

# SELF-ADVOCACY, PERSON-DIRECTED PLANNING, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

## INTRODUCTION

Transition is the term used for the time when you are changing from a student to an adult. You, your parents, and your school begin to plan for transition while you are still a student.

Your parents and the school need to understand your wants and needs to make sure they are included in your plan. You need to talk to your parents and your teachers about how you can become more involved in making decisions about your educational program and your plans for the future.

When you turn 18, the law considers you an adult who has the rights and responsibilities of every other adult. You can still ask your parents for help to make important decisions. Before graduating from high school, you and your parents need to talk about many things. Some of these things are getting a job, going to college, and where to live. You can take a bigger part in making decisions for yourself by:

- learning how to speak up for yourself
- working on steps to reach your goals
- speaking up in your meetings
- learning how to set goals
- making choices as a young adult
- helping to plan your future

This first section of the Texas Transition and Employment Guide talks about three ways for you to begin to plan for the future.

### Self-Advocacy—Speaking for Yourself

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself. You should ask for what you need and want when making life decisions. Knowing yourself is your first step toward being a self-advocate. This means:

- talking about your needs, interests, likes, and dislikes
- knowing what you are good at and how you learn
- knowing what you want to do
- knowing what you have to do
- understanding your disability and how it affects your ability to work, learn, and live
- thinking about what you need to work, learn, and live
- learning your rights, responsibilities, and how to get help
- telling people what you need and want
- asking for help
- asking questions when you do not understand something
- speaking up in your admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee and other planning meetings
- helping to write your individualized education program (IEP)

### Self Determination—Choosing for Yourself/Making Your Own Choices

Self-determination means making choices based on your needs and interests. You have the ability to learn and benefit from making your own choices.

Making your own choices means:

- making decisions
- taking responsibility for the decisions you make
- setting goals
- learning independent living, risk-taking, and safety skills
- believing in yourself and your abilities
- solving problems
- speaking up for yourself
- directing or leading your own life
- understanding what you know how to do and what you need to learn

### Person-Directed Planning

You can begin to make your own choices about things that affect your life. Person-directed planning gives you the power to direct the supports and services that meet your needs. You and the people who know and care about you work together to make life choices. Person-directed planning is a process that allows you and the legally authorized representative (LAR) on your side, to direct the development of a plan of supports and services that meets your personal outcomes. The process must:

- identify existing supports and services necessary to achieve your outcomes
- identify natural supports available to you and work out service system supports you will need
- occur with the support of a group of people chosen by you and the LAR on your side
- accommodate your style of communication and preferences regarding time and setting for the planning meeting

## **TIMELINE**

### When or before you turn 14:

- Speak up for yourself.
- Talk about your interests, wants, and needs.
- Explain your disability or health issues and what you may need to help you be on your own.
- Participate in your ARD committee meeting, if applicable.

### When or before you turn 16:

- Talk about your goals for life after high school.
- Practice how to act in different places (school, jobs, and so on).
- Identify health care needs and providers (doctors, therapists, pharmacies) to meet your needs.

### When or before you turn 18:

- Plan for working, voting, further education, and signing up for services.
- Decide where you want to live and how you will do it.
- Ask for help, say what you need, and tell people that you know how to make decisions.
- Be on time for classes, appointments, social activities, and work.
- Ask about other services like health, employment, counseling, technology, and housing that you can receive after high school.
- Accept responsibility for health care needs (make doctor or therapy appointments, fill and take your prescriptions, etc.).

### After graduation:

- Take over making choices for your life.
- Find people who are willing to help you.
- Be open to trying positive new things.

## WHO CAN HELP

### • Local School

Your school district has a transition and employment designee (TED) to help you and your parents with information about being able to make life choices for yourself. You can find information about your school's TED at:

<http://framework.esc18.net/display/Webforms/ESC18FWCountyInformation.aspx?ID=Transition>

### • Local Resources

You and your parents need to look at what is available in your community. This could be local advocacy groups, offices of state agencies, or support groups.

### • Texas Transition Network Contacts

Transition in Texas: The transition specialist at your area's education service center (ESC) can give you and your parents information about planning for your future. A list of transition experts can be found at: <http://www.transitionintexas.org/Page/7>

### • AskTED

AskTED is an online list of Texas schools, including charters. Use this directory to find contact information for districts, schools, and education service centers: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/districtinfo.aspx>

### • Texas School District Foster Care Liaison

Each school district/charter school in Texas has to have at least one person to help a student who is in foster care enroll in or transfer to a school. A list of the foster care advisers for your school can be found at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liaisons/>

### • Disability Rights Texas

Disability Rights Texas is the federally designated legal protection and advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities in Texas. You can contact the local office for help at: <http://www.disabilityrightstx.org/>

### • Institute for Person-Centered Practices

The Institute for Person-Centered Practices helps you as a young adult learn how to take over your life as much as you can. It works with the Texas Center for Disability Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and the Center on Disability and Development at TexasA&M University. For training and materials about person-centered practices, see: <http://www.person-centered-practices.org/>

### • National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)

NSTTAC tells about transition on Student Focused Planning. For information, resources, and interactive websites for you and your family, see:

<http://www.nsttac.org/content/students-families>

### • Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD)

TCDD gives money to organizations to help people with developmental disabilities live on their own. For a description of projects supported by TCDD see:

<http://www.tcdd.texas.gov/>

Find information about using respectful language at the following link:

<http://www.tcdd.texas.gov/resources/people-first-language/>

### • Texas Youth 2 Adult

Online Transition Tool that can be customized to your Transition Age Child's Diagnosis, Age and Needs. The tool assists families in preparing for Adulthood in the areas of Medical, Education, Social & Recreation, Legal and Advocacy, Financial Management, Independent Living and Employment.

<https://www.texasyouth2adult.com/>

### • Money and Stuff

Website that provides Financial Education material for Free for Kids, Teens, Adults and Educators. Learn about Budgeting, Understand Credit and links to helpful financial websites and apps

<http://moneyandstuff.info>

## • Department of Family and Protective Services/Child Protective Services (DFPS/CPS)

DFPS/CPS maintains a youth-focused website for services and referrals for youth and young people currently in foster care and those young people seeking transitional services from foster care to adulthood. In addition, DFPS, in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Casey Foundation, supports Transition Centers that provide an array of services, including education and vocational opportunities, employment readiness, housing, mentoring, and self-advocacy for youth and young people currently in foster care.

See more information at:

<https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/hotstuff/default.asp>

Resources Available:

Access Granted: Texas Foster Care Handbook for Youth

Understanding Psychotropic Medications

Graduation Toolkit

Strategic Sharing

## • Texas Project First

Texas Project First is a project of the Texas Education Agency by and for families

Texas Project First (Family to Family) provides information and resources for educators, school districts, parents, students, and the general public, including information on:

- Self-Determination
- Guardianship
- Self-Advocacy
- Person Centered Planning

<http://texasprojectfirst.org/>

## • The Arc of Texas

The Arc of Texas can tell you how to find training and services to teach you and your family how to advocate for yourself. Learn about Project MOVE advocacy training and support at the following link:

<http://www.thearcoftexas.org/>

## • Partners Resource Network

Partners Resource Network (PRN) is a non-profit agency that operates the Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) in all areas of the state. Texas PTIs provide training, education, information, referral, emotional support, and individual help to get services. Get more information at:

<http://prntexas.org/texas-ptis/team-project-2/>

## • Texas Parent to Parent (TxP2P)

TxP2P provides peer support and information to families of children with special needs and/or disabilities. For detailed transition information see this link: <http://www.txp2p.org/parents/pathway.html> or call 866-896-6001

TxP2P also provides an on-line resource directory organized by counties. Just enter or select your county or a nearby county to see what resources are available for you or your family at:

<http://www.txp2p.org/training/family2family.html>

## • Texas Advocates

Texas Advocates provides training to its members on self-advocacy, self-determination, person-directed planning, and self-advocacy organizations at the following link: <http://www.txadvocates.org>

## TRANSITION IN TEXAS TIMELINE

Transition prepares students to move from high school to adulthood. Transition in Texas begins before a student's 14th birthday, or earlier if the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee decides it would be right for you. As you get close to beginning high school, you will need to talk about what you want to do after graduation. Your transition services will be based on your needs, preferences, and interests. The ARD committee (which includes you and your parents) writes the transition plan as part of your Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The **Transition in Texas Timeline** is a tool to help you and your parents work with the other members of the ARD committee write your transition plan. Use this timeline to decide if these issues should be discussed at the ARD committee transition meetings.

### Parents, as soon as possible:

If your child is identified with a developmental disability, put his/her name on an interest list with the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) until services are available. The waitlist is currently years long.

<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/LA/PersonDirectedPlanningGuidelines.pdf>

### When or before you turn 14 years of age:

- Speak up for yourself—practice self-advocacy. Learn to explain your interests, preferences, and needs.
- Talk with your parents and teachers about what kind of job you want.
- Identify your career interests, strengths, and needs. Complete interest and career inventories.
- Explore career options.
- Identify training requirements for the job you want and admission standards for any school or training program you may want to attend.
- Be able to explain your disability and accommodations you may need.
- Build your academic and functional skills (such as personal health, money management, decision making, independent living, etc.).
- Prepare to participate in ARD meetings. Talk to your parents and teachers.
- Attend all ARD meetings, to which you must be invited, when transition is considered. If you do not attend, you should give information to someone on the ARD committee about your wants and needs.
- Participate in the ARD discussion about transition services. Learn to be the leader of the meeting, by asking for an agenda, calling on people who want to speak, and talking to your school and parents about all your needs. 52
- Talk with your school and parents to make sure that you take the classes you need for the job you want. Talk about the classes you need to take to attend the college or training program of your choice after you graduate.
- Talk with your ARD committee to write your personal graduation plan.
- Explore other agencies and service providers that can help you after graduation from high school.
- Find out about assistive technology tools that can help you to live independently and have a job.
- Expand your participation with community activities, such as library projects, volunteering, recreational sports, and trying to find people with similar interests to yours.
- Apply for a social security number and card, if you do not already have one. Contact the local social security office to see if you qualify for benefits.
- Identify any needs you have for long-term services and supports. Explore the community and long-term services and supports that are available.
- Consider the need for guardianship or guardianship alternatives.

### When or before you turn 16 years of age:

- Identify and communicate your goals for life after high school.
- Practice appropriate communication and social skills in different settings (school, peers, recreation, jobs, etc.).
- Continue to talk about transition planning each year until you graduate from high school.
- Talk about giving permission to the school to share information with any agencies who might give or provide you with transition services. Think about why this might or might not be a good idea.
- Ask the school to invite other agencies that may provide or pay for transition services to your ARD committee meeting. You or your parents must give the school permission.
- Complete a functional vocational assessment if you need it.
- Find out about education or training requirements for the job that you want.
- Ask your school counselor about classes that you need matched to your job interest, or how to find training on your job interest.
- Talk about any testing that you need for after graduation for postsecondary education or training (SAT, ACT, TSI, ASVAB). Discuss accommodations you may need. Find out about any other admission requirements.
- Ask if there is financial support to help pay for any admission tests you may need.
- Find out how much the job training or education you are interested in will cost.

- Talk about the supports you will need to get and hold a job.
- Explore types of transportation to a job, including public transportation.
- Keep a list of your job experiences or volunteer work or clubs and sports activities.
- Begin a résumé and update as needed.
- Practice effective communication by asking for help, identifying accommodations you need, and developing interview skills.
- Practice independent living skills (such as budgeting, shopping, cooking, housekeeping, decision making, etc.).
- Participate in activities within your community, such as library projects, volunteering, recreational sports, or finding people with interests similar to yours.
- Identify health care needs and providers (doctors, therapists, pharmacies) to meet your needs.
- Explore living options that may be available for you when you attend college or a training program after you graduate.
- Contact community and long term service and support agencies to discuss eligibility information.
- Ask for and receive information about the rights that are granted to your parents (other than the right to receive notice) that will transfer to you when you turn 18. This happens unless someone has been granted guardianship.
- Get an identification card, voter registration, and/or driver's license and be able to
- communicate personal information.

**When or before you turn 18 years of age:**

- Continue to work with your ARD committee to review and update employment goals.
- Talk about the kind of work you can do. Check on who can coach you on the job, if needed.
- Ask that any agencies that might help you with training or getting a job be invited to your ARD committee meeting.
- Ask for and receive notification about age of majority requirements when you turn 17.
- Ask for and receive your rights at age 18. Your parents will continue to receive a notice of your ARD committee meetings, but can only attend if you or the school invites them.
- Register to vote.
- Register for selective service (males).
- Take responsibility for being on time for classes, appointments, social activities, and work.
- Ask about other services besides school that may be available for you.
- Develop a list of people who know you and the work you can do.
- Identify sources for job listings.
- Practice interviewing for a job.
- Apply for education or training programs.
- Develop a plan to pay for postsecondary education or training.
- Apply for financial help for education after high school (FASFA, grants, scholarships).
- Apply for long-term services or supports, if appropriate. Learn to direct and manage these.
- Explore adult recreational activities and community involvement.
- Prepare for the adult model of health care.

**After graduation:**

- Take over making decisions for your life.
- Ask for and receive a Summary of Performance from the school.
- Ask for and receive a prior written notice about your change of placement when you graduate.
- Collect all information you will need for your postsecondary education or training (diploma, transcripts, etc.) and enroll in the program of your choice.
- Accept responsibility for health care needs (make doctor or therapy appointments, fill and take your prescriptions, etc.).
- Begin receiving services from agencies, if appropriate.
- Finalize your résumé.
- Identify job openings or trainings.
- Apply for jobs and talk to someone who can help coach you in your work