



connections

A guide to transition planning
for parents of children with a developmental disability

Toronto and York Regions
May 2007



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Connections: A Guide to Transition Planning” was developed and written by Rae Roebuck and Judy Coultres-MacLeod of First Leadership Limited. Initial funding for this project was provided to Toronto and York Region by the Ministry of Community and Social Services through the Innovation Fund 2005/6. The May 2007 reprint has been supported by Reena, Surrey Place Centre and York Support Services Network.

We would like to thank the joint Toronto and York Regions Transitions Partnership Projects Steering Committee for their input and support in the initial development of “Connections”. Special thanks goes to the co-chairs of the joint Steering Committee – Sandy Keshen of Reena, John Flannery of Surrey Place Centre, Karen Hirstwood and Kelly Casey of York Support Services Network.

The development of “Connections” would not have been possible without the valuable input from a number of organizations, parents, and individuals. We would like to acknowledge the work of the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development the New Brunswick Association for Community Living, the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Central Alberta Community Board, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living and Bloorview Kids in Toronto.

Finally we would like to thank the parents of children with developmental disabilities who have shared their experiences with us and allowed the inclusion of their stories in “Connections.” Their time and insight was invaluable to us in making this document helpful to the many other parents with children just beginning the journey to adult life.

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PART 3: YOUR INFORMATION

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Connections: A Guide to Transition Planning” has been developed to help you – the parents of a child with a developmental disability in Toronto and York Regions – as your child makes the transition from school life to adulthood.

This guide has been written to provide you with information on transition planning and to identify some of the issues you need to think about. It will also provide you with information on accessing services in each of Toronto and York Region that may be useful to you as you begin to plan for your child’s life beyond school.

This guide has three parts:

- Part 1 provides information on Transition Planning;
- Part 2 provides information on Tools & Resources that may help you in the transition planning process; and
- Part 3 provides you with space to collect your information – your records, certificates, copies of your transition plan, contact information etc.

An initial thought...

As you will read throughout this document, it is important to prepare for your child’s transition from the school system to life as an adult. Having a transition plan in place however, is no guarantee that all the supports and services you have identified in your plan will be available to you in the adult system. The reality is that your child is moving from a system of entitlement, (the public education system) to a system of limited and finite resources (adult developmental services).

You will be challenged to be creative, think outside the box of the traditional support system and find innovative ways to acquire the supports and services you and your child need. There are many parents that have travelled this path before you and they can be a resource for you. Some of their ideas are shared in this guide.

The information that follows is intended to provide you with a variety of resources, tools and sources of information to help you find the right mix of supports as your child takes the next major step in his or her life.

It is hoped that “*Connections*” will help you and your child get involved by giving you information, ideas and tools to start planning for this time of change. You can begin using some of these tools as early as when your child reaches the age of 9. Even though this may seem early there are many activities that can be completed and reinforced, or continued throughout the adolescent years in preparation for the move to adult life. Preparing early and being well organized will help you make this transition a smoother process. Transition planning will take time and hard work, but seeing your child make a confident step to adult life will be worth the effort.

This Guide is for You and Your Child



While the information is aimed primarily at you – the parents – much of what is in this guide needs to be considered and completed with the full involvement of your child to the extent that they are able. Family members and other important people providing supports (teachers, friends and service providers) may find it useful as well. This guide is intended to provide you with information through a variety of practical tools, checklists, worksheets and innovative ideas that you and your child can use together to help make your way through this time of transition.

Please Note...

Throughout this guide, the word “parent” not only refers to biological parents but is meant to include any adult with the responsibility of raising a young person with a developmental disability, for example, a legal guardian. The use of the word “families” is meant to be inclusive of all members of the extended family that play an important part in the life of the young person. This may include parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

As a parent, you naturally have dreams and aspirations for your child. You want them to finish school, find a job, find a comfortable place to live and have a circle of friends to support them as they enter the next phase of their life. When raising a child with developmental disabilities, figuring out options and making decisions to make their hopes and dreams a reality is often much more complex and requires a great deal more effort and planning. This transition is going to happen whether

you plan for it or not. It is to your advantage to begin thinking about it early and use this opportunity to make a very real and positive impact on your child's future.

An important part of transition planning is to involve your child in the process in whatever way and to whatever extent is possible. For example, that can mean including them in meetings, asking them what they want to do and encouraging them to relay their responses through whatever communication method they are comfortable with. Each of the tools in this guide can be adapted to fit the circumstances and the unique abilities of each child.

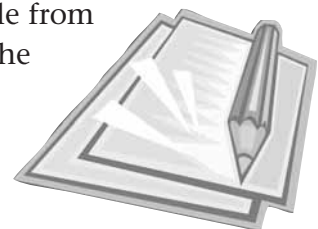
Just as each child is unique in their own way, so too are families. Families have different cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and values. Therefore, the way each family approaches a situation, makes decisions or relates to each other as a group will be different as well. Nonetheless, every family needs a transition plan. So take the suggestions included in this guide and make adjustments as needed to ensure the best fit for your family situation.

What does involvement mean?

In many places throughout the guide, it is suggested that you involve your child in planning and in making decisions. It is recognized that each child has their own unique set of abilities, strengths and challenges and the level of involvement for each child will be defined differently. Some may be comfortable leading activities identified in their plans while others will simply indicate their intentions with a smile. Either way, this is how involvement is defined...individually, and based on a unique set of abilities!

About the Information in this Guide

There are many transition planning guides and resources available from a wide variety of sources. Several provinces and many states in the United States have researched and developed transition guides. "Connections" is based on the research and information provided in several of these transition guides; in particular the document 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*". All of these sources provide a wealth of information on transition planning and much of this information is available on the internet. Reference to these other documents is provided for you in Part 2 - the resource section of this guide.



While there is a lot of interesting information and ideas to follow in this guide, do not feel you need to read the document cover to cover in the first sitting. Read it a bit at a time, make notes and highlight activities that you can easily start with. Not all of the worksheets and suggestions for planning will work for everyone. You are encouraged to make use of the tools that make the most sense for you and your particular family circumstances.

Get a Quick Start!

If you would like to get started right away before reading all of this document, turn to Section 7 “Now You are Ready to Start”. In that section you will find a summary of the information in Part 1 and some tips and tools to get you going.

“Connections” has been designed to fit into a binder so you can add and remove pages as you go. There is also a tab at the end of the guide labelled “Your Information”. Use this section to store in one place important information about your child and information on resources or services that you are interested in. Remove the worksheets and copy them or download fresh ones from the internet. As you go through the steps of transition planning, particularly the reviewing and updating of your plan, you will likely use and reuse some worksheets over and over. The types of activities involved in transition planning will likely be repeated many times over and could easily be continued well into adulthood as interests and preferences change.

Connections can be found and downloaded from the web at www.dst0.com (look under “Helpful Resources” then “Publications”), at www.reena.org (look under “About Reena” then “Publications”) or www.centraleast.info/index.htm (look under “York” then “News”).

Tell Us...

This guide is intended to help you navigate your way through the transition process. Your feedback on the guide is important. Keep track of any comments, suggestions, and/or questions you may have as you use this guide and let us know what you think.

Please send any feedback to: Connections@firstleadership.com