

School to Life

Transition Handbook

5 Steps to Successful Planning



**SASKATCHEWAN ASSOCIATION
FOR COMMUNITY LIVING**

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Acknowledgments

This is an updated edition of the *School to Life Transition Handbook* created for SACL in 1999. The project responded to concerns of parents and educators about the lack of options open to young people with intellectual disabilities leaving the educational system. It looked at best practices for transition planning in Saskatchewan and elsewhere.

This Handbook will help young people in transition and their families plan for their future. It is a useful guide for students and families as they move through school and into the adult world. Steps and worksheets have been updated and personal stories are featured throughout.

Thank you to the SACL Employment Committee and the Employment Opportunities Consultants for reviewing the original manual and for their suggestions for improvements.

And thank you to Kelly Cotter, a young woman who provides her own perspective on what transitions mean in her life.

Foreword

A Personal Perspective

My transitions

By Kelly Cotter

I went to school at Sheldon Williams Collegiate in Regina and I'm soon to be 26. Today, I'm attending SCORE (in Saskatoon) to get my GED (grade 12 equivalent).

I wanted more education and I know that I want to work in education with young children who have challenges. Some of my accomplishments and goals are:

1. I did a one-year Life Skills and Job Placement program through Saskatchewan Abilities Council, which was excellent. I didn't find a job, but I ended up being my own boss doing a "Friend for Shut-Ins" small business. I had a client with quadriplegia who attended a special program at Campbell Collegiate. This helped me realize that I wanted to work with children with special needs.

2. I want to be a teacher. And so I took Teacher's Assistant classes at SIAST (as many as I could). Then I took Montessori School classes by correspondence. After I am finished my GED, I will continue with Montessori.

3. I volunteered for 2 years in the kindergarten class at Victoria School to give me practical learning experience in the education environment.

I guess you could say that my transition plan is to keep working toward becoming a teacher in whatever ways I can find.

I find that participation with the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living helps organize my thoughts about transitions in the future.

A part of making the transition to independent living is encouraging people to do things on their own.

Living close to where you work is important in today's society. I try to arrange things so I can walk where I have to go. It also means I don't have to earn large amounts of money. I hope to eventually find a workplace close to where I live. I know it is going to be a long, long haul to get where I want to be.

Purpose

of the Handbook

This Handbook is designed to help students who are in the process of transition out of school to adult life.

It provides information for them, their families and teachers about transition planning, giving an overview of:

- When to begin planning for transition.
- What areas of adult living to plan for.
- How the meetings should go.
- Who should be part of the planning team and what are their jobs?
- How to carry through with the transition plan.
- Where to get more information about resources and materials.

The focus of the Handbook is on the student in transition. So the handbook, as well as the worksheets and checklists are directed to “me, the student in transition.” The main reason is to reinforce the basic principle of *person-centered* planning. That is, the student is central and the most important person in the transition process, and their participation and input is crucial. Another reason is to help others who read the Handbook to “put themselves in the shoes” of the student.

The language in this Handbook is written in a way that is easy to understand. Some students will not be able to read the Handbook on their own but another person can help them work through it.

How to use the Handbook

The Handbook is written so that it can be used in transition planning for students with different kinds and degrees of disabilities, and even for students without disabilities. Some modifications and adaptations may be necessary to accommodate the needs of all individuals in transition. It should also make useful reading for parents, family members, educators, social workers, advocates, agency people and employers if they want to learn more about the transition process.

The Handbook is organized into four parts. The first part contains information about what is transition planning. The second part is more practical with a section on why it is important to plan for transition and describes specific steps of the planning process. The third section of the book contains photocopy-able versions of all the worksheets that you will need for the individual in transition and the team members. The last part of the Handbook includes sections for parents and teachers.

Anyone interested in learning more about transition will find more valuable materials and resources at the John Dolan Resource Centre at the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL). The list of resources is available online. See details in the Appendices.

Throughout the Handbook there are success stories of transition. They are meant to offer inspiration, encouragement, and ideas that may be useful in other situations.

The worksheets and checklists in this book are all found in the Worksheets section. They are designed to be taken out and photocopied as needed.

The Handbook is ready to put in a three-ring binder. The Handbook is user-friendly and flexible so notes can be added from meetings, contact names, telephone numbers and other relevant information.

What is Transition?

Transition means change and growth. People go through many transitions in their lives. They move from family life to school, from elementary to high school. Then comes the big move from high school to the rest of adult life and all the paths and possibilities that might offer. Getting a job, following a career dream, taking post-secondary training at a university or college, finding a place to live, being involved in regular community activities, developing relationships with other adults, getting married, starting a family. And there's so much more. Everyone's situation is different and we're all on the move.

For most parents, this is a time of mixed emotions. If your child has a disability, this may be a very stressful time. In these circumstances it is even more frightening to let go or think of your child moving out of the family home. Many parents have succeeded in helping their adult children create a satisfying life of their own but it takes a lot of planning and work.

For a student with a disability, all the changes that happen when high school is finished can be intimidating. Leaving school means leaving behind organized services and supports. It may also mean leaving behind friends. All young adults go through a time when they figure out who they are and what they want to do with their lives. A student with an intellectual disability may need some extra direction in deciding what to do with her life. Parents can help their child ask the big questions about work, relationships and where to live.

There are many new experiences and unanswered questions when a person moves into adulthood. Parents and students find the adjustment easier when they have information about the various options and a successful transition will be a meaningful, satisfying, self-determined, adult life in the community.

Dreaming

about the future

If you are a parent and your child is nearing the end of high school, a plan needs to be in place. You are an old hand at “plans” by now, having been involved in your child’s Personal Program Plan every year that she was in school. As your child gets older, we encourage you to involve her in a particular kind of planning session, one that focuses on *her* dreams for the future.

Of course, dreaming does not need to be a formal, planned process for every person, but some direction can help your daughter look ahead. At the end of this, there are tools and planning processes. MAPS and PATH are tools in which the student with a disability and her support system work together to make that dream a reality. These tools are a respectful way to support someone with an intellectual disability and her family to dream about her future and set some concrete goals.



Stories of successful transition

James

James was a high school student in special education. His program consisted of regular instruction with teacher assistant support, resource instruction, and speech and language therapy. James was always a pleasant face in the hallway, ready to tell a joke or share the latest intrigue on *Survivor*. He related well with the teachers but was shy and nervous when dealing with the other students or adults he didn't know. The family's greatest fear was that he would never leave home and become independent.

A team made up of James, his mom and dad, the resource teacher, the teacher assistant, the principal, and the special education coordinator began transition planning when James was in grade ten. It was decided that James' program would contain a large component of life skills training, social skills training, work experience, and problem solving skills. His program also contained functional academics and skills he would need to become independent.

During the next three years James worked in various places in the community. These included the lumber store, the hospital, the nursing home, a hardware store, a potato packing plant, as well as home maintenance with a teacher assistant's supervision. During his job experience James discovered a love of mechanical work. His favorite job was the lumber store where the owner and staff always kept a place waiting for him in the coffee room.

In the fall of James' last year in school SACL's Employment Consultant joined the transition team to help with planning for post-secondary placement. James made it clear he wanted to attend a post-secondary institute away from home. With funding assistance from the local Lion's Club, the school arranged trips to Medicine Hat College, Vermillion College, and Palliser Institute in Moose Jaw so James and his family could examine various options.

James decided he would like to attend the two-year Vocational Life Skills program at Medicine Hat College. He was able to find supported living with three other adults close to the campus. In his first year, James won an award for excellence. Not only has James overcome his shyness to a great extent, he has become a socially active young man who is a member of a badminton league, card club and a youth group that goes on camping trips and other outings. He is also busy saving money to go on a trip to Las Vegas with a group of friends next year.

Stories of successful transition

Samantha

Sam had been included in regular classes in her small hometown until her family moved to the city when she was starting grade nine. The school only offered a functional living skills program for students with disabilities. Sam's parents were very vocal about their wish that Sam be included in regular classes and the regular school experience, so some adaptations were made. Still, most of her time was spent with other students with disabilities as part of the life skills program.

Sam's father and brother are mechanics and Sam talked to her family and teachers about wanting to have the same career after graduation. A small Transition Team was set up with Sam at the beginning of grade ten. It was decided that work experience in a variety of places during high school would help Sam focus her dream of becoming a mechanic. With support from a work experience coordinator, Sam did work experience at a local garage, a gas station with a full-service bay, a hardware store, and a farm implement dealership. The family enlisted support from an SACL Employment Opportunities Consultant, who became a member of Sam's Transition Team.

While Sam thrived on the various experiences, some of her business managers suggested that Sam needed to work on her interpersonal skills. Sam wasn't shy but rarely spoke and was often serious to the point of rudeness. Employers were concerned that at times customers were made to feel unwelcome. Sam's parents and brother offered to help Sam with her social skills. She agreed to meet weekly with a woman who modeled the skills Sam needed to learn to become more confident and took great pride in her relationship with someone she admired.

One of Sam's teachers suggested that Sam and her family learn more about the Way to Work program at a SIAST campus. The teacher arranged for Sam to meet with the program instructors at the campus. Sam said she would like to try it. Sam is now finishing her grade 12 and will begin the way to work program at the end of next summer. She offered to investigate EAPD funding if Sam was interested in attending. The August through June program provides adult students with a program to assist in greater independence such as using public transportation, banking, cooking and relationship building, work experience, and confidence building. In the meantime she has been hired as a mechanic assistant in a neighborhood garage two afternoons a week.

Why Do I Need to Plan

for transition from school to adult life?

Transition planning helps me to become an adult. It helps me make decisions and take responsibility for myself. With friends, teachers and other people that I invite into my life, I decide goals that are important for me and my future with my family. To begin, the goals I set provide a clear direction for planning my future. It is important that the goals come from me.

The transition planning should cover:

- my goals for the future (what do I want to do for work and where do I want to live?)
- my personal strengths and interests
- ways to reach my goals
- what needs to be done to achieve my goals
- who should be on my transition team

Transitions planning should begin by developing an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) while I am still in school. The ITP spells out what everyone needs to do in order to provide the training and services I need for a smooth transition from school. A transition plan is more effective when a team of people are involved. Step 2 of this Handbook discusses who should be on the Transition team and what team members need to do to make transition planning work.

Transition planning does not stop when I leave school. It is goals and a life-long process. As my needs change so too will parts of my plan with new people joining my team. My own home, work or a day program that fits with my interests and goals are important things to think about.



The Five Steps:

Putting it all together

Here are the five steps that, when put together, will help me with my Transition Planning as I move from being a student in school to an adult in the community. We'll come back to this list at the end of the manual after we work through the process to understand what each step involves.

1. Starting – what does this Transition Planning process mean?
2. Deciding who should be on my Transition Planning Team.
3. The Transition Planning Meetings.
4. Carrying out my Plan.
5. Checking how my Transition Plan is working.



Step One

Starting the transition planning process

When should planning for transition begin?

Before they leave high school, some students know what they want to do and plan for it. Others do not know what they'll do after they leave school. Transitions planning will help them decide what they'd like to do and how best to reach their goals.

If you are one of these people, transitions planning should begin early, so that there is plenty of time for you to decide what you want to be. You need time to look at ways to get where you want to be.

Transition planning often starts when a student begins high school. It is even better when planning begins in elementary school. That way, your elementary school teachers can be part of the transition team. Elementary school teachers know their students well and can provide valuable information about your strengths, abilities and interests.

What questions do I, the student, need to ask?

If the planning process is to go well, I need to do some thinking before our first meeting. Here are some questions I should be asking myself:

- What are my hopes and dreams?
- What do I want to do after I leave high school?
- What do I need to learn?

The answers to these questions will become my transition plan. The worksheets on the following pages (after the checklists) will help me work out the answers. I might have to ask my Transition Helper to help me with the Worksheets. My Transition Helper will be somebody who knows me well and who is willing to work closely with me. He or she might be a teacher, counselor, family member or friend.

After I have thought about my goals for the future, I will be ready to put together my transition team. Then we can start planning for my first transition meeting.

What to do

When?

The checklists outline the activities that the transition team should think about and when the team should begin exploring them. My skills and interests will decide which activities fit my needs. The checklists will also help decide who should be included in the planning process.



Checklist #1

Four to five years before leaving school

- Find out my learning style. How do I learn best and what help do I need to be able to learn new things?
- Find out my interests, and what jobs I would like to have. Do a career assessment. Identify further education or training that I need.
- Look at options for post-secondary education. Find out what I need to get into the programs. Contact SIAST, community colleges and universities.
- Learn how to tell people what my interests, preferences, and needs are.
- Learn how to ask for help in school and at work.
- Learn to explain my disability, and what help and support I need.
- Learn and practice making good decisions. Learn about Supported Decision Making by contacting SACL.
- Look into modern technology tools that might help me to get involved in the community and find a job.
- Get involved in community activities. Make new friends.
- Check out self-advocacy groups like People First, the Self-Advocacy Action Group and others.
- Learn to use public transportation on my own.
- Think about getting a driver's license.
- Learn how to use money. Identify what help I need to manage money.
- Be able to tell people my name, address, telephone number.
- Get to know telephone numbers of my home, school, parents' work, doctor and my Transition Helper.
- Decide what skills I will need to learn to live on my own.
- Learn how to look after my health.
- Learn about my sexuality to stay safe.

Checklist #2

Two to three years before leaving school

- Find out what community support systems are available. I will need help with education, employment, health, and living arrangements.
- Ask adult service providers, friends, and others to the planning meeting.
- Make sure that I am taking the right classes at school so I can get the job I want.
- Apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) before my first job.
- Get more information on post-secondary programs and the support they offer.
- Get a summer job, after-school job or voluntary work.
- Contact SACL's Employment Opportunities to check out various supported employment programs that exist while I'm a student.
- Get a copy of SACL's book, *Navigating the System*.
- Find out who provides health care. Learn about sexuality and family planning.
- Make sure any money my family has saved for me is in a discretionary trust until I turn 16 years old.
- Decide what kind of financial support I need and apply for it.
- Learn and practice how to get along with others in different settings at work, in school and fun activities.
- Begin to develop a file of things that might be useful when I want to get a job (career portfolio). Keep it up to date.
- Find out where I would like to live and whether I need support.
- Practice independent living skills. For example, budgeting, shopping, cooking, housekeeping, transportation, personal care.
- Practice getting to and from the doctor and dentist.

Checklist #3

One year before leaving school

- If a post-secondary program is part of my plan, do a thorough check on what I need to do to attend.
- Practice what to do at a job interview.
- Practice how to ask for help in school and at work.
- Find out what employment support is available; talk to an Employment Opportunities Consultant at SACL. Things like a job coach, job shadowing, job sharing and caring.
- Decide what job I want. Get the job, with support if needed.
- Practice skills such as getting to work on time, keeping appointments and spending time with coworkers.
- Apply for health coverage available from Social Services
- Apply for Income Security if I'm 18 years old. Contact an SACL Advocate should you need help in applying.

Getting to **know me**

1. My name: _____

2. What I like to do:

At home:

In school (if a student) or at work (if working):

In the community (outside the home, school or work in spare time, hobbies, church, etc.):

3. What makes me mad or sad:

4. What makes me happy:

What are my dreams & hopes for the future?

1. New things I would like to do and learn:

At home:

In school (if a student) or at work (if working):

In my personal life:

In the community (outside home, school or work):

For fun:

What do I need help with?

At home:

In school (if a student) or at work (if working):

In the community:

In my personal life:

Having fun:

What do others dream & hope for me?

(This checklist should be photocopied and completed by as many people involved as possible)

Who completed this checklist: _____

Relationship to: _____
(insert the name of the person for whom transition is being planned)

1. What is most important to me about _____'s transition from school to adult life?

2. New things I would like to do or learn:

At home:

Stories of successful transition

Gillian

Gillian spent her childhood and most of her school years on a farm, surrounded by animals. Because she has multiple disabilities and is unable to communicate in a conventional way, Gillian's family has been her voice with respect to her likes, dislikes, decisions and opinions. She attended the same rural school as her brother and sister. Her family always considered it a bonus that the small school didn't have a lot of room for a segregated place for students with disabilities; Gillian for the most part was involved with her other classmates during the school day. Her passion for animals was obvious not only to her parents and siblings who saw her love of the family pets and animals on the farm, but to her teachers and classmates who always put Gillian "in charge" of any homeroom pets. The guinea pig, hamster and gerbils always went home with Gillian for safekeeping on holidays.

When the family sold the farm and moved to the city during Gillian's grade 10, her parents met with the principal and teachers at their neighborhood school about ways Gillian could be supported to attend. The school was positive; it was a matter of how to make it work, not whether it would work. The special education teacher suggested a MAPS would be a good way for people at the school to get to know Gillian and would give some focus and direction to her high school experience. The idea of a job during and beyond high school was a difficult concept for her family to grasp, simply because of Gillian's complex needs. However, a classmate who had been asked to help Gillian in the classroom volunteered to come to the MAPS session. She pointed out that Gillian's love of animals should be "worth something. Maybe not like a vet, but I bet there's stuff she could do that she would really like." It was this suggestion that became the focus of a Transitions Planning team that grew out of the MAPS gathering.

An SACL advocate was asked to attend the first Transitions Planning meeting with Gillian, her family, the special education teacher, the occupational therapist and two classmates, including the one who was still keen on the animals. The advocate contacted someone she knew at the SPCA and wondered if some pet therapy was possible—not pet therapy for Gillian, but for the animals to be doled out by Gillian! With more creative input from Gillian’s friend and classmate, “Gillian’s Pet Cuddling” was born. Still in high school, Gillian goes three times a week for two hours at a time to the SPCA. Her work experience involves companionship and attention for cats, dogs and the occasional rabbit or bird. She sits in her chair and offers a warm lap for cats who can be let out of their small cages for exercise and human contact. She has some control of her left hand, so she can stroke animals. The staff have been given a few tips by Gillian’s family and occupational therapist about how she can get the most out of her left hand. The staff know what she needs to manipulate toys for the animals.

She has been a regular for over a year. The staff gave her a name tag the first week and Gillian has been invited to staff parties, baby showers, and holiday occasions. The director reports the long-term animals perk up when they hear the noises she makes as she comes in the front door. The director and sometimes a staff person attend Gillian’s Transitions Planning meetings, and lately there has been discussion about other similar jobs for Gillian after she leaves school at 22. The SPCA director says she is always welcome; an employment consultant on the team has suggested maybe another opportunity if the right one presents itself. The team thinks the security of the familiar with a new experience is something to try. Gillian’s family says she enjoys school, but is never more excited than when she knows she’s going to see her animals. And, her mother says, she is never more at peace than when a cat is curled in her lap and a dog is sleeping at her feet.

Step Two

Deciding who should be on my Transition Planning Team

Planning the transition from school to adult life is a team effort. Results are better when people work together. I must be involved with my family and friends. Together with my school and other agencies, we are all partners coming with ideas and building my Transition Plan. A word of caution: remember it's not the size of the team, but its will to work toward the stated goals. Each team member must have a role to play and want to participate.

Why should we work as a team?

Because it:

- makes me and my family feel that we have a say in our own future; makes it easier for services to work together;
- means that everyone knows what the others are doing;
- is more effective. People at the meeting can brainstorm ideas. They can talk about services and solve problems. They can deal with matters such as funding, assessment or financial needs. A team can be creative and look beyond just what exists and help me tailor things to suit me.

Key team members:

1. As **the person in transition**, I am the most important person at the planning meeting. At each step of the planning process, I am the most important member of the team. The planning is about my future, about my needs and wishes. These are the things I have to do:

- Let others on the team know what are my interests, goals, and expectations.
- Make sure I say whether suggestions or plans are okay with me.
- If I am unable to speak, arrangements have to be made for someone to speak for me. He or she will pass on information about my personal interests, goals and expectations.

2. **The Transition Helper** is someone who helps me begin developing my Individual Transition Plan before the first meeting. She will help me describe my goal, dreams and hopes. The Transition Helper will:

- Help me and my family get answers to questions about my future.
- Make sure that we cover important items at the meeting.
- Organize the first meeting and take notes about what was said and decided at the meeting.

Help me decide who should be invited to the meeting.

At the first transition meeting, the planning team should choose a **Meeting Facilitator** and decide who will be the **Transition Coordinator**.

3. **The Meeting Facilitator** runs the meeting. Some of the Facilitator's duties are to:

- Start and end the meeting.
- Keep track of what is happening at the meeting.
- Keep the focus on me.
- Make sure that the transition plan is written.
- Keep time. Remind the team how long they have spent on an issue.
- Keep notes of the meeting.
- Keep track of who is going to do what, and when a task has to be completed.

4. **The Transition Coordinator** keeps the transition plan on track. The Coordinator is chosen at the first meeting of the transition team and her duties are to:

- Make sure that all team members get copies of the plan.
- Check to see that the plan is running smoothly and is on target.
- Make sure the team sets up a method for easy exchange of information.
- Help problem solve.
- Prepare progress reports.
- Call the team (or some members of the team) together, as needed.

Sometimes, my **Transition Helper** might also become the **Meeting Facilitator** and/ or the **Transition Coordinator**.

Before the first meeting,

the **Transition Helper** Should:

- Help me and my family think about my needs, wishes and preferences.
- Explain to me and my family how the transition process works.
- Help me and my family decide:
 - Can my needs be met by one agency? Or are more agencies needed?
 - Who should be invited to the team meeting?
 - What are the most important things to do now?
- Find out whether my family and I have the same ideas about what we want for me. If we don't, the Transition Helper should help us sort things out.
- Collect information about any current or previous assessments or services.
- Arrange, or help to arrange, first team meeting.
- Get consent (release of information) forms, if they are needed.
- Share information with other team members.
- Arrange for other support, if needed. For example, a translator or interpreter.
- Help me and my family prepare for the meeting.

My Transition Helper will stay in touch with me during the transition period and will help me to stay on track.

5. **Parents and other family members**, such as my brothers and sisters, should be encouraged to take part in planning my future. They know me and can provide information about me. They can give support, and help me to reach my goals.

6. **School representatives**, such as my teacher, teacher assistant and or learning assistant teacher. The school has a duty to develop my Personal Program Plan and activities to prepare me for adult life.

7. **Friends** are invited to come to the planning meeting. They can provide information and support. They can also help me with specific transition goals.

8. **Student(s)** from my school can often help.

9. **Representatives of agencies** may include my Community living or social worker, SACL Advocate or SACL Employment Consultant. People from other advocacy organizations and service providers are others who might be asked.

10. **Representatives of the community** to make sure that I can get to community services, to help me be a part of the community. They might include my employer, a neighbor, a minister, an elder.

Every member of the transition team is important and has something to give. Some people might be members of the team for only a short while. Others will be on the team for a long time. It all depends on my needs.

Team Principles:

- Know that I am the person in transition. The focus has to be on my needs and my wishes.
- The team understands that discussion is *with* me, not *about* me.
- Each member on my transition team is an important partner.
- The Individual Transition Plan will set out:
 - Activities or services that I need.
 - Dates and timelines for the specific goals.
 - Who will help me to reach the goals.
 - How we will know that the plan is working.
- Within a week of the meeting, each member of the team will get a written copy of the transition plan that we have developed.

The worksheet on the next page will help decide who should be invited to the Transition Planning Meeting.



Who will I invite

to my

Transition Planning meeting?

Name	How to contact this person (email, phone, fax, mailing address)	Who is this person? (parent, friend, teacher, advocate, social worker, etc.)

Stories of successful transition

Don

Don graduated from high school last year and is working in his home community in northern Saskatchewan. Don, who is Aboriginal, had several challenges to finding employment. He is blind and has some hearing impairment. He has an intellectual disability and some mobility difficulties with his left arm. He's a personable young man with a deep appreciation for his heritage and loves his community.

During the last two years of school, a Transitions Team came together than included Don, the school, and an SACL Employment Consultant. A Transition Plan was developed for him. It included a strategy to decrease the time Don was in school and increase the time at he spent at his work experiences that reflected real employment. His work experiences included working at the gift shop in the hospital and paper shredding for the RCMP detachment.

As Don's school career was coming to an end, the local supported employment agency joined Don's Team to ensure a smooth transition. The agency assumed the support he required so he could be successful in his community employment. By the end of his last year of school, Don's work experience turned into three part-time paid jobs.

For his office job, something that Don is happy about – he had a job coach for a short time. The coach helped him develop a routine and explored the environment to see if there were any other tasks Don could do there. One of his tasks was operating the photocopier. During a Team meeting the need to support Don was discussed. A job coach was hired to work with the employer and Don to help with photocopying. Unfortunately the employer has yet to set up a system for this task so Don hasn't been making use of the skills he learned. However, Don delivers office mail, shreds paper, and does other tasks in the office.

Don is also employed by the town to carry out paper shredding. The shredder is a large, commercial type and Don, who is visually impaired, requires some support. Part of this support network includes classmates from high school who, as part of their work experience, assist Don to complete his tasks in a safe manner.

The third part-time job is helping in the office of the local hockey team. Don's duties include counting tickets and helping with general office duties. Don likes to keep up on what's happening in the community, but he has difficulty reading the print in the local newspaper. So, members, of the hockey team took turns reading the paper to him. Although the Transition Plan started late for Don, it was successful. His teacher and employment agency were a creative, dedicated and passionate part of his Team.

Step Three

Beginning the Transition Planning Meetings

Once the Transition Helper and I have identified my goals, and have put together the planning team, it is time to think about the first transition meeting.

Where should my team meet?

While I am still in school, it is often easiest to have the meetings there. But, meetings don't always have to be in the same place. Sometimes, I might like to invite the team to have the meeting at my home. This could be at my parents' house or at my place, if I don't live with them. We could also meet at a restaurant. The meeting place should be as convenient as possible for everybody.

What should we do at a Transition Planning meeting?

The focus of this meeting is on my goals, abilities and interests. This is called *person-centered* planning. Person-centered transition planning means that:

- My abilities and goals are at the center of the planning.
- The team finds out what I need to learn a job and live a full life according to my wishes and abilities.
- The team looks at new ways of using community services.
- The team develops formal and informal support networks with me.
- We will have to review our plans from time to time and the plans may change.

At the first meeting, we decide the things that we will work on in the next little while. We will also decide who will do what to help me reach each of the goals. We will set times when we will check on progress.

During a planning meeting, the team will come up with concrete plans on how to achieve the goals for my future. Questions that my transition plan should answer are:

- Where will I live?
- What about a job?
- What about further training, maybe at a community college or SIAST?
- How will I get involved with the community?
- What will I do in my spare time for fun?
- What about friendship, relationships

On the next page is a Meeting Outline Checklist for a transition-planning meeting. Each team can develop its own agenda, but this outline may help to get things started.

The Worksheets (on the pages that come after the Checklist) will help pinpoint goals in each of the areas covered by the five questions.

Suggested Agenda

For Transition Planning Team Meetings

This agenda or checklist will help the Meeting Facilitator keep the meeting moving and ensure people can say what they need to and that the work is done. Remember, you may not need a different person for each and every role. Think of the following positions that appear in bold as “roles,” not necessarily different people.

1. **Transition Helper** states reasons for this transition-planning meeting and explains what has already been done.

2. **Meeting Facilitator:**

- Starts the meeting;
- Introduces the individual or has individual introduce self, parents and significant others such as sisters, brothers, friends.
- Passes around attendance list.
- States how long the meeting will last.
- Talks about ground rules, such as:
 - The person in transition is the focus of the meeting; eye contact and conversation are directed to the student;
 - The student gets first chance to talk for each topic;
 - The team talks with, not about, the student;
 - One person speaks at a time;
 - Everyone’s opinion is important.
 - Everybody has an opportunity to say what they want to say.

Helps team decide how decisions will be made. (For example: by consensus, voting, or person in transition to decide).

- Reminds team members that the main focus is on the needs and goals of the youth and not on currently available services from the agencies;
- Encourages team members to be creative in finding solutions that reflect the youth’s personal goals.

3. **Meeting Facilitator** encourages all present to participate and assures each member of the team that they all have an opportunity to participate.

4. **The other team members** introduce themselves and state why they are at the meeting. Agency representatives briefly describe services they can offer.
5. **Meeting Facilitator** reviews the agenda and lists issues in order of priority (For example: employment #1, transportation #2, independent living #3);
6. **Any necessary changes are made to the agenda.**
7. **The team then works through each issue:**
 - What do we want to achieve?
 - Identify problems and issues that could get in the way.
 - Brainstorm and problem solve.
 - Check with the student and other team members who are familiar with the person.
 - Choose best option.
 - Produce written summary of the plan, individual responsibilities of team members, and timeline.
8. **Transition Coordinator.**

A Transition Coordinator is responsible for:

 - keeping track of decisions;
 - serving as a central point of contact;
 - being the contact person if problems arise;
 - calling the group back together as needed;
 - ensuring the person in transition knows about everything that happens.
9. **Meeting Facilitator:**
 - Sums up what has been decided in the plan.
 - Checks for clarity and understanding.
 - Reviews who is responsible for what.
 - Outlines what will happen next and together with the team sets the date of the next meeting.
10. **Final check and evaluation:**
 - Is there anything else?
 - Is anyone uncomfortable with anything?
 - What worked?
 - What could we have done better?
11. **Meeting Facilitator closes the meeting, makes copies of the transition plan, distributes them to each team member.** (These may need to be mailed later, within a week or so).

How I live now & how I would like to live

1. How do I live now?

- With my parents
- With other relatives
- In a group home
- With a roommate
- Alone
- Other _____

2. What are the best things about where I live now?

3. What would I change about where I live now if I could?

4. What kinds of support do I need where I live now? (For example, getting around, doing chores, cooking, personal care, managing money, developing relationships, other)

5. Am I living where I want to live?

6. Where would I like to live in three to five years' time?

- Alone
- With a roommate
- With my parents
- With other relatives
- In my own home
- Other _____

7. What kinds of support will I need then? (For example, getting around, doing chores, cooking, personal care, managing money, developing relationships, other)

What about work?

1. Right now, I am:

- Going to school
- Working
- Volunteering
- Doing something else_____

(If not working, please go to Question #4)

2. How is my job?

Do I like my job? Yes No Sort of

Are the working hours and days okay?

Yes No Sort of

Do I get the support I need?

Yes No Sort of

If NO, why not?

How do I get along with people at work?

Great OK Not very well

When I think about my job, I think:

- I am glad I have it
- It's OK that I have it
- I wish I didn't have it

3. What kinds of jobs or careers interest me?

4. Do I want to get a job, or find a different job than I have right now?

- Yes No

5. Am I looking for my first job? Yes No

6. Do I need help in getting a job? Yes No
If YES, what kinds of help?

7. Does it take me a long time to learn a job?

- Yes No Don't know

8. Do I need help in getting to work?

- Yes No Don't know

9. Do I need any special training or experience?

- Yes No Don't know

If I answer YES to any of the questions 4 through 9, it probably means I could probably use some support in getting and keeping a job.

Getting involved in the community

1. How do I get around? (I can check more than one.)

- I depend on others to take me where I need to go.
- I use public transport independently.
- I need help using public transportation.
- I use supported transportation
(like Access Transit bus).
- I walk.
- I ride a bike.
- I use a wheelchair.
- I drive a car.
- I don't get around much.

2. What help do I need?

- I need help with managing money.
- I need someone whom I can phone when
I need advice
(like an advocate, social worker, counselor)
- I need legal assistance.

My free time

1. What I like to do for fun after school and on weekends:

2. My hobbies and interests:

3. New things I would like to learn how to do:

4. I prefer to be:

with other people alone

5. I prefer to do things for fun:

outdoors indoors

6. School activities (if a student) I would like to be involved in:

7. School activities (if working) I was involved in:

8. Activities in the community I would like to get involved in:

My personal & social life

1. I am a social, outgoing person or I prefer to be alone:

2. My friends are:

3. Things I enjoy doing with my friends:

4. I visit with my friends as often as I would like:

Yes _____

No _____

If not, why not?

5. I would like the following help to visit my friends:

6. I would like to know more about relationships, dating and intimacy.

7. What recreational, leisure or church groups do I belong to?

8. People I can talk to when things are not going well or when I need more help:

Step Four

Carrying out the Plan

At our first meeting, the team identified:

- the issues that we will work on,
- who is responsible for helping me reach my goals, and
- when we will check on progress.

I have to make sure that I do the jobs that are assigned to me at the Transition meetings. Unless we all do our jobs, the plan will not work. It is also important that I keep in touch with my Transition Coordinator, through my Transition Helper. They are there to help me if I need it.

The Worksheet “Transition Plan at a Glance” will help keep track of what I have to do and when.

As part of transition planning, I will be working on my career portfolio. It is a record of my experiences, accomplishments, personal strengths and interests. The career portfolio can include:

- reports I have prepared in school
- photographs of things I have made
- certificates
- awards
- letters of recommendation
- progress reports.

The career portfolio shows others what I can do. It keeps track of my strengths, my growth, and my achievements.

Transition Plan

at a glance

I will use this worksheet to keep track of my Transition Plan. I'll look back at the worksheet occasionally to remind myself what happened in the Transition-Planning Meeting, and how things are going.

Date and place of today's meeting: _____

Identified goal or objective	What needs to be done to achieve this?	Who is responsible for doing this?	When will it be done?	How will we know if it's a success?

When and where will the next meeting take place:

Step Five

Checking how the Plan is working

The first meeting was only a beginning. My team will meet regularly to check on how my plan is working. There is no rule about how often the team should meet. It is a good idea to meet regularly—even frequently—depending on the current situation, so that everybody stays in touch. In my last year of school we might have to meet more often, to make sure that everything is on track.

If things are not working as well as I like, or if I need help, it is okay to ask the Transition Coordinator to call another meeting.

Things can change or something might come up that is important to me. This is all right. The transition plan is meant to be flexible, and the team members are prepared for changes. This is only natural. We never stop learning more about ourselves and about the world as time goes by.

The Worksheet “How to tell if things are working” is on the next page. It will help me keep track of things and help me decide when I need another meeting.



How to tell if things are working

I review my Transition Plan on a regular basis to see if things are working out for me. Depending on my situation, I may need to do this every few weeks or even more.

Here are some of the questions I can ask myself:

1. Can I do more things on my own?

Examples:

2. Do I get around in the community? Yes No
3. Am I living where I want to? Yes No
4. Am I working where I want to? Yes No
5. Do I see people outside school/work and my family?

Yes No

6. Can I get help if I need to? Yes No

What could be working better?

What is going well?

What am I learning?

If I answered NO to any of the questions or if I think things could be better, I should talk to my Transition Coordinator and ask for another meeting.

Reviewing the Five Steps:

Putting it all together

Here are the five steps put together to help me with Transition Planning.

1. **Getting ready for the transition-planning process.**
 - I talk to my family, friends or others who I trust about my future.
 - I pick someone to help me get started (a Transition Helper). He or she can be someone from my family, a teacher, a friend, an advocate or social worker.
 - I think about my dreams, hopes and needs for the future.
 - With the help of the Transition Helper I complete the following worksheets:
 - “Getting to know me”
 - “What are my dreams and hopes for the future?”
 - “What do others dream and hope for me?”
 - “What do I need help with?”
 - We use the “When to do what” Checklists.
2. **Deciding who should be on the transition-planning team.**
 - The Worksheet “Who will I invite to my transition meeting?” helps me.
3. **Beginning the transition-planning meetings.**
 - The team uses the Checklist “Suggested order for personal transition team meetings” or we use our own agenda.
 - I complete the following Worksheets:
 - How I live now and how I would like to live
 - What about work?
 - Getting involved in the community
 - My free time
 - My personal and social life

4. Carrying out the plan.

- I make sure that I do the things we have decided.
- I keep in touch with my Transition Coordinator.
- I use the Worksheet “Transition plan at a glance” to keep track of what to do.

5. Checking how the plan is working.

- About every six months, the team meets and reviews how the plan is working.
- I keep in regular touch with my Transition Coordinator.
- Together we check whether the plan is working out.
- If things are not working as well as I would like or if something happens and I need help, I ask my Coordinator to call another meeting.
- Worksheet “How to tell if things are working” helps me to decide what parts of the Plan are working and what parts aren’t.

Stories of successful transition

Sylvia

Sylvia moved to the city in grade nine and attended an alternate program at her neighborhood high school. In her last two years, she was heavily involved in career education. Sylvia spent afternoons going out into the community. She worked in various places developing work skills, life skills and getting ideas as to what sort of work she would like to do.

Her work placements included a box store, a grocery store, and a rent-a-car office, as well as the school division maintenance department. At the box store, she was stocking shelves. At the grocer she worked in the fruit and vegetable department, and at the rent-a-car she cleaned cars. (Sylvia also worked in woodwork and packaging departments at a local developmental program for adults).

In the summer before her grade 12, Sylvia got a placement at a fast food restaurant that turned into paid summer employment. During her last year in school, she was placed at a pizza place because she liked the restaurant industry where she was good at both washing dishes and preparing pizzas. She did very well there. The manager hired her to work weekends, and during the week she worked there for work experience. Her paid employment at the fast food restaurant also continued into the school year.

Who was on the team?

Mom, Dad, Sylvia, the regional special education coordinator, and several teachers.

Community Living Division was involved with housing, and SACL provided an advocate. An SACL Employment Consultant coordinated the work training and took over contact with the bosses. The team made sure Mom was connected. Sometimes Mom would call the special education coordinator if she was uneasy about something and that person would go back to the team to make sure that things were going well. By the time Sylvia finished grade twelve, the school was less involved and the shift of responsibility to the other members of the team had taken place.

Sylvia's transitions went very well. She gained paid employment and experienced the responsibility of working in the community. As Sylvia's needs changed, she sometimes feels a little down and depressed, so the team is aware of that and responds accordingly. The important thing is that when she needs more support, it is there and she knows who to call for help. The employer knows who to contact and Mom does too. Having backup plans in place has really helped to make Sylvia's transition from school to adult life a success.

Tips for parents

Thinking ahead

The term “parent” is used in a generic sense to describe adults who have responsibility for “parenting” young people with disabilities. This may include biological and step parents, family members in parenting roles, foster parents, and informal or legally appointed co-decision makers and guardians.

Before your child reaches the crossroads between high school and adult life, you can prepare by planning ahead for the transition. Many of the options available to adults with intellectual disabilities are segregated and do not give them a chance to experience and contribute fully to the community. Planning far enough in advance will give you a better chance at finding an option that suits your daughter’s personality and needs in the community, just like everyone else. The first tip is to start early. Do not wait until the last year of high school. It is probably best to start thinking about a transition to adult life as soon as the student starts high school.

Person-centered planning makes sure that the student’s dreams and goals are the centre of the planning process. The five steps to successful transitions are:

- getting ready
- deciding who should be on the transition-planning team
- beginning the meetings
- carrying out the plan
- check how the plan is working

This process will help the young adult and her family decide on goals and find ways to reach those goals.

Planning a transition

- First and most important is to acknowledge that periods of transition can be confusing and that the feelings of turmoil are real. Sharing these concerns with others in similar situations can be helpful. Others often have suggestions concerning problems that you have found unsolvable and, at the same time, your experience might help someone else deal with their problems. SACL may be able to connect you with parents who have experienced similar things with their children.
- It is important to identify your needs and the needs of your children. Then work on a solution, one step at a time.
- Getting involved in your child's transition planning is one of the ways you can feel good about preparing for her or his future. Other members of the transition team will be there to offer you support and information.
- Being involved also means being informed. You will learn about transition planning, about work experience courses offered by schools, and options in supported employment. You will learn more about your local community. Who the employers are and what kind of jobs are available. The opportunities for summer and after-school jobs your local regional college offer any programs that might interest your child. The programs and services in your community that might help your child achieve her or his goals, opportunities for recreation and social activities, and housing options.
- You will become aware of the rights and options relating to supported decision making and co-decision making. Contact SACL for more information.
- And, finally, don't give up! Things may get discouraging, but it is important to remember that you are doing all this so that your son or daughter can have a full life in the community, doing what they want to do and meeting people they want to meet.

Empowering parents to build bridges

It's never too early for students to start thinking and talking about their future goals and dreams. It's important for parents to sit down with their son/daughter and discuss what life could be like when they finish school.

Parent support is essential in helping a young person plan for the future. For many students, one of the major goals is to have a job after high school. Work experience during the high school years can be the means to build this bridge.

Parents can help encourage the school to provide the type of work experiences that will benefit their son or daughter most. Work experiences provide exposure to a variety of jobs. As the parents seek actual work experiences for a son/daughter, they need to consider how they might discuss the idea of work experience with an employer.

Part-time after school and summer jobs

A barrier that students with intellectual disabilities may face is leaving high school without ever—or at least very seldom ever—having had a paid job. In the past, job supports available to someone with a disability through various government programs after graduation were not available to them while they were still a student. Supports are now available to assist students get paid part-time jobs after school and/or summer jobs, such as the Student Employment Experience (SEE). Contact SACL’s Employment Opportunities for information about this program.



It's who you know.

Don't be afraid to get your foot in the door!

It's important for families to help with finding and developing job opportunities. As young people, we often get our first job or two through the personal or business contacts of friends and family. Yet, parents of students with disabilities sometimes feel apprehensive about doing this. Part of the reason may be that some parents feel they are seeking charity when they ask about a job opportunity for their son/daughter with a disability. If this is the case, you need to challenge your own thinking and realize that your son or daughter does have something of value to contribute. With the right support and attitude, they'll be an asset to an employer, not a liability.

As the parent, it's all right to explore personal contacts and utilize them to find a job for your son or daughter. Parents can plant the seed and make the initial contact, then pass the contact along to a job developer or employment consultant. That person can then work with the employer to ensure that the necessary supports will be in place to help make the experience positive for everyone involved.

Families can be empowered when they are provided with the tools they need to feel confident in assisting with transitions and specifically with finding and developing job opportunities. As the age-old saying goes, "it's not what you know, but who you know that counts". This is still true, and families need to feel okay about exploring their connections.

Strategies for finding work

It is critical for students to gain skills and try different jobs, perhaps through volunteer work, doing chores around the home or helping a neighbour. They can do a variety of work experiences through school. All of these activities have the potential to provide the student with basic work skills, a work ethic, as well as exposure to different kinds of jobs. All this helps the student clarify in their mind what it is they like to do.



Questions

to ask an Employment Consultant

Here are some good questions to ask if you are helping your son or daughter interview potential employment consultants. These questions are not intended to put the consultant on the spot, but to help the parent and person with a disability find the right person. These questions appear in Chapter 10: Transition into Adulthood, *Navigating the System: an Advocacy Handbook for Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities* (SACL, 2004).

1. Do you have any experience finding employment for people with intellectual disabilities?
2. What is the program's philosophy or vision about securing and creating employment opportunities?
3. Is job carving a possibility for my son? What other methods do you use?
4. How will my son's participation be encouraged in the job placement process?
5. How do you present the skills and abilities of the student to the business world?
6. How will my son be represented during an employer contact?
7. What services are offered?
8. What is your success rate for placement?

Tips for teachers

This Handbook is written primarily with the student in transition and her or his family in mind. The material is reader-friendly and covers the basic elements of Transition Planning. This material will help students in transition identify their goals for the future, and also help their families to understand that they have a vital role to play in an effective transition planning process.

Research and personal experience indicate that although educators say they welcome parent involvement while the young person is in school, families often feel intimidated when dealing with educators and other professionals. This Handbook emphasizes to families – and to other readers – that their child is the focus of the transition process and that their role is extremely important in providing support.

Two basic principles:

1. Transition Planning must be *person-centered*, with the student in transition as the only focus;
2. Cooperation and mutual respect between families, educators and other professionals is crucial for effective Transition Planning for students with disabilities.

Person-centered planning is a creative approach that encourages innovation. It focuses on goals and abilities of each individual, and on personal choice and self-determination, rather than being shaped by available services and programs. The process involves the student and those who care about her or him. It explores the individuals' experiences, leads to understanding of their goals, and discovers their gifts and abilities. It fosters listening and valuing their dreams for the future, and results in plans of action designed to make those dreams come true.

Person-centered planning should be the foundation in developing Personal Program Plans, right from preschool on up. This might require a shift in practice and perspective to focus on the need for an interdisciplinary team approach to decision making. A collaboratively developed PPP is a first step toward shifting from a system-oriented approach to person-centered approach.

Educators are familiar with the principles of Transition Planning and have access to transition materials and resources. When the school is getting ready to initiate the Transition Planning process, offer this Handbook to students in transition and their families.

The Checklists and Worksheets can help you in assisting the student and the transition team in identifying the goals and dreams, and in planning an effective transition from school to adult life. They will help familiarize everyone with the language and concepts associated with transition.

Stories of successful transition

Andrea

The local paper announced “a new business and number of new recycling opportunities” in a rural environmentally-conscious community. Andrea, who has multiple disabilities, is a graduate and works at this business along with three part-time helpers.

Andrea works with plastic and paper in the recycling department, even though her mother Margaret says this work is not a moneymaker. Andrea handles various reusable items in the “reusing” division and also a Second Hand Treasures Department where second-hand items are sold either on consignment or donated. Used soft and hard cover books are also handled and this department is expected to pay the bills. Two students from the high school come by for an hour or two of work every week.

Andrea’s parents Cliff and Margaret, who have always envisioned and worked for a life in the community for their daughter, will manage “Andrea’s 3R’s.” “The work she does every day must be meaningful, valued and interesting,” say her parents.

“We were very fortunate that we are able to afford to start this business” says Andrea’s Mom. “If we couldn’t have done it and didn’t want her in the workshop, I guess I would have stalled for two years to keep her in school and prayed for something wonderful to happen in the meantime,” she adds. A lack of after school options has always concerned the family.

As part of the business promotion campaign in the community, Cliff, Margaret and the support workers sent out a “Dear Friends” letter to local businesses, organizations and citizens. The letter introduced Andrea’s new business and encouraged people to drop in, say hello and ensure Andrea remains a familiar member of the community.

“She’s very happy,” says Margaret. “She was a little worried in the summer about what she was going to do when everyone started school, but then we opened on August 19th and she hasn’t looked back.” Margaret says the community has been interested and supportive of the new venture; many stop in to buy, others stop in to see how it works.

Margaret says, “This is a new option and it’s very difficult to explain to people that not everybody who is handicapped has to be in a program. This is Andrea’s job. We all have jobs, but for some reason we relegate people with handicaps to programming for their entire lives.” Andrea’s parents have supported their other children to attend university, so to support Andrea in her career goals was the logical thing to do.

In addition to her own business, Andrea also works at the local hospital twice a week and at Jubilee Lodge three times a week. These are very important parts of her work-week, says Margaret. “She’s doing very well in both of those jobs and it just keeps getting better as time goes on.”

“No government grant money is going into this,” explains Margaret. “Andrea’s 3R’s is a business and will run like a business.” As an illustration of Andrea’s place in the local business community, she will be participates in the town’s merchant display at the local shopping mall, side by side with other businesses showing their wares and services.

“Andrea’s delighted,” says Margaret, who adds there is no problem in getting her daughter up and off to work in the morning. “She’s really happy with what she’s doing and the community has been very responsive to the idea of someone who has a disability running her own show.”

Planning tools

The following are two models that can be used when creating a vision for your child's future. Contact the SACL for details about these tools as well as the names of people who are trained as facilitators in their use.

McGill Action Planning System (MAPS)

MAPS is a method for planning the future for a person with a disability. The goal is to hear his dreams and to plan creatively. A MAPS session has a trained facilitator who focuses on the gifts and strengths of the person as each question is answered. The people who are most important to him are invited to participate in the session to make up a circle of support. To make sure that dreams come true and nightmares are avoided, the team makes specific plans to get him from where he is to where he wants to be.

The questions that are used in MAPS will help you understand the process:

- What is a MAP?
- What is the person's history or story?
- What are your dreams?
- What are your nightmares?
- Who is the person?
- What are the person's strengths, gifts and talents?
- What does the person need?
- What is the plan of action?

MAPS has been an empowering process for many people with disabilities. If you are interested, contact SACL to find a MAPS acilitator. There are videos and books on MAPS at the John Dolan Resource Centre.

Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)

PATH is a respectful process that places the person with a disability at the centre and permits him to dream about the future and what he wants in his life. PATH is described as "an exercise in thinking backwards."

It was developed for situations that are complex, when it is hard to dream. PATH starts by creating a vivid image of the person's dream and then plans backwards. The creators of PATH caution that it is more intense than MAPS, because the situation is more intense. It asks the hard questions about how the team will commit to the dream. It is a powerful and challenging experience for the person involved in it, and well worth it if he is ready to move toward his dream.

The steps in

PATH are:

The North Star: The PATH finder is asked questions about their ideals, values, what gives them direction and what drives them. They spend time focusing on their dream.

The Goal: The next step is a visualization activity. A specific time is chosen in the future and the group visualizes that future time. Everyone shares what has happened. The group's reflections need to be positive and possible within the time frame.

Now: Everyone in the group comes back to the present and discusses what life is like now. The facilitator explains that the group somehow needs to get from the "Now" to the "Goal".

Who Do We Enroll?: No one can reach their dream alone. The next question is who we enroll to help. Anyone or any agency can be enrolled to help. Enrolling means making a commitment in the person's life and dream.

Getting Stronger: The reality is that a lot of work is necessary to reach the goal. When everyone gets busy with other things it will seem overwhelming to commit to a dream. This step is about deciding what each team member needs to do in their personal life to be strong enough to make a contribution.

3 Months: From the future time when the goal is achieved, the group moves closer to the present, 3 months from today. Everyone visualizes what has happened already with the positive assumption that there has been progress.

1 Month: The team moves from 3 months ahead, back to one month from today. This step is a commitment to specific steps, answering the questions, who, what, when and where.

The First Step: The facilitator asks, what is the first step? The team is asked to take immediate action, even if it is only a small step. The goal throughout the PATH process is developing interdependence, so no one is trying to reach the goal alone. In this step, the team decides what is blocking the dream right now, and takes steps to change it. The session ends with the group discussing their feelings about the process.

Work experience:

a bridge to employment

Many students end their high school experience with the goal of getting a job. This is especially true for individuals who have an intellectual disability who don't have a lot of options for post-secondary education or training. It is the experience of SACL's Employment Opportunities consultants that students who have an intellectual disability often experience a long time lag between the end of their high school experience and when a job is obtained. This "down time" leads to frustration and lower self-esteem and has a negative impact upon the student. The question becomes how can we assist the student get and maintain a job after high school.

If a student's goal is to get a paying job after graduation, properly structured work experience is a valuable tool toward this goal. The work education component of a student's program must be a part of a complete transition plan to be developed, reviewed and adjusted throughout a student's high school life. Other areas of the student's life, such as where are they going to live also need to be addressed in a transition plan.

What does this need to look like?

Work experience provides students with good learning opportunities. Most people involved with students agree that work experience during the first couple of years of high school is one way of assisting a student to learn about different kinds of jobs, to learn some basic work skills, and to obtain general knowledge about what it means to work. During the first year of a Work Education program this may very well mean doing work tasks within the school itself and perhaps doing job shadowing.

Work experience during the student's last year or two of school must provide a learning opportunity that is more focused and reflective of real work if it is to become a bridge to employment. Such learning opportunities also need to provide the student with a variety of different work experiences so that they can start to sort out what they like and don't like to do. What this means is that the student needs to be out in the real world doing work experience in situations that reflect real jobs. Things that need to be considered and planned for include, work expectations both in terms of productivity and co-worker social interactions, length of working hours, time of day that tasks are performed, and the number of different tasks that are undertaken. Some consideration also needs to be given to issues of transportation and community living supports.

The quality of learning opportunities that a student has through work experience is, to a large part, affected by how the work experience is presented or, “sold” to the employer. Special Education Teachers, Educational Assistants, Work Education Coordinators and others who play a fundamental role in setting up work experiences have a significant part to play in how the work experiences are presented to an employer and in how they shape the perception that the employer has of the student and their work experience. Parents can also assist here. Students in some communities, usually with the help of their parents, are sometimes asked to seek out their own work experience opportunities. As such, the parent too has an opportunity to shape how employers view the potential candidate.

This “sales pitch” is a matter of perception and is essential to everything that happens during the work experience and, subsequently, upon the quality of the learning opportunity. This ultimately has a further impact upon the student’s chances to obtain paid work. While the employer is looking at the student as a potential employee; as someone whom they may pay, then they will more often challenge the student with more tasks in order to better evaluate what they can and can't do well. Expectations regarding punctuality, appropriate amount of time taken for breaks, speed/quantity and quality of the tasks completed, etc, are often different between the employer who provides a student with a work experience as compared to the employer who is evaluating a potential employee.

When challenged and given appropriate work place expectations the student has the opportunity to learn what "real work" is about, as well as, the opportunity to show what they really can do, where additional training may be needed, and what support, if any, they may require.

Other aspects of work, such as putting in several hours per day and for several days per week, keeping in mind what the student can manage, will also help build up both physical and mental stamina and provide students with a clear perception about what working is all about. It is one thing to go to a job a couple of hours two or three times per week, but going every day for a month or two can give you a different view on things. If financial independence is a goal, then working full time is something that needs to be assessed.

Sales Pitch

Work experience: crossing the bridge

Do you want to be working in the community when you end your high school experience? A useful way to do this is to make sure your work experience in high school helps you reach this goal. The more your work experiences look and feel like real jobs, the better prepared you will be for entering the world of work. Make sure you tell your teachers and parents about your dreams. They can play a big part in helping those dreams become reality.

What about a student who has other requirements?

Many students stay in high school until well after their 18th birthday and many to their 22nd. By law, school divisions are required to provide an educational program to students up to their 22nd birthday. As such, most of these students have all their necessary Saskatchewan Learning requirements fulfilled typically 2–3 years before they leave high school. The years after having achieved the Saskatchewan Learning requirements provides for a great amount of flexibility in what the students curriculum looks like and specifically in how they structure their work education program.

There are many resources available to support a student with a disability once they leave school and enter the world of work. Supports can usually be arranged for students who end their high school experience but still require additional support before an employer is prepared to hire them. Training allowances and job coaches are often provided. Contact your local supported employment program or SACL's Employment Opportunities for additional information about these supports and/or agencies that may be able to help.

Stories of successful work experience

Heather

Heather was in her last year of high school. She was placed in a job, on a work experience in February, with the idea that if she learned the job satisfactorily she would continue with paid employment in June. The employer was unable to provide one to one training beyond the traditional one to two days, so it was felt this student would need job coach support. High schools will not provide such job coach support. Employment support dollars are not available for someone on a work experience while they are in high school.

However, in this situation the two parties a local School Division and a government agency agreed to cost share the cost of a job coach. Heather started the work placement with a job coach with her each day. After a short time the job coach was no longer needed. When she graduated in June, Heather stayed on as a paid employee.

Harvey

Harvey really enjoyed a work experience he had at a local business where he detailed cars. He wanted to work there when he graduated, so the business was approached about hiring Harvey. But they felt he was not able to do the job satisfactorily. They did, however, think that with additional training, Harvey would do well. So he did his last work experience with the business. However, near graduation, the business was concerned that he still wasn't up to a satisfactory level. A contract was set up with some government funding and eventually, Harvey was hired by this business. The continued funding provided the business with training dollars to compensate for the further training Harvey needed.

Hilda

Hilda had always been interested in working on dairy farm. In her last year of high school an employment consultant found a local farmer who was interested in an additional farm hand. Hilda did her last work experience from 5 a.m.–9a.m. several days a week in the milk shed. Her mom drove her to the farm the Educational Assistant picked her up for the return trip to school. Hilda ended her school day at noon and went home. It was understood that if Hilda learned the routines and did a good job, she would be hired when she graduated. However, after a few weeks, it became apparent that this job involved much more than merely milking cows. Hilda felt she wasn't suited to a job that had so many tasks. She also learned that she really didn't like starting work at 5 a.m.!

Amanda

Amanda was reluctant to leave school, but was happy when the employer of her last work experience suggested she try a job there and after some discussion, Amanda was hired part-time. She continues to works part-time, but also goes to school. She enjoys her job, but also welcomes the opportunity to be with her teachers and classmates. It's a good combination.

Faith

Faith was on her summer break from high school. She was looking forward to going back to school in the fall to complete what was expected to be her final year. Faith was most interested in a summer job. She put out her resume but didn't find an opportunity until the last week of summer holidays. A grocery store manager was looking for an additional person to work part-time as a customer service clerk. This meant bringing in shopping carts, helping pack groceries, working the parcel pickup, and other tasks. The employer agreed to have Faith come in on a work assessment to evaluate her work ethic and potential to do the job. It was decided that the support of a job coach who could provide one to one support to start with was important. Since she only had a week of holidays left, Faith continued with her work assessment once school started. She worked at the store on Saturdays and Wednesday evenings. After the first week, her job coach no longer came in with her and informal support was provided by her co-workers.

Blaine

Blaine had a work experience at a local store. He enjoyed his time there and thought it would be good to work there over the summer or part-time while finishing his final year. The employer was approached and it felt that with some support Blaine would be able to help put stock away. A training on the job arrangement was set up. When Blaine finished school in late June, he started working at the store. When school started that fall, Blaine stayed on at the store on weekends and holidays. He is building up his work experience, is earning some money and is very happy with the arrangement.

Paul

Although he could stay in school until his 22nd birthday, at age 20 Paul decided he no longer wanted to be in school. He really wanted to work out in the community. His last work experience at a local restaurant had proved successful and his employer had, in fact, offered him part-time work. As part of his Transition Plan, Paul worked part-time from late afternoon until early evening while also attending school part-time each day. His attendance at school let him keep his relationships with schoolmates and stay connected to his teachers. It also provided the school with an opportunity to focus on working with Paul in areas where he was having difficulty at work. One of those areas was measuring a variety of pastas. Math was not Paul's forte. So when Paul was at school, the teachers spent time helping him learn the specific skills he needed for his job. It was easier for Paul to learn about measuring when he realized why he needed to know it. He could see the practical application for his job. For one year Paul worked part-time and attended school part-time.

More to think about

Supported Decision Making

This is a process of acting with a person to discover their values, interests, talents and gifts in order to support them to choose the way they want to live their life. It begins by recognizing a person's right to self-determination. It assumes that everyone makes decisions that are in their best interest. It then assumes that it is not the decision maker who needs to learn about supported decision-making, but rather those who presume to support others in making choices.

As an added feature of this *School to Life Transition*, SACL's *Supported Decision Making Handbook* is included. (If a copy is not included here, contact the SACL for a copy.)

Creating a home, a way of living

There is probably more collective stress over the issue of housing than any other challenge young adults with disabilities. SACL is working to encourage more options for more homes in the community for people with disabilities...as well as individualized funding to make the present options more accountable to the consumer. Parents need to be vigilant in calling for change in the area of housing. Your child deserves to be in a home she likes with people she likes. Housing is one area where we need to look beyond what exists and figure out what we want to create for adults with disabilities.

When you and your daughter decide that it is time she move out on her own, first figure out where she might want to live. This can be part of her PATH. Maybe she will want to share a place with one other young person, or her own apartment in the city where there are a lot of activities. Help her to dream and let her know that if she tries something and doesn't like it she can try something else. Next, help her figure out what her needs will be. She may need a full-time support worker or someone to check in on her twice a day. She may need some assistance with cooking, cleaning or personal care. Since you know her so well you are the best person to sit down with her and figure out what supports will make her housing choice successful.

If you are looking for supported housing options contact SACL to discuss current and possible options as well as your CLD worker to see what is available in your area.

A gradual transition is very important when your daughter moves into her new home. Many people have found that slow transitions are better, especially if the person with a disability is going to have roommates in their new home. Don't let administrative or funding pressures rush the transition. You know your daughter better than anyone and you will know when she is comfortable in her new home.

Income

Your family must carefully examine the possibilities for and ramifications of financial support for a son or daughter with a disability. Once your young adult reaches the age of 18, he qualifies for income security. At present it is how most people with intellectual disabilities receive their income. Even if he is still living at home he can receive assistance. You can call the Income Security call centre at 1-800-667-7161 for information. Your CLD worker or SACL advocate can also help your son apply and cut out some of the hoops you need to jump through. We encourage you to assist your son or daughter to apply for assistance as soon as her or she turns 18, even if they are still at home.

As your son's advocate, you'll want to make sure that he keeps the same quality of life after he moves out of your home as he has now. For your son to be able to use his money to keep or improve his quality of life, it is important to legally protect that money before he goes on assistance. While you are alive, you can keep his additional savings and assets anything over \$1500 under your name, and pay for things he needs as they come up. This way, you can purchase items as gifts for him without jeopardizing his assistance.

A wide range of issues are examined in two recent SACL publications. *Navigating the System: An Advocacy Handbook for Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities* (SACL, 2004) and *The Road Map to the Future: A Financial Planning Guide for Families of People with Disabilities* (SACL, 2003). Contact the SACL for your copies: 3031 Louise Street, Saskatoon, SK, S7J 3L1, ph: (306) 955-3344.

Individualized Funding

Individualized funding gives people with disabilities control over the services they choose rather than fitting into the only available program that is funded. It ensures that service providers are more directly accountable to the people using the programs and services. If money follows the person, services will be personalized and accountable to that person. Change is always challenging. Many programs and services are used by people with disabilities only because there is nothing else available. Individualized funding is a paradigm shift that takes the focus off of the program and puts it back on the individual. If we embrace individualized funding, it can provide more diverse options and make dreams come true. Talk to an advocate at SACL for more information.

Getting current information, support

SACL's Employment Opportunities Program

Employment Opportunities makes the goal of a real job in the community for people with intellectual disabilities. This program is designed to support people with intellectual disabilities as they look for jobs, move to a new career or look ahead to leaving high school. It also offers services and support to employers and businesses. The program is funded through the government's Department of Learning. Employment Consultants use a fund called Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) to bring together prospective employers and people with disabilities who are looking for work.

The SAACL Employment Opportunities Consultants have been supporting people leaving school for an adult life in the community for more than 30 years. Consultants can be part of the transition team as the student works through the process. High school students and families want to plan for what happens after graduation. The Association's Employment Consultants also work with high school educators, students and families to support the transition of students with intellectual disabilities from high school into the world of work, further education and adult life experiences. Consultants work with schools, businesses, employment programs, funding resources and families to foster partnerships and to meet the needs of potential employees and employers. Employment Consultants can help students who need a transition plan, who want a PATH or MAPS session, or who want to find employment.

Employment Consultants are based in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. To contact the provincial coordinator or an employment consultant in your area, call (306) 955-3344 in Saskatoon, or (306) 763-5606 in Prince Albert, or (306) 790-5680 in Regina, or email: sacl@sacl.org or visit SAACL's website at www.sacl.org.

Advocacy, SACL

SACL Advocates offer support to individuals and families around the province to manage challenges, plan for the future and navigate service systems to create more fulfilling lives. The Association assists people as they work through issues in their lives with respect to access to education, employment, housing, social services, health and medical services and on issues of justice and human rights. This support is offered to individuals or to parents and family members. Call (306) 955-3344 or fax (306) 373-3070 in Saskatoon and ask for the Advocacy Worker assigned to your part of the province. Call (306) 763-5606 in Prince Albert, or (306) 790-5680 in Regina, or email: sacl@sacl.org or visit SACL's website at www.sacl.org.

Self-Advocacy

The self-advocacy movement developed when people with disabilities began to demand a better life for themselves. In institutions, group homes and sheltered workshops, people with disabilities had experienced abuse, poverty and disrespect. As with every other marginalized group, the time came for them to begin telling their own stories. Instead of having their parents advocate for them, they became their own advocates. Parents, advocates, educators and service agency personnel need to stay informed about what self-advocates are saying.

When your daughter becomes an adult, she may want to become active in a local advocacy group, and begin speaking out on behalf of people with disabilities. Call SACL at 955-3344, Extension 13 for information about Saskatchewan People First and the Self-Advocacy Action Group (SAAG).

The John Dolan Resource Centre

This library is one of Canada's most extensive lending libraries of its kind open to not only its own members, but to the general public. The collection features resources on intellectual and other disabilities, inclusion and all aspects of community living. More than 5,000 items including books, reports, video and audio materials, journals, training kits and information packages are available. A vast range of information is offered, from archival materials to the most current resources available including SACL-published materials.

The SACL offers a new service through its John Dolan Resource Centre. The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) allows patrons to search the extensive library holdings and place orders for materials, all online. (Patrons are welcome to visit the Resource Centre in person at 3031 Louise Street, Saskatoon or: visit the web site at www.sacl.org).

Become an online patron. Contact the Resource Centre librarian to receive a user name and password. Call (306) 955-3344, Extension 20 or by email: johndolan.rc@sacl.org. Once an online patron has unique access information, they go to www.sacl.org/library.

Organizations, Agencies & Websites

The following are agencies that offer assistance to individuals and families who are planning for a future life and employment in the community. Remember to ask about services in your area. Many of these organizations have branches throughout Saskatchewan. Following is a list of websites with information on supporting people with disabilities. Keep in mind that the following may have changed since publication; contact the SACL for the most current information.

Employment Opportunities/SACL
Northern Saskatchewan: (306) 763-5606
Central Saskatchewan: (306) 955-3344
Southern Saskatchewan: (306) 790-5685
Rotary Partnership: (306) 955-3344

Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities:
(306) 787-5602

Centennial Student Employment Program
(CSEP)-Saskatchewan Culture Inc.: (306) 780-9284

Regina Human Resource Centre of Canada:
1-800-206-7218 (Call for information about your area.)

Enhanced Access for Students with Disabilities:
(306) 790 – 5685

Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities—Human Resource & Skills Development
Canada (HRSDC) <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca>

- Regina Human Resource Centre of Canada
(Call for a satellite office in your area): 1-800-206-7218
- Saskatoon Human Resource Centre of Canada
(Call for a satellite office in your area): 1-800-206-7218

The Way to Work Program, SIAST Woodland Campus is a 200-day employment readiness training project for adults who have an intellectual disability. Students will explore and practice employment readiness skills in a safe and supportive environment. Throughout the year, students will receive ongoing support to help with transition into employment: (306) 953-5590

Partners for Workplace Inclusion Program (PWIP)—one-stop employment services for job seekers with disabilities: (306) 651-7177

Partners in Employment/Saskatchewan Abilities Council—support services, vocational assessments and supported employment program throughout the province: (306) 374-4448

Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC)-work experience programs, employment support and referrals. SARC will be able to give you a referral to employment and workshop programs in your area.
Phone (306) 933-0616

Canada-Saskatchewan Career Employment Services-career planning, training, and employment services
Phone 1-888-77LEARN or (306) 787-2160

Regina Work Preparation Centre—individualized vocational counseling and referrals: (306) 757-9096

Community Advocates for Employment (CAFÉ)-in Estevan, an employment services for people with disabilities:
(306) 634-9554

Weyburn and Area Supported Employment Services (WASES)—assists individuals who face barriers to employment, offers wage subsidies: (306) 842-9081

South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre-information, accommodation, database, career development, job maintenance and follow-up, disability sensitivity training for people with disabilities: (306) 757-7452

Prince Albert Support Employment (PASE)—employment support for adults with disabilities: (306) 953-4487

Prairie Employment Program Inc.—employment supports for adults with disabilities in North Battleford: (306) 445-6404

Rosthern Employment Program—employment counseling and information for people with disabilities and those who face employment barriers: (306) 232-5242

Humboldt and Area Supported Employment Program—employment counseling and information for people with disabilities and those who face employment barriers: (306) 682-1414

North East Supported Employment Program—employment counseling and information for people with disabilities, as well as assistance for employers and job support for people on site: (306) 873-4550 or 1-877-873-4550

Alternative Employment and Independence Group—in Humboldt, employment counseling and information for people with disabilities
Phone: (306) 682-1455

Canadian Mental Health Association Provincial Office—local offices offer employment counseling for people with mental disabilities: (306) 525-5601

Canadian National Institute for the Blind—employment services to visually impaired persons: (306) 525-2571

Canadian Paraplegic Association— support for people with physical disabilities, employment counseling and information: (306) 652-9644 in Saskatoon; (306) 584-0101 in Regina

Career Headways Inc.—employment counseling and information for people with disabilities: (306) 352-8768

Nipawin District Services for the Handicapped—information, resources and employment counseling for people with disabilities: (306) 862-2270

Neil Squire Foundation—information, resources and employment counseling for people with disabilities: (306) 781-6023

Northern Saskatchewan Independent Living Inc.—information, accommodation, database, career development, job maintenance and follow-up, disability sensitivity training for people with disabilities: (306) 665-5508

Portage Vocational Society—in North Battleford, information, resources and employment counseling for people with disabilities: (306) 445-3752

Redvers Activity Centre—information, resources and employment counseling for people with disabilities: (306) 452-3544

Income Security Call Centre: 1-800-667-7161

Community Living Division (contact the central office for a CLD office in your local area.)
(306) 933-6300

Saskatchewan Alternative Initiatives (SAI):(306) 244-5013

Regina Residential Resource Centre (RRRC): (306) 352-3223

North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre:
(306) 665-5508

South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre:
(306) 757-7452

Saskatchewan People First: (306) 525-0404

Self-Advocacy Action Group (SAAG)—Saskatchewan Association for Community Living:
(306) 955-3344

Websites

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living
www.sacl.org

Independent Living Institute—information and resources for people with extensive disabilities, based on the principles of self-determination, self-respect and dignity:
www.independentliving.org

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)—accommodations and resources for people with developmental/intellectual disabilities and their employers:
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/MR.html>

Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities:—Accommodation Guide for Employers:
<http://www.saskvoice.com/accomguide.html>

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)—promotes and supports equal and equitable employment of job seekers with disabilities
<http://www.ccrw.org/en/>

The Aroga Group—provides systems to help individuals with disabilities to perform a particular task, and develops accessible workstations:
<http://www.aroga.com/>

Global Applied Disability Research and Information Network for Employment and Training (GLADNET)—brings together research and promotes information exchange about integrating people with disabilities in the workplace:
<http://www.gladnet.org/>

Further acknowledgements:

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Checklists prepared by the School To Work Interagency Transition Partnership (SWITP) in California target issues that transition teams should look at one, two, three and four years before students leave school. The lists have been changed to fit Saskatchewan environment. They are reproduced with SWITP's permission.

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We have reprinted and adapted items from SACL's own publications, *Navigating the System: an Advocacy Handbook for Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities* (SACL, 2004) and the *Road Map to the Future: A Financial Planning Guide for Families of People with Disabilities* (SACL, 2003). These publications are available from the SACL.