

6. TRANSITION PLANNING AT HOME

This section outlines things that you can do at home to help move the transition planning process along such as:

- Focus on the positive – an approach to presenting your child throughout the process that helps create a supportive and creative environment;
- Building self-reliance – the importance of fostering independence for your child and examples of how to do this;
- Get connected – the importance of finding people to support you and help you through the process; and
- Consider all options – the importance of being creative and trying new things.

There are many things that you can do at home to support the transition planning process without waiting for your child's teacher or someone in the community service system to start the process.

Focus on the Positive

Keeping a positive attitude and setting expectations are very important factors in developing your transition plan. High expectations do not provide any guarantee of success, but setting expectations will help your child reach their potential. Always remember the way you view your child will have a direct impact on how they are viewed by others.

Everyone has strengths, gifts and abilities. Speak of your child's enabling qualities rather than the barriers that limit them. Too often, children with developmental disabilities have come to be described by their disabilities, which can be limiting in determining an appropriate action plan. When focussing on their abilities, strengths and interests, it is much easier to develop a positive and more creative plan.

Build Self-Reliance

Building self-reliance is a key activity in developing a successful transition plan and in helping your child become a more independent adult. There are lots of ways you can begin developing your child's self-reliance skills at home from an early age simply through daily living activities. Use these opportunities to encourage your child to recognize and develop their abilities.

Building self-reliance is also about allowing your child to make decisions. Start early. Help your child become comfortable with the notion of making their own decisions. This will help them accept their role as decision-maker during transition planning activities.

Remember, making decisions will involve risks which subsequently have consequences. There may be a few hard lessons learned along the way but it is all part of growing-up and taking responsibility for actions as an adult. Continue to encourage your child and be sure to let them know that it is okay to make mistakes – everyone learns from their mistakes. Your child will come to recognize that they are capable of making decisions for themselves, which will help them as they move to life as an adult. Start small. Help your child to decide on things with low risk, such as what to wear, what to have for lunch, etc. Teach your child that they can ask for advice in making decisions – it is not something they need to do alone.

Below are examples of ways to encourage self-reliance. They progress from activities to do at an early age right through to the high school years. Recognize that not all activities listed may be appropriate for your child. Identify those that are consistent with your child's abilities and adapt suggestions where necessary. You may be surprised by what your child can accomplish if given the chance and lots of encouragement.



Examples of Ways to Encourage Self-Reliance

- Teach your child everyday skills like brushing their teeth.
- Give your child household chores that match their abilities.
- Provide them with an allowance.
- Allow your child to choose how to spend some or all of their allowance.
- Teach your child their personal information such as address, phone number.
- Begin giving your child choices so they can learn to make decisions, like choosing which clothes to wear.
- Teach your child the consequences of their behaviours and their choices.
- Begin asking your child what they want to be when they grow up.
- Have your child help in making simple meals for the family and progress to having them make meals on their own.
- Involve your child in neighborhood and community activities, such as Scouts, swimming lessons, story hour at the library etc.
- Wherever possible and at an appropriate time, allow them to participate without you.
- Encourage hobbies based on your child's interests and strengths.
- Teach your child to speak up for themselves.
- Allow your child to complete homework assignments as independently as possible. Let them tell you when they need your assistance.
- Teach your child life skills, such as money management, shopping skills.
- Introduce your child to the public transit system.

- Encourage your child to get to places in the community on his/her own by using the public transit system, walking, making arrangements with friends.
- As part of the high school experience, consider community based job training (co-op programs) and life skills if these are appropriate activities for your child. Involve your child in all decision-making.
- Include your child in meetings about their education through the IEP process and transition planning.
- Continue to talk about career interests that are consistent with your child's interests and strengths.
- Help your child talk directly with doctors and other service providers.
- As appropriate, encourage gradual moves toward greater personal independence and self-care.
- Have your child do volunteer or paid work in the home, neighborhood or community. Assist your child in developing good work habits.
- Have your child become a mentor for younger children just entering high school.

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Tool 4 in Part 2: Tools & Resources

highlights a complete checklist of transition activities that includes many self-reliance building activities that you can start from a very early age.

When thinking about self-reliance beyond the school years look at the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP), a resource that provides clear descriptions of the skills used in virtually all occupations, as well as important work habits. The OSP was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The purpose of the

OSP is to document an individual's demonstration of skills and work habits that are considered to be of great importance in the workplace.

Students and job seekers can use the OSP to identify the skills they already have and to plan further skill development so that they can more easily make the transition to the workplace and/or to postsecondary education. The skills listed in the OSP are transferable skills that a student, job seeker and worker can take from job-to-job, sector-to-sector and school to work.

There are two components of the OSP that may be of interest in you and your child:

- the OSP database which lists skills and related tasks by occupation; and
- the OSP portfolio to keep work plans and other skill-related documents, such as a résumé and an OSP skills summary chart.



tip # 20

You can access the Ontario Skills Passport website at:
www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/introduction.jsp?announcer=Home

As you get into the activities for identifying what your child wants to do beyond school, this is a good resource to identify the skills your child may need in considering a potential occupation or post-secondary opportunity to pursue.

Get Connected

This is the time to make sure you are informed about what is going on at the school and in the service system. Speak to your child's teacher. Make sure you understand the IEP and transition process as it is established in your child's school. Speak to your service providers. Understand what is going to happen to the services you are receiving now when they reach the age of 18 or 21. Find out about your community. Ask to be added to mailing lists of organizations you are interested in, sign up for newsletters, and read the community newspaper. It will be important for you to understand your community as you help your child make a connection to their community.

Transition planning is about being organized and prepared. If you haven't already started, it will be helpful to keep various records for your child together; for example, report cards, assessments, certificates of involvement in community programs etc. Put this guide into a binder and use it for keeping your transition planning resources and other important information in one place. You will likely need to refer to these documents as you discuss your plans for the future with various individuals. Keep track of who you talk to, times and dates of conversations, what was discussed, referrals to other individuals or organizations, and identify if a follow-up conversation is required.

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Tool 3a in Part 2: Tools & Resources provides a template for keeping track of contact information as you begin talking with individuals and organizations.

Don't think you need to try to do this all on your own. Ask other people to get involved to help you and your child throughout this process. Start early and establish strong support networks – family, friends, parents, professionals, employers, trainers, community groups who can help build a connection to your community. Access agencies can provide you with information on parent groups in your community or ask at your child's school. If you find there are no parent groups in your area, consider starting one of your own.

Networking will be a key activity for you as you go through the transition process. This may involve making calls to people you have never spoken with before.

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To make this a little less intimidating, use some of the tips in Tools 3b, c and d in Part 2: Tools & Resources to help you in your discussions with agencies, community organizations and professionals.

When talking with an access agency, there are many things they may be able to help you sort out but you need to ask. There may be a transition group already established in your area that you could be part of. The agency may be able to connect you to a parent's group or simply another parent that has already gone through this process – a mentor. Ask if there is a newsletter to parents that you could subscribe to. Find out if there is a coordinator available to help you navigate your way through the transition process. Be prepared to ask many of these questions for yourself and do not rely on the service system to provide this information to you.

tip # 23

In Part 2: Tools & Resources under Supports to Parents further information is provided on parent groups in both Toronto and York Regions.

Consider all Options

There are different options to consider in seeking out supports for your child that are found in the mainstream system available to others in the community. While your child is in the education system, take a look at the programs available to the general public through the Board of Education. While most courses are for adults there may be some programs that are available for younger people. Having your child participate in these programs can help to build their self-reliance skills and further develop their interests.

Get out in your community with your child and find a connection. From early on, participate with your child in recreation and leisure programs. Sign up for swimming lessons, craft programs, library groups. Seek out appropriate faith groups to participate in. These activities will provide you with a strong connection to the community and a good network of connections when you are looking for experiences for your child as an adolescent.

Find other parents and see what things they have done. Use their experience and knowledge of the system to help you make your way through. They will have a wealth of information that you can use to help determine your activities for your child. Ask your child's teacher what other parents have done for their children. They will likely have some good ideas based on what has worked for other parents in a similar situation.

Don't be afraid to try something new. During this time in your child's life, you need to give them many experiences to find out what they like and what they don't like. They need to find out what works for them. Trying new things will help them experience the world, will help them become familiar with their community and help them to be a part of it as they make the transition to adult life.

The creativity of parents...

One strategy is connecting to other parents who are seeking the same opportunities for their sons and daughters. Parents could consider pooling their resources and working together to develop a daytime schedule based on the unique needs and goals of their children. By doing this, parents are able to choose the hours that are best suited to their routine and select their own support staff.

Look in your community for an easy-to-access location such as a library or community centre for a meeting place. From there you can access a broad range of activities such as volunteer placements, fitness activities, literacy programs, and life skills.