



## Individual and Family Fact Sheet – TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE

May 2003

### When Should I Begin To Plan For What Happens After High School?

You should begin to explore options when your child is in middle school but no later than his or her 13th birthday.

### Why Is It Important To Plan So Early?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) enacted in 1990 requires that a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) must include information about needed transition services beginning no later than age 16 (age 15 in Connecticut) and updated annually. The plan must also include information about agencies that will be involved after graduation and their responsibilities to your child. The 1997 amendment to IDEA requires that schools look at courses that will lead to successful transitions for students beginning at age 14.

### What Exactly Is Transition Planning?

Transition planning has three goals:

- ⇒ To help you and your child to think about and develop plans for life after high school and help set down the steps needed
- ⇒ To design the high school program in a way that ensures that your child is being prepared for adult life with the skills and competencies necessary to achieve the planned future he or she desires
- ⇒ To help your child to identify and link with any services and supports that can help him or her after graduation.

### What Can DDS Do To Help Me And My Child Prepare For Transition Planning?

All DDS regions have transition coordinators who may be able to provide assistance to your family and case manager as you navigate through the transition process. Transition coordinators may suggest you participate in a person-centered planning process, which is an opportunity for your son or daughter to express his or her dreams for the future. Some of these processes include MAPS, PATH, Essential Lifestyle Planning and Personal Futures Planning. You will also learn about the possibilities available through an approach known as self determination, which enables you to develop something uniquely suited to your child's preferences and to hire your own staff. Transition coordinators can also give you copy of "Building a Bridge," a guide that can walk you and your child through the transition process.

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- When My Child Leaves School, Can I Be Assured That Supports Will Be Available If Needed?
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- What If My Child Chooses Supports After Graduation That He Or She Doesn't Like Or That Do Not Meet His Or Her Needs?



## ***What Other Information Can A Transition Coordinator Share With Me That Might Be Helpful?***

Here are some more topics you might want to explore:

- Additional information on transition law and your rights
- The roles of all parties in the transition process
- In-depth information on self determination, individual supports and individual budgets
- Self advocacy groups and resources
- Various employment options
- Services and supports available from DDS and other agencies
- Differences between mandated and non-mandated services
- Guardianship and conservatorship
- Entitlements and benefits
- Post-graduation educational options
- What happens if my child leaves school before the age of 21?

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## ***Who Are Some Of The Other Adult Service Agencies That May Be Involved?***

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is the state agency that assists persons with significant physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, find or keep a job. BRS counselors may participate in the PPT meetings during the last several years of high school. BRS services are typically time limited and are aimed at achieving successful employment. School or DDS staff can assist you to initiate and complete the BRS referral process to determine eligibility for their services.

Other adult service agencies include private agencies that provide day programs. Each provider is unique and may offer a variety of day programs and supports. It is important to find out what is offered by providers in your local community. DDS staff can share that information with you.

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## ***Is There Anything Else I Should Know?***

Remember that this period of transition is an important opportunity for your child to begin to learn about and exercise some choices. It is also a time to begin to look at what other supports may be needed. You will want to communicate very clearly with the school about your child's plans and desires for his or her future. Do not hesitate to ask questions if you do not understand something or want more information.

## ***When My Child Leaves School, Can I Be Assured That Supports Will Be Available If Needed?***

Unlike the school years that are mandated by law, services and supports available through DDS are not mandated. This means that these services are available if the resources have been allocated to DDS. Check with your case manager or transition coordinator for information about your specific situation.

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## ***Will I Have The Opportunity To Compare Different Options And Visit Different Adult Programs?***

Absolutely. You and your child should consider various support options and visit as many programs in your local community as possible before making a decision. You may also want to talk to families who have hired their own staff to find out how they went about it. Your case manager or transition coordinator can help you with this.

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## ***What If My Child Chooses Supports After Graduation That He Or She Doesn't Like Or That Do Not Meet His Or Her Needs?***

The funds that DDS has set aside for your child's day support are portable. This means that this money can be used for different supports that you and your child choose. There are certain steps to go through to make this happen and your case manager will help you.