



# Fact Sheet

## **Creating Community for Adult Life: Planning an Effective and Exciting Transition**

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### **What is transition, anyway?**

We all experience many transitions throughout our lives. This article explores the process of transition for young adults with disabilities and special needs, from school to adult life. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

- 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, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and
- includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

*[For more information about IDEA, go to <http://idea.ed.gov> and search on the word “transition” in the Part B section. ]*

Looking into the future can be difficult and requires self-reflection, self-assessment, focus, creativity, and flexibility. Trying to visualize a perfect future for your child may seem like looking for “the land of Oz”. Perhaps your vision is a little blurry, perhaps Oz looks differently than you expected. Maybe it really looks more like Kansas. Even though it may be a little scary, it is essential to project into the future to create an effective transition plan for your son or daughter as he or she prepares to leave school and enter the world of adult life and adult services.

## **Planning for the future**

There are a variety of person-centered tools available to assist families in the futures planning process (i.e., to identify desired outcomes and develop strategies that ensure success). Here is one tool just to get you started:

*It's Never Too Early; It's Never Too Late!* [www.mncdd.org/extra/publications.htm](http://www.mncdd.org/extra/publications.htm)

It is never too early to begin compiling documentation that captures your child's skills and abilities, likes and dislikes, communication and other support needs, and possible support providers. Video resumes can be effective tools for documentation. (See Resources for planning at the end of this article.)

## **Strategies for planning an effective transition from school to adult life**

**KNOW** the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. It is the federal law that mandates appropriate transition services and it drives local programs.

**RESEARCH** local programs and get to know your community options. Service delivery models vary greatly from state to state and from community to community within states.

**KNOW** definitions and terms used by local service agencies. Definitions are not necessarily consistent nationally, regionally, or locally. Clear communication is essential!

## **Know the members of your child's team and use them**

Every child receiving special education services has an educational team that consists of the student, family members, special education teacher, general education teacher, administrator, and other specialists. The transition planning team may include the educational team, but it also includes other people who know and love the child/focus-person.

The planning team may include:

- Focus person
- Family members
- Friends
- Educational team with related services staff (therapists)
- Adult service provider agency representatives
- Welcoming agency representatives

Through the planning process the team will identify individual support needs of the focus-person and possible support providers:

- Interpreter
- Intervener
- Communication specialist
- Vision & hearing specialists
- Personal attendant
- Job coach/developer
- Behavior specialist
- Medical specialist

- Orientation & mobility specialist

Through the planning process the team will also identify possible adult service agencies/providers:

- Habilitation/rehabilitation
- Local day programs
- The ARC
- Regional Center (CA)
- Transportation services
- Services for the blind
- Services for the deaf
- Helen Keller National Center
- Mental health services

### **How the futures plan relates to the student's Individual Education Plan and Individual Transition Plan**

The futures plan identifies:

- Hopes and dreams of the focus-person
- Likes and dislikes
- Strengths upon which to build
- Weaknesses to be strengthened
- Personal and community links
- Healthcare, communication, and behavioral support needs

The preferences identified by the futures planning process are the basis for the goals and objectives on the Individual Education Plan/Individual Transition Plan.

Comprehensive transition plans consider all possible community services and options and customize an array of appropriate services to meet the needs of the focusperson. Community services and options to be considered include but are not limited to:

#### **Educational options**

- College/university
- Community college
- Regional occupation programs
- Other training options

#### **Living options**

- Home with family
- On own with or without roommates
- Supported living with or without roommates
- Group home

#### **Vocational options**

- Paid employment
- Volunteer work
- Supported work

#### **Recreation/leisure options**

- Swimming
- Outdoor recreation
- Dancing
- Drumming
- Music
- Yoga & exercise classes
- Sports

### **Getting from the plan to the reality**

**Learn how to make lemons into lemonade.** There are many obstacles and barriers on the path to adult life. Try to see each one as an opportunity.

**Listen.** Every team member has valuable ideas and input. Listen carefully.

**Identify local resources.** Resources and services are unique to each community. Knowing your local resources is critical to successful community living.

**Get on waiting lists, if necessary.** Do not wait until your child leaves school to apply for enrollment in adult programs and services. There are often long waiting lists for quality services and programs.

**Identify funding sources (SSI/SSA).** Funding streams and mechanisms are different from state to state. Identify appropriate funding for your child's needs. Apply early for the funds. Stay in contact with funding agency representatives.

### **Making it happen**

Building a future takes teamwork, commitment, and community. Futures planning weaves together components from many community agencies, services, and systems. No one can do it alone. So if you start to feel overwhelmed or confused, ask for help. Remember, even though your child is reaching adulthood, it still takes a village!

### **Resources for planning**

Texas School for the Blind, *Transition from School to Adult Life in the Community*, a two-part planning sheet: <http://tsbvi.edu/>

*It's Never Too Early It's Never Too Late!* <http://mn.gov/mnddc/>

*A Good Life.* <http://plan.ca/>(search for the book A Good Life)

*Transition to Adult Living and Information and Resource Guide.* <http://calstat.org/>

*D-B LINK.* <https://nationaldb.org/>(search on transition)

### **For more information about the CO Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project:**

Colorado Department of Education

Phone Number: 303-866-6694 – Ask to speak with a Deaf-Blind Specialist on staff with ESSU

Fax: 303-866-6767

Exceptional Student Services Unit

1560 Broadway, Suite 1175

Denver, CO 80202

Web Page Address:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>

*Fact Sheets from the Colorado Services to Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with vision and hearing loss. The information applies to children, birth through 21 years of age. The purpose of the Fact Sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. The contents of this Fact Sheet were developed under a grant from the United States Department of Education (US DOE), #H326C080044. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US DOE and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through personalized technical assistance available from the project. Reviewed: 2/17*