

Collaborative Interagency, Interdisciplinary Approach to Transition - Executive Summary

As youth with IDD leave school, they face several transitions including school to work or post-secondary education, family home to community living, and child oriented health care to adult care. Youth should be able to expect self-determined transitions with coordinated support from family, community, professionals, and agencies. But they and their families often experience very little choice, control or collaboration from the myriad of systems to which they look for support and services for transition.

Multiple barriers stand in the way of a coordinated approach to supporting all aspects of successful transition to adulthood. These barriers include - failing to support self-determination as a central element of the person-centered process of transition; insufficient understanding of the role of culture in an individual or family's concept or approach to transition; the tendency for professionals within each transition domain (education, health, community living, employment, others) to use language that is not easily understood by other professionals, youth, families, or other community partners; and neglecting to specifically explore how transition in the different realms could/should be linked for maximizing success.

To that end, this paper promotes four core concepts that are essential to the development and implementation of effective transition plans and process.

1. Self Determination should be the foundation for transition planning.

Promoting the self-determination of adolescents with disabilities has become best practice in secondary education and transition services (Wehmeyer, Agran, Hughes, Martin, Mithaug, & Palmer, 2007). Self-determination status has been linked to the attainment of more positive transition outcomes, including more positive employment and independent living (Martorell, Gutierrez-Rechacha, Pereda, & Ayuso-Mateos, 2008; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997) and recreation and leisure outcomes (McGuire & McDonnell, 2008), and more positive quality of life and life satisfaction (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998; Lachapelle et al., 2005; Nota, Ferrari, Soresi, & Wehmeyer, 2007; Shogren, Lopez, Wehmeyer, Little, & Pressgrove, 2006).

There are numerous curricular and instructional models identified to enable teachers to provide an instructional focus on self-determination (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007). Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, and Wood (2001) found evidence for the efficacy of instruction to promote component elements of self-determined behavior, including interventions to promote self-advocacy, goal setting and attainment, self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and decision-making skills. These include the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction*, *TAKE CHARGE for the Future*, and student involvement programs, the *Self-Directed IEP* and *Whose Future is it Anyway?*. Recent research has provided causal evidence of the importance of self-determination for students to achieve positive transition outcomes. Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenshield, and Little (2012) investigated the relationships among self-determination interventions during high school, self-determination status when leaving school, and adult outcomes one and two years after leaving school. Results indicated that self-determination status at the end of high school predicted significantly more positive employment, career goal, and community access outcomes.

2. Transition should be viewed through a cultural lens.

Culture defines the values, beliefs, and practices surrounding when and how youth transition to adulthood. Culture influences the beliefs and practices of families and youth about transition within the contexts of health care, employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. There are several key issues that should be considered.

- *There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in transition services and outcomes.* Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black youth ages 12-17 are significantly less likely than non-Hispanic White youth to have received services needed for transition to adult health care, work, and independence. (Child and Adolescent Measurement Initiative)
- *Transition services and outcomes generally reflect the values of individualism and independence vs. collectivism and interdependence.* Most transition policies, practices, and services may assume that all youth with disabilities or special health care needs and their families value such individual oriented outcomes as self-determination, self-reliance, and independent living. These outcomes may not reflect those of cultural groups, individuals, and families who value collectivism. Individualistic cultures view the process of development for youth as moving from dependence to independence and self-reliance. In contrast, collectivistic cultures see development as moving from dependence to interdependence (Ewalt and Mokuau, 1995).
- *Self-determination is a cultural construct.* The concept of self-determination may be viewed and practiced very differently across cultures (Zhang, 2005). For some youth and families, a goal of individual choice may conflict with cultural values that support group or hierarchical decision-making.

Cultural and linguistic competence must be embedded into all transition services.

3. Interagency Collaboration is essential to effective transition.

Interagency coordination and planning is one of the critical elements of transition planning. Noonan, Morningstar & Erickson (2008) conducted a detailed review and analysis of state and local practices in 29 high performing districts. Strategies for interagency collaboration, were identified that emphasized a complex inter-related system of staffing, support, knowledge building (i.e., training, technical assistance), relationships, and funding. The strategies identified often-required collaboration at both the local and state levels to be successful. Thus, a critical dimension of successful interagency collaboration is the interplay between multiple local and state systems. Typical transition planning teams need to be expanded to include all disciplines and agencies that will impact the life of the person with a disability.

In a comprehensive review of federally funded state programs that support transition, the US Government Accountability Office (2012) found that students with disabilities face systemic barriers as they transition from the entitlement system of special education to the multiple eligibility-driven adult systems. Students and their families may not have sufficient information about the services or options available to them. Consequently, there may be a delay in applying for, and receiving, needed services like job supports, tutoring or assistive technology. From the agency perspective, the differences in statutory eligibility criteria, lack of common outcomes or common policies for operating across agencies hinders interagency coordination and influences student success at achieving post-school outcomes.

4. Transition Planning should include all the perspectives, disciplines and organizations that will impact the transitioning student.

Perspectives and Issues	Effective Practices
<p>The voice of the transitioning student should be central to the planning process.</p>	<p>Implement a student involvement curriculum (e.g., <i>Self-Directed IEP; Whose Future is it Anyway</i>) in preparing students for transition planning</p>
<p>Self-Determination:</p> <p>Students need to increase their ability to self-determine.</p>	<p>Secondary schools should implement of the evidence based self-determination curriculum models (<i>Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction; Take Charge for the Future</i>).</p>
<p>Cultural and linguistic competence must be an integral component of all transition services.</p>	<p>Understand the cultural beliefs and practices of the student’s family and community.</p> <p>Family and youth needs and preferences for services in languages other than English.</p>
<p>Students and families need accurate information about the range of opportunities and supports available to them.</p> <p>Many families and students report not being prepared for adult life.</p>	<p>Student focused transition planning.</p> <p>Person-centered planning.</p> <p>Disability Navigators.</p>
<p>Health Care Transition:</p> <p>Family members and young adults encounter: late preparation for the transition to the adult health care system, have little knowledge about how to navigate the adult health care system, and have difficulty with identifying a new primary care provider and specialists in the adult health care system.</p> <p>Pediatric health care providers face issues such as little time for transition care, lack of reimbursement for transition support, concern that the young adult will not receive the same level of care in the adult health system, lack of adult providers and specialists in the young adult’s home community, and little knowledge about community resources that might benefit the young adult and family.</p>	<p>Start the transition process around 12 to 14 years of age; be familiar with eligibility criteria for services, treatments and equipment in the adult service system, health care insurance changes; initiate the identification of a future adult health care provider early; youth assume an active role in decision making and assume responsibility for interventions.</p> <p>Health care providers initiate the transition process to adult primary and specialty care around 12 to 14 years of age; develop a transition plan with the youth and his/her family; provide families and youth with health care transition resources; prepare and share a portable medical summary</p>

<p>Transition Assessments are often limited in scope.</p>	<p>Transition assessment data should include results of self-determination and career assessments, occupational and assistive technology assessments, community-based vocational assessments, adaptive behavior assessments, and family and student interview data.</p>
<p>Transition to Employment:</p> <p>The number of individuals with disabilities who participate in individual, integrated employment is very low.</p>	<p>Integrate transition assessment activities including career exploration and development into the core curriculum. Promote the expectation that employment is the first option.</p> <p>Provide a variety of volunteer, unpaid and paid internships (including summer employment) beginning no later than age 14 and continuing until permanent paid employment is obtained.</p> <p>Include in the IEP vocational and career – related goals that result in vocational and career services associated with paid work</p>
<p>Transition to Post-Secondary Education</p> <p>The number of individuals with disabilities who participate in inclusive post-secondary education opportunities is very low, especially for students with intellectual disabilities.</p>	<p>Plan person-centered transition services for high school students as they pursue postsecondary education.</p> <p>Support students with IDD in planning and facilitating their own person-centered meeting.</p> <p>Provide instruction for the educational coaches. Recruit faculty and peers to support students in inclusive college experiences.</p>
<p>Transition to Community Living:</p> <p>Young adults need a place to live and work; skills to manage their living environment and navigate their community; self-care skills to ensure safety and personal health; to be included in community activities of their interest; a social network of friends, family members and allies that support them; and opportunities to participate in leisure/recreation activities.</p>	<p>Youth and adults who receive community living supports have continued needs even when they are receiving supports. Communities and service planners need to anticipate these needs and ensure that the staff providing community living support are trained and equipped with the right competencies to facilitate positive and desired community living outcomes.</p> <p>A comprehensive transition plan should include all of these dimensions and employ effective instructional strategies.</p>
<p>Housing</p> <p>Although there are many housing options,</p>	<p>Consider and identify future or current housing</p>

<p>people with disabilities are more likely to rent their home than people without disabilities. Most individuals with intellectual disabilities live with family members.</p> <p>There are many barriers to housing, ranging from poverty to racial discrimination.</p> <p>People with disabilities need basic home modifications to make their homes accessible.</p>	<p>options during the IEP and/or person-center-planning process.</p> <p>Examine how public benefits and subsidies impact housing options.</p>
<p>Transportation</p> <p>Difficulty in finding accessible transportation is one of the most common issues experienced by people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Develop a multi-tiered approach to transportation education including (a) orienting students to public transportation, (b) developing customized transportation as needed, and (c) providing individualized travel training.</p>
<p>Technology</p> <p>Technology is a means to increase productivity, communicate or to simplify a complex task. Assistive technologies (AT) are those that enable individuals to gain, maintain or regain independence.</p>	<p>Seek and use AT as early as possible in a child’s development. Ensure access to essential AT. Seek innovative funding arrangements that allow technology to be used in all environments in which the individual interacts.</p> <p>Take advantage of mainstream technology. Get it. Use it. Figure it out.</p>

Policy Implications

This paper outlines many of the beliefs, values, and principles that are commonly shared by policy-makers, professionals, parents, and young people themselves. From a policy perspective, these beliefs, values, and principles are intended to: (a) guide and inform policy-makers as to the importance of inclusion and community integration at all levels and in all facets of community life; (b) lead to federal and state policies that promote positive transition outcomes; (c) ensure that transition-related statutory and policy development is driven by an underlying belief of high expectations for all youth; (d) ensure that policies focused on transition planning and the provision of services are based on self-determination and person-centered approaches; (e) ensure that policies address the cultural and linguistic diversity of youth with disabilities and their families when designing and implementing transition programs and services; and (f) ensure that federal, state, and local policies are intended to achieve positive transition outcomes and promote interagency coordination and the provision of a unified, flexible array of programs, services, accommodations, and supports.