

Summer 2005

A Manual for Transitioning Students with Disabilities into Post High School

John McDonald

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ABSTRACT

A Manual for Transitioning Students with Disabilities into Post High School

By

John McDonald

This project examined the components of an effective transition plan to help students at the secondary level have successful post-high school outcomes. The review of current research indicates that when families, students, teaching of self-determination skills, and collaboration with adult service agencies occurred the likelihood of a positive outcome increased. Included is a secondary level transition planning guide that focused on family and student participation in the transition planning process, several example lessons on self-determination skills, and adult service agencies to link students with before exiting the public school system. The overall purpose of the guide was to increase positive post-high school outcomes for students with learning disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was a success due to many individuals who sustained me during the trying times of work, school, and personal life all at once. My good friends Owen Simmerer, Gayle Anderson, Sandy Tossini, Cathy McLynne, and Kris Aronson were great in providing moral support during my countless hours of typing and reading.

I would also like to thank Dr. Shelly for his patience and perseverance with me while working on this project and being a great instructor. Dr. Thyfault, Dr. Fennerty, and Dr. Nourse for their guidance and instruction that reaffirmed my belief about the public school system. Also, Crystal Weddington, the person who seems to have all the answers and has been helpful during my entire program.

My mentors, Pat Larson and Julie Melver who have been two of my biggest supporters during my graduate school experience. They have offered encouragement, advice, and assistance beyond anything I could have asked them to provide during their busy professional lives.

My students who I am proud to be their teacher and watch them grow and learn. I especially write this guide for them because I want to see them succeed in life, be independent, and have great futures. My students are my inspiration for the work I do everyday and the reason I continue to teach and write this guide.

Last, but not least, my family. Tina (mom), Rick (dad), Matt (brother), Nicole (sister-in-law), Asasia (niece), and Quentin (nephew) for their unwavering love and support through thick and thin. They have always provided me with love, encouragement, and the sense to succeed in life through education. Without their guidance and love, I would not be where I am today.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

"Transition to adult roles can be a complicated process, one that all youths must negotiate, and a myriad of factors work together to affect students' lives after school completion." (Kohler, P. & Field, S, 2003, p. 174)

The U.S. Department of Education started emphasizing the importance of transition for youth's with disabilities since the mid-1980s (Johnson, D., 2004). The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) (2002) cited studies that indicated that students with disabilities had a higher dropout rate; lower levels of academic achievement; higher levels of unemployment; social isolation; and a lower participation rate in higher education and training programs. Johnson (2002) emphasized that the challenge was especially greatest for students with learning disabilities (32%) and emotional/behavioral disabilities (50%) for not completing high school. Students with disabilities not completing high school was seen as one of the problems in special education nationally (Johnson, D., 2002).

Warger and Burnette (2000) viewed transition planning as more than a route from high school to post school employment but a comprehensive educational program that was aligned with the student's post school goals. In addition, Katsiyannis and Zhang (2001) noted that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required schools to focus transition services based on student goals in the areas of post school employment, postsecondary education, adult services, community participation, and independent living. Going further, Katsiyannis and Zhang emphasized that transition

plans must take into account student interests and preferences. Furthermore, Grigal M., Test, D. W., Beattie, J., & Wood, W. M. (1997) added that meaningful activities must then be selected to enable students to reach their transition goals.

Luecking, R. G., Crane, K., & Mooney, M. (2002) stated that interagency collaboration was a key component of helping youth with disabilities make the transition from high school to adult life. Adding to this argument, Crane et al (2004) noted that schools and adult service agencies typically work in isolation from one another. In addition, Grigal (2002) believed that most adult service agency personnel were not involved in transition planning for youth with disabilities.

Grigal et al (1997) suggested that many transition plans included unclear outcomes and activities, were not future oriented, and did not include best practices. Adding to this, deFur (2001) stated that transition plans should be an ongoing process that was subject to change as student's interest changes. Kohler and Field (2003) asserted that transition plans that included interagency collaboration, vocational training, and parental involvement had a positive impact on the transitions of youth with disabilities.

Johnson (2002) declared that youth with disabilities, no matter how severe their disability might be, are the most important person on the transition planning team. Emphasizing on that point, Katsiyannis and Zhang (2001) reported that the student should be the center of the whole transition process. Warger and Burnette (2000) explained that at the age of 14, youth with disabilities must be invited to their IEP meetings when the discussion will be around transition planning. Extending on this, John (2004) suggested that parents and teachers prepare youth with disabilities in order to participate effectively at the transition planning meeting.

No one knows their own children better than their parents (Lankard, 1993). Kerka (1987) emphasized that parents play a major part on influencing their child's attitudes and feelings towards life and future careers. Adding emphasis to this, Katsiyannis and Zhang (2001) pointed out that active parental involvement in the transition planning process was a predictor to how successful a youth with disability would transition into adult life. Accordingly, Johnson (2004) affirmed this by indicating research has shown that active parent participation leads to successful transition to adulthood for students with disabilities. Peterson (2004) stated that families often want to protect their children with disabilities because their teenager wants to experience individuality. However, Johnson (2002) emphasized that parents must be involved in all aspects of transition planning for their child.

Statement of the Problem

How can parents participate meaningfully in transition planning? How can schools adequately prepare students to participate meaningfully in planning their transition into adulthood? How can schools involve adult service agencies to meet the transition needs of students?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to design a manual to help individualized education program (IEP) teams to effectively involve parents, students, and adult service agencies in planning the transition of youth with disabilities into post high school. This project was specifically designed for use in planning for transitions for students 14 and older in the Highline School District in Seattle, Washington.

Limitations of the Project

This project has the following limitations:

The transition guide was primarily designed to be used with students who are 14 and older in the public school system. The transition guide was primarily designed for students who have identified disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Research

The review of literature was limited to research conducted and articles written within the past twenty years. Further information was gathered from secondary schools in the State of Washington.

Definition of Terms

Major terms used in this study include the following:

Transition services: A coordinated set of activities that was outcome oriented and will assist the student in making the transition from school to the adulthood (Grigal et al, 1997).

Student: Was a student who has an identified disability and was in need of special education and related services (IDEA, 1997).

Parent: A person who has knowledge regarding their child and the one common element in the student's life as they make the transition from school to adulthood.

Adult Service Agency: Adult service agencies can include vocational rehabilitation, mental health, postsecondary education that link students experiences in school with employment, independent living, and training (NCSET, 2002).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The law that defines special education as specially designed instruction provided at no cost to the parents. (GPO, 1997).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written statement that was developed and revised based on a child's disability. (GPO, 1997)

Self-determination: Was a belief that every individual had the right to choose their own path in life. (Bremer, Kachgal, & Schoeller, 2003)

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM SELECTED SOURCES

Introduction

Students with disabilities have a particular disadvantage in today's economy due to advances in technology that have eliminated the need for unskilled and semiskilled workers (Goldstein, 1982). Goldstein (1982) revealed that students with emotional, social, and/or academic disabilities are at disadvantage when there was a higher rate of unemployment due to economic conditions. However, Naylor (1985) emphasized that no matter what; students with disabilities have to move from the safety net of the school to the competitive world market economy where they will compete with others for work. As stated by Johnson (2004), coordinated planning of a student's transition from school to adult life was important for a higher probability of success. The major area of focus on transition planning for IEP teams should be about how students with disabilities will access postsecondary environments (Stodden, Grigal & Hart, 2004). Peterson (2004) argued that most often IEP teams focus primarily on academic and career development at the expense of social, psychological, emotional, and sexual developmental needs. Expanding on this, Grigal et al (1997) suggested that IEP teams should take into account instruction, community experiences, development of employment skills, and when appropriate, daily living skills.

The Need for a Comprehensive Transition Plan

McAfee and Greenawalt (2001) declared that schools should be measured by the success of their graduates after high school. Katsiyannis and Zhang (2001) discovered

that post high school outcomes for students with disabilities included lower employment rates, lower earnings potential, and lower rates of satisfaction with their lives. Harvey (2001) stated that special education was designed to help students with disabilities have a successful post high school outcome.

McNair and Rusch (1990) surveyed 200 families and discovered that only 30% participated in the transition planning while 70% of parents desired meaningful participation in transition planning. Expanding on this, Katsiyannis & Zhang (2001) explained that parents are often faced with the unknown of changing from the school system to the adult service system due to its unfamiliarity. Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood (1997) discovered that student attendance was also lacking when the discussion involved transition planning and adult services staff were not involved in assisting in the development of transition plans. Warger & Burnette (2000) reported that students who were not prepared on how to participate in their IEP meeting did not understand what was being discussed and that they felt that members of the IEP team did not hear what they had to say.

A status report was written by Johnson (2004) for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction of Washington State regarding the status of post school outcomes for special education graduates with the class of 2003. Johnson (2004) contacted 2610 young adults for a survey. According to Johnson (2004), only 14% or 133 of youth were participating in a vocational training program through an interagency linkage. After an examination of student IEPs, 71% or 1862 had identified an adult agency on the IEP. However, only 90% of those students had made contact with those agencies after graduation. Johnson (2004) recommended that every IEP should include an interagency

linkage to support students with their post school lives. In a reported final outcome by Johnson (2004), students with disabilities was experiencing a decrease in the number of students with disabilities actively employed after leaving the public school system.

Components of a Comprehensive Transition Plan

According to the combined works of Kohler & Field (2003), Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, & Mack (2002), deFur (2001), and Johnson (2004), there were several components to the development of a comprehensive transition plan. Those components included:

1. Student-focused transition planning
2. Student self-determination skills
3. Interagency collaboration
4. Family involvement in transition planning

Student-focused Transition Planning

deFur (2001) asserted that students should be invited to their IEP meetings because the student is at the center of the process. Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin (2000) affirmed this by stating students that are 14 years old or older must be invited to their IEP meeting when the discussion involves transition planning. In addition, Warger & Burnette (2000) concluded that student's need to participate in their transition planning so their input was valued and attainable. Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn (2004) indicated that students need to be involved in planning their future.

Kohler & Field (2003) believed that student-focused transition planning should be around a student's interest and goals. Katsiyannis & Zhang (2001) contended that

transition plans must be individualized to the student's unique needs. Peterson (2004) emphasized that the IEP team should also focus on other variables related to the student including social, emotional, and psychological needs of the student when creating their transition plan.

Student Self-Determination Skills

Thoma, Baker, & Saddler (2002) reported that teaching self-determination was considered a best practice for helping students prepare for adult life. Thoma, Nathanson, Baker, & Tamura (2002) revealed that self-determination skills were an important issue for students with disabilities. Bremer, Kachgal, & Schoeller (2003) reported that students that acquired self-determination skills had a better chance of being successful in the adult world. Warger & Burnette (2000) believed that the teaching of self-determination skills should begin as early as elementary school.

According to Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood (1997) self-determination skills were often not included in a student's transition plan. Johnson (2004) stated that students with disabilities need to learn self-determination skills so they can meaningfully participate in their IEP meetings. Katsiyannis & Zhang (2001) reported that students who learned self-determination skills were active participants in their IEP meeting and were likely to meet their transition goals set out in their IEP.

Bremer, Kachgal, & Schoeller (2003) proposed that self-determination skills should encompass goal setting, decision making skills, and self-advocacy. In agreement, Thoma, Baker, & Saddler (2002) added that these students also needed to learn how to monitor their progress towards their goals. Expanding on this, Johnson (2004) said that

students who learn self-determination skills were more likely to achieve positive outcomes both at school and in the adult world.

Bremer, Kachgal, & Schoeller (2003) believed that self-determination was best learned through real world experiences. Real world experiences included taking risks, making mistakes, and learning from those risks and mistakes. (Bremer et al, 2003).

Thoma, Nathanson, Baker, & Tamura (2002) added that teachers must also be willing to listen to students when they voice their opinions.

Interagency Collaboration

According to Luecking, Crane, & Mooney (2002), interagency collaboration has been often mentioned as an important factor in moving students with disabilities from school to the adult world. Research conducted by Mellard & Lancaster (2003) suggested that there are many adult service agencies in the community that can provide services to adults with disabilities after they leave the public school system. However, Crane, Gramlich, & Peterson (2004) countered that a major obstacle to positive post school outcomes was the lack of access to adult service agencies by students with disabilities.

Johnson (2004) stated that collaboration was needed between the school system and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to increase the likelihood of a favorable outcome for youth with disabilities. According to Mellard & Lancaster (2003), they revealed that to qualify for services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was different than qualifying under IDEA 1997. Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack (2002) discovered that students with disabilities who accessed services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had a more beneficial outcome on post school adult living.

Scholars agree that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was not the only agency that IEP teams should be working with in planning a student's transition from school to adult living (Katsiyanniz & Zhang, 2001, Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin, 2000). Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin (2000) reported that mental health agencies will need to be involved if the student has an emotional/behavioral disability. The Study Group (1998) suggested a connection with the Social Security Administration for cash benefits and possibly linking with the Work Incentives program for benefits if they qualify as being disabled under federal law.

Family Involvement in Transition Planning

Johnson (2002) stated that parents know their children better than anyone else. Expanding on this, Kerka (1987) explained that parents play a major role on their student's attitude towards life and work. According to Katsiyannis & Zhang (2001), parent involvement was a powerful predictor of post school success for students with disabilities. Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, & Mack (2002) suggested that schools actively engage parents regarding their student's transition to the adult world and must be given meaningful and valued roles as members of the IEP team. Katsiyannis & Zhang (2001) concluded that parents are essential members of the IEP team because they have been on the team year after year and will continue to be there even after their student leaves the public school system.

Johnson (2004) indicated that parents play many important roles and act as a service coordinator, teacher, parent, and as a role-model for their students. Doherty (1994) believed that parents were essential in teaching and encouraging students with disabilities to use self-advocacy skills, decision making skills, and to develop autonomy.

Kohler & Field (2003) maintained that family involvement increased self-esteem, improved school attendance, a higher probability of attending higher education, and a reduced drop-out rate.

Summary

Coordination of services with adult service agencies, parent involvement, and student involvement in the transition planning process has often been cited by many experts as an essential component to planning. Comprehensive transition planning was often the result of a group of individuals that assisted a student with disabilities in planning their post high school outcomes and what the student needed to learn in school in order to reach their desired outcomes. Parent involvement was considered to be the indicator that predicted a successful transition outcome. Adult service agencies were considered as an important support for students in obtaining and acquiring training and life skills. Students were emphasized by many experts as the person most vital to the transition planning process since they were at the center of the planning process and the most important contributor to their own future.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive transition planning manual to be used at the high school and middle school levels in the Highline School District; specifically at the New Start Alternative High School and Cascade Middle School. In order to achieve this objective, a review of related literature and research was conducted and the information was analyzed. In addition, transition planning manuals from area school districts and high schools were obtained and utilized as resources in the development of this project.

Rationale for the Project

According to Katsiyannis, deFur, & Conderman (1998), students with disabilities continue to have higher drop out rates during high school, higher unemployment rates, and a general dissatisfaction with their quality of life. Johnson (2002) described the transition plan as a map that described the route these students took going into the post high school world. Warger & Burnette (2000) further explained that the transition plan was a thorough educational program that was aligned with the student's educational goals for post high school.

It is this writer's intent to assist IEP team members in the transition planning process at Cascade Middle School and New Start Alternative High School in assisting students in reaching their post high school goals. It is the author's intent to support teachers in their efforts to effectively write and implement transition plans that will help their students achieve their post high school goals.

Procedures for the Project

The writer undertook the following procedures to develop a comprehensive transition planning manual for Highline School District and New Start Alternative High School and Cascade Middle School:

- An extensive review and analysis of related literature was completed.
- Information regarding existing manuals was obtained from:

Seattle PS (Public Schools)
Seattle, WA

Federal Way PS
Federal Way, WA

Tukwila PS
Tukwila, WA

Everett PS
Everett, WA

Highline PS
Burien, WA

Edmonds PS
Lynnwood, WA

Tacoma PS
Tacoma, WA

Mukilteo PS
Everett, WA

Kent PS
Kent, WA

Renton PS
Renton, WA

Implementation

The implementation of the transition planning manual for the Highline School District and New Start Alternative High School and Cascade Middle School was planned to take place as a pilot program for the school district over the 2005-2006 school year. Coordination of the project was to be done by a team of teachers and administrators at New Start Alternative High School and Cascade Middle School. All staff members at New Start Alternative High School and Cascade Middle School were introduced to the plan at a March in-service day by the implementation team. The team was critical to the instruction of staff about the program and its proper implementation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive transition planning guide for students with learning disabilities at the high and middle school levels. The following guide was developed to assist current and future New Start and Cascade

Middle School staff in planning comprehensive transition plans for students with learning disabilities. This guide includes contacts, forms, recommended timelines, and lessons to effectively plan for a student's transition to the adult world. Teachers, social workers, families, students, and other staff will be able to use this guide as a way to plan for the transition of students with learning disabilities into the adult world and to be used by future staff. Operating as a resource for staff, students, and families, the "Transition Planning Guide," will become an important part of the IEP process and planning the futures of students.

A Manual for Transitioning Students with Disabilities into Post High School

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SECTION 1

An Introduction to the Transition Planning Guide

The Development Process

The writer of this guide began this project after determining that there was a need for the development of a comprehensive transition planning guide. This determination was made based on conclusions found in the IEP meetings of school year 2003-2004 at New Start Alternative School and Cascade Middle School. It was decided that New Start Alternative School and Cascade Middle School needed a comprehensive transition planning guide to assist IEP teams in writing comprehensive transition plans. Additionally, transition planning guides were obtained from surrounding school districts for review. Finally, several lessons were incorporated to help students acquire the different skills for self-determination.

The Delivery Model

The comprehensive transition planning guide for New Start Alternative School and Cascade Middle School was implemented during the 2004-2005 school year after staff training. It was presented by the writer to the staffs of New Start Alternative School and Cascade Middle School. The applicable contents of the guide were then presented to students and parents during the actual school year prior to their annual student's IEP meeting.

Section 2

Interagency Involvement

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
- ~~Washington State Health Care Authority~~
- Healthy Kids Now!
- Economic Services Administration
- Social Security Administration
- Mental Health Agencies

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is to assist individuals with disabilities to gain and keep steady employment. In turn, steady employment will allow an individual to live independently in their community.

DVR Services

Assessment services in the form of medical, psychiatric, social and psychological evaluations are provided so DVR can assess the individual's strengths and limitations.

Vocational assessment is used to identify an individual's interests, job readiness, and possible careers.

Counseling and guidance is a process utilized to review evaluation results, match possible career interest with job market opportunities, and to develop a vocational rehabilitation plan.

Restoration is the use of medical treatments to increase the likelihood of successful employment and retention of their job.

Job preparation is the acquisition of skills for an individual to gain employment.

Support services might include accessing transportation; purchasing of supplies and/or tools; or support for independent living.

Job match/placement is a service that is designed to match individuals with work opportunities that match their interest and capabilities.

Follow-up is used to track an individual's progress on the job for at least 90 days to check for successful employment.

Post-employment services are used to provide short-term support to individuals after they have been working, that are necessary for them to continue with their employment.

Independent living services is used to evaluate and provide services that assist an individual with everyday life issues that may interfere with their vocational rehabilitation process.

Assistive technology services are used to assist a person who may have technology needs that will improve, maintain, or increase their functional capabilities.

Adapted from DVR Services web page. www1.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/aboutdvr/dvrservices.htm. Accessed on January 10, 2005.

Qualifying for DVR Services

An individual must meet the criteria set out in law to qualify for services with DVR. There are three categories that determine an individual's placement on the DVR waiting list.

- Most Severely Disabled (Priority 1)
- Severely Disabled (Priority 2)
- Not Severely Disabled (Priority 3)

DVR uses the following functional categories to determine limitations towards employment:

- Communication
- Interpersonal Skills
- Mobility
- Self-Direction
- Self-Care
- Work Skills
- Work Tolerance

When should the IEP team involve DVR?

If the student could meet the category of “Most Severely Disabled,” the IEP team should look at involving DVR when they are 17 or one year prior to graduation. The waiting list for DVR services, which they consider “Most Severely Disabled,” can expect a wait of a year or less. For students who may be considered “Severely Disabled,” these individuals should look at applying for services when they are 16 years of age because the waiting list time can range from 1 to 2 years. Plan on scheduling the student’s IEP meeting with your DVR counselor at least one month in advance.

How can I help my student and their parents/guardians be prepared for the IEP meeting involving a DVR counselor?

Documentation is the key to obtaining services through DVR. It is helpful at the meeting to have the following information that details the individual’s disability:

- ✓ Current educational evaluation
- ✓ Current Individual Education Program
- ✓ Current Medical Records
- ✓ Current Psychiatric and/or Psychological Records
- ✓ State Identification or Driver’s License and social security card or birth certificate.
- ✓ A completed application for Vocation Rehabilitation Services.

Who do I contact to initiate a referral for DVR services?

Contact information for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation can be found at the following internet address: <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/dvr/schooltransition/search.aspx>

Contact information used with permission from DVR.

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

The mission of the Division of Developmental Disabilities is to “assist individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to obtain services and supports based on individual preference, capabilities and needs, and which promotes everyday activities, routines and relationships common to most citizens.” (DDD, 2003)

DDD Services

Case management is used “to identify interest and needs, coordinate planning and development of resources, and monitor service delivery.” (DDD, 2003)

Medicaid personal care provides personal care assistance to individuals who need assistance in at least one personal care task in that individual’s home or group care setting.

Employment services are supports and training for individuals to obtain paid jobs.

Community access helps individuals who are eligible to participate in their communities through advocacy and education.

Community supports include medical, dental, professional therapies, and other medically necessary treatments.

Voluntary placement foster care program is a program that allows individual’s under the age of 18 to be voluntarily placed in foster care under certain circumstances.

Residential services are provided to individuals in a variety of living alternatives.

Residential habilitation centers are provided to individuals who need skills development or have unique medical needs.

Adapted from DDD (2003). Services provided. <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/services.shtml> accessed on January 10, 2005.

Qualifying for DDD Services.

To qualify for DDD services an individual must have a “developmental disability that starts before age 18, results in a substantial handicap, and is expected to continue indefinitely may be eligible for DDD services.” (DDD, 2003)

According to DDD, the following disabilities qualify as a developmental disability:

- Mental retardation
- Developmental delay (ages birth to 6)
- Cerebral palsy
- Epilepsy
- Autism
- Another neurological condition or other conditions similar to mental retardation.

When should the IEP team involve DDD?

The IEP team should involve DDD as soon as they have knowledge that a student may have a developmental disability as defined by DDD.

How can I help my student and their parents/guardians be prepared for the IEP meeting involving a representative from DDD?

Documentation is the key to obtaining services from DDD. It is helpful to have the following documentation that details the individual's disability:

- ✓ Current education evaluation
- ✓ Current Individual Education Program
- ✓ Current medical records
- ✓ Current psychiatric and/or psychological records
- ✓ State Identocard and social security card or birth certificate.
- ✓ A completed application for DDD services.

Who do I contact to initiate an in-take for DDD services?

Contact DDD directly to initiate a referral for services. The contact information is:

DDD

1700 East Cherry Street

Seattle, WA 98122

206-568-5700

dd4fso@dshs.wa.gov

Washington State Health Care Authority

Access to health care can be a barrier to successful transition to the adult world.

Washington State has a state sponsored health plan called *Basic Health*. *Basic Health* has several health plans for individuals to choose from that fits their needs. Individuals apply to the program and pay a premium each month for their health care. The premium is

based on the individual's income and household size. Qualifying for services is on a first come first served basis so applying early may allow the individual to qualify for health care as they are leaving the school system. The internet address for Basic Health is www.basichealth.hca.wa.gov/.

Healthy Kids Now!

Healthy Kids Now! is a Medicaid program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services. Healthy Kids Now! offers individuals under the age of 19 free or reduced health care. Individuals may apply on their own behalf, parents may apply for their students, and others such as school staff may also apply for individuals. Healthy Kids Now! covers individuals until they are 19 years of age. In order to receive coverage under Healthy Kids Now! an individual must complete the *Application for Children's Medical Benefits*. If the student currently receives care under Healthy Kids Now! they must reapply before turning 18 years old in order to maintain their coverage until they are 19 years old. The web site address for Healthy Kids Now! is www.healthykidsnow.net/.

Economic Services Administration

The Economic Services Administration provides many benefits for low income individuals. Some of the benefits provided by the Economic Services Administration include:

- Cash Assistance
- Food Assistance
- Medical Assistance
- General Assistance for the Unemployable
- Nursing Home Care or Assisted Living

The Economic Services Administration can provide a valuable support for individuals with disabilities by providing some of the basic living supports necessary. Most individuals can apply for services whenever they feel the need to as the wait time for an application is not very long. The Internet address for the Economic Services Administration is www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/.

Social Security Administration (SSA)

The Social Security Administration provides several important services for individuals with disabilities while in school and getting ready to transition to the adult world.

The Social Security Number

Find out if your student has a social security number by asking them if they have a social security card. If they do not have a social security number or have misplaced their card encourage them to apply for a new social security number or for a replacement card. An application for a new social security number or for a duplicate card follows the Social Security Administration section. Review with the student the necessary documents that will be needed to obtain a new social security number or a duplicate card. Encourage the student to mail the application to the SSA or go to the local SSA office.

Supplemental Security Income Disability Benefits (SSI)

Applying for social security benefits begins by filling out and mailing in a *Referral for Social Security Disability Benefits* form from the Department of Social and Health Services.

CHILD SSI:

In order for a child to qualify for SSI Disability Benefits they must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ He or she has a physical or mental condition(s) that very seriously limits his or her activities; and
- ✓ The condition has lasted, or is expected to last, at least one year or is expected to result in death. (SSA, 2003)

The SSA will obtain information from a variety of sources including those that have diagnosed the individual with a physical or mental condition and information from the school.

Timeline: Average time it takes to be approved for SSI Disability Benefits is 3 to 5 months.

Important: SSI Disability Benefits for children terminate at the age of 18 years old.

Therefore, it is important for individuals to reapply for disability benefits prior to age 18.

ADULT SSI:

In order for an adult to qualify for SSI Disability Benefits they must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Must be unable to do any substantial work because of your medical condition(s); and
- ✓ Your medical condition(s) must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least one year, or be expected to result in your death. (SSA, 2003)

The SSA will obtain information from a variety of sources including those that have diagnosed the individual with a physical or mental condition and information from your most recent employer.

Timeline: Average time it takes to be approved for SSI Disability Benefits is 3 to 5 months. IEP teams will want to encourage the individual to begin applying for SSI

Disability benefits at 17 years and 6 months old.

The internet address for the Social Security Administration is www.ssa.gov/.

Mental Health Agencies

Mental health issues can be a major barrier towards any individual transitioning from the public school system to the adult world. Individuals with emotional and/or behavioral problems can be tiered for mental health counseling during their time in the public school system. In many cases, the mental health counseling ends when the individual turns 18 and exits the public school system. Continuation of mental health counseling services can be vital for these individuals as they face the challenges of the adult world. To be tiered with a mental health counseling agency an individual must choose an organization and arrange for an intake meeting. Individuals with state Medicaid are often tiered quickly and services start sooner as compared with individuals using private insurance. The following is a list of local community mental health counseling agencies:

Seattle Mental Health

206-302-2300

<http://www.smh.org/>

8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday

Highline-West Seattle Mental Health

206-248-8226

<http://www.highlinementalhealth.org/>

8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Consejo Counseling and Referral Service (Spanish)

206-461-4880

<http://www.consejo-wa.org/>

Atlantic Street Center (African-American)

206-329-2050

<http://www.atlanticstreet.org/>

9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Asian Counseling and Referral Service

(Asian and Pacific Islander)

206-695-7610

<http://www.acrs.org/>

Ruth Dykeman Youth and Family Services

206-243-5544

<http://www.rdcc.org/>

Adult Agency Contacts

| Government Agency | Phone Number |
|---|--------------|
| Division of Developmental Disabilities | 206-568-5700 |
| Division of Vocational Rehabilitation | 206-439-3703 |
| Social Security Administration | 800-772-1213 |
| Division of Disability Determination Services | 206-654-7216 |
| Healthy Kids Now! | 877-KIDS-NOW |
| Basic Health | 800-660-9840 |
| Economic Services Administration | 800-865-7801 |
| Mental Health Agency | Phone Number |
| Seattle Mental Health | 206-302-2300 |
| Highline-West Seattle Mental Health | 206-248-8226 |
| Consejo Counseling and Referral Service | 206-461-4880 |
| Atlantic Street Center | 206-329-2050 |
| Asian Counseling and Referral Service | 206-695-7610 |
| Ruth Dykeman Youth and Family Services | 206-243-5544 |

Adapted from Federal Way Public Schools (2005). Adult agency contacts list.

Section Three
Student Involvement

Student Involvement

The student is the most important member of the IEP team when it comes to transition planning. The student is at the center of the entire planning process for their future. The IEP teacher must make sure that the student is able to give adequate input into their plan through the use of inventories, questionnaires, and interviews.

Questionnaires and interviews should focus on collecting as much information about the student as possible. Some examples of information that can be collected includes perceived strengths and weaknesses; favorite activities; work experience; and interest. This information will assist the IEP team in formulating appropriate goals and objectives to help the student reach their post high school goals.

Inventories can be used to assess the student's career interest. Inventories have a number of questions in several different areas including working as a team or individually, good with numbers, and likes to edit. The information from these inventories allows the IEP team to look at agencies outside of the school system to provide training, education, and/or experience for acquiring job skills.

Student Interview Questions

Student's Name:

Date:

1. What classes do you enjoy? Why do you enjoy them?
2. What classes do you not enjoy the most? Why do you not enjoy these classes?
3. What kind of teachers do you get along with best? Why do you think so?
4. What academic subjects do you feel you are best at doing?
5. What academic subjects do you feel you have the most difficulty at doing?

6. Have you had any paid jobs?

7. Which jobs did you like and why?

8. Which jobs did you not like and why?

9. What do you like doing for recreation and leisure (fun)? Why?

Adapted from Everett Public Schools (2005). Transition planning for post-school outcomes.

Section Four
Family Involvement

Family Involvement

Family participation in the transition planning process is a powerful predictor of their student's success in transitioning to the adult world. Families often have hopes, dreams, and desires for their own children and need to be heard. Families are also a powerful ally and advocate for their child and will always be a supporter of their child and a

coordinator of transition activities as school staff come and go or the student moves on to another school. Families are also a wealth of information on their own children. When an individual with disabilities underestimate their own skills, abilities, likes and dislikes a parent can provide that information to the IEP team.

IEP teams must also keep in mind that their child with disabilities will be leaving the comfort of the public school system into the perceived chaotic adult world. Transition planning should be used as a time to strengthen existing relationships while helping the family establish new relationships and partnerships with adult service agencies. A list of transition activities that a parent can assist with is on the following page.

Family transition activity checklist

| Activity | Agency/Person | Date Activity completed |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Apply for a social security card. | Social Security Office | |
| 2. Apply for a state ID card or Drivers License. | Department of Licensing | |
| 3. Apply for reduced fare bus pass. | Metro | |
| 4. Register for Selective Service (Males only). | Post Office | |
| 5. Apply for Voter's card. | Library | |
| 6. Apply for Supplemental Security Income. | Social Security Administration | |
| 7. Apply for medical assistance. | DSHS | |
| 8. Attend IEP meetings. | Teacher | |
| 9. Complete vocational assessments. | Teacher | |
| 10. Apply for services with DVR/DDD. | Teacher/DVR/DDD | |

Adapted from Everett Public Schools (2005). Transition planning for post-school outcomes.

Family Interview Questions

Student Name:

Date:

- 1 . Does or has your child worked on a job for which they were paid?

- 2 . Was your child successful at these jobs? Why or why not?
- 3 . What do you see as your child's future job or career? Why?
- 4 . What skills do you believe that your child needs to learn to be successful at that job?
- 5 . Do you believe that your child needs to participate in a vocational education program? Which programs and why do you think they will help prepare your child for future employment?

Adapted from Everett Public Schools (2005). Transition planning for post-school outcomes.

Section Five
Self-Determination Skills

Skills to be learned

Self-determination skills are an important aspect of a student's development into adulthood. Students need to learn how to set goals for themselves so they have a target to aim for and can develop a plan for how they will get to that goal. Students also need to develop decision making skills so they may become informed decision makers. Students need to be able to make a decision based on pros and cons and what they want their eventual outcome to be. Students will need to become aware of their own abilities. This will effect the decisions they will make on jobs and activities. Students need to develop a realistic picture of their own abilities and how it can effect the decisions they will make.

Goal Setting

Steps to teach for goal setting:

1. Decide what goal you want to obtain.
2. Gather as much information as you can about how to obtain the goal.
3. Think about the steps you will need to take to obtain that goal and plan it out.
4. Start on step one of your plan.

First, model the skill of goal setting by providing the students with an example. Model the skill by thinking each step aloud. Second, practice goal setting by writing a goal together as a class. Brainstorm ideas with the class on possible goals. This could be a class goal or an individual's goal. For the last step, have students set their own goals and steps on how to obtain their goals.

Decision Making

Steps to teach for decision making:

1. Think about the issue that requires you to make a decision.
2. Think about the choices you could make about the issue.
3. Find out information about your choices.
4. Rethink your possible choices with the information that you have learned.
5. Make a choice that you think is best for you.

First, model the skill of decision making by providing the students with an example.

Model the skill by thinking each step aloud. Second, practice decision making as a group by coming up with an important decision a young adult would have to make. Have students brainstorm possible choices. Have students talk to each other about the possible choices and their pros and cons. Have class choose the choice that they think is best for them. For the last step, have students practice decision making through the use of different scenarios that they may encounter at school and in the adult world.

For educational purposes only and adapted from: Goldstein, A. P., McGinnis, E., Sprafkin, R. P., Gershaw, N. J. & Klein, P. (1997). Skillstreaming the adolescent. Research Press: Champaign, IL p. 116.

Assessing your own abilities

Steps to teach for assessing your own abilities:

1. Think about the ability you would like to use.
2. Think about how successful you were at using this ability in the past.
3. Ask other individuals about this ability.
4. Think about what others have said about your ability and assess how well you think you use that ability.

First, model the skill of assessing your own abilities by providing the students with an example. Model the skill by thinking each step aloud. Second, practice assessing your own abilities and use yourself as an example. Have students' volunteer comments about that ability. Have class choose the choice that they think is best for them. For the last step, have students practice assessing their abilities through the use of small groups. Have students come up with an ability they want to assess and to receive feedback from a peer.

For educational purposes only and adapted from: Goldstein, A. P., McGinnis, E., Sprafkin, R. P., Gershaw, N. J. & Klein, P. (1997). Skillstreaming the adolescent. Research Press: Champaign, IL p. 113

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CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop a transition planning guide to be used by teachers at the secondary level in the Highline School District. The manual served as a supplement to strengthen Highline School District's current transition planning procedures. A thorough review of the literature, the obtainment of other school districts transition planning guides, and other related information was used to determine the important components of transition planning. The transition planning guide was written in accordance with relevant district policies, state and federal laws regarding transition services. In the future, this guide will be reviewed for relevant updates by members of the special education teaching staff at the secondary level in Highline School District in accordance with new special education regulations.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, the following conclusions have been ^{reached} made:

1. Transition planning is a collaborative process that involves families, educational staff, and adult service agencies.
2. Development of an effective transition plan is vital for a student's success in the post-high school world.
3. The student is the most critical team member during the transition planning process. The student is at the center of the transition planning process.
4. Families will be the one constant in a student's transition from high school to the post-high school adult world.

1. For a transition planning guide to be effective, it must be periodically reviewed by educational staff at the secondary level.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions the following recommendations have been made:

1. The transition planning process should be focused on the supports that need to be in place to help the student transition successfully into the adult world.
2. The transition planning guide should be made available to all secondary special education teachers to use as a reference.
3. New staff members in special education should be trained and given a copy of the transition planning guide to use as a reference in the IEP process.
4. The transition planning guide needs to be frequently updated to reflect the needs of the current special education population in the Highline School District.
5. The transition planning guide should be made available to not only educational staff but to parents, guardians, and students.

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