

Transition Planning

Transition planning is a fancy way of saying “prepare for a change’. In order to make a change in services smooth and with little disruption, transition planning has become necessary.

Whether a person receives services within Special Education, Developmental Disabilities, Child Welfare or other Social Services, professionals are prepared to help make any transition as seamless as possible for people receiving services. There are many important considerations when preparing for a transition, for that reason you will find transition guides on this site that come from different service sectors. Each type of service has specific criteria to consider as a person moves through its system. For example, a teenager that has an IEP for educational support must begin transition planning when they are 14 years old that includes long term goals after leaving high school. Each year, the goals should be discussed and reviewed to be sure they are still what the student hopes to do after high school.

An adolescent in foster care needs to plan for independence if they are not adopted before leaving the child welfare system. Their team of workers will help plan for independent living, educational options and work considerations.

If that same adolescent gets adopted, then transition planning involves the pre-adoptive family, the youth and others to make sure their move into their new family is as easy as possible.

As children age, they move between schools, providers and sometimes even service systems. Each change, or transition should be discussed and prepared for before any major moves occur. It is your right to plan for transitions so be sure to ask and to be involved as much as you can when you face a change or transition in your services.

The list of Transition Plans that follows is meant to help you. Each plan is different so use what helps you the most or use parts of them to create your own plan that meets your needs.

Questions to Promote Permanency

We believe that achieving permanency for youth who are aging out of the foster care system is of critical importance. We also believe that “permanency” may have many definitions but adoption is what we seek for youth no matter what their age. We encourage you to work closely with colleagues within your own system of care, as well as the other systems that the young person may be involved with.

Questions that should be addressed to county workers, (guardians), adoption workers, GALs as part of our permanency efforts with youth in foster care:

1. What is this youth’s current legal status with regard to parents, guardianship and custody? Have this youth’s parents’ legal rights been terminated? If so, what is the current permanency goal for this youth?
2. If permanency goal is long term foster care, ‘independent living’ or ‘emancipation’, please describe the factors that led to that option rather than an a plan for adoption.

3. Please explain to us what efforts are being made to find an adoptive resource for this youth. Is the current placement a potential permanency option?
4. How have you dealt with the concept of adoption thus far with this youth? Is it freely discussed, is the youth on board, are there any restrictions to discuss adoption at this time?
5. How can teachers help in the process? Teachers may hear a youth talk about adults in their life that have been supportive, formative or influential, including relatives. These people may be potential resources for youth. It is important that teachers make note of the names and relay the information to the youth's adoption worker or social worker. Please tell us exactly who to call with this important information.
6. Many youth in foster care have limited social connections outside of the school environment. Ask the team about efforts to increase the social networks for youth in the community. Promoting participation also increases the opportunities for youth to make connections with potential adoptive resources. By raising this issue with the team we raise the accountability to our youth.

The following are questions that we hope you will include when working with young people in transition.

1. What is your current living situation? Is it stable?
2. Are you involved in the child welfare system? Have you ever been?
3. Do you have supportive adults in your life now? Who are they? Would you like them to be involved in some way in your transition planning?
4. What is your legal status (ie: ward of state, etc.) and what is your permanency plan

(make sure youth and workers have the same understanding)

5. Are you involved in transition programs through any other sources?
 - a. Education and Training Voucher (ETV), if so, who is your mentor?
 - b. Independent Living Skills (ILS) Program or classes/SELF or other Independent Living Program (ILP)
 - c. Other?

If so, what are you working on?

6. What are your plans when you leave school/age out of care?
7. How can I help you make connections with people who will support you?
8. Where will you live when you leave school? What is your fall back plan?

9. Where can you go for support? Who can you ask?
- a. Emotional
 - b. Financial
 - c. Residential
 - d. Advice....
10. If you are at least 16 years old, do you have (and have a copy of) the Independent Living Plan that your social worker is required to complete with you as part of your placement plan?
11. If you are at least 17 ½ years old, have you received detailed information about your right to remain in foster care and/or to continue to receive support services until you are 21 years old?
12. Explain what you understand about what will happen when you turn 18/leave foster care/graduate or leave school
- Housing
 - Further education or training
 - Healthcare/insurance
 - Case management, if necessary
 - Social Security or other supports for which you may be eligible