



Section Two



***Support Guidelines for Implementation
of Bridging to Adulthood:
A Protocol for Transitioning Students
with Exceptional Needs from School to Community***

Person-Centred Transition Planning

Person-Centred Planning

Students go through different stages of transition during their school years, from preschool to school, from early years to middle years, from middle to senior years and from school to adult life. These stages often involve changes in environments, roles and responsibilities, needs, and/or social relationships. The transition from school to adult life causes substantial changes in the lives of students and families.

Person-centred planning strives to provide services and supports that meet the specific needs of the individual. To do this, the participation of the student is key and their interests, strengths and circumstances are the foremost factors to consider. A person-centred planning process will involve key people working together to develop a transition plan that meets the student's needs, using available resources or, advocating for new or enhanced services.

Person-centred transition planning may include:

- pursuing academic areas of interest and continuing meaningful involvement in school life past age 18
- celebrating the completion of high school through the graduation ceremony with peers, and then shifting focus towards life/work preparation with continued support from the school
- pursuing a combination of volunteer and work experience through the school
- shifting school focus towards meaningful participation in community life (volunteerism, recreation) in increasing independence/interdependence
- high school completion after four years and transition to the support of a community service provider
- preparation for post secondary education after high school

Person-Centred Transition Planning

Individual students' strengths and needs are always unique and may require many co-ordinated services for successful transition. A student's current level of performance in transition areas all become a part of a student profile that influences his/her transition planning. Considering a student's individual strengths and needs helps ensure a successful transition.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of person-centred transition planning is to help students achieve an optimum quality of life as they become adults in the community. An effective team will:

- identify the student's interests, preferences, strengths and needs
- involve and empower the student and family in the transition process
- increase the capacity of the student for meaningful participation in community life
- identify potential post school options (e.x: recreation, education and/or community life)
- identify and secure required resources and supports for successful transition
- ensure that implementation plans are made
- involve the student, family and other team members in carrying out the plans

Effective Practices in Transition Planning

The following principles should be considered in transition planning:

1. early co-ordinated planning
2. student, parent and support network involvement
3. team collaboration
4. inclusive, community-based approaches

- 5. developing a student's self-determination and self-advocacy skills
- 6. comprehensive and functional approaches

1. Early, Co-ordinated Planning

Early planning gives teams sufficient time to understand the student and their needs, develop his/her potential, secure necessary resources and explore opportunities. To be effective, transition planning should re-visit the goals, activities, roles and responsibilities of team members, as the student grows older.

2. Student, Family and Support Network Involvement

Student and family involvement (parents, siblings, grandparents) is fundamental to ensuring students' needs, interests and capabilities are reflected in the transition planning process.

The student is the central member of the transition planning team. His/her role is particularly central in goal setting and decision making. The roles of the student in transition planning include:

- attending individual planning meetings, if possible
- sharing information on his/her interests, skills and hopes for the future
- participating in assessment designed to identify current skills and needs
- identifying goals in transition planning

- expressing his/her opinion in the decision making process
- fulfilling his/her share of the responsibilities to reach the goals of the plan

Parents are key members of the team who can ensure that transition planning reflects the interests, benefits and values of the student. Suggested roles of parents include:

- understanding the transition planning process and obtaining relevant information
- attending IEP/ITP meetings
- sharing their knowledge of their child's interests, strengths and needs
- helping their child identify goals achievable with effort
- offering opinions and participating in the decision making process of transition planning
- encouraging and helping their child participate in transition planning
- finding information on services and resources available, currently or after graduation
- helping their child carry out the responsibilities assigned to him or her in the transition plan
- helping their child develop independence and self-determination in everyday living

Strategies to support student involvement include:

- previewing the agenda of team meetings with the student
- providing the student with an orientation on the general process of transition planning
- helping the student understand his/her role and responsibilities in transition planning and the significance of his/her participation
- using an alternate/augmentative communication system for the student if he/she has difficulty communicating
- ensuring sufficient opportunities and time for the student to express opinions and make decisions
- making transition planning meetings personal and welcoming to the student, by inviting individuals with whom the student feels comfortable and arranging a welcoming environment (ex: preparing snacks, playing music, providing comfortable seating)

Strategies for parental involvement

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the parents in the process.
- Maintain frequent communication with parents about the student's needs and progress.
- Provide orientation on the purpose, process and key decisions in transition planning (ex: web-based information, booklets, information evenings).
- Inform them about programs and services available in the community and how to access them (ex: transition fairs, tours of adult service providers, booklets).
- Arrange transition planning meetings that are convenient for them to attend.
- Provide them with a meeting agenda in advance.
- Ensure they have opportunities to offer their opinions freely and raise concerns during meetings.

- visiting various placement options or programs to help their child make decisions for future options (ex: residential, vocational, recreational)
- sharing information about their child's progress

Along with the student and the family, members of the student's support network who can provide valuable input for transition planning should be included in planning. A support network may include siblings, friends, advocates, foster parents, group home staff, etc.

3. Team Collaboration

Transition planning may involve many partners from various disciplines and organizations including school divisions, government, designated agencies, service providers, advocates, Manitoba Justice and the community. It is critical to establish and maintain a collaborative team to effectively support the student through transition from one support system to another.

A collaborative approach allows team members to communicate and share information and resources. Effective, accountable, seamless transition planning relies on team collaboration. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the members is also crucial.

4. Inclusive, Community-Based Approach

No matter how intense and complex the needs of a student are, everyone has the right to be included as part of the community as students and into adult life. For students with exceptional needs, limited experiences in the community and a lack of contact with peers will be an indicator of limited potential for inclusive community life. It is important for students to be a part of inclusive communities inside and outside of school so they can reach their goals in areas such as social relationships and employment. In inclusive schools, transition planning should facilitate inclusive experiences and instruction for a student with exceptional needs as much as possible.

5. Developing a Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Skills

Developing a student's self-determination and self-advocacy skills enhances their own transition planning and the quality of their lives as adults in community life. This involves developing student specific outcomes in areas such as:

- decision-making
- problem solving
- taking initiative
- self-management

The family, school and other team members should help students find and use opportunities to develop and exercise self-determination and self-advocacy in their daily routines. A student may require practice in:

- expressing personal preferences and interests
- communicating wants and needs with others
- making decisions and explaining the reasons
- identifying problems or difficulties in a given situation and finding solutions
- being aware of situations that need self-advocacy (ex: discrimination, harassment, abuse, etc.), and how to deal with them
- setting goals and taking action to achieve them

6. A Comprehensive, Functional Approach

Transition planning requires a comprehensive, functional approach covering such things as vocational skills, social skills, independent living, health, daily living skills and academic knowledge. For students with limited daily living skills and difficulties in generalizing learned skills, the transition team will need to focus on developing functional skills useful to adult life in the community. Many students with exceptional needs require extensive, specific instructions and/or support to develop many of the skills others acquire through daily experiences. In addition, teaching functional skills to students with exceptional needs may be combined with community-based experiences (ex: work experience, shopping/banking skills, transportation skills) in situations where they are likely to be needed.

Meeting Preparation

Well organized meetings are essential for effective person-centred transition planning. Case managers and other team members should ensure:

- The individual student's dreams and vision for future is the standard toward which the planning team strives.
- The planning should be results-oriented with achievable goals and a plan for implementing and monitoring of outcomes.
- The focus of the planning should be on the strengths, interests and hopes of the student and the required supports, rather than on the student's disabilities.
- The planning should respect and reflect the student's background (ex: family values, way of life, culture, community life).

When, How Often and Where?

Planning meetings may be formal or informal. Informal meetings can occur as frequently as needed, anytime through the year and involve contact by phone, e-mail or in person. Formal transition planning meetings must be held at least annually. Annual outcomes need to be decided on soon after the beginning of each school year.

The time and location for meetings should be arranged by case managers to accommodate the participants as much as possible. Accessibility and convenience for the students and parents is important.

Who should attend the meeting?

A transition planning case manager should consult with the student and parents about who will be invited to the IEP/ITP meetings. The core team should include the student, parents and/or legal guardian/CFS agency worker and the case manager. The student's friends or advocates should also be welcomed to attend if their presence

will provide support and/or important information.

While many professionals and other support people (ex: teachers, administrators, specialists, community service providers, advocates, etc.) may be involved in the transition planning for the student, the team may choose to invite only the people who are directly related to the issues on the agenda to any given meeting. The case manager should consult with the student and family about who they want to invite to a meeting.

Conducting the Meeting

Planning meetings should look at priority learning needs holistically (e.g. employment, housing, personal management, health, community participation, recreation, etc.) to identify the needs of the student and co-ordinate services. The work of meeting participants may include:

- sharing new information about the student
- identifying gaps in what the team knows about a student
- developing/updating a student profile
- evaluating the progress and outcomes of previous planning or describing current levels of performance

- discussing adult support options and requirements including contacts to be made
- setting the priorities to be addressed in the plan
- identifying student specific outcomes and performance objectives
- developing implementation plans
- establishing and updating roles and responsibilities
- identifying responsibilities for writing, updating and sharing IEPs or ITPs

For a checklist outlining steps for conducting a planning meeting, see Appendix F.

Person-Centred Planning Tools

Some teams may choose to use specific person-centred planning tools for transition planning. Two tools which are commonly used are: Making Action Plans (MAPS) and Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH).

For further information on MAPS and PATH, see Appendix E.

Strategies for team collaboration:

- Create a positive, respectful and welcoming atmosphere.
- Avoid the use of jargon.
- Establish a joint vision and shared mission.
- Ensure every member is familiar with the purpose of the transition planning process.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Develop specific implementation plans with assigned timelines and monitor the process and results.
- Establish a communication network among members (ex: phone, e-mail, regular meetings).
- Develop agreements for collaborative teamwork and document them.

The transition planning case manager's leadership is particularly crucial in ensuring team collaboration

Transition Planning Process

Transition planning may follow the same process as individual education planning (IEP). In Manitoba, IEP is a global term for any written plan developed by a team that addresses the individual needs of a student. School teams, including families, are likely to be familiar with the IEP process. What may occur, beginning in Grade 9, is that the student's IEP planning process begins to take on a new perspective with domains and student specific outcomes (SSOs) addressing transition needs taking priority as high school completion nears.

Transition planning consists of four steps consistent with individual education planning:

1. setting direction
2. gathering information
3. developing the transition plan
4. implementing and reviewing the plan

1. Setting Direction

Case managers who are responsible for transition planning will identify key team members as the first step of the process.

The team members will include people who are currently involved with the student as members of the student's IEP team.

The team should also include people who will be involved as the student prepares to leave school. These include community workers from Manitoba Family Services and Housing, CNIB, Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, the Canadian Paraplegic Association Inc., child and family services agencies and regional health authority programs/services. Community Service Providers and members of support networks may also have a role in individual transition planning.

Depending on the needs of the student and individual circumstances, some team members will be permanent, while others

participate as needed basis or upon request.

After identifying the team members, setting direction may involve:

- orienting the members about the transition process
- clarifying member's roles and responsibilities
- deciding on a process for collaboration and sharing information

2. Gathering Information

Observation and assessment are ongoing in transition planning. They help the team monitor the student's transition needs and determine appropriate outcomes.

The team may gather information about:

- the student's vision for the future as well as interests, hopes and aptitude (with input from family and support networks when appropriate)
- background information about the student and his/her family and community (ex: language, culture, way of life, etc.)
- the student's current level of performance, experiences, strengths and needs
- the skills or knowledge the student requires for successful transition
- the available community based services and resources
- the ongoing requirements for adaptations or assistive technological devices or therapies to help the student

To gather this information, the team may:

- conduct curriculum-based assessments
- collect work samples
- interview the student, parents, teachers, or other support staff
- use inventories or checklists from the student, parents, or other support staff

- use specific observations of the student in various settings (ex: classroom, home, worksites, retail store, etc.)
- examine existing documents (ex: student school records, previous IEP or ITP assessments)
- guide the student in developing a career portfolio
- assess the student's specific skills in various real life settings (ex: vocational, behavioural, academic)
- conduct diagnostic assessments (formal or informal cognitive, or adaptive testing)

Student Self-Managed Career Portfolio Guide:

Guidelines for students in Manitoba to develop a career portfolio are available at:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/resources.html.

3. Develop Individual Plans

Selecting Priority Learning Needs

Successful adults try to balance their daily lives. Transition planning also requires balancing several areas:

- A. life-long learning
- B. employment/career development
- C. building social networks and inclusion
- D. living in the community with independence

Although priority outcomes in transition planning may vary for individual students, the team should assure that any concerns in these areas are addressed.

For information on developing annual student specific results, see Appendix G.

A. Life-long Learning

i) Post Secondary Education

Some students may choose post secondary education after high school. Persons with disabilities have the right to reasonable accommodation within post secondary institutions. Post secondary institutions may require skills or specific prerequisites for acceptance that often demand long term preparation, such as particular course credits or skills. The transition planning team may support a student in areas such as:

- exploring the student's areas of interest, strengths and needs
- supporting self-determination and self-advocacy skills
- helping the student develop skills needed for post secondary education (ex: effective study strategies, literacy, computer skills, communication)
- learning what the entrance requirements are for post secondary institutions
- identifying disability services available in post secondary institutions
- helping the student in the application process
- arranging for assistive technical devices and investigate the portability of specialized equipment from one system of support to another

For information on post-secondary education institutes in Manitoba, see the Advanced Education and Literacy website at: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/unicoll/index.html.

ii) Other Community Programs and Training Options

Students who do not choose post secondary education may benefit from other community programs or training opportunities to advance their employment or community life after graduation. The transition planning team needs to assure that the student and the family are able to access information on available community resources.

For information on community programs and training for Manitobans with exceptional needs, see www.contactmb.org/.

MB4Youth connects to services and programs for young adults from education to jobs, from driver licensing programs, to environmental projects. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/mb4youthdivision/

B. Employment/Career Development

Work is the key means to achieve to independence, contribute to society, develop social relationships and establish self-esteem for many citizens. For this reason this area is particularly important in transition planning for students with exceptional needs. Some students may require specific individual supports for career development. Through career development a student may:

- earn high school credits
- learn and practise pre-vocational social skills
- develop employability skills
- expand resumes and career portfolios
- make contacts with people in the business community
- adjust employment expectations, explore employment options and narrow job search focus

C. Building Social Networks and Inclusion

This area may involve developing friendships, collaborating with others and participating in social and cultural events. Areas the transition planning team may address include:

- developing social skills
 - offering and asking for help
 - negotiating conflict
- increasing social integration/networking opportunities
 - maximizing inclusive placement with peers and general public
 - exploring interests, hobbies, volunteer and leisure activities
- meeting with those who interact with the student to help them
 - understand the characteristics, strengths and needs of the student
 - communicate comfortably and successfully with the student

Career Development Curriculum

Manitoba's career development curriculum are developed by Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth to help schools prepare students for their future careers. The following five themes included in Manitoba's life/work exploration curriculum are a guide for transition planning for all students, including those with exceptional needs:

- personal management
- career exploration
- learning and planning
- job seeking and job maintenance
- career and community experiences

D. Living in the Community with Independence

This area addresses the personal management, community participation and self-advocacy issues that an independent adult faces in the community. Examples include:

- personal management
 - daily household tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping
 - personal care, hygiene
- community participation
 - voting
 - accessing community facilities, resources
- self-advocacy
 - self-awareness (strengths, weakness, specific needs)
 - awareness of potential risks and abuse and ways to prevent or deal with them

For some students, increasing independence will require specific training and supports. To be effective, the instruction and assistance should be combined with community-based experiences, in places where those skills are mostly likely to be used. Since many activities in the home environment involve these independent living skills, collaboration with home is necessary in helping the student develop and generalize necessary life skills.

4. Plan Implementation and Review

Effective implementation of the plan requires ongoing communication among the team members. Implementation also requires that S.M.A.R.T. outcomes which include practical, effective instructional and assessment strategies are in place.

SSO's should be S.M.A.R.T.

- **Specific:** written in clear, unambiguous language
- **Measurable:** allow student achievement to be described, assessed, and evaluated
- **Achievable:** realistic for the student
- **Relevant:** meaningful for the student
- **Time-related:** can be accomplished within a specified time period, typically one school year

The identified learning outcomes and instructional strategies are clearly understood by all team members involved on a daily basis.

Implementing the plan also involves:

- securing appropriate co-operation, partnerships, resources and services to implement the plan
- maintaining ongoing communication with the student, parents, and other team members
- monitoring the progress of implementation
- revising and adapting the plan as necessary
- communicating of the progress and outcomes of the plan with team members
- reviewing and updating the plan annually

Problem Solving/Dispute Resolution

Transition planning involves a number of people working together for a common purpose. Different opinions are a natural part of working relationships. Sometimes these differences lead to disagreements or disputes. Informal dispute resolution is a co-operative, creative, problem solving process.

Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities is a resource to support local school and school division dispute resolution policies and practices.

***Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities* can be found at:**
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/problem_solving/index.html

