



Focus on Transition

Your child is entering a point in time, filled with change, growth, excitement, and sometimes fear and confusion, called **TRANSITION**. Transition is defined as movement, passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept, to another. For you and your child, transition means that he/she is moving from childhood to young adulthood, and from school to adult life. There are many things to think about and do to prepare for this change.

This guide is to help you think about some of the questions to ask, options to consider, and things to talk about with your transitioning youth. Choices and decisions you and your son/daughter make during this time can help to positively shape the future and the life they will live as an adult.

This guide is based on *Charting the Life Course: A Guide for Individuals, Families and Professionals*. Charting the Life Course is a framework that was developed to help individuals with disabilities and families at any age or stage of life to:

- think about what they need to know
- identify how to find or develop supports
- discover what it takes to create the lives they want to live

Charting the Life Course presents questions to ask or consider in different life domains. Life domains are the different aspects and experiences of life that all people consider as they age and grow from childhood into adulthood and eventually the senior years of life.

Individuals and families can focus on their current situation and stage of life, but may also find it helpful to look ahead and start thinking about what they can do or learn now that will help build an inclusive, productive life in the future. It is also important to consider questions and options regarding supports and services, especially when considering adult living.

CHARTING the life course



DAILY LIFE & EMPLOYMENT

What a person does as part of everyday life – school, employment, volunteering, routines, & life skills.



It may seem like it's a long way off, but sooner than you think, the bus will stop coming – your son or daughter will no longer be going to school during the day. Have you thought about what they will do during the day when school ends? Have you asked them what they want to do? What kind of changes might this mean for your family? Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- What do you want to do during daytime (school) hours when school is over for good?
- What kind of supports do you need during the day, who will provide needed supports, and how will this impact finances or other family members ability to work?
- Have you thought about possibly attending college or vocational training for a specific job or career?
- What kind of job do you think you would like (what do you like to do or want to learn more about)?

COMMUNITY LIVING

Where and how someone lives - housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptations and modifications.



Have you thought about or talked to your son/daughter about where they might live when they are an adult? There are many different options to consider – some traditional disability systems options (for instance, a group home), but more and more, there are many “non-systems” community options emerging (like owning your own home). Anything is possible if you plan ahead, think creatively and believe! Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- Have you thought about whether you'd like to move out of your family home or even to another city or state, over the next few years (as you become an adult)?
- Will you continue to live with your parents, or would you like to have your own home or apartment, and can you think of someone who you might want for a roommate?
- What are some places you might like to go in the community and how would you get there?
- Have you thought about technology or home modifications that would help you function better or be more independent in your home?

HEALTHY LIVING

Managing and accessing health care and staying well – medical, mental health, behavioral health, developmental, wellness and nutrition.



Healthy living is an often overlooked, yet very important part of transition to adulthood. There are steps you can take now to help your transitioning youth become more knowledgeable about their own health, medical needs and disability, and start to take control of making decisions and choices about their own health. It is also time to start thinking about who will provide healthcare once they are an adult. Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- Do you understand and talk about your disability and special healthcare needs with others?
- Are you learning about the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise?
- How do you find adult health providers who will understand your disability and special healthcare needs?
- Do you understand the changes in your body and your reproductive health?

CHARTING the life course



Parents and other concerned individuals often worry that their loved one with a disability will be taken advantage of or be harmed if they don't have a guardian. You may have been told by someone – school, doctor, or friend – that you should pursue guardianship for your son/daughter when they turn 18. However, it is important to understand the gravity and effects of guardianship on the individual, and the many options and alternatives that exist before making a decision. Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- What skills and abilities can you learn and practice now to prepare you to “be your own person” and so you will not need a guardian to keep you safe when you turn 18?
- What are some of the alternatives to guardianship that will keep you safe without restricting your basic rights?
- In what areas are your parents and loved ones most concerned about your safety (for example, health care/medical, school, community access, etc)?
Are you able to stay at home or be in the community alone or without additional support, and do you know what to do in case of an emergency (fire, home invasion, etc)?

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Staying safe and secure – emergencies, well-being, guardianship options, legal rights & issues.



The relationships and networks that are developed and nurtured during the school years can play an important role in your youth's adult life. These connections, sometimes referred to as “social capitol”, may end up being your child's friends, neighbors, roommates, staff or employers someday. Most importantly, having friends and relationships are key to quality of life and happiness. Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- Are you building friendships by participating in extracurricular activities in the community such as clubs and other social outlets?
- Are you learning to use social media safely and responsibly (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) to connect with and maintain contact with friends?
- Are you learning about sex and intimacy, including safe sex and sexual boundaries
- Are you involved with a youth or young adult group in your faith community?

SOCIAL AND SPIRITUALITY

Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks, and faith community



Your child can begin to learn to be responsible a good citizen by having chores at home and participating in service opportunities at school and in the community. During the transition years, it is even more important to give your youth opportunities to find ways to be valued at home, school and in the community, as well as make choices, learn about new places and things, build community connections, develop advocacy skills and learn responsibility. As an adult, they will need to be able to speak up for themselves and advocate for what they want and need. Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- Do you ask for accommodations for your learning and/or physical limitations when you need them?
- Are you allowed to risk making mistakes, experience the consequences and learn from it?
- Are you making choices and decisions for yourself with support from family, teachers, and others in your life?
- Does your transition plan include volunteer or work experience that helps you and others around you to focus more on what you CAN do rather than limitations your disability might impose?

CITIZENSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.





SUPPORTS & SERVICES

Resources and strategies that aim to promote the development, education, interests, and personal well-being of a person and that enhances individual and family functioning.



With limited public funds, and increasing demands, it is important to think about the kinds of things that might be needed to support your son/daughter in their adult life, and explore a combination of different sources of support – relationship based (friends and family, neighbors, co-workers), community supports that anyone might use (public transportation, businesses, colleges or tech schools), technology (ie- iPhone or smart phone apps, remote monitoring, adaptive equipment) and eligibility based supports (DD services, Medicaid, HUD, food stamps, etc.) What are your hopes and dreams and how do you plan to have the support necessary to achieve them? How can the transition plan help prepare the youth for increased self-sufficiency? Here are some things to think about and discuss with your transitioning youth:

- Are you learning about the supports and benefits you receive or could receive; how to manage your money, services and supports; and lead your various planning meetings (IEP, IFSP, health, etc)?
- Should your family apply for benefits (Social Security, Medicaid, State DD services)? What are the pros and cons and how might it affect your future ability to earn income?
- What kinds of community (non-eligibility based) supports might help you now and as an adult (for example, public transportation)?
- Will you graduate/leave school at age 18 or continue until you are 21, and will you receive a high school diploma or a certificate of completion?

FAMILY UNIT

What the family unit needs to support and be a successful part of their family member's life. Supports that are directed to the family will ultimately benefit the individual.



Family members have a key role in the provision of support and guidance to their family member. Families are connected to the individual throughout the life course, and the role of the family changes and evolves as the individual grows and changes. During this time of transition from youth to adulthood, what does your family need to continue to support and guide your son/daughter to achieve their goals and dreams? Here are some things to think about and discuss for your family:

- What kind of supports does the family need in order to be able to continue working and maintain your lifestyle when your son/daughter is an adult?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your future as a family? How do you see your role as the parent/family member of an adult?
- Have you completed future planning, such as a will, living trust, durable power of attorney for healthcare, and/or a special needs trust?

This quick reference guide is a starting place to the transition point in time, to give you some key points and issues to consider, and to help your youth and family to have a smooth and productive transition from school to adulthood. In addition, there are detailed and in depth guides and information available for each of the life domains. To obtain the full Charting the Life Course booklet or any of the other Life Course materials, contact Missouri Family to Family at 800-444-0821 or online at <http://www.mofamilytofamily.org/>.