-0553 (TTY). URL: <http://www.thearc.org/>

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221-0192. Telephone: (614) 488-4972 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: [ahead@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:ahead@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu) URL: <http://www.ahead.org>

Easter Seals National Headquarters, 230 W. Monroe, Suite 1800, Chicago, IL 60606. Telephone: (312) 726-6200; 1-800-221-6827. E-mail: [webmaster@seals.com](mailto:webmaster@seals.com) URL: [www.easter-seals.org](http://www.easter-seals.org)

Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Career Development and Transition, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589. Telephone: (703) 620-3660; (703) 264-9446 (TTY). URL: <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

HEATH Resource Center (National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities), One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193. Telephone: 1-800-544-3284; (202) 939-9320. E-mail: [heath@ace.nche.edu](mailto:heath@ace.nche.edu) URL: <http://www.acenet.edu/programs/HEATH/home.html>

Job Accommodation Network (JAN), 918 Chestnut Ridge Road, Suite 1, P.O. Box 6080, Morgantown, WV 26506-6080. Telephone: 1-800-526-7234; (304) 293-7186 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: [jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu](mailto:jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu) URL: <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu>

Mobility International USA (MIUSA), P.O. Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440. Telephone: (541) 343-1284 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: [info@miusa.org](mailto:info@miusa.org)

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), 1916 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 209, Arlington, VA 22201. Telephone: (703) 525-3406; (703) 525-4153 (TTY). E-mail: [neil@tsbbs08.tnet.com](mailto:neil@tsbbs08.tnet.com)

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: 1-800-695-0285; (202) 884-8200 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: [nichcy@aed.org](mailto:nichcy@aed.org). URL: <http://www.nichcy.org>

National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC), 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319. Telephone: 1-800-346-2742, (301) 588-9284; (301) 495-5626 (TTY). E-mail: naric@capaccess.org. URL: <http://www.cais.com/naric>

National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, Transition Research Institute, University of Illinois, 113 Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820. Telephone: (217) 333-2325. E-mail: nta@aed.org. URL: <http://www.dssc.org/nta>

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 1331 F Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004. Telephone: (202) 376-6200; (202) 376-6205 (TTY). E-mail: info@pcepd.gov. URL: <http://www.pcepd.gov>

Project ACTION, 700 Thirteenth Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 1-800-659-6428; (202) 347-3066. E-mail: project\_action@nessdc.org. URL: <http://www.projectaction.org>

Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas, 4089 Dole Building, Lawrence, KS 66045-2930. Telephone: (913) 864-4095 (Voice/TTY). E-mail: rtcil@kuhub.cc.ukans.edu. URL: <http://www.lsi.ukans.edu/rtcil/rtcil.htm>

School-to-Work Learning and Information Center, 400 Virginia Avenue SW, Suite 150, Washington, DC 20024. Telephone: 1-800-251-7236. E-mail: stw-lc@ed.gov. URL: <http://www.stw.ed.gov/index.htm>

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers, PACER Center, 4826 Chicago Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55417-1098. Telephone: 1-888-248-0822, (612) 827-2966; (612) 827-7770 (TTY). E-mail: alliance@taalliance.org. URL: <http://www.taalliance.org/>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1801 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20507. Telephone: 1-800-669-4000; (202) 663-4900 (TTY). URL: <http://www.eeoc.gov>

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