

## **Creating a Vision for the Future**

### **What is Transition Planning and Why is it Important?**

Transition into the adult world can present challenges for all young people. The process of transition may be more difficult for some youth with disabilities and will require unique strategies to enable each student to achieve the maximum possible independence in working, living and participating in the community as adults.

Transition planning is a process that brings together a student and those individuals directly involved in helping the student prepare to enter a post-school environment. It is designed to ensure that the student will be provided the necessary skills and services to make a smooth transition from school to adult life with as little interruption as possible. Unless the transition process is formalized, little thought or planning is given to the student's future service or program needs.

Quality transition planning is achieved when the process is initiated at an early age (age 16 or younger by law). A team comprised of the student, family member(s), school personnel, agency representatives and significant others, meet to assist the young student in defining a vision for the future. The overall value of the meeting is the sharing of knowledge about the student's strengths, interests, and preferences in order to create a map of where help is needed, and what experiences are going to be valuable over the high school years.

There are three areas that must be discussed when participating in a transition planning meeting:

- What is the student's long term goal in the area of **Postsecondary Education or Training**?
  
- What is the student's long term goal in the area of **Employment**?
  
- What is the student's long term goal in the area of **Independent Living/Community Participation (if appropriate)**?

Unless you can begin to define the answers to the above questions, it will be very difficult to develop a sequential/coordinated plan to prepare the student to reach his/her independence in each of the stated areas. Waiting until a student is ready to graduate is simply too late to begin the transition process. It is important to remember that there is no "system" like special education that entitles a student to receive appropriate supports and services after they graduate from high school.

Remember goals may always change as a student gets older, experiences more opportunities, and begins to personally define specific career directions.