

Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance

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Translating Evidence to Support Transitions (TEST)



PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES IN TRANSITION PLANNING

FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Marsha Langer Ellison
Sloan Huckabee
Laura Golden
Kathleen Biebel

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Foreword

Young adults with mental health difficulties are capable of successfully engaging in school, training, and employment. The support these individuals receive as they progress through secondary education can help them realize their potential in life after high school. Many times teachers see different results for these students such as high school drop-out, lower rates of post-secondary education and employment, and even higher rates of involvement with law enforcement, poverty, and homelessness upon their exit from high school; however, with the right information, resources, and determination teachers can make a lasting impact on these students.

To help students with emotional disturbance (ED) to obtain post-secondary success, teachers need resources to assist them with planning and preparing for students' transition from high school into education and training programs and employment in young adulthood. This practice guide will offer practical ways to plan for these students' successful transition from high school to post-secondary life, which can lead to positive outcomes for students with ED.

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About this Guide

What is it?

This guide is for special education teachers and transition planners who serve students with Emotional and related disorders. The guide describes steps to take for involving adult community agencies during the critical period of transition out of high school for students with emotional disturbance. Many high school students may not be aware of the community agencies available to them upon graduation. Community agencies may include state and local agencies, grant-funded foundations, colleges, vocational training programs, non-profit organizations, religious groups, private businesses, and privately funded organizations. This guide is intended to be used by special educators involved in the transition component of the IEP planning process. It can be used as a roadmap and reference for steps and activities that can assure the collaboration of secondary education with the community agencies who will be serving the student next. This can include a range of agencies critical to student outcomes such as Institutes of Higher Education or training, or Departments of Mental Health or Vocational Rehabilitation.

Who is it for?

This guide is for a variety of educators who support and serve students with ED such as special education teachers, transition planners, guidance or mental health counselors, as well as other related service providers who serve students with ED. For this guide, “students with ED” includes students formally identified as having an ED who receive special education services, some students identified as having Other Health Impairment (OHI), or students with IEPs who have behavioral goals. There may be diagnoses and co-occurring disorders among students with ED such as depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, mood swings, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students with other disabilities, or students with 504 plans for whom teachers are providing extra support would also benefit from the material in this guide.

This guide is, in part, intended to help educators increase their awareness of the struggles that students might have with their mental health conditions (MHC). Mental health conditions are invisible disabilities and are not overt to everyone. MHCs can manifest themselves in different ways and conditions can co-occur. Some co-occurring disabilities are, and many more.

Why is it important?

Students with ED often face a cliff during the transition period as child services end and adult services may or may not begin. Students can fall off a cliff after high school and may find themselves:

- “Graduated” out of foster care with no housing
- Having lost SSI benefits with no other benefits
- Suddenly independent with few independent living skills
- Pregnant
- Unemployed with no employment experience and no prospects
- At a loss for pursuing post-secondary education

However, students who receive targeted support while still in high school planning for transition in partnership with representatives from community agencies, colleges, and technical schools, are more likely to experience success in finding employment. Youth with ED also participate in postsecondary education

less frequently and have lower rates of post-school employment than many other categories of students with disabilities. Missed early employment and educational opportunities can result in individuals achieving little economic progress, a pathway that can be difficult to modify later in life.

Consider This:

Students who have a representative from technical schools, community colleges, or 4-year colleges involved in their transition planning are 29 times more likely to be engaged in post-secondary education! (Wagner & Newman, 2012; 2014)

Students who receive transition assistance from between three and six community agencies are more likely to be engaged in post-secondary employment than those who receive assistance from two or fewer community agencies (Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Koterling & Kohler, 2009).

How can Community Agencies be of Assistance?

- Community partners can help prevent chronic absenteeism among students with ED. At every grade level, special education students are frequently absent from school. Chronic absenteeism peaks in high school, where almost one quarter of special education students miss 10% or more of school days (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Students with ED, in particular, may be struggling with symptoms and in some instances need to be hospitalized or receive ongoing treatment that keeps them from school. The transition team can collaboratively identify, with a student and their family, issues (disability-related or not) that are contributing to absences and brainstorm ways to overcome these during the IEP meeting (Attendance Works, n.d.-a). Community partners can be identified as those that can help get students with ED to school when challenges come up (Attendance Works, n.d.-b). An attendance goal for the next school year can be developed which outlines how community partners will help achieve this goal. Resources to facilitate these activities are available on the Attendance Works website.
- Providing information about community/agency/post-secondary-based services available and eligibility requirements
- Brainstorming/collaborating with other transition team partners to identify appropriate services
- Clarifying differences between school program entitlements (particularly the services and assistance provided during their K-12 years as required by IDEA to ensure that students receive a free and appropriate education- FAPE- as required by law for all children in this country and adult services which are provided based on a different set of eligibility criteria
- Providing continuity and implementation support of transition plans across transition years
- Aiding in planning that braids together services received in child/adolescent settings and those offered in adult settings to facilitate a seamless transfer from youth to adult systems
- Assisting in assessing needs for school supports between the ages of 18 and 21 when students may continue in their secondary education as provided by IDEA (states may provide special education services beyond the age of 21, but IDEA requires services to be continued through students' 21st year (if deemed appropriate)
- Assisting in the application process for community, agency, and college supports and services as appropriate

- Alerting students and families about potential waiting lists for services
- Provision of agency or organization services and supports for students, as appropriate, before the student exits the school system

What are you going to find inside?

This guide describes key steps to involve adult community agency staff as partners in the transition process. Included are information about community agencies, action plans for involving them, and checklists for tracking your progress. This guide is designed to be used with the transition planning component of the IEP, and should be implemented when a child turns 16 (as indicated by federal law) or earlier (depending on state law). The guide can be used by transition planners and special education teachers in partnership with students with ED, their parents, and other relevant stakeholders. Although the steps are presented sequentially, we recognize that life is not always linear, and steps may occur in other orders.

I. Planning for Community Partnerships

- ✓ Identify the current involvement of adult service agencies/ organizations in the transition planning process.
- ✓ Identify new potential service agency/organization partners
- ✓ Assist the student and family to identify new or additional community partners to include in their transition planning

I. Planning for Community Partnerships

For students with ED, it is especially important to identify potential challenges the student may encounter between high school and the first years of postsecondary life, such as those involved in moving from child/adolescent services to adult services. For example, by connecting with a student's current service providers and identifying who and where the similar provider in the adult service system is, a teacher could potentially involve both parties to plan for a seamless transition from one organization to the other.

Who is already involved?

- ✓ **Identify current services agency/organization involved in the transition planning process.**

A first step in planning for community partnerships is to review the current IEP and its transition planning component, to identify currently involved services agencies/organizations. In doing so, teachers can become familiar with and understand the history, successes, and challenges involved with those agency relationships. They can then work with students and parents to assess whether these partners continue to be appropriate and relevant.

Who could become involved?

- ✓ **Identify new potential services agency/organization partners.**

New agency and community partnerships may be needed as students' circumstances evolve. For this step, teachers can work with the student and parents to identify new appropriate and relevant agency partners, help them think about the upcoming transition to post-secondary life, and potential supports that could ease that transition. The teacher, student, family members and current community partners can identify appropriate adult serving agencies to reach out to develop relationships. This could involve introducing the student and family to the mission, eligibility criteria, and service models of relevant agencies. The appropriate and desired new adult services agencies/organizations could then be identified in the IEP and subsequently included in transition planning.

For students with ED, involvement of clinicians, therapists, or outpatient agencies in their transition plans may be particularly beneficial. This can help ensure students with ED have the mental health support they need as they prepare for and transition into postsecondary life. This time of transition can be particularly stressful and having the right mental health professionals on a student's side can avert potential emotional difficulties or crises.

It is important to acknowledge that service agencies/ organization partners vary in prevalence and quality across regions and communities. You may not have all desired community partners within easy reach. The fact that this is out of your control can be frustrating. There are ways to become creative to address this, e.g., consider entering into resource-sharing agreements with neighboring towns, counties, or states. Also, do not be afraid to advocate for access to community resources that do not currently exist. You can engage stakeholders in the community and advocate together with others as a team (there is strength in numbers).

Don't be discouraged if there does not seem to be an obvious way to connect students or access services that are not currently available- just let these ideas help make you alert to opportunities that may present

themselves or keep questions in your mind about ways to make things work.

Post-secondary goals of a given student could span the domains of education, employment, and independent living; consequently, familiarity with a wide variety of possible community and governmental agencies is advisable. The matrix on page 6 is an example of one way to document possible agencies and organizations to contact about services. These organizations and individuals may be involved in service provision, providing access to their resources, and connecting with other resources. Once created, the document can assist with building a network of groups and individuals involved in youth and adult serving agencies at the local and state levels that may be helpful in the transition process. An example of a completed resource matrix can be found in Appendix A.

The changing of personnel can be within the school or with the within community partner agencies is a constant. It is encouraged to go over the matrix at least once a year to ensure that the contacts you have listed are up to date. Students should also be encouraged to look at multiple agencies/partners (as a backup plan) and be aware that turnovers are not a common occurrence. Add something about how turnover disrupts relationship that may be forming and be like starting all over and upsetting for the student (but can't be helped).

✓ **Parental Involvement**

There needs to be a partnership with families in creating postsecondary transition goals. The Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR) has parent centers that serve families with children with disabilities and help parents become involved in their child's transition planning. CPIR has either a Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC) in each state, with over 100 locations total in the US and its territories. These centers work with families with children up to age 26. Parents can find their center here: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>. Their website offers webinars and a resource hub that family members can access.

Familial buy-in is needed to combat the historical discouragement of people with mental health conditions from working. Families should encourage youth with ED to attain employment and should not encourage youth with ED to avoid employment in to maintain federal benefits and financial assistance. Students with ED and their families should keep in mind that incentives to pursue employment are available through the Social Security Administration (SSA):

- SSDI recipients have nine trial work months every five years in which to test their ability to work while remaining eligible for cash benefits (Diehl, Douglas & Honberg, 2014).
- Under section 1619 (b) of the Social Security Act, Medicare coverage can continue for up to 93 months after the date of hire (Diehl, Douglas & Honberg, 2014).
- SSA work incentive programs such as the Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS) and the Ticket to Work allow beneficiaries to keep medical benefits until their earnings and benefits are sufficient to cover their expenses (Diehl, Douglas & Honberg, 2014).
- The ABLE Act, enacted in 2014, allows for young adults to save money for “qualifying expenses” such as a car, college, training, healthcare, and prevention and wellness in an ABLE bank account without being taxed by the government on interest accrued. All funds placed in an ABLE account

do not affect SSI status unless they exceed \$100,000 (Mizrahi, R., Duperoy, T., Youth Advisory Board of the Transitions ACR & Logan, D., 2017).

Students with ED pursuing postsecondary training and employment allows these students to utilize their talents and capacities for productivity (Harnois & Gabriel, 2002). Research shows that most adults with mental illnesses want to work and about six out of ten can succeed with appropriate supports (Frounfelker et al., 2011; McQuilken et al., 2003; Mueser, Salyers & Mueser, 2001; Lutterman, 2013). The perception that students with ED would not be successful in a work environment is often not true and limits their community integration, sense of self-efficacy, and independent living prospects. Employment provides time structure, social contact, collective effort and purpose, social identity, and regular activity (Harnois & Gabriel, 2002, p. 5).

Matrix for Including Community Agencies, Technical Schools, and Community Colleges

Contact Information			Transition Domain(s)				Notes
Agency/ Organization	Contact Person Phone Number Email	Post- Secondary Education or Vocational Training	Employment	Independent Living	Community Participation		

The following is a list and description of community and governmental adult-serving agencies to consider when planning for community partnerships. Across the country many service providers have, or are, moving towards divisions geared to providing services for this age group. Because of the relatively recent addition of services targeted to this group, the age of entry at which adult services can be accessed may vary. What this means is that some child serving agencies will provide services beyond the typical age at which youth age out (usually 18). Since this is becoming more common, it is a good idea to check the websites of agencies or organizations to find guidance about their services and age requirements.

1. Mental Healthcare Services

- **What they do:** Services can include accessing the expertise of psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and counselors specializing in mental healthcare (Mental Health in America, n.d.).
- **How they can be involved:** Mental health care providers can be represented in the IEP meeting when a student has goals within the transition component of the IEP related to self-care, independent living, or medication management. The IEP meeting can include outlining a plan for how mental healthcare services will assist a young person in achieving these goals. During the meeting, there also can be an acknowledgment that good mental health is the foundation needed for a young person to be able to pursue their work or postsecondary education goals.
- **Example:** If a student intends to work a 9-5 job after graduating from high school, an agreement can be made between the student and his/her counselor that a weekly appointment will be made available to during the evening hours so the student will not have to give up regularly engaging in counseling to achieve her employment goal.

2. Healthcare services

- **What they do:** Provide services that involve the diagnosis and treatment of disease or improving or maintaining health (Health Services, n.d.)
- **How they can be involved:** Having a representative from local healthcare services can help ensure that students have the proper diagnosis or diagnoses moving forward and the proper corresponding treatments. A student's diagnoses and needed treatments can be taken into account as part of establishing transition goals during the IEP meeting. Thus, it is very helpful to have healthcare professionals attend the meeting. A young person also may have an independent living goal that involves managing his/her healthcare. A discussion can address how a young person can communicate with his/her healthcare professionals moving forward.
- **Example:** If a student has a goal to independently manage needed prescriptions, the student can be taught how to set up refill reminders as well as reminders for picking up prescriptions through the pharmacy's online app. Additionally, the student could practice calling to schedule an appointment with their provider before they fill their last refill of their prescription.

3. American Job Centers (One-Stop Centers)

- **What they do:** Established by the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and the Department of Education, One-Stop Centers provide a "full range of assistance to job seekers under one roof" (American Job Centers, n.d.). They offer referrals to job training opportunities, career counseling, job listings, and similar

employment-related services to all individuals, short-term training or tuition assistance for in-demand careers, and can provide financial support during training, i.e., daycare, certification fee assistance, uniforms, and books (American Job Centers, n.d.).

- **How they can be involved:** One-Stop Centers can work with students to ensure that they do not drift aimlessly after graduation. By being involved in IEP meetings, a One-Stop Center representative can share with the student and family members the job training activities or employment opportunities a young person could participate in while still in high school to start building up skills and a resume to support post-high school career success. A One-Stop Center representative also can outline how they can be helpful after graduation if he/she is looking for further employment or training opportunities.
- **Example:** A young person may have a transition goal of pursuing an interest in the medical field through becoming an EMT. A One-Stop Center representative can share with the young person and other IEP meeting attendees the resources that are available through the Center that could help the young person achieve this goal. Perhaps the young person could meet with a career counselor at their local One-Stop Center to set benchmarks toward becoming an EMT. For example, if a program requires CPR certified before enrolling, a young person could enroll in an EMT basic training program at a community college or training institute and take a state exam upon completing the program. (See the TEST guide on Career and Technical Education for more on this). A career counselor also could discuss how they could be of help throughout this process, such as covering the fee for the CPR course or locating tutoring services to aid the young person in passing the state exam.

4. Government Benefit Offices

- **What they do:** Assist with disability programs that provide cash benefits. Social Security Income (SSI) provides cash payments to youth with disabilities and others based on income and assets and their need for financial assistance (work experience is irrelevant). Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) covers individuals with disabilities who have worked a certain number of hours in the past and who have made contributions to the Social Security trust fund. Many people who are eligible for SSI or SSDI also are eligible for other government assistance that is designed to assist individuals to pay for food, healthcare, and other necessities. These income benefits can include food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP—benefits); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), also referred to as welfare; and Medicaid or Medicare health insurance coverage (Government Benefits, (n.d.); Laurence, (n.d.); Childhood Disability, 2001).
- **How they can be involved:** representatives of different government benefit programs can inform a young person if he/she is eligible for any programs and about any work incentive programs that accompany these benefits. The representative also can explain how benefits may be affected by future circumstances (e.g. the number of hours one works impacts the amount of SSDI money received).
- **Example:** A Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach representative can let a young person who is eligible for SSI know if he/she also is eligible for the Plans for Achieving Self Support (PASS) program. PASS is a work incentive program that provides an individual with payments that can be used in their efforts to achieve a career goal, such as paying for transportation to and from college courses or for a job training program. A Benefits Planning representative can confirm eligibility and assist in writing a PASS plan (Katz, n.d.).

5. Federal Housing Assistance Programs

- **What they do:** Federal housing assistance programs that are relevant to transitioning students with ED are:
 - *Section 8 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program* - provides supportive housing for very low-income persons with disabilities who are at least 18 years of age. Housing options usually include small group homes, independent living projects, and units in multifamily housing developments, condominiums, and cooperative housing. Tenants pay 30% of their income toward rent, and federal rental assistance covers the rest of the cost to the landlord to operate the housing. Each project must have a supportive services plan which could include case management, training in independent living skills and/or assistance in obtaining employment (Federal Housing Assistance Programs, 2007).
 - *Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program* – assists very low-income families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities to afford “decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market.” Families or individuals receiving Section 8 are free to choose their preferred housing as long as the landlord agrees, and the property meets the eligibility requirements of the program. Housing choice vouchers are distributed to eligible individuals through a person’s local public housing agency (PHA). The local PHA pays for a portion of the rent, and the family or individual receiving a Section 8 voucher is responsible for making up the difference owed to the landlord. Long waiting lists for housing vouchers are common (Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet, n.d.).
 - *Section 8/Single Room Occupancy (SRO)* – residential buildings, many of which were formerly residential hotels, YMCAs, or YWCAs that have been rehabilitated and provide small private rooms for single individuals. Bathrooms, kitchens, laundry, and living spaces are traditionally shared. The government covers some of the rehabilitation costs for the landowner. Tenants pay 30% of their income toward the rental cost typically (Federal Housing Assistance Programs, 2007).
 - *Public Housing* – housing made available to low-income individuals and families at rents that are affordable to them and that provide technical and professional assistance. Rent is based on the highest of either 30% of a resident’s monthly adjusted income, 10% of their monthly gross income, their welfare shelter allowance, or a PHA-established minimum rent of up to \$50. There often are long waiting lists, but once granted public housing, a person can stay as long as necessary (Federal Housing Assistance Programs, 2007).
- **How they can be involved:** A federal housing program representative can be beneficial to an IEP meeting in discussions of independent living goals. The representative will know which housing options a young person is eligible for upon graduation if he/she is interested in living away from the parent’s home.
- **Example:** A young person may be wondering whether it would be a smart choice to live alone or whether he/she would benefit from living in a supportive group setting. At the IEP meeting, the housing program representative can answer the young person’s questions, such as “What are my options for living independently or in a group setting?” The results of such discussions can guide the next steps in setting and attaining a student’s independent living transition goals within the transition component of the IEP.

6. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

- **What they do:** State VR agencies provide services to people who are eligible due to a disability that impacts employment, including a psychiatric disability. VR services generally include the development of individualized plans for employment (IPE), vocational counseling, job development help (resume prep, job search help, skills training, etc.), post-employment services, and provision of funding for young people to access other needed services to find work. Of special note are the VR “pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS)” that have recently been mandated under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (Marrone, 2016). (See Appendices E & F for more information) Most public high school students with an IEP will be eligible for VR Pre-ETS services. These include:
 - o job exploration counseling
 - o work-based learning experiences (including in-school or after school opportunities)
 - o counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition services or post-secondary education programs
 - o workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
 - o instruction in self-advocacy
- **How they can be involved:** The transition component of the IEP can mirror a young person’s IPE. An IPE includes a young person’s chosen career goal and the services needed to achieve that goal. Meanwhile, the transition component of the IEP outlines post-secondary goals, including career goals, and often the benchmarks needed to achieve them.
- **Example:** A VR counselor can be invited to participate in the student’s IEP meeting where goals can be written that involve filling out an application for VR services and submitting the related paperwork. IEP and IPE goals can be written so they are mutually supportive. An IEP goal may be to explore schools that provide cosmetology training, an IPE goal can include services that would facilitate accessing the training, and Pre-ETS services can be accessed to fund that activity.

7. Community Colleges

- **What they do:** Community colleges are a less expensive option for postsecondary education than typical four year institutions, and allow for part-time or full-time coursework. Community colleges offer associate degrees, usually targeted toward specific career skills. Many students also use community college as a stepping stone to further education. They may attend community college for a limited time as a way to obtain credits for prerequisite courses and then transfer to a 4-year university to obtain a bachelor’s Degree. This strategy can reduce the costs of postsecondary education significantly for students and their families (Preparing for Columbus State Community College, n.d.).
- **How they can be involved:** representatives from a community college’s Admissions Office and/or Disability Services Office can attend an IEP meeting to explain the process required for a student to enroll in community college and to get needed supports and accommodations there (Preparing for Columbus State Community College, n.d.).
- **Example:** a community college representative can let a student know during the IEP meeting that he/she should expect that parents will not be as involved in their educational activities once they enter community colleges; instead community colleges prefer to communicate with a student directly (Preparing for Columbus State Community College, n.d.). Becoming aware of this at an IEP meeting can encourage a student to begin practicing self-advocacy skills in preparation for their community college experience.

8. Four-year colleges and universities

- **What they do:** provide education leading to the achievement of a bachelor's Degree—a degree that is increasingly becoming required for higher-earning, white-collar occupations.
- **How they can be involved:** A representative from a college or university of interest to a student could convey the required high school GPA and standardized test scores for admission, the academic skills needed to succeed, whether there is a degree program that seems to align well with the young person's interests and skills, and the pros and cons of living on-campus vs. commuting to classes. A representative from a four-year college or university also can discuss the expectations from the school has for its students, so a potential applicant could work toward making themselves a strong candidate for admission or decide to steer their goals in a different direction.
- **Example:** A college representative at an IEP meeting may let attendees know that their college requires a score of 1300 on the SAT exam for a student to be considered for admittance. As a result, the student and those present at the IEP meeting may decide that completing an SAT prep course would be an appropriate transition goal.

9. Job Training Programs

- **What they do:**
 - *Job Corps* – provides education and training to help young people finish their secondary education, learn a career, and find and keep a good job. Individuals who are at least 16 years of age and qualify as low-income are eligible to participate in job corps (Job Corp, n.d.).
 - *YouthBuild* –provides opportunities for young people with low incomes to learn construction skills while helping build affordable housing and other buildings like schools and community centers (Rebuilding our Communities, n.d.).
 - *AmeriCorps Programs* – provides young people with opportunities for intensive community service activities in non-profit organizations, schools, public agencies and faith-based groups across the United States (Americorps, n.d.).
- **How they can be involved:** program representatives can be present at a student's IEP meeting to convey options other than work and higher education that can be pursued after high school graduation. Representatives from these programs may be particularly helpful to have in attendance if a student could benefit from job training before pursuing formal employment or higher education.
- **Example:** A student with ED may be interested in pursuing a post-secondary degree but be lacking the emotional maturity and focus to dive into life on campus immediately after high school graduation. A student could search for AmeriCorps positions that align with possible areas of interest to pursue in the year after graduation. This could help the student define a focus and prepare to make the best use of a college experience. A service year with AmeriCorps and facing social issues within the community also can greatly increase a young person's emotional maturity.

10. Gap Year Programs

- **What they do:** A gap year is a planned break from schooling between high school and college. Gap years can be spent abroad or in work experience programs based in the U.S. Gap years are often tools for “increasing self-awareness, learning about different cultural

perspectives, and experimenting with future possible careers” (What’s a Gap Year?, n.d.). Gap years can help avoid academic burnout.

- **How they can be involved:** A representative from an organization offering gap year programs can make a student and other IEP meeting attendees aware of that organization’s offerings. This may provide the student and other attendees with information to determine whether a gap year would be a good fit for the student and if so, which of the available programs would be most appropriate for the young person.
- **Example:** Perhaps a student is very active and has a hard time focusing in a classroom environment. Many wilderness gap year programs include outdoor adventures while also teaching young people valuable leadership skills. If a student is interested in a career that would involve spending time outdoors, this may be a good opportunity for a young person to explore his/her passion and build skills.

11. Independent Living Centers

- **What they do:** these centers, run primarily by individuals with disabilities, provide information and referrals, peer counseling, training in independent living skills, and individual and system advocacy (Koyanagi & Alfano, 2013). Independent living centers are part of many vocational rehabilitation programs. Each independent living center targets a certain population and has certain eligibility criteria, with some focusing on transition-age youth (Koyanagi & Alfano, 2013). Although most independent living centers do not serve many people with serious mental health conditions (they tend to have a focus on individuals with physical disabilities), they still can be a potential resource for young people with ED (Koyanagi & Alfano, 2013).
- **How they can be involved:** independent living center representatives are particularly well suited to address transition goals in the independent living domain. If it is determined a student could benefit from assistance in that domain, a representative can talk about the programming and supports available through a local center and whether the young person is eligible.
- **Example:** A transitioning young person who is planning to move away from home for the first time following high school may have an independent living transition goal of being able to prepare his or her meals. This young person can take a cooking class offered at the local independent living center.

12. Local Transportation Services

- **What they do:**
 - *Public transportation* – “buses, trains, subways, and other forms of transportation, that charge set fares, run on fixed routes, and are available to the public” (“Public Transportation,” n.d.).
 - *Paratransit* – a type of public transportation made available to individuals with disabilities that supplement the routes of public transportation systems. The availability and flexibility of paratransit services vary upon location.
 - *Rideshare services* – can be used to arrange shared rides on short notice. Typically, rides can be requested and paid for using cell phone apps. Ride share drivers can be rated for users so that passengers can be assured of the quality of their riders before getting in the car if desired. Popular options for ridesharing including the companies Uber and Lyft.
- **How they can be involved:** A representative from public transportation services could inform a student with ED and their IEP team about the extent of local transportation services in order

to meet the transportation needs necessary for a student to meet their work, school, and/or independent living goals.

- **Example:** Perhaps a student has successfully arranged for a job post-graduation. This is very exciting for the young person and a satisfying achievement, but the job is located across town from where the young person will be living and he/she does not have access to a car. Because the job has a fixed schedule, the young person needs to arrive on time each day. The job also requires that the young person works in the late evening hours some nights. A representative from local transportation services could communicate at the IEP meeting reliable public transit options that would make it realistic for the young person to take the job, confident of being able to abide by their work schedule.

13. High School Guidance Counselors

- **What they do:** high school guidance counselors work with students and parents to help guide students' academic, behavioral and social growth (What is the role of a school guidance counselor?, n.d.). A high school guidance counselor has a particular focus on supporting students prepare for postsecondary life.
- **How they can be involved:** a high school guidance counselor could provide insight on paths they have seen students with similar interests or backgrounds follow and community organizations that have been helpful to other students as they prepared to graduate
- **Example:** A student may not have a particularly high GPA and may not meet many four-year colleges' GPA requirements, but this student may still be interested in pursuing a four-year degree. A high school guidance counselor can suggest attending community college for two years and then transferring to a four-year institution. This might be something she has advised students in similar positions to do and has seen this work out well for others in the past.

14. Mentoring Programs/Mentors

- **What they do:** Mentors are individuals a student can look up to as a role model and ask for advice. Mentors are individuals who have expertise in an area that is helpful to their mentees. Some mentors have faced the same challenges as their mentees and have found ways to be successful; these mentors can share their lived experiences with mentees to inspire them to overcome challenges as well.
- **How they can be involved:** Mentors or representatives from mentoring programs can be involved by absorbing a student's goals during the IEP meeting and providing insight that would aid the student in reaching their postsecondary goals.
- **Example:** A student may be a gifted musician and have an interest in pursuing a career playing music in the local area. A mentor or mentoring program may be able to connect this student with a role model who is working in the local music industry who could assist the student in networking for job opportunities and also advise the student on the skills needed to succeed as a musician.

15. Foster Care System Representatives

- **What they do:** The foster care system provides housing and other essentials to youth who are in the custody of the State. Foster home placement can include institutions, group homes, or sharing a home with foster parents.
- **How they can be involved:** a Department of Family Services employee or a Juvenile Officer could attend a transition planning meeting as a representative from the foster care system (Who can represent the interests of a Special Education Student? 2006). A foster care system representative

does NOT have the same authority as a parent in terms of decision-making related to a student's transition plan, but still can be invited to participate in transition planning meetings (Who can represent the interests of a Special Education Student? 2006).

- **Example:** A foster care system representative can share with meeting participants what changes in living arrangements for the student will look like as they phase out of the foster care system and become an adult. This is a big transition for the student as the expectation of supporting themselves becomes a reality.

16. Advocacy Agencies (e.g. court-appointed special advocates)

- **What they do:** advocacy agencies champion the needs of various populations – including young people with ED. These agencies work to shift policy and public perception towards young people with ED, and work to protect and defend the rights of individuals with ED.
- **How they can be involved:** Advocacy agency representatives bring an air of authority to an IEP transition planning meeting. These representatives are typically well-versed in the legal rights of students with ED as they transition out of high school (Do I really need to bring a Special Education Advocate to all my IEP meetings?, 2016). Also, the advocacy agency representative will likely be able to remain less emotional than a parent might be able to during challenging discussions (Do I really need to bring a Special Education Advocate to all my IEP meetings? 2016). Advocacy groups may provide a representative for free or for a minimal charge or their attendance may be quite pricey.
- **Example:** An advocacy agency representative can interject during a conversation if school officials are making incorrect claims about what educational resources can be made available for a student. A school may at times try to argue that an appropriate resource cannot be made available. The representative can bring forward mandates included in IDEA legislation to defend a student's legal rights to appropriate resources and as a result, overcome push-back from the school.

II. Engaging with Current, Previous, or New Adult Services Agency/Organization Partners

- ✓ Suggestions for involving community partners in transition planning
- ✓ Checklist for including community partners in transition planning
- ✓ Invite community partners to the meeting

II. Engaging with Current, or Previous, or New Adult Services Agency/Organization Partners

Clear, regular connections between services youth identified with ED receive and those adults are eligible to receive are not routinely established and when students with ED stop receiving special education services upon exit from secondary school they often “fall through the gaps” between youth and adult services if plans are not made to connect them to appropriate adult serving agencies or organizations.

When collaborating with community partners, it is helpful to remember that the work with these groups begins before the IEP/Transition planning meeting and continues after it. For community partner participation to be most meaningful, it needs to involve an ongoing connection between the representative of the community organization, the student, the student’s family (if the student is below the age of majority), and the high school staff working with the student - this may include guidance counselors, the special education teacher who is responsible for the student’s IEP, or a transition coordinator. It is important to identify and connect with potential community partners early in the course of the student’s high school career to be able to work and plan together throughout 2 to 3 years (ideally 4 or more years). By working together with the student and family to identify the student’s strengths, needs, interests, and goals, the involved parties can locate and begin to connect with these partners.

How Do I Connect With Community Partners?

✓ **Suggestions for Connecting with Community Partners**

Connecting with community partners can be done in a variety of ways. Suggestions are to:

- Establish the student as a client with agencies that can provide appropriate services
- Attend or be involved with hosting a “Transition Fair” to help students and parents learn about and connect with relevant community agencies
- Notify parents about “Transition Fairs” and consider creating a parent/child/ teacher field trip around to attending one
- Contact the local One-Stop Center to learn about local resources

Once the initial steps of connecting to the right resources have been completed, transition planners can begin to facilitate conversations between these community representatives and the student and his or her parents.

Collaborating with community partners or agencies can be difficult in a virtual setting, especially if the collaboration is for a hands-on experience. Virtual learning may not be a temporary obstacle, so educators and students should reach out and remain in touch with the listed community partner(s)/agencies. Staying in touch will provide guidance on whether the student will still be able to collaborate with the people/places they have listed or if they need to think of other places to whom to reach out.

Transition Fairs

Transition fairs can be a helpful step for creating valuable connections with community partners. These events involve a variety of different community agencies visiting the school to talk with students and their families. It can be a successful way of introducing multiple community agencies to students and parents and providing an idea of the potential partnerships available. Transition fairs should be designed for students as well as parents to build awareness of the different agencies that a student can access. Transition fairs can also be a successful means of involving community partners prior to the IEP meeting and to ensure support at the beginning and throughout a student's transition planning.

How Do I Facilitate Conversations With Community Partners?

✓ Checklist for Including Community Partners in Transition Planning

1. **Establish the following to involve community partners in transition planning.**
 - a. A point of contact with community partners
 - i. If agency representatives are unknown, communicate with a - transition team member beyond the school setting and/or use the resource matrix to identify appropriate agency contacts
 - b. When and how communication and meeting involvement takes place
 - i. Identify optimal communication mechanisms (phone, email)
 - ii. Identify scheduling preferences for transition meetings
 - iii. Attempt to build communication and partnership throughout the year and not only for the IEP meeting.
2. **Relationships between school(s) and/or parents and community representatives**
 - a. Share information with planning partners about student's goals and needs for advance planning, including agency-specific goals.
 - b. Once a community partner has indicated a willingness to be involved, send an informational letter to parents and students about the opportunity this new partner in the transition process. Include information about the agencies and potential ways in which they may be helpful during the transition planning process.
 - c. To help parents understand why this might be a good idea, encourage them to think about their student going forward in the next few years into life as an adult- it may be hard for them to see their children this way, but agencies and laws recognize them as adults fairly quickly after transition planning starts. Helping the parents and students think strategically about what the student may need in the next 3-5 years and identifying and establishing relationships with those adult serving agencies may make life easier going forward.
 - d. Communicate with parents or involved adults, about inviting community partners to the transition meeting, secure permission to include them in planning.
 - e. Share information with planning partners about students' unique goals and needs for advance planning.

How Do I Extend the Invitation?

✓ Invite community partners to the meetings

The last step for engaging community partners is to invite them to the meeting. Utilize a method for arranging the meeting date like a doodle poll to maximize the attendance of as many participants as possible. Once a date has been agreed upon, contact invitees to confirm the meeting date, time, and

place. Where appropriate, the student can extend invitations to representatives from transition services and request RSVPs for the meeting and confirmation of whether they would like to be participants. If some can't attend in person, offer to use speaker phone and/or teleconferences to involve partners by phone. Ensure the meeting space is appropriate for the invited community partners. If your school has the technology, consider using virtual meeting software so that documents can be viewed, and webcams set up so that you can see speakers and attendees. Suggestions for how to conduct the meeting are in the next session.

Specific Steps to Invite Community Partners

1. Establish contact with the agency representatives in your area using the introductory letter found in Appendix B, where there also is documentation about involving outside partners to meetings that can be generated from the IEP software packages.
2. Include Brief for Community Partners with your letter establishing contact, also included in Appendix C.
3. Follow the letter with a phone call to discuss transition planning and the activities that they may be able to help complete.
4. Once a community partner has indicated a willingness to be involved, send an informational letter to parents and students about the opportunity to involve community people in the transition process. Include information about the agencies and potential ways in which they may be helpful during the transition planning process.
5. If parents and students are interested in making these connections, send appropriate documentation securing permission to invite relevant community partners to participate in the IEP planning process and meeting.
6. Communication should be ongoing after the initial agreement is reached about the Community Partner's involvement.
7. Community partners need to be notified about the student's post-secondary goals and academic and employment strengths and needs.
8. Information that is relevant to the services provided by the community partner needs to be provided to him/her in a timely way.
9. A meeting that includes the special educator, student (and parents), and community partner(s) is an important opportunity to discuss available services and supports and identify which ones might be helpful to the student.
10. Send invitations to Community Partners to participate in the transition planning.

III. Making the Meeting Work

III. Making the Meeting Work

For the IEP meeting time to be invested well and produce a well-made plan for enabling the student to progress in the general curriculum and toward their transition goals, several things need to be considered and planned for before, during, and after the meeting. To prepare the student to participate in the meeting as much as possible, please refer to the TEST guide for The Student-Led IEP. This guide provides specific guidance about assisting the student with participation in their meetings- up to and including leading the meeting themselves. (See Appendix G for more information)

- Prior to the meeting: Ensure that all preliminary work has been completed including gaining permission to invite outside agency reps, setting and confirming the meeting date and time, preparing with the student for the meeting, and preparing the meeting space including any technology needed during the meeting.

Starting the meeting

- Have everyone introduce themselves and their roles
- Review the meeting sequence and main topics that will be addressed
- Describe what needs to be accomplished during the meeting
- Explain the role of the partners and the expectations for their involvement
- Review any acronyms that will be used during the meeting to ensure all participants will be able to follow the meeting's conversation
- State any “ground rules,” such as how the student should be addressed, and their disability referred to

*See Appendix H for more information

During the meeting

- Involve the student in conducting the meeting to the extent possible (see TEST curricula on Student-led IEP meetings) (See Appendices I & J for more information).
- Discuss how participants or their agency/organization will be involved with the student during the term of the IEP
- Discuss the various opinions about the provision of or need for services and reach consensus about the IEP's statement of goals, services provided, and timing of service provision.
- Agree on a method for assessing the student's progress toward annual goals and a timeline for reviewing that progress.
- Agree on target dates for reviewing student progress and adjusting activities as needed
- Agree on target dates for accomplishing activities specified in the IEP.
- Have all participants sign the IEP If no changes to the IEP as written are needed.
- As the meeting is closing, the action items developed during the IEP meeting and who these action items are assigned to should be clearly defined and communicated to all meeting participants. Meeting participants should make a commitment to achieving their assigned action items.

After the meeting

- If there were changes made to the IEP during the meeting, participants should leave the meeting with a plan for signing the IEP as soon as the changes are made, and it is practicable to obtain all signatures.
- Meeting participants should communicate with one another (according to the plan agreed to during the IEP meeting) regarding student progress, availability of services, required meetings to accomplish tasks related to community partners process for the provision of services. This is an opportunity to continue the relationship post the meeting. Establishing this relationship can help with next student.
- The student should be asked how they felt the transition planning meeting went. The student can be asked this in general, and specific follow-up questions can be pursued afterward (e.g. “Did you feel heard during the meeting?”, “Were you pleased with the plan we created during the meeting?”, “Did you find any of the community representatives helpful?” “Do you think there are any additional people we should invite to your next transition planning meeting?” Asking the student for feedback will further empower them to take initiative in planning for their post-high school life.
- If possible based on a student’s comfort level, a student should take initiative to follow-up with all meeting participants after the meeting to thank them for attending and communicating if and how their attendance contributed to a student feeling more empowered to reach their goals. Also, the student should take an active role in holding all participants accountable for completing their assigned action steps. (See Appendix K for more information)

Special Considerations for Students with ED

If a student experiences instability of moods, this can be a hindrance to forming relationships with community agency representatives if these individuals do not understand the student’s ED and how it manifests itself. A special effort should be made to help community agency representatives to understand how an ED or mental health condition can present itself, and this should not dissuade these community agency representatives from doing the best they can to offer students services that can support them during their transition to post-high school life. (See Appendix L for more information)

General tips to help students manage anxiety generally and during meetings

Adjusting to new situations can be challenging, especially for students who are prone to experiencing general and social anxiety. Some students may avoid or even refuse to participate in activities or events that make them anxious. Below are some general tips to help support students who experience anxiety.

- **Modify expectations and praise small accomplishments.** It can sometimes seem like a student is uninterested or underachieving when exhibiting avoidance behaviors, but the opposite might be true. Students with anxiety may avoid situations because they are afraid of making a mistake or being judged. To combat this, try your best to refrain from expressing frustration or punishing mistakes. You may need to adjust your perceptions of success or progress according to the student or situation. Every success — even something small or simple — merits praise.
- **Prepare for the situation.** Help the student feel prepared by giving them a general sense of an event or situation beforehand (where it will be, who will be there, and what might happen). Scripting, role-playing and previewing are all excellent tools. Preparation will help an activity or

event feel less new and scary. Students with social anxiety may benefit from arriving to an event or situation early for this reason. Make sure to account for extra time for this preparation if needed.

- **Reframe negative thoughts.** Students with anxiety are often overwhelmed by negative beliefs that reinforce their anxious thoughts (e.g., assuming the worst-case scenario, believing that others see them through a negative lens). Help a student to recognize negative thoughts and replace them with positive, realistic ones. If a student tends to say things like, “My teacher thinks I’m stupid because I’m bad at reading,” help the student recognize the negative thought, ground it in reality (a teacher’s job is to help students learn, not judge them on what they already know), and replace it with a positive thought (“I’m having a hard time reading but my teacher will help me get better.”)
- **Use relaxation techniques.** It is nearly impossible to accomplish a task or engage in an activity while dealing with intense physical symptoms of anxiety. Deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation are helpful tools used to calm the body’s anxious response.

Deep breathing can calm rapid heart rate, shallow breathing and feeling dizzy. Instruct the student to count each breath to help slow the breathing (4 in, 4 hold, 4 out).

Progressive muscle relaxation, or the act of tensing and releasing muscles, can relieve some of the built-up tension in the body. Beginning with hands, have the student make a fist and hold it tight for five seconds then slowly release. Move on to the arms, neck and shoulders, and feet and legs.

- **Facilitate Peer Support.** If possible try to connect your student with another student with ED or similar challenges who has gone through an IEP meeting. Facilitate an opportunity for them to meet each other to talk about their mutual experiences . Sometimes an encouraging work from a friend who’s “been there” can help to alleviate worries.

IV. Sustaining Connections with Community Agencies

IV. Sustaining Connections with Community Agencies

“Often what we find is that at 18 young people with mental health diagnoses fall off the map and then reappear a few years later and their lives are a train wreck”.

- Service Provider (Stone, Ellison, Huckabee, & Mullen, 2017)

One issue that people who work with transition-age youth talk about is the difficulty they have helping them move smoothly from high school to young adult life after they graduate. By establishing connections for students with ED who are transition age agencies and organizations after leaving high school. Listed below are some things that will help to ensure continued involvement and collaboration among partners and foster a broader connection between the school or district and the agencies.

Involvement with the Individual Student

- The special education teacher establishes a routine for communicating with agency members by email, phone, or in-person
- Communicate regularly regarding waiting lists for particular services
- Keep the special education teacher and student/family informed about applications to be completed for supports and services at colleges, training institutions, or adult service agencies
- Maintain communication with partners regarding tasks and target dates for completion
- Plan for and provide monthly updates about progress on IEP transition goals

Collaboration and Relationship-building between Schools and Agencies

- Schedule regular times to meet with agency representatives and make referrals, e.g., monthly, quarterly
- Provide beginning of the year and mid-year updates on all students who may benefit from community partners services
- Provide school space for agency representatives to meet with parents, students, and other teachers
- Become familiar with agency services, eligibility requirements, and the referral process
- Obtain printed materials from agencies to share with parents and students
- Co-sponsor a Transition Fair for parents and students to meet with agency representatives and other transition service providers in their communities
- Invite agency representatives to be available at Back-to-School nights or Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Involve agency representatives in classroom or “School to Career” activities (mock interviews, video-taping, preparing for job shadows, discussing employer needs)
- Connect with local interagency teams personally or through a district representative. Although you as a teacher are not responsible for inter-agency coordination at the district level, forming a relationship with a local agency representative or counselor can help

V. Implementation Guide

Section IV. Implementation Guide

Before embarking on Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance, take some time to coordinate or “facilitate” the Guide’s use. It is suggested that the “implementer” (counselor, teacher, transition coordinator, administrator) who has determined to use this resource might follow the steps in this chapter to increase the likelihood of success. These steps are offered as supports. They may not all be necessary for you; but review and consideration of each step below is recommended.

1. Determine which Student You are Targeting

You may have looked at the data regarding the post-school outcomes for students in your school with emotional and behavior disturbance (ED) and determined that you want to target this intervention with 12th graders, just before they graduate; or juniors, providing additional time for relationships to form; or in-coming 8th graders – catching these students and linking them with supports before risking their premature exit (dropout) from school altogether. However, you intend to proceed – all students with disabilities, or a discreet group - being clear about the target population is a first step.

2. Develop an Implementation Plan

As you consider activities and associated components (see the chart below), it may be useful to skim the sections that follow this chart on buy-in, readiness, and logistics. The content in these sections may help you and your colleagues plan steps that otherwise might be overlooked. This is a good time to read the About this Guide section and continue reading below.

Below is a chart which may be useful as you organize your plans to more meaningfully engage with other agencies who may serve your students and youth during and beyond high school or program.

School/ Program Implementation Plan

Team Members (who is helping implement this work? List other school/district/agency partner staff. Are youth leaders or parents involved in this initiative? List their names, also):

Start Date	Activity	Person(s) Responsible (names)	Materials Needed?	What Documentation is Expected?	Anticipated Completion Date	Differentiation for Students in Varied Settings

Sample Implementation Plan

Names of Team Members (includes: those who help implement the work, school/district/agency partner staff, youth leaders or parents involved in the initiative):
Vivian Vincent, Lincoln Lassiter, Maria Martin, Nigel Nichols, Octavia Odom

Start Date	Activity	Person(s) Responsible (names)	Materials Needed?	What Documentation is Expected?	Anticipated Completion Date	Differentiation for Students in Varied Settings
December 1 – 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite team potential team members to “kickoff” work meeting in January Assign to read guide before meeting 	Vivian Vincent (assistant principal)	Copies of <i>Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition</i> <i>Planning for Students with ED</i>		December 15	NA
January 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet to complete Readiness Rating scale and begin to create a list of providers with names and contact information and a brief description of the service they provide 	ALL team members contribute Divide list and individuals collect contact information and write descriptions Blank copies of Matrix	Internet Flip charts	Consensus on Readiness Rating Completed list/ matrix from Guide	February 1	NA
February 5 -15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite partners to parent night 	Lincoln Lassiter (school counselor) and Maria Martin (transition coordinator)	Adapted letter to partners from Guide	Calls made/ letters sent Contact log	February 15	

Start Date	Activity	Person(s) Responsible (names)	Materials Needed?	What Documentation is Expected?	Anticipated Completion Date	Differentiation for Students in Varied Settings
March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Student/ Parent Night (add details re: booths, incentives for students, information sessions after January & February meetings) 	Maria and 3 volunteers from team to plan	Space arranged Flyers Copies of matrix available for families Agency participation confirmed	Attendance Parent/ student Surveys	Marketing by February 28 Event March 31	
April 4 – 18	Host “parent night” with flexible scheduling to assist with completing paperwork, etc.	Maria, Octavia, Nigel 2 partners from VR	Necessary forms/ applications Internet	Applications completed/ connections made	May 1	Differentiated based on specific student needs
May 1 – May 15	Planning for next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase agency participation in student/parent night Involve agencies in co-hosting event Pre-plan schedule for appropriate agency participation in IEP meetings August - October (when most IEPs convene for our students) 	All on team	Chart Paper & Markers IEP review schedule Evaluation data from event	Next year’s calendar and planning mapped out	May 31	Plans may differ by grade level and student support needs

3. Building Buy In

You are planning to engage more agencies in the transition planning of students in your program because you understand the importance of this. You have done the research and know that students with disabilities who link with agency supports before they exit high school are more likely to succeed in school and after high school. You also know that students with ED and co-existing mental health diagnoses often experience poor post-school outcomes, due to a lack of supports as they move from youth to adult services, because linkages were not made. Do others in your school understand the importance of this effort? They probably do; but haven't had the time to figure out how to make the connections between "systems" work better for students.

Making connections with outside agencies take time—for school staff, for families and students, and for the other agency staff. Will your colleagues support this? How will you communicate about this new effort with parents and students? Do you have relationships with any outside agency personnel who may also be interested in this effort? Reviewing About this Guide and Section I of the Guide should provide you with some snippets to share with other stakeholders to ensure their support of *Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance*.

With any new intervention or initiative, it is critical to identify allies or champions of the work. As you and your team complete your implementation plan, consider other partners (in your program or outside of it) who may lend support *Partnering with Community Agencies*. Bring them on board to assist.

4. Readiness

What is your school/program's current culture regarding collaboration? What are the status quo practices for IEP development meetings? Interagency transition fairs? College and career fairs for all students? Multi-agency planning meetings? Is implementing this new process in alignment with other initiatives in your school/district or will it be a major sea change in practice?

Answering the questions below with your team may help you plan for implementation.

Question	A few (0-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Most (51%-75%)	Almost all (75%-100%)
How many students (with ED) in your program receive services from an outside provider?				
How many students' IEP meetings (any disability category) were attended by outside agencies in the past year?				
How many students (all) attend a college or career fair hosted by your school?				
How many students (with ED) attend a college or career fair hosted by your school?				
How many parents/ family members of students (with ED) are aware of community agencies beyond the school or your program that provide services to students and youth as they become adults?				
What outside agencies do you/ your staff engage with at least once/ grading period?				

Discussing the above as a team may help you identify activities toward the long-term goal of students linked with community agencies. Is the short term goal:

- agency IEP meeting attendance? (ensuring adequate time for scheduling and communication mechanisms may be an important activity)
- agency exposure to many families at once? (an agency fair or information session might be an appropriate short-term activity)
- agencies' awareness of students' goals and support needs to determine the best fit? (a program presenting to an assembled cross-agency team on students' needs might be an appropriate activity)
- cross-agency knowledge of roles and responsibilities to serve students in a coordinated way (regularly scheduled cross-agency meetings or developing data-sharing agreements may be an appropriate activity)

5. Logistics

To implement *Partnering with Community Agencies* will require time. Can staff time be allocated to this effort (and other responsibilities lifted) to make phone calls, send emails, or otherwise collect information from and provide information to other agencies? Will one person or several on the team be point(s) of contact with others? Who will have the responsibility of communicating with students/families that it may be a good idea to invite an external partner to an IEP meeting? How will consent and assent for attendance be documented? Will reminders to external meeting attendees be sent by the meeting coordinator, the family, the school/ program's administrator? Plan for these details in your Implementation Plan after reviewing each of the three Sections of the Guide. Planning to make initial contacts may take you and your team one week, a month, or an entire semester. As with any new endeavor, thoughtful planning will be critical for your success.

6. Coaching

We suggest identifying a point person (a facilitator) who is knowledgeable about the Guide and some other community agencies as a coach for other team members. While multiple team members should have roles in implementing the plan and completing the steps, identifying this facilitator will increase the likelihood that steps are not missed. Establishing regularly scheduled team meetings to monitor progress and problem solve barriers will be an important role of the facilitator and regular attendance by all team members should be expected.

Possible team meeting agenda

- Report out on progress (i.e., tasks completed, agency responses)
- Report out on successes
- Report out on concerns, barriers, challenges
- Group discussion of potential solutions
- Action plan for next meeting

7. Ready, Set, Go!

Once the team has developed a plan, get started! It may be challenging for a school or program to move from identifying possible partners to regular IEP meeting attendance immediately. Follow your Implementation Plan and use the Implementation Checklist (below) to increase the likelihood of success.

Complete the Matrix of Community Agencies. Schedule and coordinate IEP meetings, embracing the idea of student-led IEP development. Schedule and coordinate other mechanisms for partnering with Community Agencies to get engaged earlier with students and youth. Document your progress.

8. Evaluate

In addition to the completed Matrix of Partners, your team may want to collect other data to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts to engage with partners. The chart below may help progress monitor and assess the overall impact of using *Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance*.

Measure	Of	Collected By	When
Formative Measures			
Implementation Checklist	School/Program	Team	Update at least bi-weekly
Implementation Team Meeting Notes	School/Program	Facilitator(s)	During/ immediately following each meeting
Contact Log	School/Program & Partners	Team	Updated with each contact attempt/ reviewed at each team meeting
Summative Measures			
Readiness Rating	School/Program	Facilitator(s)	Pre/ Post
IEP Rating Form	Student	Facilitator(s)	Pre/Post
Completed Partner Matrix	School/Program & Partners	Team	Post
Completed Implementation Checklist	School/Program	Team	End of intervention
Partner Survey	Partners	Facilitator(s)	Following interagency meeting
Team Member Satisfaction Form	Team Members	Facilitator(s)	End of intervention

Implementation Checklist

Content/ Materials	Component was Initiated	Component was Completed	Adaptations made to delivery	If not completed, explanation	Outcome data from this component
Planning for Community Partnerships					
Identify current organizations and agencies involved in transition process					
Identify potential new agencies and organizations to involve to meet student's needs					
Complete "Including Community Agencies, Technical Schools, and Community Colleges" matrix					
Engaging with Community Partners					
Utilize "Suggestions for Connecting With Community Partners"					
Establish a point of contact at each community partner					
Create a plan for communication planning/ meeting involvement of partners moving forward					

Content/ Materials	Component was Initiated	Component was Completed	Adaptations made to delivery	If not completed, explanation	Outcome data from this component
Secure parental permission to contact potential partners to invite them into the planning process					
Notify community partners about the goals and needs of student					
Invite community partners to transition meeting					
Making the Meeting Work					
At beginning, introduce all attendees and their role at meeting, state agenda and purpose of meeting, and convey “ground rules”					
Build consensus around activities to help students reach goals and community agencies’ involvement in these activities					
Establish benchmarks for measuring student progress, establish target dates for assessing progress and for completing activities – have all attendees agree to these benchmarks by signing the IEP					

IEP Rating Form:

Check all that apply

Student Name or ID	
Present level of performance and/or goals suggest possible need for outside agency supports for successful transition to adult life	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition services indicate linkages with or involvement of external agencies or service providers	<input type="checkbox"/>
External agencies contributed to IEP development (e.g., assessment data, goals, present at meeting)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Partner Survey: Event/interagency Meeting

(this can be converted to SurveyMonkey © or some other survey program typically used, if preferred)

School/Program Name (optional): _____

I attended the cross-agency meeting or event:

in person, online, by phone, did not attend.

Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understood the purpose of the meeting/ event					
Participants increased their knowledge of agency/organization roles and responsibilities					
I would participate in a future event/meeting of this type					
Engagement of students or youth with Emotional Disturbance (ED) with agency(ies) prior to adulthood is critical to their future success					

What was most useful about this event/meeting?

What was least useful about this event/meeting?

Partner Survey: IEP Meeting

(this can be converted to SurveyMonkey © or some other survey program typically used, if preferred)

School/Program Name (optional): _____

I attended the IEP meeting or event:

in person, online, by phone, did not attend.

Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understood the purpose of the meeting					
I learned more about this student's goals and service needs					
I contributed information during the meeting					
Attending this meeting was worth my time					
The student/family gained information about agency/ organization supports available beyond school					
The student led parts of their IEP meeting					
This IEP meeting was different than previous IEP meetings I've attended					

If the meeting was different, please describe what was different about it.

What was most useful about participating in this IEP meeting?

What was least useful about participating in this IEP meeting?

Team Member Survey

(this can be converted to SurveyMonkey © or some other survey program typically used, if preferred)

Team Member Name (optional): _____

Role (e.g., transition coordinator, social worker): _____

Number of students potentially impacted by the process of partnering with community agencies: _____

Number of agencies/partners engaged during this initiative (e.g., semester, year, grading period): _____

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Partnering with Community Agencies in Transition Planning for Students with Emotional Disturbance</i> (the Guide) increased knowledge of agencies serving youth and young adults in our community					
Use of the Guide increased my skills for communicating with potential agency partners					
Use of the Guide facilitated a process for engaging with more agencies than I/our program/school had previously					
The Guide was helpful for working with students ED, specifically					
The Guide is easy to understand					
The Guide is easy to use					
Agency involvement in student(s) IEP meetings increased (e.g., contributed information, attended), when compared to previous semesters/ years.					
Engagement of students or youth with Emotional Disturbance (ED) with agency(ies) prior to adulthood is critical to their future success					

What were the most useful aspects of the Guide?

What adaptations did you make to the guide (that could help other educators)?

What were the least useful aspects of the Guide?

Were there any particular successes with student(s) you want to share?

Resource List

Tip Sheets

I've Got My Crew: Inviting Community Partners to Your IEP Meeting

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1152&context=pib>

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): A Young Adult's Guide

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1070&context=pib>

WIOA: New Law Helps You & Young Adults Get Jobs – What Families Need to Know

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1127&context=pib>

Partnering with Families and other Natural Supports on Individualized Service Plans (ISPs)

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=pib>

How to Talk about Mental Health: Addressing Misunderstandings about Mental Health in the Media

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1136&context=pib>

Strategies for Engaging Young Adults

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1132&context=pib>

How to Speak UP and Be Heard: Self-Advocacy

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1092&context=pib>

TTYL: Keeping in Contact with your Professional

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=pib>

Teen on IEPs: Making my “Transition” Services Work for Me

<https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=pib>

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Appendix A

The following pages provide a sample completed template for listing agencies, points of contact, transition domain addresses, and room for notes as the process is followed.

Contact Information		Transition Domain(s)				Notes
Contact Person Phone Number Email		Post-Secondary Education or Vocational Training	Employment	Independent Living	Community Participation	
Able	State: Charlie Walters cwalters@able-sc.org Local:			X	X	
Center for Disability Resources TASC	State: Joy Ivestor Joy.Ivester@uscmed. sc.edu Local:	X	X	X	X	
Department of Disabilities and Special Needs	State: Rhonda Mumford rmumford@ddsn.sc.gov Jennifer Quinn jquinn@ddsn.sc.gov Local:		X			
Department of Employment and Workforce	State: Amanda Lucas, State Youth Coordinator alucas@dew.sc.gov Local:		X			
Department of Juvenile Justice, Director of Job Readiness Training Center	State: Harold B. Mayes hbmaye@scdj.net Local:	X	X	X	X	

Contact Information	Transition Domain(s)				Notes
Contact Person Phone Number Email	Post-Secondary Education or Vocational Training	Employment	Independent Living	Community Participation	
Department of Mental Health (Division of Children, Adolescents and Families) State: Sylvia Senbel School Based Services Program Manager http://www.state.sc.us/dmh/caf/ Local:			X	X	
Developmental Disabilities Council State: Valerie Bishop Valerie.bishop@admin.sc.gov Local:	X	X	X	X	
Family Connection of South Carolina State: Amy Holbert, Exec Dir aholbert@familyconnections.sc.org Shelley Nowicki, Parent Training & Information Manager snowicki@familyconnections.sc.org Local:	X			X	
Goodwill Industries State: http://www.goodwill.org Local:	X	X			

Contact Information	Transition Domain(s)				Notes
Contact Person Phone Number Email	Post-Secondary Education or Vocational Training	Employment	Independent Living	Community Participation	
National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth		X			
Post-Secondary Education Institutions	X				
Protection and Advocacy					
South Carolina Assistive Technology			X	X	
SC Commission for the Blind	X		X	X	
South Carolina Department of Education	X	X	X	X	
Vocational Rehabilitation	X	X			
Walton Options for Independent Living	X	X	X	X	

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction and Invitation to collaborate around Transition Planning for Students with ED

Dear (Community Partner),

I am _____ from _____ High School. Part of my job is to help students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities (ED) plan for the transition from high school to their post-secondary life. This transition planning is a required part of their special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). Research has shown that planning well for the transition from high school to post-secondary life improves the outcomes of these students.

We are interested in involving members of the community as we work to connect students with services, programs, and educational and work experiences they can participate in after high school. We would like to avoid gaps in services during the period when a young person is exiting from high school and beginning adult life. As a part of this involvement, we invite you to work with us to connect students to appropriate community resources, to be involved in the transition planning for the post-school outcomes included in their annual Individual Education Programs (IEP), and support the school, the students, and their families.

Working together to support students throughout the year in working toward their annual IEP goals would enable them to acquire the skills necessary to reach their post-secondary goals. As the primary point of contact with the students, I will work to keep us connected and to monitor the students' progress toward their goals. I will contact you periodically to communicate about the students' needs and progress and be available to assist in connecting your organization with students, families, and other education-based personnel and resources, as provided for in the IEP plan.

I will be following up with a phone call to provide further details and determine your availability and willingness to partner with us in supporting our students as they enter young adulthood. Thank you for your attention, I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

(Signature of teacher, administrator, transition coordinator)
(Name of high school)
(Name of school district)

Appendix C

Brief for Community Partners

The following is a compilation of information regarding the IEP, the transition planning process, and suggestions for how community partners might work with transition planners and Students with ED.

Planning for the transition from high school to post-secondary life:

Individual Education Program (IEP): a legal document reviewing the child's current level of performance and guiding the services and supports specially designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a qualifying disability under IDEA. The plan is meant to help the student learn information and skills being taught to progress in the general curriculum with the students' same age peers.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): legislation requiring schools to meet the needs of students identified as being in one of thirteen qualifying disability categories: autism, deafness, deaf blindness, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impaired, serious emotional disturbance (emotional and behavioral disturbance), specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness).

The Transition Planning Component of the IEP: transition planning is a requirement for students receiving special education services under IDEA and must be developed by the time a child with an IEP turns 16 (or earlier, depending upon state law). This component of the IEP is a coordinated set of activities created for and with students to prepare the student to achieve their desired post-secondary goals intended to prepare students to work, live, and participate in their communities as independently as possible. The plan must include: age-appropriate assessments; measurable goals for post-secondary life based on the student's strengths, preferences, and interests; how progresses toward these goals will be measured; and who will collect data to measure this progress. Once transition goals are developed, they are linked to goals in the student's annual Individual Education Program (IEP). IEP goals are particular activities conducted in support of the post-secondary goals articulated by the student and his or her special education teacher.

How Community Agency Representatives can be of assistance:

- Provide information about services available and eligibility requirements
- Brainstorm/ collaborate with other partners to identify services
- Help other transition team members understand the difference between school program entitlement and adult services eligibility
- Maintain continuing involvement in implementing transition plans across transition years
- Aid in planning that braids together services received in child/ adolescent settings and offered in adult settings to facilitate seamless transfer from youth to adult systems
- Assist assessing the need for school support between the ages 18-21
- Assist in the application process for community, agency, and college supports and services as appropriate
- Alert students and families about potential waiting lists for services
- Provide services as appropriate before student exits the school system



I'VE GOT MY CREW

Inviting Community Partners to your IEP Meeting



A community partner is a person from an organization outside of your high school that can help you plan for your life after graduation. It may be helpful to invite community partners to your IEP meetings because they can help you lay out your goals and the steps to take to meet those goals.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Think about one or more community partners to invite. A community partner should connect with your goals for life after high school.

i Examples:

Goal	Community Partner
Live in my own apartment	Housing Program Representative
Find a job	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Representative
Schedule my own mental health appointments	Adult Mental Health Care Provider
Go to college	College Admissions Representative

Still not sure who to invite? For ideas, you can ask your transition coordinator, counselor, teacher, or family member. You can also get to know community partners by attending a transition fair at your school!

DURING THE MEETING

1. At the start of the meeting, the community partner(s) will introduce themselves to you and your IEP team. They may attend the meeting in-person or over the phone.
2. During the part of the meeting about your goals, let your community partners know about your strengths, needs, and goals for after high school. Do you want to go to some type of college? Where do you hope to work? Or live? How independent would you like you be in your community one day?



3. Community partners will tell you how they can help you reach your goals.

i Some examples:

Housing Program Representative	This representative can tell you about housing options you are eligible for after high school and if assistance can be given to help you pay rent.
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Representative	VR offices help people with disabilities get jobs. A VR representative can tell you about how VR can help you with your resume, job search, career skills, and more. VR can also help cover some of the tuition for college courses.
Adult Mental Health Care Provider	This provider can outline how they can support you as you begin to schedule your own therapy and medication management appointments.
College Admissions Representative	The representative can explain the application process, requirements for enrollment, and let you know if their college has a degree program aligned with your interests or suggest a different college that is a better fit for your goals. They can also explain about disability services at their college and how to get academic accommodations for your courses.

4. You, your community partners, and everyone else at the meeting will decide what steps will be taken and how to measure progress toward your goals. Your crew will also pick target dates to reach your goals.

AFTER THE MEETING

1. Follow-up with any community partners that came to your IEP meeting. Thank them for attending.
2. If you're comfortable, tell them if and how their attendance made you feel, and how you thought they can help you reach your goals. This will let them know they are making a difference.
3. Over the next year, follow up with community partners about the steps they agreed to take with you and target dates. By talking with partners on a regular basis, you will get to know them better and build strong relationships for the future!

i You can ask your crew to help you complete these steps after the meeting if you would like.

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that this meeting is about you and your goals! Your crew are there to give you advice and guidance, but the choices are yours to make. It might take time to find the right community partner, but you can do this! Just take it one step at a time.

RESOURCES

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): A Young Adult's Guide

The Word on Work - Tip Sheet 6

Transitions RTC

April 2012

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies are located in every US state. VR helps people with physical or mental health disabilities achieve employment and live independently by offering vocational counseling and related individualized services. The information below explains how young adults with serious mental health conditions can take advantage of the VR services in their state.

What support services can I get from my state VR agency?



Transition Services: These are a variety of services students with disabilities use to make the adjustment from school to work after high school; VR can work with students and their special education teachers to develop an Individualized Education Transition Plan (IETP). VR will consider providing any service that is needed to achieve the agreed upon vocational goal.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE): This is the map for achieving your vocational goal, which when reached, will help you work and live as independently as possible. The IPE includes: work goals, steps and services to reach your goal, time frames, cost of services and who will pay, and your responsibilities for carrying out those plans.

Funding for Other Needed Services to Help You Work: The VR agency may be able to provide financial assistance for the services in your IPE such as training and post-secondary education, transportation, supplies, job search assistance, and assistive technology.

Vocational Counseling: VR can also help you decide what kinds of jobs or careers make the most sense for you. This could happen by talking it through with the counselor or taking tests to help you figure out how your interests and skills fit into different types of jobs.

Job Development: This includes job searching, skills training, resumé preparation, and placement into a desired position. Your VR counselor may refer you to job developers who work for the VR agency when you are ready to begin a job search.

Post-Employment Services: One or more short term VR services that help you to maintain, regain, or advance in employment.

Other services: To see information about more services offered by your state, contact your state Vocational Rehabilitation office or search for your state VR agency online. You can find a listing of state agencies at: Job Accommodations Network (JAN):

https://askjan.org/concerns/State-Vocational-Rehabilitation-Agencies.cfm?cssearch=2057690_1

What do I need to be eligible for VR?

Tips From People Who Found Jobs Through the VR Program:

Flexibility: Be flexible about what services you ask for.

Ask questions: Make a list of questions to ask whenever you meet with the counselor or other VR staff and find out about your options, both pros and cons, so you can make informed decisions.

Communicate with your VR Counselor: Ask for the best way to contact them: email, phone, texting, etc. Identify your needs and ask for help.

Advocate for yourself: Contact the office supervisor if you are having problems with your counselor.

Talk to your peers: See what their experience was like using VR services to get a job.

Be Organized: Make a calendar and mark appointments. Keep a folder for VR paperwork. Take notes during meetings.

- You need medical documentation of a physical or mental disability that causes significant barriers to working/employment.
- You need a determination that VR services are needed for you to get a job or keep working.
- Individuals who receive SSI or SSDI usually also qualify for VR services.
- The time frame to either deny or accept an application is usually 60 days. Certain groups of people with a disability may have priority to get services and there may also be a wait list for services.
- For more eligibility or application information, check out your state VR website or handbook.
- If you were determined not qualified, you can appeal the process using The Client Assistance Program (CAP). Please see additional information on the next page.



What is the VR process?

1. The VR counselor will outline available services during a group or individual meeting.
2. Once you are determined to be eligible, an initial interview will be scheduled with a VR counselor.
3. Your VR counselor and you will develop your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which includes your chosen job goal and all the services needed to achieve that goal.
4. You meet periodically with your counselor to reach your goal.
5. VR services last until employment has been maintained for at least 90 days and you and your counselor agree that you are performing well on the job, **or** your case file is closed for lack of cooperation on your part or other reasons.

What are the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors' responsibilities?

- Inform you of resources available to you and give you specific help in connecting with them
- Provide information on your rights and legal information, such as the appeals process, and the Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- Participate with you in the development of an IPE which you and your VR Counselor will sign. Give you a copy of the IPE and all subsequent amendments and reviews
- Assist in the coordination of IPE services and review your progress; at least annually
- Keep you fully informed throughout the VR process, including the opportunity to talk about why your case is being closed when that time comes

What can I do if VR services do not meet my needs?

Discuss your questions with your VR counselor.

Ask for whatever you think your needs are. As tax payers, the VR system belongs to all of us.

If dissatisfied, you can speak to the supervisor or request a change in counselors.

Contact your local Client Assistance Program (CAP), some decisions and problems can be appealed.

Get informed about your state VR agency. You can get help from advocacy organizations like the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).¹



Where Else Can I Get Help If Problems Occur With My VR Services?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a program for persons with disabilities who are applicants or clients of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or Independent Living programs. CAP:

- Provides information about Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Advises you on your rights and responsibilities and investigates your complaint
- Assists in resolving problems with your counselor during any part of the process
- Helps you write a formal request for appeal and move your concerns through the system²
- Represents you at administrative reviews, mediations and a formal appeals hearing

How do I find my state agency?

To find your state agency, a listing is available at Job Accommodations Network (JAN):
http://askjan.org/concerns/State-Vocational-Rehabilitation-Agencies.cfm?cssearch=2057690_1

Sources:

Office of Special Education Rehabilitation Services:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html>

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Youth and Transition Services:

http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/youth_transition.shtml

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students with a Disability: <http://www.mass.gov/>

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: <https://dhs.sd.gov/rehabservices/vocrehabservices.aspx>

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):

https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/vocrehab_manual/Web%20Version%20SEC06-00%20%20%20%20IPE.pdf

Department of Rehabilitation Services Client Assistant Program:

<https://dors.maryland.gov/resources/Pages/CAP.aspx>

Getting the Most from the Public Vocational Rehabilitation System:

https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=129

Massachusetts Consumer Handbook for Rehabilitation (VR) Services:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/vocational-rehab/consumer-handbook.html#3>

Vermont Policy and Procedure Manual: <https://vocrehab.vermont.gov/about-us/policy-and-procedure-manual>

California Department Of Rehabilitation Regulations: [https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=I81D8B290D45311DEB97CF67CD0B99467&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=I81D8B290D45311DEB97CF67CD0B99467&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default))

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The Transitions RTC is part of the Systems & Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC)
A Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Research Center of Excellence



1. To find your local NAMI, please visit: <https://www.nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI>
2. Appeal processes in Vocational Rehabilitation programs differ by state; check with your local office. A good guide is available at <https://dors.maryland.gov/resources/Pages/CAP.aspx>



WIOA: New Law Helps Youth & Young Adults Get Jobs – What Families Need to Know

Tip Sheet 16

Transitions ACR

Revised November 2020

The **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) P.L. 113-128, 2014** mandates services for youth and young adults (ages 14-24) with disabilities, including those with psychiatric disabilities or serious mental health conditions, to help them prepare for, obtain and pursue careers in integrated settings that offer competitive salaries and benefits. This tip sheet provides information that parents can use to advocate for and educate themselves about WIOA services that are available to youth and young adults living with serious mental health conditions.

What is important about this law for youth and young adults with psychiatric disabilities?

- » Students with disabilities can get new career and educational development services.
- » There is a focus on providing career and educational development services to youth and young adults who are not in school.
- » The focus is on competitive jobs in integrated settings paying at least minimum wage or higher.



Who Can Access WIOA Youth Program Services?

1

Out-of-School Youth

2

In-School Youth

Youth and young adults between the ages of 14-24 with a psychiatric disability are eligible. A youth or young adult with a disability is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Eligibility Criteria

<p>Out-of-School Youth (including those with a psychiatric disability) must be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Between the ages of 16-24 at enrollment (age may differ in your state). ✓ Not attending any school (as defined under your state's law).
<p>In-School Youth (including those with a psychiatric disability) must be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Between the ages of 14-21 at enrollment (age may differ in your state). ✓ Attending school (such as high school, alternative school, or college). ✓ "Low income", which is based on the young adult's own income--not the family's income (e.g., living in a high poverty area or is eligible to receive a free or reduced price lunch). ✓ Meet the definition of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Documentation of a disability includes having an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a 504 plan in place, or a physician's note.

What Services Are Available?

<p>All Eligible In-School and Out-of- School Youth</p>	<p>Per Title I of WIOA, the following 14 program elements are to be provided to eligible youth and young adults. Local agencies decide what services a youth or young adult will get based on each participant’s objective assessment and individual service strategy. The 14 elements of WIOA youth services are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention. 2. Alternative secondary school and dropout recovery services. 3. Placement in paid and unpaid work experience. 4. Occupational skills training. 5. Integrated education and training model combining workforce preparation, basic academic skills, and occupational skills. 6. Leadership development opportunities. 7. Supportive services, such as transportation, child care, dependent care, and housing, etc. 8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation. 9. Follow-up services provided after program exit to help ensure success in employment or education. 10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling provide individualized counseling to participants, including drug/alcohol and mental health counseling. 11. Financial literacy education. 12. Entrepreneurial skills training. 13. Services that provide employment and labor market information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations. 14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities help youth and young adults prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.
<p>In-School Youth Only (i.e. Students only)</p>	<p>Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are only available to In-School Youth (i.e., students as defined by federal and state laws). These services are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job exploration counseling, which may include helping students learn about the world of work, explore their interests and abilities, work with a job mentor, etc. 2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include paid or unpaid in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships. 3. Individualized student strategies to support a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary education settings and employment. 4. Workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills. These are the skills and behaviors employers expect employees to possess prior to starting a job. 5. Instruction in self-advocacy (which may include peer mentoring), which helps students to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his/her own interests and/or desires.

A youth or young adult may not receive all WIOA youth program services—only those services they need. Typically, youth and young adults go through an assessment at an American Job Center (AJC), and, with assistance develop an individual service strategy to determine the services they need, which may or may not include vocational rehabilitation services. Once enrolled in a WIOA youth program, youth or young adults may be able to continue receiving these youth services after reaching the maximum eligibility age (21 for In-School Youth; 24 for Out-of-School Youth).

Where Can Youth and Young Adults Get WIOA Services?

Out-of-School Youth

Out-of-School Youth should go to a **local American Job Center** (also known as a One-Stop Center) to apply for and access WIOA youth services. While some services may be provided elsewhere in the community, AJCs serve as the hub to access WIOA youth program services. Some AJCs offer different youth services than others, so it may require some research to find the best fit. Staff at the AJC can help youth and young adults find employment, get training or education for a career path, or go back to school.



Find a local American Job Center (AJC) here:

<https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx>

In-School Youth (i.e. Students)

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and local school districts work together to identify students with disabilities who may benefit from receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from the VR agency; however, students with disabilities enrolled in the WIOA youth program who are in high school or recognized postsecondary education/training programs may benefit from such services as well, and the VR agency may serve as another referral base.

Pre-ETS services are provided in a variety of ways across the country. In some areas, the VR agency contracts with schools to provide the services, while in others the VR agency may be providing direct services or contracting with a college, university, or even community rehabilitation provider to provide the services. Schools are not necessarily the places in which the Pre-ETS are provided but certainly serve as prime locations for such collaborations. However, keep in mind that all students receiving special education services are entitled to transition services coordinated by the schools under IDEA irrespective of WIOA. If you have questions about how your in-school youth or young adult can get Pre-ETS, contact your local VR agency to find out about the referral process. Since Pre-ETS are not delivered that same way in every area, you can also contact your local AJC to see if they can provide any information or guidance on how your in-school youth or young adult can access similar or other WIOA youth program services.



Find a State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:

<https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-%20agencies/>

What If a Youth or Young Adult Needs More Comprehensive Services?

Youth and young adults who are receiving WIOA youth services may also be eligible for their state's VR services. Therefore, if a WIOA enrolled youth or young adult with a psychiatric disability needs more personalized services, they should apply for VR services through their state's VR agency. This way, if approved, they can have access to their state's VR services, which would include the specific services they need to prepare for or find competitive, integrated employment. This is true for both In-School and Out-of-School youth.

Don't let your youth and young adults with psychiatric disabilities miss out on these valuable services to get the training and education they need to achieve their post-school employment goals and get jobs that will help them have rewarding work lives.

Resources

- Find local American Job Centers: <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx>
- Find your State Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation: <http://www.askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies/>
- Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL): <http://iel.org/home>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Resources for Youth: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth>
- RSA: Transition of Students and Youth With Disabilities from School to Postsecondary Education and Employment: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/transition-of-students-and-youth-with-disabilities-from-school-to-postsecondary-education-and-employment.pdf>
- Teens on IEPs: Making My “Transition” Services Work for Me - <http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=pib>
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): A Young Adult’s Guide - <http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1070&context=pib>
- Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Technical Assistance Center (VR Y-TAC): <http://y-tac.org/>
- WIOA Youth Program Eligibility: <https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/09/11/34/WIOA-Youth-Program-Eligibility>
- WIOA Youth Program Fact Sheet: https://www.doleta.gov/Youth_services/pdf/WIOA_Youth_OWI_Fact-Sheet_12_2016.pdf
- WIOA: What it means for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD): <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5183>
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and its Application to Youth and Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions (SMHC) - <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=pib>

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Visit Transitions ACR online at <https://www.umassmed.edu/transitionsACR>

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Positive familial support can be a good resource for young people during their transition years. However, family involvement and support during the transition years for young adults with mental health conditions can be complicated by changing family dynamics.

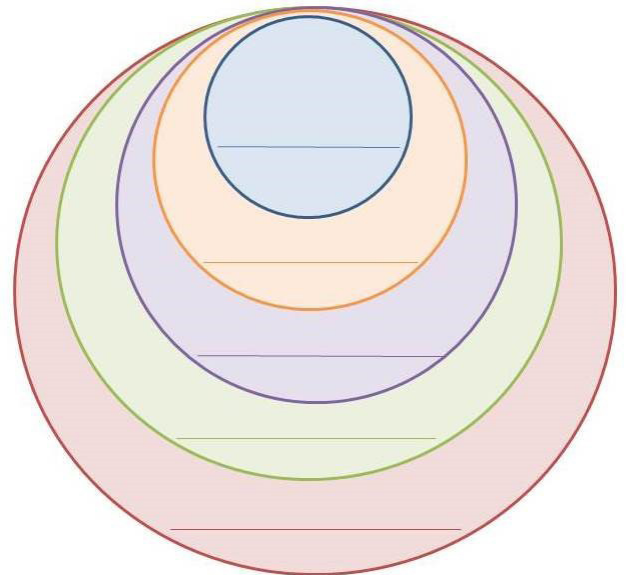
Best Practices When Working with Young Adults and Their Families

Have the young adult define their relationships

Do not assume anything about the people in their lives. Supports and services need to recognize that young adults may define their families in broad terms, and family sometimes extends beyond their blood relatives or legal guardians. Especially for young adults who have been involved in multiple systems and/or out-of-home care, you cannot assume their biological family will be their primary support.¹

Below is a simple activity for young adults to periodically assess and identify their social network:

- Draw a circle with five layers.
- Have young adult put their name in the middle.
- Ask young adult to put the names of people most important to them in the rings closest to their name. Ask the young adult to put the names of less important people in the outside rings.
- Highlight the relationships that contribute most positively to their success in one color and the negative ones in another color.
- Discuss who young adults want involved in their care and how they see them being involved



Be sure that these discussions include an exploration of non-family supportive adults or allies as well as significant others and that you revisit this occasionally, as social networks tend to change.

Discuss conflict in relationships

Conflict is a product of our being different from each other and not always seeing the world in the same way. The goal is not to avoid conflict but to maintain a healthy relationship even in the midst of conflict. If conflict exists within the family or within a young adult's natural support system, attempt to understand it and work with the young adult to strategize how to navigate this relationship and work through the conflict. It takes practice!

Find creative ways to incorporate family input into youth-led treatment planning

Individualized Service Plans and goals should be youth-led (i.e. the young adult should be making decisions about what their goals are and how they want to get there). Some parents

might have difficulty with this shift in treatment planning because for many years they led their child's treatment plans. However, there are some practical ways to incorporate family or parent input into care without confrontation.²

For example:

Each team meeting should start with laying the ground rules for communicating with each other. For example, who leads the meeting, how others can share their input respectively, topics that should be off limit. Involve all group members in creating the rules and writing them on a whiteboard. Enforce the rules as needed. Refer to resources related to Achieve My Plan (AMP) for more tips on youth-led treatment planning.



Identify any behavioral health needs of parents or other family members

Sometimes the parents themselves, or siblings, have unmet mental health or substance abuse needs that can add stress to the family unit. It is important to evaluate and assess these needs in a strengths-based non-threatening way.

What We Know About Partnering with Families

The “magic” age of 18

Family involvement for children under the age of 18 with serious mental health conditions is a cornerstone of the System of Care approach. However, when an individual legally becomes an adult the family dynamic can shift in two very important ways:

1. Confidentiality and privacy laws

Confidentiality and privacy laws pose restrictions on information sharing once a young person turns 18. Most of the below laws and statutes require young people over the age of 18 to grant permission for their parents to access their health, behavioral health, or academic records. This change literally can take place over night and have major implications for how parent's access their young person's records and help them navigate their care.

2. Exclusion of families from ISPs, education and employment goals, etc.

Many parents are actively involved in the treatment and care decisions of their children but after age 18 a young adult can refuse to involve his/her parents in treatment. In some cases, familial input in treatment can come to a halt,³ even if families are still financially supporting their child. Often parents and young adults will disagree on their preferences as to how much the parents should be involved, which can create conflict.

Recommended citation: Sabella, Kathryn. (2018). Partnering with Families & Other Natural Supports on Individualized Service Plans (ISPs). Worcester, MA: University of Massachusetts Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center.

The contents of this tip sheet were developed in part under a grant with funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, and from the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (ACL Grant# 90RT5031, The Learning and Working Transitions RRTC). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this tip sheet do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, or SAMHSA and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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RESOURCES

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Resources for children, young adults, and families

<https://www.fcmh.org/>

Parent Professional Advocacy League

Resources and advocacy specific to Massachusetts

<http://ppal.net/>

The Parent Information Network (Southeastern MA):

<https://www.bamsi.org/program/parent-information-network-pin/>

The Support Network (Western MA):

<http://wmtcinfo.org/programs/support-network-of-families-of-wmass/>

NAMI Family-to-Family

A free twelve-week educational program for caregivers and/or friends of people living with mental illness

<https://www.nami.org/find-support/nami-programs/nami-family-to-family>

Achieve My Plan

Best Practices for Increasing Meaningful Youth Participation in Collaborative Team Planning

<https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbAMPYouthParticipation.pdf>

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HOW TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

Addressing Misunderstandings about Mental Health in the Media

Stories in the media, such as those told through the news, TV shows, movies, books, and social media sometimes use incorrect or offensive statements to describe mental health conditions. Unfortunately, these wrong ideas can be taken as facts by people who may not know a lot about mental health. It is our goal to use this tip sheet to bust these negative ideas about mental health and people with mental health conditions.

This tip sheet was developed as a collaboration between the Massachusetts Statewide Youth Advisory Council (SYAC) and the Learning and Working Center at the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (TACR) to clear up some common misunderstandings about mental health conditions and to share strategies to talk about mental health in a more accurate and more helpful way! Read on to learn more about mental health.

MENTAL HEALTH



HOW TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Like everyone, people with mental health conditions need to be treated and referred to with dignity and respect.

“She was acting like such a psycho.”

CORRECTION

“She was really upset and was shouting at him.”

- ❶ The word “psycho” is an offensive term referring to a person who experiences psychosis. Just because someone is angry does not mean they are psychotic.¹⁴
- ❷ Using this term in this way implies that a person with psychosis is dangerous or violent, neither of which are necessarily true.

“I’m so OCD about keeping my room clean.”

CORRECTION

“It’s really important to me that I keep my room neat and organized.” -from a person that doesn’t have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

- ❶ It’s not okay to borrow a condition you know you don’t truly have. OCD, or any mental health condition, is not something cool, quirky or unique to claim you have if you are not actually living with the condition.

“He’s a schizo.”

CORRECTION

“A person diagnosed with schizophrenia.”

- ❶ Use “person-first language” when speaking. A person is more than their diagnosis.
- ❷ *Person-first language* means that when writing or talking about someone you recognize the person first and then the condition or disability.



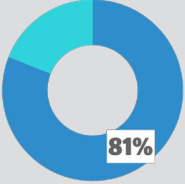
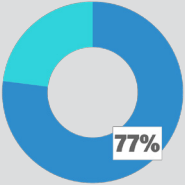




“How do you deal with a bipolar person?”



CORRECTION

“How do you support a person living with bipolar disorder?”

- ❶ Use positive, strengths-based language when discussing recovery from mental health conditions.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

 MYTH	 FACT
A mental health condition is a personal weakness. Anyone can get over it if they really want to.	Mental health conditions are very common. They are not anyone’s “fault.” They can be the result of a combination of biological and life experiences like traumatic events. Mental health conditions may affect a person’s thinking, feeling or mood. ¹ Such conditions may impact someone’s ability to relate to others and function each day. People recover from mental health conditions, but may need supports and help to do so. ²
A mental health condition means that a person is evil or bad, or influenced by the devil.	Mental health conditions do not make people “bad.” People with mental health conditions have strengths and talents and make valuable contributions to society like everyone else.
Mental health is only important to people with mental health conditions.	Everyone has mental health and should take care of it just like physical health. It’s important to think about mental health as part of your overall well-being and if you notice you are having difficulty seek help.
Work is too stressful for people with mental health conditions and you should not expect them to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research has shown that work improves one’s self-esteem, life satisfaction and, belief in being able to achieve goals and tasks.³⁻⁵ • A recent study found that 81% of young adults with mental health conditions in the sample <i>considered working to be important</i> and 77% <i>considered going to school to be important</i>.⁶ • People with mental health conditions can and want to work and succeed with or without supports and accommodations. <p>Did you know? <i>There have been great leaders, scientists, artists, and athletes (e.g., Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Nikola Tesla, Vincent van Gogh, Metta World Peace, etc.) with mental health conditions.</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div>
Only a few people have mental health conditions.	<p>Many people live with mental health conditions:</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition.⁷ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in 5 adults in America experience mental illness in a given year.⁸ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <hr/>
Once someone sees a therapist or goes to the hospital for a mental health condition, they are a sick person.	Having a mental health condition does not define you. You are a person first, just like everyone else.

 MYTH	 FACT
It's not okay to talk about mental health with people.	You should not be afraid to talk about your or someone else's mental health with friends, family or your doctor. If you notice that someone you care about is having a hard time, find a way to talk to them. <i>Seize the Awkward</i> (seizetheawkward.org) has ideas on how to start this conversation.
It's not okay to get help when someone is having a hard time with their mental health.	If you notice that your mental health is causing you to have a hard time doing things, then it's important to get help. Seeing a therapist or a doctor is a good thing. If you were having a hard time breathing, you'd get help.
Having a mental health condition dictates what your life will be like. People with mental health conditions cannot live meaningful lives.	<p>Having a mental health condition does not determine what your life will be like or mean that you will have bad outcomes.</p> <p>Did you know? <i>Prince Harry, Kendrick Lamar, Demi Lovato, Kid Cudi, J. Cole, Halsey, Selena Gomez, Chrissy Teigen, and Lady Gaga all have reported struggling with mental health conditions while having very successful careers and fulfilling lives.</i></p>
Mental health conditions are untreatable and people with mental health conditions will always be sick. Once you have a mental health condition, you will have it for the rest of your life.	Mental health conditions are fluid and conditions can change and improve over time. ⁹ There are many effective treatment methods for mental health conditions, and symptoms can often be improved or managed. Research shows that the sooner that young people receive the right treatment for their mental health condition, the better they will do in the long-term. ¹⁰⁻¹¹
People with mental health conditions tend to be violent.	People with mental health conditions are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence. ¹²
Mental health conditions are the cause of gun violence.	While the media makes people think that having a mental health condition is the cause of gun violence, a recent study has shown that having a mental health condition is not the root cause of gun violence. ¹³ Instead, having access to firearms and a history of violent behavior are better predictors of gun violence than having a mental health condition. ¹³

OTHER TIPS & TRICKS ON HOW TO BE A MENTAL HEALTH ALLY WHILE TALKING WITH OTHERS

- Talk openly about mental health and that it's OK to get help when you need it (if comfortable, share your lived experiences). Talking openly breaks down the stigma that mental health is not something that people should discuss.¹⁵
- Model more appropriate ways of discussing mental health if a person uses offensive, incorrect, or stigmatizing language.¹²
- If a person shares their strong emotions with you listen without judgement.

WHAT IS THE MASSACHUSETTS STATEWIDE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SYAC)?

The SYAC brings together mental health service providers, and youth and young adults to advise the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. It is a group of young adults who work together to find equality and to advocate for each other, themselves, and any youth and young adult in the Mass DMH system and the community. They represent youth and young adults with mental illness in the state of Massachusetts through personal experience as peers.

You can learn more about youth and young adult advisory councils for mental health organizations in our *10 Steps to Starting a Young Adult Advisory Council* tip sheets in the resources below.

RESOURCES

- **Active Minds:** <https://www.activeminds.org>
- **Doors to Wellbeing:** <https://www.doorstowellbeing.org/>
- **Jed Foundation:** <https://www.jedfoundation.org>
- **Mental Health America:** <https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net>
- **Mental Health First Aid USA:** <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>
- **NAMI - National Alliance on Mental Illness:** <https://www.nami.org>
- **SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:** <https://www.samhsa.gov>
- **Seize the Awkward:** <https://seizetheawkward.org/>
- **Strong 365:** <https://strong365.org/>
- **Tips and Tricks to Starting a Young Adult Council Part 1: 10 Steps to Starting a Young Adult Advisory Council:** <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1125&context=pib>
- **Tips and Tricks to Starting a Young Adult Council Part 2: The Do's and Don'ts of Young Adult Councils:** <https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1126&context=pib>
- **Youth MOVE National:** <https://www.youthmovenational.org>

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What We Know From the Field

Young adults can be actively engaged and retained in services that are important to them by using proactive approaches. We know that young adults often under-utilize services for serious mental health conditions. The scarcity of treatment resources, the lack of adaptation to young adult culture or needs, and the challenges of navigating the treatment system as adults may explain unmet treatment needs. Moreover, young adults may need to develop self-advocacy skills because their parents or others in their support system may have advocated for them in the past. Simply providing young adults with information about how and where to get care or services does not always work.

Change is a cornerstone of the transition to adulthood. Aside from their mental health needs, young adults living with mental health conditions may need support with obtaining meaningful employment, education, housing, community integration, mentoring and peer supports, and/or developing supportive relationships or social networks.¹⁻⁴ Be aware that their services may need adjusting as their needs and goals change.

Providers need to develop a connection, build trust, and create a working therapeutic alliance with each young adult. See each young adult as a partner. Try to be flexible, and respond according to where the **young adult is at in his or her life**. Utilizing these principles will help providers to develop a strong foundation of mutual respect and the rapport needed to work effectively with young adults.



Guiding Principles for Working with Young Adults

- **Develop a therapeutic alliance with each young adult by:**
 - **Establishing a connection by using a functional and person-centered approach** (rather than a medical approach). Focus on the young adult, their goals, interests, desires, and skills rather than their diagnosis.⁵ Find out what the young adults' goals are and allow them to drive the process. Ask questions and really listen to what they want and which areas they would like support.
 - **Being helpful** by connecting young adults with the services they feel they need to achieve their goals.⁶
 - **Being genuine and likable** (e.g., friendly, empathetic, compassionate, honest, and amiable) with young adults by clearly expressing interest in helping them find the services and supports that meet their goals/needs. Avoid taking on an authoritarian or parental role.⁷
 - **Allowing for flexible meeting times and locations.** Help with transportation, if needed. Young adults may miss appointments more than older adults so try to be flexible with cancellations and missed meetings. Assist young adults in scheduling and setting up reminders about future appointments, and brainstorm with the young adult about ways to hold them accountable to attend their appointments.
 - **Being consistent and following through** on plans and promises.⁶
- **Get to know each young adult by:**⁶
 - **Understanding their** reason or reasons for coming to services
 - **Finding out the importance** of school and work in their life
 - **Discovering who influences** them in their life; getting to know their social influences
 - **Discussing the role of family** biological or otherwise youth-defined
 - **Describing** releases of information and making sure they understand their purpose and need

Some tips for meeting with young adults:

- **Ask one open-ended question such as** “What do you like to do for fun?” or “What do you need help with?” and then STOP to listen to the answer. Do not ask questions in quick succession.⁹
- **If you think the young adult is missing something** or needs more information, ask a question instead of just giving them the answer. For example, if a young adult wanted to take an art class ask him or her “I wonder if there are costs associated with taking the class”.⁹
- **Try to be descriptive when offering praise** or talking about a strength. Say more than “great”. Also offering congratulations for accomplishments (large and small) is important.⁹
- **Provide reflection** when a young adult says something meaningful, important, or personal, or mentions something often.⁹



- **If technology is available to you, use texting and social media to engage young adults.** Young adults rely on heavily on texting and social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram) to communicate. Checking in using texts and sending appointment reminders via text are good ways to connect with young adults. Discuss with the young adult what his or her preferred communication and establish parameters for using them.
- **Ask the young adult about any desires or goals** they may have to make academic and/or employment changes.⁶ Refer to services that:
 - Focus on career development and exploration that may include resume building, how to apply for a job, how to dress, and how act being in a professional environment.⁸
 - Assist young adults in finishing high school and/or transitioning to post-secondary school education.
- **Identify services and supports that are developmentally appropriate.** Young adults may have stronger skills in some areas than others. Try to find services and supports that match the developmental stage of the young adult.
- **Make and keep connections with other agencies and organizations** to create a more integrated approach and to assist with referrals. Use a proactive, but gentle approach. Do not assume the young adult will follow-up later. Do a warm hand off. Encourage young adults to use their service authorization person or case manager’s telephone number to schedule the appointment.
- **Assist young adults in developing important life-skills** such as advocacy and self-determination.
- **Refer young adults to services and supports** that have been specifically adapted for young adults and that have near-age peer mentors.
- **It takes cultural sensitivity and respect** to relate to young adults effectively.
 - Providers should have sensitivity to the diverse cultural/linguistic values they may come across while working with young adults. Be aware of socioeconomic differences, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
 - Be attuned to the generation you are talking to. In general, young adults have different values, language, technology dependence, and expectations when compared to older adults.

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SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Achieve My Plan (AMP's) Top Ten Tips for Engaging with Young People: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj-5-AMP-top-ten-tips-for-engaging-young-people.pdf>
- Davis, M., & Golden, L. (2018). Annotated bibliography: State-of-the-science conference proceedings. Worcester, MA: University of Massachusetts Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC), Transitions Research and Training Center. Retrieved from <https://www.umassmed.edu/globalassets/systems-and-psychosocial-advances-research-center/images/annbib-sos2018.pdf>
- During Meetings I can't Stand It When...: A Guide for Facilitators and Team Members: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj3-facilitator-guide-2013.pdf>
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- TIP Case Plan Goal Domains: https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/HTItoolkit/files/04-Service_and_Delivery/2-Individualized_Planning/C.TIP_Case_Plan_Goal_Domains.pdf

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- ⁶ *HYPE practice guide: Engagement & intake*. Unpublished manuscript. Worcester, MA: University of Massachusetts Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center (SPARC), Transitions Research and Training Center.
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How To Speak Up and Be Heard: Self Advocacy

Community of Practice, Northeast Massachusetts 2014

SELF ADVOCACY IS THE ABILITY TO SPEAK UP FOR YOURSELF AND FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU. AS YOU BECOME OLDER AND TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE, SELF ADVOCACY HELPS YOU:

- ▶ Get what you need
- ▶ Make your own choices
- ▶ Learn how to say no
- ▶ Express your feelings respectfully

Places to Use Self Advocacy

Putting it Into Words

AT WORK OR SCHOOL

- Adjusting your schedule
- Participating in meetings
- Asking for accommodations
- Requesting tutoring
- During a job interview
- Asking for a raise

• **AT SCHOOL:** E-mail to professor: “I am asking for a week extension for this assignment. I haven’t been feeling well and I fell behind.”

• **AT WORK:** “I can’t work on Sunday, I have a family commitment. Can I work a different shift instead?”

AT HOME

- Managing finances (bills/ roommates)
- Requesting personal space/time
- Renting an apartment
- Sharing food costs
- In a relationship

• **WITH ROOMMATES:** “I have class at 8 A.M. Can you stop playing your music by 10 P.M.?”

• **ARGUMENT WITH A SIGNIFICANT OTHER:** “I need to remove myself from this conversation, could we talk about this later when we are both feeling less angry?”

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Arranging transportation
- Presenting in court
- Making a complaint
- Paying a check

• **AT THE BANK:** “I don’t understand this statement, can you explain the fees to me?”

• **SPLITTING A CHECK:** “I’d love to go out to dinner. Can we split the check?”

AT THE DOCTORS OFFICE

- Making an appointment
- Reviewing a treatment or recovery plan
- Requesting a second opinion
- Asking for clarification

• **AT THE DOCTOR:** “Before we make a final decision, I would like to get a second opinion.”

• **MEDICAL APPOINTMENT:** “The side effects of this medication are bothering me. Can we discuss other options or choices?”

10 Ways to be Heard

1. Ask questions.
2. Listen! Be interested in what the other person is saying.
3. Think before you speak. People listen when you choose your words carefully.
4. Write down your thoughts and/or rehearse what you will say with a friend or in a mirror.
5. Speak to others in the way you want to be spoken to.
6. Know to whom you are talking. For example, friend, grandparent, or boss and use language and tone that they would find respectful.
7. Know when to stop talking and how to exit a conversation politely.
8. Be willing to compromise and be flexible.
9. Using words like “please” and “thank you” go a long way.
10. Do your research. Find out if what you’re asking for is reasonable.

Questions to Ask Yourself

If you are getting ready to advocate for something you need, think about the questions below. You can review your answers with someone you trust. Role-playing the scenario can also help you to figure out exactly what you want to say and how.

1. What am I advocating for? What do I want?

2. Why is it important?

3. How should I make my request?

4. Who do I need to talk to?

5. Who else will this affect?

6. Is there a compromise or another option?

7. What should I do if my request is denied?

For additional information on self advocacy visit these websites:

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/tip-sheet/becoming-a-self-advocate>,

<http://www.selfadvocacyonline.org/learning/>

SAMHSA Guide on self advocacy: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA-3719/SMA-3719.pdf>

Visit us at: <http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsRTC>



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TTYL: Keeping in Contact With Your Professional

Community of Practice, Northeast Massachusetts 2011

Keeping in communication with professionals (doctors/counselors/psychiatrists/etc.) is very important. It will help keep you updated on appointments, insurance issues, medications, etc. Here are some tips on simple ways to stay in contact! No matter what form of communication you are using, you should always give 24 hours notice if you are cancelling an appointment, unless if it's an emergency. Find out your offices policy about no shows (i.e., some offices will charge you or stop working with you for missed appointments).

Keeping in Contact by Phone and Text

Cell Phones

- Let all professionals know right away if you have to change your phone number.
- You can use your cell phone's calendar to put reminders in your phone for appointments with your providers.
- Use the address book in your phone to put in all your professionals numbers and an emergency contact number so they are easy to locate.
- Write down all professionals numbers so you have a backup if a phone breaks or is lost. (Some cell phone providers will keep a backup for you online for free).
- Make sure to set up your voicemail so professionals can leave you messages about appointments/insurance issues/etc.
- Keep your cell phone charged at all times so you are easy to reach, & keep it on you whenever possible.
- Ask your professional if they are allowed to use text messaging.

SafeLink Cell Phones

- SafeLink is a government supported program that provides a free cell phone and minutes to those who qualify for State or Federal Assistance Programs.¹ For example, Medicaid, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Food Stamps and low income Home Energy Assistant Programs, etc.
- To find out if you are eligible for a SafeLink cell phone go to: www.safelinkwireless.com, put in your zip code and you will receive information on benefits, qualifying and applying for SafeLink that are specific to your State.
- You can also text on a SafeLink phone. Check your plan to see how many minutes are taken up by sending or receiving each text.
- To purchase additional minutes for your SafeLink phone you can either go online (24/7) to www.tracfone.com by phone (24/7) 1-800-378-1684 or at local retailers (Wal-Mart, CVS, Kmart or Target etc.).

Keeping in Contact by Internet

Access to computers

- If you do not own a computer and need to use one to check e-mails, etc, you can go to your town's library, or use one in your school's computer room.
- If you own a computer but don't have internet, most libraries offer free wireless internet. A lot of restaurants or coffee shops (such as McDonalds) have free wireless for customers.

E-mail accounts and Social Media

- Ask your professionals if you can contact them through e-mail.
- You can get a free e-mail account from websites like Google.com, Yahoo.com, etc.
- Make sure to check your email every other day if possible so you don't miss important messages.
- Some professionals will allow you to contact them through Facebook or Twitter, but make sure you ask if it's okay before contacting them.

¹PCLS E-Government Services: <http://pclsegov.blogspot.com/2009/06/free-cell-phones-safelink-wireless.html>

Helpful Tips on Internet Communication

- Keep your passwords private & store them somewhere safe in case you forget them.
- Make sure your social media & e-mail addresses are appropriate. If you wouldn't be okay with someone like your parents seeing the picture, it shouldn't be posted. E-mail addresses should be rated PG.

Mail

- A lot of professionals send out notices & forms only through the mail. If your address changes, you need to let all of your professionals know as soon as it happens.

For Professionals

TTYL*: Keeping in Contact with a Young Adult (YA)

Keeping in Contact by Phone and Text

Many YAs change cell phone numbers and carriers due to bills, better service, etc.

- Ideally it is good to get an alternate number (family member, long-term friend, etc.)
- Young adults often rely on texting before calling. It is important to check your agency policy if texting is possible. Discuss with the YA in advance what is possible and preferable.
- Many YAs don't like to leave messages. Let them know if your voice mail is confidential and if they can call anytime day or night.
- YAs often rely on caller ID rather than a message so be sure to check your missed calls.
- If you use your personal cell phone be aware if your number will be displayed.
- Many youth have very limited minutes on their cell phone. Check if this is a concern when communicating.

Keeping in Contact by Internet

- YAs have access to the internet many places however, be aware that email is not always used on a regular basis.
- Check with YAs about how/when they use email and if it is a good way of communication.
- Most agencies do not allow professionals to be friends with YAs on Facebook/Twitter and other social media websites. Check your agency policy.
- Be aware of your own Facebook/Twitter and all social media privacy settings.
- Have a plan if a YA request social media contact in alignment with your agency policy.
- Be mindful that email can be a great way to communicate however HIPAA still applies and email is not fully secure.

When you cannot get in touch

- Call the emergency, friend, or back up number
- Try email
- Send a letter
- Depending on your relationship drop by the home if possible
- Be clear when you need contact by i.e., date, time of day, etc.
- Remember that YAs are learning how to communicate and manage appointments. Discuss ahead of time expectations on what the plan will be if an appointment or call is missed
- Be as flexible as your agency will allow and that will help YAs reach their goals

* text talk for "talk to you later"

Download at: www.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/publications



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Teens on IEPs: Making My “Transition” Services Work for Me

What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and “Transition” Services?

An IEP is an individual education plan written in public school for children ages 3 to 21 that by law, describes the special education services and goals for a student with an identified disability. Special ed services involve different techniques that help the student in a way that typical instruction cannot. Transition services are plans within the IEP that address your specific needs in relation to life after high school.



What are my school’s responsibilities?

- Determine eligibility for special ed services (If you think you should be getting these services and aren’t, ask for help)*
- To conduct an annual review of my IEP to identify my strengths, interests and needs (You can request meeting more often to review goals)
- Summarize my academic and functional levels
- Deliver accommodations, modifications and related services i.e., counseling, occupational and physical therapy, speech-language pathology, and psychological services decided by my IEP team
- At age 16, discuss with me my plans for after high school including “transition” services
- My attendance at IEP meetings on “transition” services or goals

What should my IEP “transition” services include?

- Identification of your interests and ideas for work or school after high school
- Measurable goals related to education, training, jobs and independent living
- Related services or courses needed to reach goals
- Referrals or activities to link me up to adult services to meet my goals; i.e., vocational programs, supported employment or education and adult mental health services
- A specific transition planning form; requirements as described in IDEA, state requirements may vary. *See NSTTAC Indicator 13 Checklist link below for minimum requirements.

*For more information please visit: <http://ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html#process> & <http://fcsn.org/parentguide/pguide1.html>

*National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Indicator 13 Checklist Form A: <http://www.nsttac.org/content/nsttac-i-13-checklist>

What are my rights on an IEP?

- To ask as many questions as I would like during the IEP meeting
- When my parent signs off or consents to the initial IEP, services and goals will begin
- To request/refuse certain services on my IEP or request goals to be added/changed
- To ask for a team meeting if I want to make changes after the IEP is signed
- To reject any/all of my IEP (The school contacts the Bureau of Special Education Appeals)
- To withdraw from my IEP with documentation in two ways: 1) If I demonstrate during a reevaluation, that the services are no longer needed, or 2) My parent elects to take me out of the special ed program
- Being informed of my rights and responsibilities one year before reaching the age of majority (in some states age 18)

Who can attend my IEP meeting?

- When transition planning starts, I must be invited to the meetings; according to federal law transition planning starts at 16, though for some states it could be earlier (I have the right to attend my annual IEP meeting at any age, but some parents do not want their young children present)
- Special ed coordinator, teacher/s, parent/s or guardian, counselor, special ed advocate, friends, relatives, or community members (A Special Education Advocate is a representative that informs you of your educational rights and assists in negotiating and resolving disputes with the school district, also, there may be a cost involved in getting a Special Education Advocate) For information please visit: <http://www.ed-center.com/specialeducationadvocate>
- Other people or agencies that have special expertise or knowledge about me

Sources

U.S. Department of Education: <http://ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html#process>

eHow family: http://www.ehow.com/way_5530520_can-withdraw-child-iep-program.html

UnderstandingSpecialEducation.com: <http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com/IEP-meeting.html>

LD.Org: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/choosing-changing-schools/leaving-high-school/planning-for-college-a-4-year-guide-for-high-school-students>

Federation for Children With Special Needs: <http://fcsn.org/peer/ess/accomodationsfs.html>

Federation for Children With Special Needs: http://fcsn.org/pti/topics/iep/tools/iep_faq.pdf

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council /Youth Empowerment Alliance "Taking Control of Your Life":

<http://www.md-council.org/resources/resources-council-grantees/>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities: <http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/team>

State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/default.aspx>

Iowa Department of Education:

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/iowas-guidance-quality-individualized-education-programs-ieps>



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