

AEA 10
Transition Topics and Agency
Profiles for
Jones County

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Getting Started in Transition

What Is Transition?

WHAT?

Transition is about preparing for and moving from high school to adult life. This move brings about many changes to the lives of the young person and the family. Planning is essential to make the transition easier.

FOR WHOM?

All children in special education.

WHY?

Transition is an issue in planning because differences in school and adult services are huge. Some of the differences between schools and adult services are:

SCHOOL

- Addresses the total child
- Brings issues and concerns to your attention
- Serves all students
- Free

ADULT SERVICES

- Separate agencies address employment, recreation, living and education services
- You must initiate communication and follow-up
- Serve people with specific disabilities; some have waiting lists
- Funding is not guaranteed

WHEN?

Transition planning is required to begin by age 14 at the child's IEP meeting. Transition will occur when the student begins accessing adult community services and/or graduates from the public school program.

HOW?

Transition is about preparing students to:

- Make choices
- Plan for their future
- Set goals
- Develop their career skills
- Perform needed daily living skills
- Participate in their community

WHERE?

Transitions take place at school, at home and in the community. Information about transitions and transition planning is available from:

Your child's teacher; consultant, transition consultant, and PEP educator from Grant Wood AEA (319) 399-6700; and from community agencies.

What Does Adulthood Look Like for People with Disabilities?

WHAT?

People judge success in adulthood in different ways. Researchers measure quality of life through these indicators: income level; employment; community participation; and access to buildings and transportation.

FOR WHOM?

Families, educators and community service providers can benefit from this information.

WHY?

Understanding the typical quality of life for adults with disabilities helps us realize the importance of beginning planning and transition services in junior senior high school years.

WHEN?

At any age, but especially when planning with students ages 14 and older.

HOW?

National surveys show that real improvements in the lives of people with disabilities have been slow to materialize. The 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has resulted in much greater awareness of disability and of the barriers. However, it has not shown a marked increase in the quality of the lives of people with disabilities. There are still huge gaps in their success indicators as reported in the 1998 US Census Bureau.

Incomes Are Low

- Jobs are often part-time. Wages are lower than non-disabled.
- Even full-time earnings tend to be lower than non-disabled co-workers are.
- 30% of adults with disabilities live in poverty.

Less Social Participation

- People with disabilities live in relative social isolation. They are twice as likely to live alone.
- Lack of a full social life is a problem for many.

Unemployment

- 38.8% of 25-34 year olds with a disability are employed.
- 61.2% of 25-34 year olds with a disability are unemployed.
- 87.6% of nondisabled persons are employed
- This picture is even more dismal for those with a severe disability. Only 18.3% of those 25-34 year olds are in the labor force.

Physical Barriers

- Despite strong gains from ADA in building access and public transportation, barriers still exist.

WHERE?

Studies referenced are from The Disability Statistics Abstract, May 1998/Number 21, and May 2003, Number 17, Disability Statistics Center. Institute for Health and Aging, School of Nursing, U of California, Box 0646 Laurel Heights, and 3333 California St., San Francisco, CA 94143-0646 www.dsc.ucsf.edu

The Emotional Impact of the Transition Planning Process

WHAT?

Families are often unprepared for the emotional impact that comes with transition planning. After all, this should be a time of anticipation and excitement. However, that may seem clouded with concerns, fears, anxiety and increased stress levels.

FOR WHOM?

Families of children with disabilities.

WHY?

Research has shown that professionals most often overestimate the impact of disability at the time of diagnosis and underestimate its impact at the time of transitioning from school to adult life. Transition times can be difficult, especially the transition of sons and daughters from school to adult living. Transitions put parents in touch with “what might have been” had the child not had a disability. Emotions return that haven’t been this strong since the time of diagnosis. While this emotional reaction is part of the life long adjustment related to coping with disability, it can catch parents by surprise.

WHEN?

Transition planning may begin at any age. It is required for children in special education by age 14. Every transition, especially developmental milestones and moving from one program to another, can generate emotional reactions.

HOW?

FOR THE FAMILY WITH SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN:

While there are the stresses of:

- Making decisions about inclusion and special programming
- Participating in IEP conferences
- Dealing with the reactions of peers and generating friendships
- Arranging for extracurricular activities
- Adjusting emotionally to on-going implications of the disability

There are also the positives of

- Getting accustomed to implications of the disability in the educational arena
- Settling into the routine of how school systems work
- Watching sons and daughters fit in and get involved
- Recognizing strengths and seeing success
- Understanding and getting comfortable with the IEP process

FOR THE FAMILY WITH YOUNG ADULTS:

There are the stresses of:

- Adjusting emotionally to the adult implications of the disability
- Dealing with issues of sexuality
- Planning for residential, transportation, financial and post secondary training needs
- Dealing with an array of fragmented services versus one educational system
- Having to work with a whole set of “new” providers
- Facing fears of the unknown - finances, relationships, independent living...
- Balancing the need for independence with the need for on-going support

- Recognizing needs for continuing family responsibility
- Establishing new interests and self-identity for parents
- Knowing retirement options won't be the same as those for parental peers

Given all that can cause stress as children with disabilities become young adults, it isn't surprising that the emotional impact on families at the time of transitioning to adulthood is major.

It is important for families to know this is all part of a normal healthy process. Understanding the reality of their emotions will help families recognize why they may be feeling overwhelmed, anxious, burned out, isolated, resistant to getting involved, or not anxious to take important and necessary actions. Acknowledging fears and anxieties can be first steps to addressing them and moving on to celebrating the success and achievement that are also a part of transitioning to adult life.

TIPS FOR ADDRESSING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT:

- Acknowledge the feelings and their source
- Remember that the emotions are part of a normal healthy process
- Focus on your son or daughter's progress and accomplishments
- Enjoy his/her excitement and readiness to move on
- Regard and treat your daughter or son as a young adult who happens to have a disability
- Be aware of existing supports from family, educators and the community
- Identify additional supports and services needed for your family and young adult
- Communicate with other families who have "survived" the transition to adulthood
- Develop relationships with adult service providers who will assist your son/daughter
- Take risks and practice letting go, a little at a time. You may discover your young adult is better prepared than you had thought

WHERE?

PEP has parents and educators on staff who are familiar with the transition process and are willing to visit with you about your individual situation.

PEP networks with local disability specific groups where one might find others who "have been there" from whom to draw strength and information.

For more information, contact your child's teacher, transition coordinator, or the Parent Educator Partnership (PEP) program staff at 1-800-332-8488, (319) 399-6700.

Role Of The Student

WHAT?

Involving the young person in making decisions about his/her life is extremely important.

WHY?

If the student has a say in making plans for the future he/she is more likely to feel a strong commitment to making the plan work.

FOR WHOM?

Any student in special education.

WHEN?

Active participation by the student in their IEP is important at any age. At age 14 their participation in the IEP is required.

HOW?

All too often decisions are made for, rather than with, young people with disabilities. With this in mind some helpful suggestions might be:

1. Have the student take ownership of their IEP. They could help with the scheduling, facilitating and planning of the IEP meeting.
2. Help them become their own advocate. When possible have them learn about their strengths, needs and supports necessary for success.
3. Include the student in reviewing information and visiting adult service providers to assist with the decisions that affect his/her own future.
4. Support them in asking questions regarding their disability and how it may affect their future. They may want to consult others with the same disability for information about creative solutions to common problems.
5. Prepare students to participate in their IEP meeting by learning to make choices and state preferences.

WHERE?

Preparation for their role takes place both at home and at school.

