

Transition Planning for Youth with a Developmental Disability Are you Ready?

Following is a summary of things to keep in mind when planning for the transition from children's services and school to adult services and community life for youth with a developmental disability.

1. **It is highly recommended that planning start by age 14.** Children's services end at age 18 and adult services have limited and finite resources; youth with a developmental disability often stay in school until age 21 so may not access many services until after they graduate from school. Transition planning isn't just about services though – it is a plan about what the youth's life will look like.
2. **The most successful transitions happen when parents, schools, and services work together with the youth.** Transitions are stressful - parents, service providers and schools should manage the transition by planning early.
3. **Get information...Take action.** It takes time to build skills, experience options that might be considered, and build linkages to people and the community. As a youth matures, their likes/dislikes and skills become clearer, as well as their support needs. Develop an 'ideal' plan, plus develop alternative plans. There are wait lists for adult developmental services.
4. **What is important when planning? Quality of life and self-determination: the youth is the center of the plan.**
It is most important to know what relationships are important to the youth, what social roles are valued, what they like about their life now and what changes they like would to make. Consider the unique supports available to ensure they have the lifestyle they choose in their local community – supports can be provided by family, friends, services, and the broader community.
5. **Plan for the future: What does a Transition Plan look like?**
A transition plan should be unique to each youth. The transition plan to change over the years as the teenager matures and interests/skills become more apparent. Consider:
 - a. What can the youth contribute to their community? This is often not considered and yet is vital to ensuring quality of life.
 - b. Housing/Living arrangements: Where will they be living? At home, a supported living arrangement, a group home, their own apartment?
 - c. Health: How will they live a healthy lifestyle? What will their health and medical needs be? Will they need assistance with decisions around healthcare and medications?
 - d. Finance/Money: What will be their source of income? Will they require assistance with banking or shopping – if so who will help? Do they have a Social Insurance Number? Have they applied for ODSP?

- e. Friendship/Social Life: What will their social life look like? What relationships, including family and friends, are important? How can relationships that are important be built and strengthened?
- f. Transportation: What will their transportation needs look like? Do they need assistance learning to use transit services?
- g. Education/Training: Will they want to further their education? Will they take training courses that are specific to their employment (First Aid, WHMIS, food handling, etc.?)
- h. Employment: What will they do after school is finished? Will they get a job? Will they want to go to a day program? How will they be actively involved each day?
- i. Recreation: What will they do for recreation? Will they want to join a sports team, exercise, take an art class, join a hobby club?
- j. Community Involvement/Leisure: What will they do during their spare time? Will they volunteer? What about spiritual and cultural activities?
- k. Legal/Advocacy: What will their legal needs be? Who will help them stand up for their rights?
- l. What is available in our community? (services and other community resources)
- m. What are their support needs for each activity of daily living?

6. How do I plan?

Parents, educators and service providers: Connect with Contact Brant to assist with planning for each youth by age 14 and annually thereafter.

There are many tools to assist with planning (visit contact Brant or their website: www.contactbrant.net for some suggestions.) Bring people together. Look at youth's capabilities and interests. Find new directions where changes need to be made today; develop strategies and set a vision. Identify obstacles – find solutions. Manage the plan: take action, explore options, build the plan, connect to your community; reflect on the plan and continue to 'grow' the plan.

- 7. Ministry guidelines & legislation support coordinated planning; educators and service agencies are to assist youth/families in the development of individual transition plans by providing support and information. Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk service agencies also have a community Protocol that supports coordinated and early planning.

What can you expect from schools?

- The Ministry of Education identifies educators must coordinate planning with parents and community services at age 14. The Education Act states that IEP must include transition plan for all special needs students starting at age 14: Where the student is age 14 or older, IEP must include a transition plan to appropriate post-secondary school activities, e.g., work, further education, community living

- Educators are to consult with community agencies; special education staff can assist schools by establishing working relationships with local agencies

How can parents and service providers utilize the education system resources for your transition plan?

- Advocate for the value of work experience and coop education can be important to help your transition plan.
- Stay in touch – how can you influence the opportunities available to youth?
- Parents: Important to be involved with your child in the education process

What can you expect from community agencies?

- MCYS and MCSS identify agencies funded by the province are to coordinate planning with parents, schools and other community partners by age 14
- When community service agencies are involved with a youth, they are to plan and coordinate individual plans that include identification of appropriate services and supports as well as other community resources

8. What can parents do?

- Connect with Contact Brant to start planning for services by age 14 and to get information on transition planning – call (519) 758-8228 or visit at 25 King Street, Brantford
- Build self-reliance – foster as much independence as possible for your child e.g., give chores to match their abilities, give allowance, offer choices so they can learn to make decisions, ask what they want when they grow up, involve in neighbourhood/community events, encourage hobbies based on their interests and strengths
- Get connected – find people to support you and help through the planning process
- Consider all options – be creative/try new things
- Obtain a birth certificate/proof of citizenship
- Obtain a Social Insurance Number
- Keep a file of medical records, assessments, report cards, records of completion, community certificates
- Apply for ODSP at age 17