

Transition Planning: *Your Child's Journey into Adulthood*

Planning ahead is the key to ensuring that high school serves as a supportive catalyst into a teenager's future. Young adults are more likely to be more successful and satisfied if they are involved in realistic planning. **Transition planning** involves parents/guardians, providers, schools, state agencies, insurance, service agencies, and most importantly, the transitioning adult. **Organization, communication and empowerment** of the transitioning individual are all vital to ensuring positive outcomes.

How You (Parent/Guardian) Can Help Throughout the Transition Process:

- Make sure disability is **documented ASAP** in order to ensure eligibility for services.
- Encourage/teach your child to **independently function as much as possible**, to understand their skills/interests.
- Continuously **assess your child's ability** to assume responsibility for medical, educational, social and financial decision making. Guardianship may need to be an appropriate consideration.
- **Use scaffolding** to build skills incrementally while involving your child in decision making that is appropriate and matches their skill set. **Give your child choices** and empower him/her to make healthy decisions.
- Continue to **engage in open dialogue** about potentially needing to transfer to adult care providers.
- Discuss interests and **realistic opportunities** for employment, college and more with your child over time.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help** when you need it! Your medical providers, social workers, educators, services agencies and resource specialists are all dedicated to ensuring that your child is cared for and is able to successfully transition into adulthood.

14 Years Old

- Read through general transition planning packets such as the *Federation for Children with Special Needs': A Family Guide to Transition Services in Massachusetts* (**1 – link to packet**) and the *Department of Developmental Services': "Important Information Every Family Should Know"* (**2 – link to packet**). The *Autism Consortium's: "Transitioning Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders"* is also an option, if applicable. (**3 – link to packet**)
- Create a Vision Statement & Letter of Intent (LOI) that can be shared with the PCP, school and other providers. This is a personal plan that helps to organize and guide decisions / options related to transition planning. (**4 – VS & LOI information sheet**)
- Request separate IEP Transition meeting to develop a Transition Plan (TPF). This meeting is separate from a standard IEP meeting and will result in the development of a Statement of Needed Transition Services. **Regular IEP meetings will typically spend only 10 minutes on this subject.** The Transition Plan should include the Postsecondary Vision, Disability-related Needs and the Action Plan. Regular. (**5 – Transition Plan Example**)
- Hold the IEP Transition meeting to develop goals and objectives based on the student's needs, interests and desired outcomes for the future. The Vision Statement, TP & IEP are all reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Regular IEP meetings to address current programming and services should also continue per usual. Begin discussion about graduation and/or vocational plans for the future.

- Outline a timeline for age-appropriate Transition Assessments. Assessments are requested by the parent/guardian(s) and the request is submitted to the public school district verbally or in writing. Arc organizations offer vocational assessments as well if necessary, or the public school may work hand-in-hand with an organization with your permission. **(7 – Examples of Common Transition & Vocational Assessments)**
- Begin organizing documentation of your child’s skill sets, medical history and level of need *(binders are great!)*. This documentation should outline your child’s skill level in the context of health understanding, communication with medical providers, use of medication/medical supplies & equipment, access to insurance/medical records and management of lifestyle choices. Practice these skills and assess understanding at home throughout the transition process. **This is very important for future DDS eligibility.**
- Create a “Medical Passport” that you can bring to all appointments and meetings with groups / individuals involved in medical care and transition planning. This can be updated / revised over time.

16 Years Old

- Chapter 688 Referral – Ask school to make the referral for DDS or other adult human service agency. This referral must be made 2 years prior to graduation or turning 22 years of age for individuals with disabilities that require services from an adult service agency. 688 referrals can be made to DDS, Mass Rehab Commission or DMH (for example). **(8 – chapter 688 information sheet)**
- Contact the state agency your child has been found eligible for in order to get to know your liaison/coordinator. Contact your local Arc organization to help with navigating state agencies, service eligibility and other resources ranging from PCAs to college transitional programs. Invite agencies or individuals providing services for your child to the IEP Transition meeting. **(10 – Arc information sheet)**
- Begin discussing transportation considerations. Ask agencies about Travel Training Competencies Assessments and Reduced Fare Eligibility.
 - **The Ride (MBTA):** [http://www.mbta.com/riding the t/accessible services/default.asp?id=7108#Ride](http://www.mbta.com/riding%20the%20t/accessible%20services/default.asp?id=7108#Ride)
 - **System Orientation (MBTA):** [http://www.mbta.com/riding the t/accessible services/default.asp?id=25947](http://www.mbta.com/riding%20the%20t/accessible%20services/default.asp?id=25947)
 - **Reduced Fare Eligibility:** [http://www.mbta.com/fares and passes/reduced fare programs/](http://www.mbta.com/fares%20and%20passes/reduced%20fare%20programs/)
 - **Driving Evaluation (Braintree Rehab):** <http://www.gettingbacktolife.com/driving-evaluation>
- Update/Revise IEP Goals, Objectives & Transition Plan (TP).

17 Years old

- Discussion about the Transfer of Parent Rights / Age of Majority or Guardianship. Contact your PCP or Neurology clinic team to assist you with this process.
- Complete and submit DDS Eligibility Application for Adults to DDS Eligibility Team. Stay in touch with your DDS Service Coordinator throughout the transition process. **(13 – link to DDS adult application)**
- Prepare decisions for Health Insurance & SSI (if applicable). Individuals can remain on their parents’ commercial insurance until the age of 26, but must sign up for individualized Masshealth at the age of 19. Contact your PCP or Neurology clinic team to assist you with navigating these decisions if needed.

- Update/Revise IEP Goals, Objectives & TP. Review decisions regarding graduation, residency, vocational programs, employment or post-secondary education with your transitioning teen, school and providers.
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17 ½ Years Old

- Guardianship Process: Complete Clinical Team Report (CTR) or Mental/Physical Incapacity Process. **This is extremely important to address in a timely manner in order to avoid needing to obtain a lawyer in the future, or needing to manage unforeseen complications associated with legal adult rights.** Contact your PCP or Neurology clinic team to assist you with navigating this process. **(14 – guardianship tip sheet / resources)**
 - SSI Application: Complete and submit application if your transitioning teen meets criteria (15 – SSI info sheet / criteria). Contact your PCP or Neurology clinic team to assist you with this if needed.
 - Finalize insurance decisions and applications. **Ask to be connected with a Case Manager at your insurance company** to help navigate complex issues regarding plans and services.
 - Confirm that all Releases of Information (ROIs) are in place for agencies and providers if applicable.
 - Confirm decisions on medical transfers of care and establish an adult Primary Care Provider (PCP). Options for adult care providers should be made available to you by your PCP, other specialists or your insurance company.
 - Confirm decisions on a Health Care Proxy and Durable Power of Attorney
 - Confirm decisions on residency, vocational programs, employment, college, etc. with your child and the agencies / organizations you are working with.
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18 Years Old

- Confirm completion and determination of DDS Adult Eligibility, SSI, Insurance, medical care, Transfer of Parent Rights or formal Guardianship. Decisions on residency, vocational training, work placements, graduation and/or college programs may be developed on the IEP until 22 years of age (depending on the individual). **Do not feel pressured to rush into decisions** before the age of 22, as services can continue until that time.
 - Contact DDS Transition Service Coordinator for additional help and/or questions you may have. Begin adult transition services after turning 18 (or when applicable after the age of 18).
 - Make sure the transitioned adult plans to renew his/her Masshealth coverage as an individual at the age of 19.
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Celebrate your child's successful transition into adulthood! This process is complicated and requires a lot of hard work. There are numerous support centers and parent support groups available – just ask your providers, agencies and community organizations about these if/when needed. You are not alone!