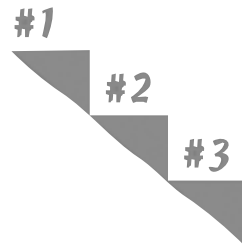


3. THE STEPS IN TRANSITION PLANNING

This section suggests a series of steps to follow in getting the planning process started. The steps include the following:

- Step 1: Create a Vision and Build the Profile;
- Step 2: Build the Team;
- Step 3: Set Goals;
- Step 4: Action Plan; and
- Step 5: Updating the Plan.

A number of steps are outlined below to help you get started on your planning. The steps are sequentially numbered but since it is your plan, you can carry them out in any order that makes the most sense to you. For example, you may want to build your transition team first and then have the team help develop the profiles.



The worksheets identified in each of the following steps have been adapted (with permission) from materials developed in British Columbia by the Ministry of Children and Family Development “*Your Future Now. A Transition Planning & Resource Guide for Youth with Special Needs and Their Families*”. They are intended to guide you through the development of your transition plan. Use the worksheets, reuse them, modify them – they are meant to provide you with examples of the type of information that may be helpful to you as you identify your specific path to the future.

If you do not find these exercises suit your needs, there are other examples of transition planning guides identified in Part 2 under Transition Resources. Take a look at these other on-line guides and find one that is a good fit for you and your child. The important thing is that you do get started, and not necessarily which tool is used.

When beginning the worksheets, encourage your child to be involved in completing the exercises to the best of their ability. Support them and have them seek assistance from you, their friends or other family members. The more involved your child is the more likely the plan will reflect their interests and preferences. Having helped in making these decisions will give them a sense of accomplishment and confidence as they take a step towards a life of more independence as an adult.

Step 1: Create a Vision and Build the Profile

Building the profile is about gathering information on your child, your family and your family situation. You will need to share this information with the transition planning team since not everyone will be as familiar with your circumstances as you are. This will help the team in making the right decisions throughout the transition planning process.

The first exercise is about creating a vision for your child. This is an exercise that you may revisit several times as your child grows and their preferences and interests change as they experience new and different things.

tip #5

Tool 5 in Part2: Tools & Resources provides a set of vision developing questions that can be used at age nine and repeated as your child goes through the adolescent years.

ONE PARENT'S ADVICE... ON A VISION

“Develop a vision for the future for your child. Make it your own vision and do not be limited by what others may say or what you think you may get. Draw support for your vision from every possible direction around you. Don't be afraid to call upon others for help and input. Secure the support you need for an ordinary life for your child. And remember to get a network for yourself as a parent - this is a difficult journey.”

You should consider developing a vision as early as possible. This vision, when broken down into yearly goals, becomes very helpful in developing the transition plan. Establishing a vision is a great opportunity to set expectations for your child – realistic expectations based on their strengths, interests and preferences.

The vision exercise is meant to find out what your child is interested in, where their strengths and abilities lie and what they want to do in the future. This exercise should clearly outline what your child can do, what they are good at doing and what they like doing. Taking this approach

can help make the experience more positive and will likely result in having your child perceived more positively as well.

FROM A PARENT

“When my daughter was a very young child we were focussed on her problems and looking for the right “fixes”. We tried to get her into a specialized school and she was not accepted. In retrospect, this was the best thing that ever happened since it started us down a path of inclusion.”

This early experience and others that followed really helped shape a change in this family’s philosophy. Instead of continuing to see problems and looking for fixes, they began to see gifts, what their daughter could bring to others and looked for ways to include her in all activities. This is not to say that your child’s challenges should be ignored – they should just not be the focus of the plan nor the basis of its development. Rather, they can be incorporated into expectations or identified as the needs to be supported throughout the transition period.

tip #6

More information on MAPS and PATH can be accessed at www.inclusion.com

The vision information can be accessed at www.pdd.org/docs/cent/PCP_811_Jan19.pdf. Further details on this and other tools available from the Central Alberta Community Board can be found in Part 2: Tools & Resources under Person-Directed Planning.

In establishing a vision for your child, there are other tools that can be helpful as well. Both the MAPS and PATH activities are useful to identify the unique preferences, experiences, skills and support needs of your child. The Central Alberta Community Board tools may also be helpful in identifying a vision and building a profile of your child.



Next, you will develop your child’s profile which builds on the information identified in the vision. The list below identifies the type of information you should be gathering about your child as you develop their profile.

Gathering Information about Your Child

- Identify people in your child's life, such as family members, friends, cultural associations, school personnel, social workers, current service providers and community members.
- Discuss where your child spends his or her time.
- Identify things that others see as strengths that contribute to his or her positive characteristics.
- Identify things that people see as areas where growth is needed.
- Discuss the kinds of choices your child makes.
- Identify preferences, including things that motivate your child and create happiness, and non-preferences, including things that do not work for them, that create frustration and unhappiness.
- Discuss personal goals and dreams.
- Identify the most vital priorities to work on now (2-12 months) and in the future (1-5 years).
- Discuss opportunities, including things or people that can help your child achieve his or her personal goals and dreams.
- Discuss obstacles or barriers, including things or people that are getting in the way of your child achieving his or her personal goals and dreams.
- Identify strategies to help your child overcome obstacles or barriers and achieve personal goals and dreams.

Now, you will need to identify information about your family. This information should include services that you currently use, what you anticipate needing when your child reaches the end of school and the ways you can help your child reach their goals for the future. The following questions are things to consider in developing a family vision and completing a family profile

Family Profile

- What supports and services do you and your child use now and will they continue when your child reaches the age of 18 or 21?
- What additional or different supports and services do you and your child anticipate needing in the future?
- Will your child continue to live at home and for how long? Will you require other living arrangements for your child?
- Do you have the means – financial and otherwise – to support your child in adulthood?
- What financial planning do you need to consider?

These are things you will need to include in your transition plan and are as important as making arrangements for your child.

tip #7

Your child, with appropriate assistance, can complete his or her profile by using the format provided in Tool 7a and 7b found in Part 2: Tools & Resources.

You can complete your family profile by using use the format provided in Tool 8 in Part 2: Tools & Resources.

Step 2: Build the Team

While you will be expected to be very involved in the development of your child's transition plan, you do not need to do it alone. Build a team for your transition plan by seeking the support of people who can help you to set your child's goals for the future and then help in making those goals a reality. Choose from people who are part of your network of supports or circle of friends – people you are comfortable with. It is suggested that your team have at least two members and no more than eight – any more may be overwhelming.

Some individuals you may want to consider in addition to yourself and your child can include the following:

- Other family members;
- Parents who have recently gone through a transition plan themselves;
- Teachers;
- Community workers;
- Friends;
- Peers;
- Employers; or
- Other members from the community.

Some members of the team may be involved with the planning process from the beginning. Others may be involved on a limited basis.

It may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions to identify the most appropriate members of your network or team:

- Who knows your child best?
- Who does your child trust and feel comfortable around?
- Who does your child look to for advice and support?
- Who would your child like to help him or her with their transition from school to adulthood?
- How can these people best help?

It will be important for you to involve people that know your child well and that may also have a vested interest in your child. You will want to include people that have a positive outlook and can see the gifts and strengths your child has to offer. Think about including those that will network and advocate on your child's behalf in much the same way as you

your transition plan. The education system and the service system may not be able to support you in the way that you expect. So it is important to involve people on your team who can help develop innovative ways to support your child as they make their way to adulthood.

Once you have established your team, you will need to think about who could take on the role of coordinator. This person can be anyone from your team that is interested in taking on more of an organizing role. They will be the main point of contact for the team, organizing and managing tasks that need to be done, making sure that progress is being made and the work of the team is moving forward.

tip # 8

Tool 2 in Part 2: Tools & Resources provides a suggested list of roles and responsibilities for members of the transition team.

You will likely be responsible for most of the work involved in the planning process so surround yourself with the right people. Use your network of supports most effectively and gain from the experience of others. Seek out parents that have been through this process before and involve them in your planning efforts. Find a mentor for your child – a peer that has recently made the transition to adulthood who can support your child as they go through the steps in developing their plan. Passport has a Mentoring Program for students with a developmental disability who are 14-21 years old. For more information on the availability of this program in your community, contact the Passport agency in your area as listed in Part 2: Tools and Resources, Section B, Financial Resources of this guide.

tip # 9

Tool 6 in Part 2: Tools & Resources section provides a template for keeping track of your team members contact information.

Step 3: Set Goals

Once the profiles are completed for your child and your family, you will need to consider developing goals. Goals are an important step in the process since they will help identify the kinds of experiences your child should pursue through their high school years and the skills they will develop as a result.

There are a few things to consider in developing goals with your child. Write them down so you can tell if your child has achieved the goal(s). Goals should also be positive and possible. It may also be helpful to separate them into short-term and longer-term timeframes. Examples for each are identified below:

Short-term goal: Mary will find a volunteer position in the community by the end of April.

Long-term goal: Mary will have a part-time paying job by the end of next year.

Short-term goal: Adam will remain at Middletown Collegiate until age 21 to maximize learning of literacy, numeracy and life skills.

Long-term goal: Adam will continue to practise and maintain his literacy and numeracy skills after leaving school and to further develop life skills.

Establishing goals is a good way to address a fear your child may have about the future and it will give them a chance to talk about it. They can become more comfortable with something that they have concerns about through a number of small but progressive steps.

Following is a list of questions you can use to consider as part of the goal setting exercise.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Goal Category	Question
Health	What will their health and medical needs be? How will they live a healthy lifestyle?
Housing/Living Arrangements	Where will they be living? Will they be living at home, in a supported living arrangement, in a group home, or in their own apartment?
Finance/Money	What about money? What will be their source of income? Will they require assistance with banking? If so, who will help?
Friendship/ Social Life	What will their social life look like?
Transportation	What will their transportation needs look like? Do they need to use adapted transit?
Post-secondary	Will they go on to further their education?
Education/Training	Will they go to a university or college? Will they take a training course?
Employment	What will they do after school is finished? Will they get a job? Will they go to a day program?
Recreation	What will they do for recreation? Will they join a sports team? Will they take an art class?
Community Involvement	What will they do during their spare time? Will they volunteer? What about spiritual and cultural activities?
Legal/Advocacy	What will their legal needs be? Who will help them stand up for their rights?



tip #10

Tool 9 in Part 2: Tools & Resources may help you to identify your child's goals for the future.

Step 4: Action Plan

Now that you have identified the pieces of the plan in the previous three steps, the action plan will help you pull it all together.



tip #11

Tools 10a & 10b in Part 2: Tools & Resources provide two sample templates that you may want to use in developing your transition plan. Other samples are available in the guides listed in the Part 2: Tools & Resources under Transition Planning Guides in Canada and United States.

First, your transition team will review the goals set in Step 3 and the potential supports and services identified to help in achieving these goals. In doing this, your team should consider the following questions:

- What are your child's goals?
- What skills or behaviours does your child need to learn to achieve these goals?
- What local programs, services and supports are available to support your child's goals?
- What responsibilities must you, the school, adult services, cultural and community agencies, and your family assume in order for your child to reach his or her goals?
- What are the gaps or barriers within current programs and services that must be addressed?

Then, the team is ready to identify the tasks that need to be completed to achieve the goals. Members of the team will also need to assume responsibility for these tasks to ensure that they are carried out. These actions need to be fairly detailed so it is clear what needs to be done, by when and by whom.

The next step will involve reviewing the tasks identified to make sure that they are consistent with the vision developed for your child.

tip #12

Tool 11 in Part 2: Tools and Resources provides a chart to summarize the actions and assigned responsibilities. It can then be used to review your progress at the next transition planning meeting.

There are many activities that can be completed along the way, other than those specifically identified in the transition plan that can be used to help make progress towards your child's goals. Many of these activities are ways to establish and reinforce self-reliance skills for your child. These activities will also be important to keep track of as you progress through the adolescent years.

Not every item will be relevant to every individual. Use the checklist as a guide to provide you with ideas and make adjustments to better fit your circumstances.

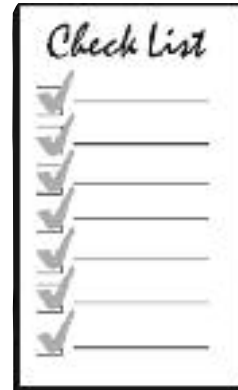
tip #13

Tool 4 in Part 2: Tools & Resources provides a checklist of items ranging from birth through adolescence that can be helpful in moving your child towards his or her vision of the future.

Step 5: Updating the Plan

One of the most important steps is reviewing and updating your plan on a regular basis. Planning is not a one-time event. You should consider your child's transition plan a "living document" that is reviewed regularly to make sure it reflects the most current information about your child and the directions they are interested in pursuing. One of the tasks of the transition coordinator is to schedule meetings to keep track of tasks that have been assigned and progress towards their completion. These meetings become an important opportunity to review the goals and ensure that they continue to be consistent with your child's interests and preferences.

In reviewing the goals and the tasks assigned to each, it may be important to revise the goals and make them more specific as needed. As your child moves through their adolescence, their interests may become more defined and so too should their goals. An opportunity provided through a work experience program at school or a volunteer position in the community may help them to more clearly set the directions they want to take as an adult. Use these times of review to ensure the direction in the original transition plan is still consistent with your child's current interests and preferences.



4. TRANSITION PLANNING AT SCHOOL

This section outlines the following information on transition planning in the education system:

- The school's role – what you can expect from the education system in planning for your child's future;
- The value of work experience and co-operative education;
- Your role in the school transition plan – how you can utilize the education system resources for your transition plan;
- Being an active participant – the importance of being involved with your child in the education process; and
- Staying in touch – the importance of being aware of what is happening with the education process and how you can influence the opportunities available to your child by being involved.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has developed a process to help students with the transition to work, further education and community living. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be completed for each student with special education needs that details the academic expectations for each year of school. Research indicates that having both the parents and child involved in the development of these plans can significantly improve the likelihood of a successful transition. The following information provides an overview of the process outlined by the Ministry of Education and the role you should take in making your way through the school transition process and integrating it with your own family transition plan.



The School's Role

In Ontario, the Education Act, states that principals are responsible for ensuring that an IEP is developed for each student who has been identified as exceptional. If your child is 14 years of age or older, the IEP must also include a transition plan to appropriate post-secondary activities; for example, work, further education and/or community living.