

## Adult Life Roles

*(Taken from Fundamentals of Transition - a joint document developed by the Michigan Department of Education-Office of Special Education/Early Intervention Services and the Michigan Department of Career Development/Rehabilitation Services. June, 1995)*

### Frequently Asked Questions:

- What are the major areas of transition to consider?
- How does transition planning involve employment?
- How should employment-related transition services be delivered?
- What is post-school adult living?
- What is post-secondary educational training?
- What is community participation?

### What are the major areas of transition to consider?

Planning for post-school life must be based upon a thorough, ongoing assessment of an individual's skills in major post-school adult life roles.

In general, the transition services include the following four areas.

1. Employment
2. Post-School Adult Living
3. Community Participation
4. Post-Secondary Educational Training

### How does transition planning involve employment?

This domain refers to the individual's preparedness to perform paid work for the purpose of achieving economic independence. Planning for and defining employment goals does not necessarily result in placement in a specific job for pay. It is appropriate and important for students to develop specific job skills and goals; however, students should also have opportunities to become aware of the world of work, explore career options, make career decisions within the context of community-based experiences, and develop general employability skills for seeking, securing, and maintaining employment. Development of the student's ability to generalize skills across settings, people, materials, and time is an important element of transition planning. Consequently, supporting the student in a variety of work-related experiences should be planned for early in the student's education. The identification of specific employment-related transition goals for a student requires a discussion of issues such as:

- type of work the student envisions himself/herself performing at the conclusion of formal schooling or training;
- nature and severity of the student's disability and job interests and types of support needed to work in an occupational field of choice;
- strengths that can be capitalized upon and specific work skills the student needs to acquire;
- school experiences, programs, classes, and activities that will help the student acquire needed work-related skills and behaviors;

- agencies, individuals, and organizations (school, businesses, para-professionals, job coaches) that can collaborate to develop a personalized employment training program to address student needs;
- accommodations the student may need on the job.

### **How should employment-related transition services be delivered?**

Delivery of employment-related transition services should include activities that take place in the classroom, home, neighborhood, and community. Classroom activities may focus on employability skills, community skills, vocational training, etc. Activities within the home and neighborhood may focus on personal responsibility and daily living skills. Community-based activities may address community service and volunteerism, part-time work, after school and in the summer, cooperative education or work-study, individualized vocational training (IVT), development of mentor relationships, etc. Job-related skills can also be taught within a work environment. Observation of the student's success in the transference of skills from the classroom/home to the community provides assessment information for evaluating his/her job readiness and future vocational training needs.

### **What is post-school adult living?**

This domain refers to the depth of one's emotional, physical, or situational support in society as well as one's use of time in a typical 24-hour period. Post-school adult living requires the acquisition of a variety of skills and knowledge that enable an individual to live as independently as possible. This domain typically consists of the following areas:

- **Personal and Social Skills:** Personal and social skills are important subcomponents of the post-school adult living domain. Mastery of tasks such as clothing selection and dressing, grooming and personal appearance, planning for social activities, home decorating and maintenance, shopping for self and household, and budgeting and financial planning is critical to independent living. It is imperative that students be provided support and ongoing assessment as they make choices about their futures.
- **Living Options:** Not every student with a disability needs to consider where he/she will live immediately after leaving high school. Some young adults remain in the family home; others live on campus as they pursue post-secondary education. For many students, however, the question of where to reside after high school is an important transition issue.
- **Income and Finances:** An important student outcome in the post-school adult living domain is development of financial awareness and responsibility. This outcome is best accomplished through a partnership between the school and family.
- **Medical Needs:** A fundamental goal identified in this domain is to assist the student in becoming aware of and communicating his/her needs concerning medical symptoms and issues. Medical awareness involves identifying common illnesses and how they can be treated, choosing physicians, identifying and reporting medical emergencies, first-aid training, and accessing services from Medicaid and Medicare. Training in this domain also should be approached as a partnership of the student, school, home, and community.

## What is post-secondary educational training?

Many students want to pursue further education or training after leaving high school. It may be academic in nature and pursued in a university or college setting, or technical in nature and pursued in a trade school or vocational center setting.

Goals and objectives developed for this transition area depend upon:

- the nature/severity of the student's disability
- the student's understanding and acceptance of his/her disability
- the student's interest in pursuing academic or technical education after high school
- arrangements for accommodations needed during college board or SAT testing (e.g., testing in Braille, oral presentation of questions, untimed testing, etc.)
- identification of the types of accommodations and support services needed that relate to the student's disability
- identification of post-secondary institutions that offer the desired training or education
- identification of post-secondary educational institutions that provide accommodations or support services needed by the student, and/or
- application to schools of choice and advocacy for needed accommodations.

Community-based instruction can also be utilized within the domain of post-secondary education. Within the community, students can meet college and training center representatives and visit post-secondary institutions. Students can also arrange and attend meetings with outside agencies that provide rehabilitation services, academic support services, community education programs, advocacy and support, and other services.

## What is community participation?

This domain refers to the individual's quality of interaction with his/her surroundings, including people, places, and things. This also includes one's level of involvement in completing self-care and other activities of daily living as well as the physical access to one's surroundings. If the end goal of transition is to live successfully in the community, then transition teams must address where the young adult will live, work, or go to school, as well as how he/she will live within the community. Specific attention to the following four dimensions of community participation may be necessary.

- **Recreation and Leisure:** It is important to remember that facilitating recreation and leisure goals and objectives in a transition plan must be desired, preferred, and chosen by the individual. Many youth with disabilities need assistance to learn how to use their recreation and leisure time constructively.
  - A transition team must be cautioned against developing transition goal statements that essentially force the student to participate in recreational activities that are not of personal interest or value. Planning often focuses first on exploring types of skills and activities that interest the student. Goal statements might focus upon supporting the student to use his/her leisure time constructively and in ways that are personally enriching. Next steps can include helping the student to locate those activities in the school, neighborhood, and/or community, then supporting his/her participation. In communities that have open recreational facilities and activities, goal statements might focus upon developing basic student skills of information-gathering, self-initiation, and choice-making, all of which can empower the student to pursue his/her own interests.

- **Personal and Social Skills:** While transition planning cannot encompass all phases of an individual's life, the long-term benefits of assisting the student to develop satisfying relationships across all domains. Effective personal and social skills can help the student form and maintain friendships with the community, interact with service providers, and obtain and maintain employment. Thus, development of personal and social skills is an important transition goal for students.
- **Citizenship and Legal Issues:** A desired goal for the student is to be a respected and responsible citizen. Skills acquired in this area involve student awareness of local, state, and federal government; knowledge of civil/citizen's rights; and how to register to vote.
- **Community Access, Mobility, and Transportation:** A desired goal for the student is to continually develop his/her ability to move around the community independently. These skills involve familiarity with the local community, awareness of traffic and safety measures, use of public transportation, and how to maintain specialized equipment.

Social workers, fellow students, families, and other individuals can assist the student in embracing his/her independence in this area. Participation in sports, clubs, and after-school events should be encouraged. Leisure skills should be identified, built upon, and extended into the community. Personal skills such as conversation, manners and etiquette, social networking, locating resources, and vacation planning can further integration into the community-at-large.