

**MOVING ON:
FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE
A TRANSITION HANDBOOK
FOR STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

This Transition Handbook has been prepared for parents as well as teachers, case managers, consumers, agency staff, and anyone else interested in the services that are available to students with developmental disabilities in Contra Costa County who are beginning to plan for the transition from school to adult life. We hope it will demystify the transition process as well as provide practical information on developing an Individual Transition Plan (ITP), which is your blueprint to the future. Thinking about transition to adulthood is an ongoing process that requires thought and advance planning. This planning start with the recognition that students with developmental disabilities will soon live, work, and socialize as adults in the community and must be well-prepared to do so.

If you are a parent, you may be wondering how to begin thinking about transition and developing a solid plan that will help your son or daughter to achieve his/her goals.

Here are some tips for parents:

- Help your child to develop good self-help skills and safety awareness
- Emphasize good grooming and social behavior
- Make sure your child is developing basic academic skills
- Support your child's emerging confidence and self-esteem
- Advocate for your child's education in the least restrictive environment
- Help your child to establish and maintain good health and physical fitness
- Think about what you would like to see happen for your child in the future, then work backwards, and **TRY TO START EARLY!**

Some of the skills you, as a parent, will want to develop are:

- **COMMUNICATION!** Keep in close contact with your child's teachers, program administrators, Regional Center case manager, and representatives from any other agency working with your child. Let them know what you need in the way of services for your child.
- **ACTION!** Be actively involved and participate in helping your child to plan for and achieve his/her goals and objectives.
- **PLANNING!** Develop your own plans and timelines for carrying out family activities that will help your child achieve his/her goals.

Remember that you will want to plan several years ahead. Studies have found that with good planning, students experience greater post-school success and independence. Here are some questions to help you begin thinking and planning for your child's future. Be sure to talk about these questions with your child.

- What would your child like to do in the future? What are his/her dreams?
- What are his/her strengths and needs as they relate to achieving his/her goals?
- How can you help your child explore his/her interests and preferences?
- What skills will s/he need to develop to reach his/her goals?
- Does your child have any behaviors that will interfere with achieving his/her goals?
- What kinds of community activities does your child like to participate in?
- What supports and services will your child need to achieve his/her goals?
- How can you create opportunities for your child to make his/her own decisions?
- Does your child have any health concerns that should be addressed in transition planning?
- What would it take to increase your child's independence?
- What would it take to increase the amount of time your child spends interacting with non-disabled peers and participating in community life?
- What kinds of supports or accommodations will your child need when s/he leaves school?



AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition planning is a federal requirement mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that must be provided by all schools for students receiving special education services. It results in a transition plan that is a coordinated set of activities designed to prepare your child to move from school to adult life. Opportunities after leaving school may include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, adult services, independent living, and community participation. What this means, simply, is that your son or daughter, along with your family, has an opportunity to think about what s/he would like to do with his/her life, what kind of job s/he would like to do, where and with whom s/he would like to live, how s/he would like to spend his/her leisure time, and who s/he would like as friends. The role of the transition planning team, then, is to work together to coordinate the available resources to support your child in achieving his/her dreams.

The first and most important thing for you to know is that transition services **MUST** be based on the student's needs and **MUST** take into account his/her preferences and interests. The second most important thing to know is that transition is not a program; it is a **PLAN** that must be individualized based on those needs, preferences, and interests.

Transition services, as outlined in the IDEA, must address the following areas:

- instruction (including courses of study and postsecondary education)
 - related services (such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc.)
 - community experiences
 - employment and other adult living objectives
- and, if necessary
- daily living skills training and a functional vocational evaluation

Effective transition planning begins with the following activities:

1. Assisting your child to identify his/her interests, preferences, strengths, and abilities.
2. Identifying activities that will help him/her to achieve goals in educational, vocational, and community settings.
3. Developing the accommodations, supports and services needed.

4. Determining what steps (actions) must be taken to help achieve his/her goals.

Transition planning is an ongoing, dynamic process that requires coordination to ensure positive outcomes for your child. The focus should be on the creation of strong linkages among families, students, schools, and community service providers to develop the needed services and supports. Your child's transition planning team should also clearly state which agencies will provide needed services both during the transition years and in the future. Throughout, the transition planning group should remember that the focus of the plan is on providing **INCLUSIVE** opportunities for your child within the community.



SECTION II

GETTING STARTED – DESIGNING YOUR INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN

Special Education Services

As the parent of a child with a developmental disability, you already know that the special education services your child receives are guided by the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is mandated by the IDEA, a federal law which requires local school districts to provide a free and appropriate education to children with disabilities. This law also contains specific requirements related to “transition” or the movement from school to adult life. These requirements are the responsibility of your local school district, whose representatives must work with you to identify a transition planning team to help plan your child’s future.

The transition planning process begins at age 16, when every child’s IEP must include a “Statement of Transition Service Needs.” This means that the IEP team must determine what instruction or other educational experiences the student needs to prepare him/her for adult life, which must be explicitly stated on the IEP.

By age 16, the IEP must include “Needed Transition Services” which might include instruction and related services, community experiences, vocational evaluation, and participation in activities aimed at preparing the student for employment and adult life. Also at this time, a statement of “interagency responsibilities” must be included which will describe how the student will be linked to agencies providing adult services. Implementation of transition services should begin at age 16. For example, perhaps your child will want to explore different kinds of jobs (“job shadowing”). If so, that should be written into the IEP.

In Contra Costa County, the school districts use an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) form to develop and document transition services. Any time transition planning is discussed at a meeting, parents must be invited to attend the meeting. It is important to know that the ITP goals must be integrated into the IEP. A “best practice” method for thinking and planning about transition is to start by using a person-centered planning process to design the ITP. (Person-centered planning is a process-oriented approach to empowering people with disability labels. It focuses on the people and their needs by putting them in charge of defining the direction for their lives, not on the systems that may or may not be available to serve them. This ultimately leads to greater inclusion as valued members of both community and society. For information on person-centered planning, consult your RCEB case manager.) Then, once you, your child, and the team have identified the desired “outcomes,” you can begin to discuss the specific services, goals, and objectives that are needed to achieve these outcomes. Those goals and objectives become part of your child’s IEP.

Remember that the purpose of the ITP is to design transition services that will promote your child’s movement from school to adult life, including continuing (postsecondary)

educational opportunities, employment, adult services, independent living, and community participation. These are described below:

- Instruction – the classes or courses of study the student must complete to gain the skills needed to achieve his/her goals (may include work programs, school or other clubs);
- Related services - those needed to allow the student to benefit from special education (such as speech therapy or occupational therapy), as well as consideration of what will be needed to support the student in adult life (transportation, adaptive technology, health services);
- Community experiences – learning to travel independently in the community and use businesses, recreation, and public facilities (stores, banks, restaurants);
- Employment and adult living objectives – career exploration and vocational training, and preparation for independent living.

If needed, the ITP team should also address:

- Daily living skills – practice with everyday activities such as home maintenance, money management, recreation, and self-care; and
- Functional vocational evaluation – a practical assessment designed to yield information about vocational interests, aptitudes, or skills.

Specifically, transition IEPs should include:

- Adult goals with measurable outcomes identified, including making choices and decisions, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, self-advocacy, involvement and participation in IEPs, self-awareness and self-management;
- Goals/outcomes that identify what instruction will be provided at school and in the community;
- Instruction directly related to adult goals/outcomes in areas of curriculum based on the student's choices, interests, preferences, and options for the future;
- The opportunity for paid work experience;
- The opportunity for both academic and community-based independent living skills curriculum;
- The opportunity for the student to be included with non-disabled peers;

- Statement(s) of transition services needs;
- Identification of other agencies involved with transition, e.g., Regional Center, Department of Rehabilitation.

The California Department of Education has produced a guide entitled “Transition to Adult Living: An Information and Resource Guide” which describes best practices for schools, families, and other participating agencies. They have suggested **three major activities as the foundation for transition planning. These are:**

- ➔ **Helping students and families to think about goals for adult life;**
- ➔ **Designing the school-based experiences which will result in the student gaining skills and competencies to achieve his/her goals; and**
- ➔ **Linking students and families to adult services and supports.**

With respect to setting goals, it is not uncommon for a student not to know what s/he wants to do or, conversely, to be unrealistic about post-high school preferences and interests. For those students who aren’t certain about what they want to do after high school, it is imperative that they be encouraged to talk about future life roles. Students should be presented with a variety of opportunities to try out various roles and explore future possibilities in real life settings. These opportunities can be attained through “school-to-work” and/or “school-to-career” type programs and goals.

For the student whose goals and preferences aren’t realistic, it is important to keep in mind that such a stance isn’t unique to students with disabilities. The role of education for every student is to help them seek out their dream, which means it is equally important that students find out what they can do, what they can do with further training and/or education, as well as what they can’t do. This exploration can be done through community-based experiences, work experiences, and school experiences.

A special note about your child’s participation on the team: The law requires that the student must be invited to participate whenever a transition planning meeting is held. If the student does not attend, schools must take other steps to ensure that the student’s preferences and interests are being considered. Moreover, when students reach age 18 educational rights transfer from the parents to the student. You will be formally notified of this one year before your child’s 18th birthday. This transfer of rights prompts parents to think about how to prepare their children to speak for themselves and make sound decisions. If your child is unable to exercise this right appropriately, you may want to explore other options for retaining educational rights, including conservatorship (see Moving On: Transition Benefits).

In Contra Costa County, the teaching staffs within each SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) and the Contra Costa County Office of Education are responsible for ITP/IEP

development. If you have questions, you should contact your child's teacher or the individuals listed below:

❖ **Transition Specialist**

West Contra Costa Unified School District SELPA
510.307.4551

(Kensington, El Cerrito, Richmond, San Pablo, El Sobrante, Pinole, Hercules)

❖ **Transition Specialist**

Mt. Diablo Unified School District SELPA
925.682-8000, Ext. 5013 798-1299 Bridge Program

(Concord, Clayton, Pleasant Hill, Bay Point, and parts of Walnut Creek and Martinez)

❖ **Transition Specialist**

Contra Costa SELPA
925.827.0949

(Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga, Alamo, Danville, Brentwood, Oakley, Bethel Island, Byron, Port Costa, Rodeo, parts of Walnut Creek and Martinez, Clyde, Canyon, Pittsburg, Antioch, Crockett, and Knightsen)

❖ **Transition Specialist**

Contra Costa County Office of Education
925.686.9091

(Students enrolled in Contra Costa County Office of Education special education programs.)

San Ramon Valley Unified School District

925.820-6815

(San Ramon)

🌀 **Regional Center of the East Bay**

In the previous section, it was stressed that transition planning must involve the participation of representatives from other agencies who will be providing services to your son or daughter. It is especially important to involve your case manager from the Regional Center of the East Bay. S/he can assist you in many different ways, including facilitating a person-centered approach to planning. The case manager can also support the development of self-advocacy skills with your son or daughter. And most importantly, s/he is the critical linkage to the services and supports that your child will need as an adult. Be sure to talk with your case manager about independent living skills training and information about other services such as day activities, supported employment, medical services, and respite. Your case manager can also provide you with valuable information and support and refer you to training opportunities or other services as you begin the transition planning process.

To contact your RCEB case manager, call **925.798.3001**.

☛ **California Children Services**

If your child was eligible for services from this program, they may have been reduced or eliminated as your child grew. Eligibility for CCS ends at age 21. If your child will continue to need durable medical equipment, specialized medical care, or rehabilitation services, you will want to contact your CCS nurse case manager and request help in planning for the transition from CCS to adult medical care.

To contact your CCS case manager, call **925.313.6100**.

☛ **Department of Rehabilitation**

The Department of Rehabilitation is a state agency whose mandate is to assist disabled residents of California to become gainfully employed. If an individual identifies a realistic vocational goal and additional education is needed, the Department of Rehabilitation can provide the funding. Your child may be eligible for services from this agency if s/he has a physical or mental disability that substantially impedes employment, and if s/he needs vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, obtain, or retain employment. A wide array of prescriptive services can be provided by the **Department of Rehabilitation**, including personal and social adjustment, skill training, adaptive aids, tools/uniforms needed for work, job placement, job coaching, prosthetic/orthotic appliances, etc. Services are time-limited until an employment outcome has been reached or someone has demonstrated an inability to benefit from services.

For further information, contact:

Department of Rehabilitation
1485 Enea Court, Suite 1100
Concord, CA 94520-5228
925.602.3953
3656 Delta Fair Boulevard
Antioch, CA 94509
925.754.7700

1003 West Cutting Boulevard, #100
Richmond, CA 94804
510.232.7062

Tips to Help You Get Started

- Most parents will say that they wished they had started earlier. It may be hard to think too far into the future, but if you break it down into small steps you can begin to plan ahead.
- Begin by educating and informing yourself. Ask other parents, your child's teacher, the Transition Resource Center, or your RCEB case manager for written information about transition.
- Find out what services and programs are available in your area. Visit them all and ask for information about the programs. You can invite them to attend your ITP meeting. Ask what skills and competencies your child will need to enter their program and be successful, so that you can be certain the need for intensive instruction in basic skills can be incorporated into your child's IEP.
- Ask the adult service agencies if they are accredited. If not, ask how they ensure quality in their programs. Ask to meet or talk with other parents whose children attend the program.
- As you think about each area that must be addressed in an ITP, think about what activities your child should participate in and what skills s/he will need to develop or improve to achieve his/her desired outcomes.
- Make sure that your son or daughter is exposed to many different kinds of environments and activities, and ask him/her what interests him/her the most. Observe what s/he seems to have a talent for.
- Remember that you can change and revise your plan as time goes by so that it always reflects your child's growing and changing interests and needs.
- This is an exciting time! Make the most of it by preparing yourself with knowledge and support.

SECTION III

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

There are a number of resources throughout Contra Costa County (and beyond) that provide programs and support to people with developmental disabilities. As part of its transition program, CARE Parent Network has created a library of transitional resources. These resources include binders on the following:

Adult Day Programs

Adult Education Programs

College Programs

Residential Programs

Behavioral Programs

Wellness Programs

Transportation Programs

Please feel free to contact CARE Parent Network for information on any and all of these programs. You may also wish to make an appointment with the Transition Coordinator to come into the office to discuss and review any of these binders, make copies of information which may be of interest to you and your child, and talk generally and/or specifically about transition plans.

NOTE: As has been stated previously, it is extremely important that you and your son or daughter plan for transition as early as possible. Some of the programs (particularly the adult day programs) have (or will have) waiting lists. Most programs will accept people on the wait lists several years before they may be entering the program. Additionally, many of the programs understand and agree that it is helpful to be on more than one wait list, as it may not be possible to anticipate which program will be the best fit for the child. Programs do request, however, that parents be upfront with each program as to where their son or daughter is waitlisted and when s/he can be removed from such a list.

SECTION IV

ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Planning for a successful transition involves a solid understanding of the laws, systems, agencies, and services that have been established to support you, combined with a focus on supporting your son or daughter to begin to develop and assert control and choice over his/her life. This is referred to as self-determination and would include skills which expand the student's ability to talk about his/her abilities and needs; enhance awareness of any accommodations required; and increase the communication skills necessary to express needs in the workplace, community, and real-life situations. Below are the agencies that can provide systems and personal advocacy for you as a parent, as well as assist your child in learning the skills necessary for self-determination.

Y Area Board 5
Oakland, CA
510.286.0439

Provides assistance to consumers and families who are clients of the Regional Center of the East Bay. Helps people to understand the Lanterman Act and the regional center system.

Y Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE)
San Francisco, CA
415.431.2285

CASE is a non-profit organization providing para-legal services, education, and consultation to a multi-county area. They sponsor an annual workshop focused on special education.

Y Developmental Disabilities Council of Contra Costa County
Martinez, CA 94553
925.313.8638

Advocacy, coordination, and information dissemination for people with developmental disabilities. Provides limited information and referral. Has a monthly Board meeting that is open to the public. The **Transition Task Force** operates as a committee of the Developmental Disabilities Council and offers a networking opportunity as well as training and information to school and agency staff involved with transition programs.

Y Disability Rights Advocates
Oakland, CA
510.451.8644

Provides legal advice and consultation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Y Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

Berkeley, CA

510.644.2555

DREDF is a national law and policy center established in 1979 by people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities to further the civil rights of people with disabilities. DREDF provides training, education, technical assistance, local and national policy monitoring, and development of legislation, advocacy, and litigation to promote its long-term goal of the full integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream of American life.

Y Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy

Oakland

800.390.7032

The Clients' Rights Advocate may be consulted about issues regarding the rights of Regional Center clients.

Y People First

C/o Area Board 5

Oakland

510.286.0439

An organization comprised entirely of people with developmental disabilities who support one another to live more independently, with a focus on self-advocacy.

Y Disability Rights California

Oakland

510.267.1200

Disability Rights California, formerly Protection and Advocacy, is a non-profit organization established in 1978 to act as the agency in California responsible for the protection of individual rights for persons with developmental disabilities. They provide advocacy services, technical assistance, and possibly direct representation for persons with developmental disabilities.

TIP: The Department of Developmental Services publishes A Consumer's Guide to the Lanterman Act. This guide will help your child to understand their rights and how the Regional Center can help them with the services they need to increase their independence. To obtain your copy call 916.654.1897.

*All students should leave
school prepared for adult
roles and the quality of life
THEY envision.*