

Community Resources and Partners Who is Able to Help?

What happens when the school bus stops coming? This is a question many parents of youth with disabilities ask themselves as their youth nears the end of his or her high school years.

There are other common questions, too:

- How will my son or daughter spend his or her days?
- What supports are available in the areas of employment, postsecondary education, and housing?
- Whose responsibility is it to investigate and access resources my son or daughter might need as an adult?
- Will my youth be able to use adult services in the same way he or she received services in special education?
- What community activities are available?

These are all important questions and parents of youth with disabilities need to find the right answers. That's why transition planning is so valuable.

Takeaways from this handout:

- There is a significant difference between required special education and related services programs in schools, and adult services based on different eligibility criteria.
- Not all youth will qualify for adult services, even if they have a disability and have received special education services in school
- In many cases, it is the family's responsibility to coordinate adult services on behalf of their youth.

Entitlement vs. Eligibility: The Big Shift

When parents begin to think about what community

resources might be available for their youth, they need to know that **there is a significant difference between required special education programs and adult services based on different eligibility criteria.** A qualifying youth with disabilities is entitled to a free and appropriate public education under federal law. In fact, school districts are required to identify youth with disabilities who they think may benefit from special education services.

After high school, however, services provided by organizations such as the county or Vocational Rehabilitation Services are based on **different eligibility criteria.** Each program has established criteria that determine if a person is eligible for its services. In most cases, eligibility is based on the severity of the disability and how it impacts a person's ability to find employment or live safely in the community without supports.

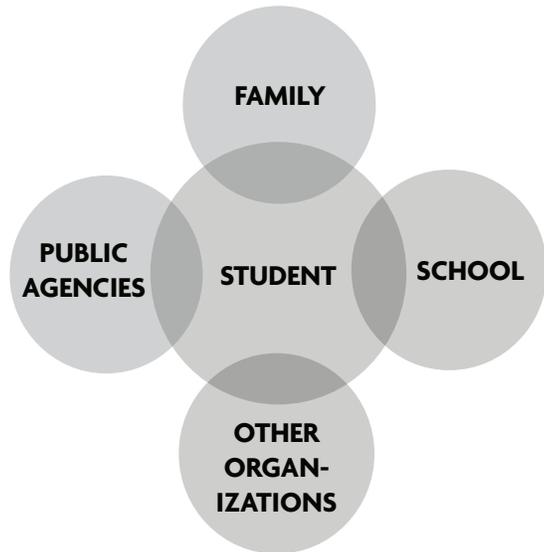
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Parents may be accustomed to the intense level of support and participation that is part of special education. It can come as a surprise when they learn that adult services need to be accessed separately, and that each service or program has its own plan, eligibility criteria, and intended outcomes.

In many cases, it is the family's responsibility to coordinate adult services on behalf of their youth.

Parents who understand this shift in how services are accessed, and strive to learn about the various options for community support, will be better positioned to help their youth navigate the complexities of adult services.

The Role of Community Partners in Transition Planning



When youth and their families are able to effectively communicate, cooperate and collaborate with schools and community agencies during the transition process, everyone wins. Teamwork and group effort among those involved will go a long way toward helping a youth reach his or her goals. Not all youth with disabilities need support to live in the community. Some will find employment or move on to postsecondary education with little or no additional support.

Many students with disabilities, however, require extra collaboration and support – some well into adulthood – to help them live independently in the community. **Fortunately, there are many different partners that can help your youth have a smooth transition into adult living.** Many teens will require some level of support to meet their goals of getting a job or living outside of their parent’s home. Support comes in the form of involvement from various community agencies, with each organization offering pieces of the puzzle.

During transition planning, these key questions need to be answered:

- Where will the youth live as an adult?
- What will the youth do for employment?
- Will the youth pursue some form of postsecondary education?
- What does the youth want to do for fun and recreation?
- How will the youth travel from place to place?
- How will the youth’s medical needs be taken care of?
- Does the youth currently have the skills to do the things he or she wants to do?

Effective collaboration and coordination with community agencies can help provide the answers. It is during transition planning that adult supports, based on a youth’s individual needs, are identified and accessed.

For more information on transition planning, see the resources section of the National Parent Center for Transition and Employment’s Learning Center at PACER.org/transition or call PACER at 1-888-248-0822.