



Alberta
Children and
Youth
Initiative

ACYI Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities

Your Guide To Reaching New Heights



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition from childhood to adulthood is an important and often challenging developmental process for every adolescent. This process is even more challenging for individuals with disabilities as they have additional barriers to overcome. Albertans have expressed concern that there is a lack of information and understanding about what support services are available and a lack of connection and coordination between different services.¹ There are also challenges in accessing culturally sensitive services for some youth with disabilities, including Aboriginals, other ethnic groups and immigrants. A protocol that addresses these issues and describes how planning could occur will guide individuals, families and professionals toward successful outcomes.

The *Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities* recognizes the importance of addressing the process of transition for youth with disabilities. The protocol specifies the transition planning process, the components of a transition plan and the shared commitment of Alberta government ministries and their partners to youth with disabilities and their families during the critical period of transition to adulthood.

A cross-ministry working group, under the mandate of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI), facilitated the development of the protocol. The working group completed a literature review, a provincial and national survey of existing protocols and conducted focus groups with key stakeholders throughout the province to identify the features needed in the protocol.

The **Transition Planning Protocol** outlines a transition process, involving the following steps:

- Step 1 Identify youth who will be transitioning
- Step 2 Identify Transition Planning Team
- Step 3 Gather information for the Plan
- Step 4 Develop the Plan
- Step 5 Implement the Plan
- Step 6 Review and update the Plan

The Transition Plan By describing a common transition planning process and key components of a transition plan, while acknowledging flexibility according to the needs of a youth and his or her family, government ministries and other service providers can more effectively support youth and families through the transition process. The protocol is intended to be a tool to support youth and their families. Its use is not mandated but youth and their families are invited to use it, if they find it useful.

¹ Alberta Children's Services (2003). *Report of the Advisory Committee on Transitions for Youth With Disabilities: Transition Framework for Youth With Disabilities.*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from childhood to adulthood is an important developmental process for every individual. Adolescence may be characterized by several developmental milestones such as separating from parents, establishing relationships outside the family, accepting responsibility for decisions and behaviours and their consequences, consolidating identity and self-image, pursuing further education and establishing career goals. Sexuality, employment, financial independence and independent living arrangements are all issues that are addressed in the transition from youth to adult.

Transition is a challenging and complex process, particularly for individuals with disabilities who have to overcome additional barriers. For example, compared to youth without disabilities, youth with disabilities sometimes take longer or have more difficulty completing high school, and they are more likely to be unemployed.² These challenges are accompanied by a lack of information and understanding about the support services available and a system-wide lack of integration and coordination.³ Further, there is a lack of culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal youth with disabilities and for youth from other ethnic and immigrant groups.

The *Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities* was developed under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI), with input from stakeholders throughout the province. The ACYI is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working on issues affecting children and youth. Established in 1998, its vision is to ensure that Alberta's children and youth are well cared for, safe, successful at learning, and healthy. The ACYI provides a broad forum for dealing with child and youth issues, using the expertise of the partnering ministries and Alberta communities to develop strategies and initiatives. These strategies provide practical opportunities for organizations and individuals to work together for children, youth and their families.

An ACYI Cross-Ministry Working Group includes representation from:

- Children's Services;
- International, Intergovernmental, and Aboriginal Relations (consultation);
- Advanced Education and Technology;
- Alberta Mental Health Board;
- Education;
- Seniors and Community Supports;
- Solicitor General and Public Security;
- Employment, Immigration, and Industry; and
- Health and Wellness (consultation).

This working group was formed to address transition issues proactively and improve supports to young adults with disabilities and their families through a Transition Planning Protocol that provides detailed, individualized transition plans for youth with disabilities.

² Human Resources Development Canada (2001). *Disability In Canada: A 2001 Profile*.

³ Alberta Children's Services (2003). *Report of the Advisory Committee on Transitions for Youth With Disabilities: Transition Framework for Youth With Disabilities*.

The *Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities* presented in this document specifies the transition planning process, the components of a transition plan, and the shared commitment required by all ministries and their partners to ensure that youth are assisted in their transition to adulthood. The protocol is designed to create a common understanding among key ministries and government-funded agencies of the transition process for youth with disabilities. This common understanding will contribute to a timely, coordinated and effective transition process. This includes all areas of transition to adulthood including:

- Adult services;
- Education;
- Employment programs and opportunities;
- Living arrangements;
- Community life;
- Financial independence;
- Relationships (making friends);
- Social/Leisure; and
- Health care and medical management.

The protocol will be distributed to all provincially funded organizations and youth support organizations that receive a combination of provincial, federal and private funding. These groups will be encouraged to identify and facilitate successful transition planning for youth with disabilities.

BACKGROUND

Government Commitment to Transition of Youth with Disabilities

Alberta is active in transition planning for youth with disabilities. In recent years, the Government of Alberta has indicated the seriousness of its intent to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the supports they need to participate successfully in community, learning, work and independent living opportunities. This is evident in legislation as well as in reports to government, and government policies and services listed below (outlined in more detail in Appendix 1).

Reports to Government

- Alberta Disability Strategy (2002)
- Alberta's Commission on Learning (October 2003)

Policies/Legislation

- Interpretive Bulletin “Duty to Accommodate Students With Disabilities in Post-Secondary Institutions” (October 2004)
- Policy Framework: Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and their Families (July 2003)
- *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* and Policy (November 2004)
- *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act* (August 2004)

Services

Advanced Education and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grants, scholarships and student loan funding to eligible students with permanent disabilities ▪ Transitional Vocational Program delivered in seven institutions across the province
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Program ▪ Transition planning for youth in care ▪ Advancing Futures Bursary Program
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding to support students with special needs ▪ Individualized program planning (IPP) ▪ Alternate format (Braille, audio, large print and e-text) learning resources and loans assistive technology to schools for students with visual impairments (low vision and blindness).
Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional health authority programs and services (including Home Care and Mental Health)
Employment, Immigration and Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disability Related Employment Support (DRES)
Alberta Seniors and Community Supports (ASCS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Guardianship ▪ Community Supports and Services for People with Disabilities ▪ Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) ▪ Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL)/Residential Access Modification Program (RAMP) ▪ <i>PDD: A Parent's Guide to Transition Planning – PDD Central Alberta Community Board</i> ▪ PDD: Programs and Services for adults with developmental disabilities, including Inclusive Post-Secondary Education
Justice and Attorney General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AISH Benefits Administration Program ▪ Public Trusteeship

Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI/Cross-Ministry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Student Health Initiative▪ Integrated case management for children and youth with special and complex needs
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REASON FOR TRANSITION PLANNING PROTOCOL

Even with the Government of Alberta's commitment to supporting youth with disabilities, more can be done to ensure smooth transitions for youth with disabilities. Many issues related to the transition to adulthood can be addressed through establishing a Transition Planning Protocol. A protocol may address challenges such as:

- Multiple systems/ministries, which can create confusion for individuals and families;
- Lack of information and understanding among parents/families/schools about services;
- Lack of system-wide integration and co-ordination;
- Minimal transition planning occurring in current systems;
- Lack of age appropriate supports for youth in transition;
- Different definitions of disability across system;
- Some funding systems, which are perceived as inflexible and focusing on deficits rather than strengths;
- Services, which are perceived as driven by funding rather than by needs and inconsistency across the province; and
- Development of adult services that have not kept pace with advances in services for children.

Transitioning to adulthood is a challenge for all youth; however, transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities can and often does involve overcoming additional obstacles.

SUPPORTING LITERATURE AND PRACTICE

In preparation for the Transition Planning Protocol, the working group undertook focus groups, a survey of the current situation in Alberta and across Canada and reviewed the recent literature. Information gathered through these activities was extremely valuable in the development of the protocol. A summary of the information collected is presented here and presented in more detail in Appendix 3.

Alberta Survey

In an effort to recognize existing protocols and other related materials, the working group undertook an Alberta-wide survey to gather information on existing transition planning supports throughout the regions.

Survey results indicate that many transition mechanisms currently exist, including formal protocols between various groups working in the regions; a process of developing an integrated case management process for adolescents with special and complex needs; and informal partnerships aimed at addressing the needs of youth with disabilities to transition to adulthood. Details of the survey results are included in Appendix 3.

ACYI has also developed *Guidelines for Supporting Successful Transition for Children and Youth*. This document includes tip sheets for a wide range of transitions for children and youth, including one tip sheet for youth with disabilities in transition to adulthood.

Cross-Canada Survey

A number of provinces across Canada have developed programs and protocols to assist youth with disabilities in their province transition successfully to adulthood. Information gathered in a cross-Canada survey included:

British Columbia	Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs: A Community Support Guide
Saskatchewan	Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities
Manitoba	Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16
Ontario	Transition Planning: A Resource Guide
Nova Scotia	Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years Through to Adult Life
Prince Edward Island	Plan for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The material from other provinces has been used in Alberta's Transition Planning Protocol.

Literature Review - Best Practices for Transition Planning

A review of literature was undertaken to gather information on best practice for transition for youth with disabilities. A summary of the literature is contained in Appendix 3. The literature is consistent in recommending six best practice characteristics for transition planning for youth with disabilities:

1. Person-centred planning;
2. Youth involvement;
3. Family involvement;
4. Community involvement;
5. Identification and use of a transition coordinator; and
6. Inter-agency collaboration.

Other effective practices in transition planning for youth with disabilities, as identified in the literature,⁴ include the following:

- Encourage self-determination;
- Keep family involved;
- Emphasize ecological approaches;
- Plan back to front;
- Coordinate services;
- Involve community;
- Access and utilize accommodation technologies and related services;
- Provide post-secondary education supports; and
- Work for systems change.

Overall, the literature supports that youth with disabilities benefit from formalized and inclusive processes to support their successful transitions.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with over 100 stakeholders throughout the province, including youth, parents of youth with disabilities, government and non-government service providers and advocacy associations. These focus group sessions provided valuable information that helped inform the development of the protocol.

TRANSITION PLANNING PROTOCOL FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Transition Planning Protocol is to provide youth with disabilities and their families with a transition planning process that is proactive and results in a detailed,

⁴ Flexer, Robert W; Baer, Robert; McMahan, Rachel. *Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities*. Kent State Center for Innovation in Transition and Employment.

individualized transition plan intended to help youth achieve their dreams, goals and aspirations. The Transition Planning Protocol is also intended to clarify the transition planning process for all relevant government ministries and government-funded agencies and to identify potential roles of the respective ministries and government-funded agencies.

SCOPE

The Transition Planning Protocol covers the following:

Disability	Youth with disabilities encompasses those youth with impairments that limit their ability to participate in their daily activities at home, in school, at work and in their communities. This may include youth who have cognitive, communicative, sensory, social/emotional/behavioural, physical/motor, self-help (adaptive) and/or exceptional health needs ⁵ and may include a wide range of functional abilities.
Age Group	The protocol addresses transition planning for youth with disabilities from 13 to 25 years of age.
Identification	The protocol was designed for use with youth with disabilities, in particular those who are receiving supports and services from one or more government ministries, regional programs, government-funded agencies or school authorities.
Culturally Sensitive	The protocol includes the needs of Aboriginal, other ethnic groups and immigrants to access to services that are culturally appropriate.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Transition Planning Protocol are to:

- Create a common understanding among key ministries, government-funded agencies and service providers in terms of process and procedures for transition for youth with disabilities.
- Promote improved coordination among existing government programs and services for children, youth and adults with disabilities.
- Contribute to a more seamless transition for youth with disabilities from youth to adult services and transition to adulthood in general.
- Contribute toward timely, coordinated and effective transitioning to adulthood for youth with disabilities.
- Address all areas of transition including but not limited to services, education, employment programs, living arrangements, relationships and community inclusion.

⁵Alberta Children and Youth Initiative Partners (2003). *Policy Framework for Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and their Families*. [<http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi/pdf/User-Friendly%20Policy%20Framework.pdf>].

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles shall be used to guide the overall transition process:

- The youth and their family, who are going through transition, are the key players in the transition process.
- The planning process focuses on the youth within their family and natural support network.
- The planning process focuses on the strengths and abilities of the youth.
- Youth with disabilities may access supports that enable them to fully participate in and contribute to the community (community inclusion).
- Youth with disabilities have choices in terms of the kinds of transition supports they receive and how and where they are provided.
- Changes in the needs of the youth based on alterations of their natural support network are considered on an ongoing basis.

PHILOSOPHY

The Transition Planning Protocol is based on the belief that planning for successful transitions will result in improved outcomes and experiences for young people.

Essential components for supporting successful transitions in children and youth include:

Key Elements	Best Practices
Ensure basic needs are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address safety and security, physical and emotional needs. ▪ Foster self-esteem and a healthy identity by meeting needs on an individual basis.
Maintain and encourage positive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate continuity within relationships that will provide consistency during change. ▪ Create opportunities to foster positive peer relationships; for example, working in groups, positive recreation and sportsmanship.
Provide support and resources to youth in their new environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify a mentor or role model in the new environment. This should be an adult that the youth can access for questions and support. ▪ Be aware of current resources in order to ensure support is in place for a transition. Be diligent and flexible in discovering and accessing resources.
Modify or adapt routines, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pay special attention to routines and environment; modify routines or environment to meet individual needs, especially for youth with disabilities.

Key Elements	Best Practices
Provide choices and involve youth in the transition process to promote and support self-advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help the youth identify hopes, wishes, dreams, ambitions, and plans to reach these goals. ▪ Provide choices and involve the youth before, during and following the transition. ▪ Allow for meaningful participation in organizing, planning and goal setting. This helps create responsibility in youth for their actions. ▪ Increase the youth’s capacity to problem solve and promote self-advocacy. Tools to support self-advocacy include fostering self-awareness in youth, helping them understand their personal needs and helping them identify sources of support such as family or peer support. ▪ Assess and re-assess a youth’s skills and strengths and build on his or her positive attributes.
Support the need for increased independence and help youth to create their own identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect the youth’s desire for increased independence and find a balance between independence and adult guidance. ▪ Target services by being culturally aware, as culture may be a key component of self-identity. For example, ensure that supports and services for Aboriginal youth are consistent with their culture.
Ensure that all transition plans are coordinated, integrated and information is shared with parents and across sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involve parents and other adults in a youth’s life through networking, cooperation and coordination. ▪ Help parent and youth understand the importance of sharing information from one program to another to help enhance services and ensure a more seamless transition. ▪ Be proactive in facilitating the coordination of services across existing programs and services to prevent service gaps in the youth’s transition process. ▪ Provide relevant information to parents and caregivers. This may include information on health, school/community resources.
Prepare for the transition and ensure consistency within and between environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan early and establish timelines for action. ▪ Facilitate the youth’s contact with the new environment, program or service. ▪ Promote consistency and realistic expectations from one environment to another. ▪ Ensure these expectations include those that youth have for themselves, and those of their parents and other supportive adults.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

A collaborative, multi-faceted and coordinated transition process is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Transition is recognized as a developmental process that all individuals encounter.
- Families and youth are aware of transition services and opportunities.
- A plan is in place that addresses areas of employment, post-secondary education, health care services, independent living and/or community living.
- Transition from youth to adult services occurs with ease.
- A plan is in place that addresses opportunities for full community participation and optimal quality of life.
- Individuals, families, provincial ministries/departments, government programs/services, government-funded agencies and service providers work together to proactively coordinate services and ensure smooth transitions across various services and systems.

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY AND SHARING INFORMATION

Focusing on the youth's transition to adulthood and their dreams and goals requires a coordinated approach across all groups involved in the lives of youth, requiring them to work collaboratively and share information.

Working Collaboratively

Working together requires shared responsibility across government departments, programs and services as well as providers of government-funded services. While there is no single ministry or program mandated to address transition planning, there is an expectation, through various legislation and government policies, that transition planning occur to support youth. The ACYI partnering ministries have also made a commitment to collaborative and coordinated transition planning for youth who require supports and services that cross multiple sectors.

Sharing Information

In 2003, information sharing guidelines were developed by the Government of Alberta to provide a framework for the sharing of information across sectors.

“There is an increasing need for services to be delivered in a collaborative and integrated manner. At the same time, there is a perception of a number of barriers that exist within the current privacy legislation: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) and Health Information Act (HIA). FOIP and HIA, however, are enabling pieces of legislation, which allow for the sharing of information across sectors. The FOIP Amendment Act in 1999 specifically recognized the need for information sharing within collaborative and integrated service delivery.” (Information Sharing Guideline, April 2003)

Specific ideas about sharing information including a suggested consent form are presented in the protocol that follows. The Information and Privacy Office of Employment, Immigration and Industry will offer province-wide training on information sharing and working collaboratively to staff in human services.

Transition Expectations

It is expected that the transition process will:

- Begin early (13-16 years of age);
- Involve and support youth and their families as key players;
- View the youth as a member of the community rather than a client of a particular service;
- Be flexible in allowing youth and families to express wishes, dreams and new opportunities;
- Be a natural and seamless progression from youth to adulthood; and
- Be a collaborative responsibility of youth/family, the key ministries and the government programs available to youth and adults with disabilities, government-funded agencies, service providers and relevant community partners.

THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

The Transition Planning Process involves the following steps:

- Step 1 Identify youth who will be transitioning
- Step 2 Identify Transition Planning Team
- Step 3 Gather information for the Plan
- Step 4 Develop the Plan
- Step 5 Implement the Plan
- Step 6 Review and update the Plan

Step 1: Identify Youth who will be Transitioning

Youth with disabilities who may be covered by the protocol are those youth between the ages of 13 to 25 years of age with impairments that limit their ability to participate in their daily activities at home, in school, at work and in their communities. This may include youth who have cognitive, communicative, sensory, social/emotional/behavioural, physical/motor, self-help (adaptive) and/or exceptional health needs. A broad definition of disability will allow youth to participate regardless of their ability to meet admission criteria for various services and programs.

As the transition process starts early, education providers play a key role in identifying youth for transition. It is important that youth who may be outside the education system are included and offered the option of developing a transition plan. As such, other groups who can help to

identify youth and provide a coordination role are foster parents, teachers, social workers, child intervention caseworkers, mental health therapists, health care providers and other service providers. Parents and youth can also self identify the need for development of a transition plan. Youth and parents have an option to opt out of the planning process if they chose. (Despite some suggestions that an individual or a program area should be identified to begin this process, because of the complexity of the needs and the multiplicity of services involved, it was determined that this would not be possible to encompass all youth with disabilities.)

The person(s) who identify the youth and the need to develop a transition plan take a lead role in assisting with Step 2, setting up the Transition Planning Team. It is expected that this individual will ensure that a cross-sector approach is established for the process and that representatives from all key sectors as well other relevant individuals are considered for inclusion in the process.

It is also expected that members from all key sectors who are currently involved with the youth will be committed to the transition planning process. In addition, it is expected that members from key sectors who may become involved with the youth after they turn 18 will be receptive to involvement with the youth prior to the age of 18 to assess for eligibility for programming or to help determine availability of other options as necessary.

Step 2: Identify Transition Planning Team

The Team

The transition planning team will be composed of individuals who play a role in the youth's life or who may play a role when the youth becomes an adult. The team will include the youth and their parent(s)/guardian(s) and a variety of others depending on the particular circumstances of the youth. This will include relevant family, organizations, service providers and Ministry staff and may include, for example:

- Friends and other members of the youth's informal network;
- Elders;
- School personnel and tutors;
- Cultural groups;
- Social workers (e.g., Intervention, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD), mental health therapists, probation officers and other service providers;
- Community members (church, neighbours, coaches, and mentors etc.);
- Community-based service providers;
- Service agency representatives;
- Post-secondary educators;
- Business and vocational providers;
- Other people who can contribute to the plan;
- Representatives of adult services; and/or
- Experts in specialized assessment/evaluation.

From the group of participants an individual will be selected as the Facilitator/ Navigator/ Coordinator. The youth or a family member may choose to take on this role. This person will coordinate the transition planning process.

Roles

Anticipated roles of the various members of the transition planning team are outlined here. Members of the team are expected to contribute to the development of the plan. In addition, it is expected that team members will participate in updating the plan as required.

Participants	Expectations
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead the process in terms of identifying their dreams, goals and desires ▪ Assume responsibility for working toward identified goals ▪ Act as facilitator/coordinator if they choose
Parents and Other Family Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate on behalf of the youth ▪ Prepare youth for the transition planning process ▪ Assist the youth in identifying dreams, goals and desires ▪ Gather and/or provide information as required ▪ Support the youth in working toward identified goals ▪ Act as facilitator/coordinator if able and chosen by the planning team
Friends and Informal Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the youth in identifying dreams, goals and desires ▪ Support the youth in working toward identified goals ▪ Advocate on behalf of the youth ▪ Act as facilitator/coordinator if able and chosen by the planning team
Ministry Staff, Service Providers and Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather and/or provide information as required ▪ Facilitate cross-sector involvement in planning ▪ Be proactively involved in coordinating service-to-service transitions ▪ Support the youth in working toward identified goals ▪ Work collaboratively to coordinate services in a proactive manner ▪ Act as facilitator/coordinator if able and chosen by the planning team
Other Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate on behalf of the youth ▪ Support the youth in identifying dreams, goals and desires ▪ Gather and/or provide information as required ▪ Provide cultural and other supports as appropriate ▪ Support the youth in working toward identified goals

- Facilitators/
Navigators/
Coordinators**
- Coordinate and schedule transition planning meetings
 - Facilitate or manage the meetings
 - Prepare and keep paperwork organized
 - Obtain information to answer any queries related to possible goals
 - Resolve conflicts
 - Monitor progress on the development and updating of the plan
 - Obtain commitment of team members to assigned tasks
-

Step 3: Gather Information for the Plan

In gathering the information to be used in the plan, it is important to build on existing information and updating rather than recreating all information for the plan. This will require that participants share information (see page 12 of this document).

To facilitate information gathering, the planning team may choose to use transition planning tools such as PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) or MAPS (Making Action Plans), both of which are available through www.inclusion.com. Reader friendly materials will be made available (variety including print, web-based, presentation) to facilitate the planning process.

Many students with disabilities may have a school-based Individualized Program Plan which could act as a foundation document for the transition plan.

Step 4: Develop the Plan

The plan will be individualized, future oriented and developed in the language of choice of the youth and his or her family where possible. The plan will focus on the abilities and strengths of the youth and how these can contribute to their dreams, goals and desires. The details of what could be included in the plan are outlined in the next section of this document.

The plan will include assignment of responsibility of tasks to members of the planning team as decided by the team. The plan will be reviewed using the question: “*will the specifics of the plan move the youth toward his/her desired dreams and goals?*” Adjustments will be made as required to ensure that this criterion has been met.

As a collaborative process is encouraged for development of the plan it is expected that any disagreements regarding goals will be resolved as part of the process. In cases where disagreements cannot be resolved the transition planning team may require assistance. If the transition team agrees that it has been unable to develop an appropriate transition plan and the youth fits the criteria for complex needs, a request for a review by the Children and Youth with Complex Needs Regional Integrated Case Management Team may be considered.

Step 5: Implement the Plan

Once the plan is developed, the youth will be supported in implementing the plan. As part of the assignment of responsibility of tasks, the team will determine how the various members will contribute to the implementation process. As well, during the development of the plan other individuals may be identified as active participants in the youth's transition plan. These individuals will be engaged in the implementation of the plan as required.

Step 6: Review and Update the Plan

The youth and the transition planning team will determine a schedule for review and update of the plan. The group will reconvene as scheduled, review the plan and make any suggested adjustments. Creativity and flexibility in reviewing and making adjustments to the plan on an ongoing basis is encouraged. New information, ideas and progress by the youth will be considered in reviewing the plan and making adjustments. It is expected that the plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, at minimum.

THE TRANSITION PLAN

The youth and family in collaboration with the transition planning team that is established for the youth develop the transition plan. The areas included in the plan may vary significantly for each individual youth depending on his or her situation; however it is expected that some element of each area will be developed as part of the plan.

With the exception of the youth's identifying information, the following five questions can be considered⁶ for each area identified for the plan:

1. What are the youth's goals?
2. What skills or behaviours does the youth need to learn to reach his/her goals?
3. What local programs, services and supports are available to support these goals?
4. What responsibilities must the youth, school, adult services, cultural and community agencies and youth's family assume in order for the youth to reach her/his goals?
5. What are the gaps or barriers within current programs, services and support that must be addressed?

Areas	Elements to be considered
Youth's Identifying Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demographics including current address, parent/guardian information, contact information ▪ History ▪ Transition team members and contact information ▪ Existing supports and services
Youth's Dreams, Goals and Ambitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengths, abilities and interests ▪ Short and long-term goals ▪ Preferences ▪ Opportunities ▪ Obstacles and barriers and possible solutions to barriers
Connections and Support Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friends and acquaintances ▪ Family including extended family ▪ Neighbours ▪ Advocates

⁶ Wehman, P. (Ed.). (2001). *Life Beyond the Classroom: Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Areas	Elements to be considered
Cultural Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific needs and desires ▪ Activities and groups ▪ Other considerations
Education, Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post-secondary education or training options ▪ Need for educational supports ▪ Need for financial support for education/training
Employment or Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work experiences ▪ Employment interests ▪ Employable skills ▪ Need for supportive employment ▪ Volunteer experiences, opportunities and interests
Guardianship, Trusteeship and Personal Directives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guardianship status: partial, full or independent ▪ Trustee status: formal, informal or independent ▪ Personal directive in place ▪ Self-advocacy ▪ Wills/trusts ▪ Other legal considerations
Health Status and Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technological and adaptive equipment ▪ Health supports, equipment and supplies to maintain health ▪ Psychosocial and cognitive development supports ▪ Medical services and resources

Areas	Elements to be considered
Income and Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Banking ▪ Long-term financial plan ▪ Life insurance ▪ Income sources ▪ Funding currently available or expected to be available ▪ Supports required to manage finances
Living Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether to continue with current living arrangement ▪ Examination of types of housing ▪ Semi-independent or independent living ▪ Short-term and long-term plan for housing ▪ Rent or own
Personal Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Household management including meal preparation ▪ Hygiene/personal care ▪ Sexuality and birth control ▪ Social skills ▪ Money management
Service Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services and supports currently used, needed and anticipated for adulthood ▪ Services currently accessed that the youth will no longer be eligible for as an adult ▪ Eligibility for adult services ▪ Awareness of information requirements and length of process involved in some areas of transition into adult services ▪ Resources
Social, Recreational and Spiritual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hobbies and interests ▪ Pets ▪ Sports and fitness activities ▪ Religious and other spiritual groups ▪ Volunteer activities and interests
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independent (bus, walk, cycle, etc;) ▪ Assisted (parents or family) ▪ Specialized accessible transport ▪ Equipment needs



APPENDIX 1

POLICIES AND SERVICES SUPPORTING TRANSITION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Government Policies

Alberta Disability Strategy (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed in 2002 by the Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The strategy stipulates that people with disabilities should have the supports they need to participate in all aspects of Alberta society.
Alberta’s Commission on Learning (October 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commission recommended that the department “expand opportunities for students with special needs to continue on to post-secondary education or into the work force.”
Interpretive Bulletin “Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Institutions” (released October 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission developed the Bulletin to provide guidelines to institutions aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access to post-secondary education.
Policy Framework for Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and their Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy framework was designed to articulate government’s approach regarding provision of services and supports to families with children and youth with special and complex needs. The Framework identifies the increased support needed on a cross-ministry level. Ministries are working together with regional authorities, boards, contract agencies and the community to provide an easily identifiable, integrated response to children and youth with complex needs. Under Policy Direction 1 of the Framework, formalization of an integrated case management system of supports has been implemented for children and youth with complex needs so that various ministry partners, regional authorities and service providers involved in a youth’s life, work together to address the youth’s and family’s needs. Regional integrated case management teams, consisting of child and family services authorities, regional health authorities, school authorities and other regional authorities and community organizations as required, have formed and formalized the processes of early identification, assessment, planning and service delivery, monitoring and evaluation. These regional teams are available to review and support a youth’s situation when the family and local cross-sector service team are unable to develop an adequate integrated service plan for youth who require significant extraordinary care due to the severity of their impairments.
<i>Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and Transition to Independence Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Act and related policy require child intervention staff to ensure that all youth who are 16 and older have a Transition to Independence Plan. The regulated plan addresses needs such as educational, career and life skill development. As well, the plan must address the youth’s living arrangements and identify family and community connections.

<i>Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Act</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The importance of proactive transition planning for youth prior to their turning 18 years old is acknowledged within the FSCD legislation as well as FSCD program policy. The Act and related policy support the commencement of Transition Planning when the child is 16, including assisting families with information, referral and coordination of support and services.
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Government Services

Alberta Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alberta Education allocates funding to cover Program Unit Funding for children with severe special needs in kindergarten, Severe Disabilities Funding for students in grades one through 12, and Mild and Moderate funding. ▪ The Student Health Initiative provides inter-ministerial funding to Student Health Partnerships to improve access to and enhance the provision of integrated health and related support services for school aged children with special health needs, so that they can participate fully in education programs to attain their potential and be successful. ▪ www.education.gov.ab.ca/
Advanced Education and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced Education and Technology provides grants, scholarships and student loan funding to eligible students with permanent disabilities. ▪ Supports seven institutions across the province delivering the Transitional Vocational Program. The program assists students with mild developmental disabilities gain the vocational and social skills necessary to make a successful transition from school age programs to adult working life. Students receive 40 weeks of employment training, independent living skills, work placement and graduate follow-up to enable them to bridge towards living and working in the community. ▪ www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/
Employment, Immigration and Industry's Disability Related Employment Support (DRES) Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DRES provides disability-related supports to adult Albertans who face barriers caused by a disability and who need help in order to enter or maintain employment. DRES funds are provided directly to students or to institutions that make purchases on behalf of the student. Eighty-five percent of the DRES program budget currently supports students attending post-secondary institutions. ▪ www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/dres/
Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PDD is the government body responsible for providing supports and services that may be needed by an individual with a developmental disability when they turn 18. www.pdd.org ▪ The PDD Central Alberta Community Board has developed a Transitional Planning

	<p>Package aimed at assisting parents to plan for the transition from child to adult services, called A Parent's Guide to Transition Planning – PDD Central Alberta Community Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PDD Regions 1 and 2 offer a PDD Transitional Service Binder / Presentation Folder, which is available to the youth and their family when transitioning to adult services. ▪ PDD also offers a number of region-specific information brochures and guidelines for youth transitioning to adult services. ▪ Funded through PDD, Inclusive Post-Secondary Education facilitates the full inclusion of adults with developmental disabilities into regular college and university programs and activities. This opportunity is currently offered at 14 different post-secondary institutions across Alberta. Inclusive Post-Secondary Education began in Alberta in 1987 and has gained a reputation nationally and internationally as a model program for helping individuals with developmental disabilities to participate in college and university. ▪ For information on Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Programs available in your area, contact regional PDD staff for more information at www.pdd.org/communityboards/
Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administered through Alberta Children's Services, the FSCD program provides supports and services to children with disabilities and their families. ▪ Assists families by providing information about various programs, services, community supports as well as resources and helps families to coordinate a range of services to meet their needs. ▪ www.child.gov.ab.ca
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administered by Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, the AISH program provides financial and health benefits for adult Albertans with a permanent disability that severely impairs their ability to earn a living. ▪ The level of benefits depends on income and assets. The maximum living allowance currently is \$1000 per month and additional benefits (personal income support benefits) may be provided to meet clients' special needs. ▪ Personal income support benefits include funding for continuous needs such as costs associated with raising children, special diets and service animals and one-time needs such as children's school supplies, exceptional travel and emergencies. ▪ www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/aish
Alberta Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides support to individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. Regional health authorities provide home care, public health, rehabilitation and mental health services as well as assisted living options. ▪ Physician services are provided through the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan and supplementary health benefit coverage is available through Alberta Blue Cross. ▪ www.health.gov.ab.ca
Alberta Seniors and Community Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offers a range of programs and services to support individuals with disabilities. These include AISH, Alberta Aids to Daily Living, public guardianship, benefits to seniors, special needs housing, community supports and services for people with disabilities, and the PDD (Persons with Developmental Disabilities) program. ▪ www.seniors.gov.ab.ca
Office of the Public Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protects the financial interests of vulnerable Albertans by administering the estates of dependent adults, deceased persons and minors when there is no one else to act. ▪ www.justice.gov.ab.ca/public_trustee

AISH Benefits Administration Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administered through the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, under the Office of the Public Trustee, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Benefits Administration Program works to assist and support AISH recipients with nominal assets to manage their AISH benefits where they have no one else willing or able to perform this role. ▪ www.justice.gov.ab.ca/dependent_adults/aish.aspx
Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AADL provides financial assistance to people who have a chronic disability or illness, and those who are terminally ill, to gain access to authorized basic medical equipment and supplies so they can function more independently in a home or home-like setting. ▪ www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/AADL/

Provincial Information Contact Numbers and Websites

Child Disability Resource Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A provincial toll-free phone line, the Child Disability Resource Link provides callers with information about a wide range of provincial and community supports, services and resources for children with disabilities and their families. ▪ Provides information about government programs, community supports, disability associations, advocacy, and other disability resources. ▪ Telephone operators are available weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m by calling 1-866-346-4661.
Service Alberta's On-line Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administered through Government Services, Service Alberta provides information on Government of Alberta services for persons with disabilities. ▪ www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/cps/rde/xchg/SID-3828BF9B-31F976D9/sa/hs.xsl/651.html

APPENDIX 2

PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Working Group undertook a number of key steps in the process to develop a transition planning protocol including:

- Literature Review
- Alberta Survey of Transition Activities
- Cross-Canada Survey
- Preparation of a Discussion Paper
- Focus Groups in Edmonton, Calgary, and Slave Lake
- Preparation of Draft Protocol

The focus groups with key stakeholders were critical to the development process. Input from parents, youth and services providers on transition planning for youth with disabilities was vital. This group played a key role in reviewing the draft Transition Planning Protocol.

Following this review, the Transition Planning Protocol was presented to the two co-lead Deputy Ministers for approval and, following that, will be implemented.

APPENDIX 3

LITERATURE AND JURISDICTIONAL REVIEW

Alberta Survey of Transition Activities

Beginning in June 2005, the working group undertook an Alberta-wide survey to gather information on existing transition planning supports throughout the regions. Members of the working group were aware that various regions were utilizing agreements or protocols in one form or another and believed strongly that these should be recognized. Representatives from regional health authorities (including mental health), Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD), Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs), school authorities, and others were asked to complete the survey. The survey was distributed by e-mail. Each response was summarized, outlining the existing transition planning resources being employed by the responder's organization, as well as current initiatives being developed, and any informal trends and networks that they regularly draw upon. Although a strong response was received, the survey results compiled are not exhaustive, and should not be considered a complete listing of transition planning initiatives and resources in Alberta.

Survey respondents identified the following regional initiatives that are targeted toward assisting youth with disabilities to transition successfully into adulthood:

Region 3 (Calgary and Area) has formal protocols between PDD and the CFSA that require CFSA staff, both child intervention caseworkers and FSCD staff, to make referrals for youth with special needs, often up to two years prior to the youth turning 18. These early referrals have resulted in ensuring all appropriate information is shared and in determining eligibility for adult services in a timely manner.

Region 4 (Red Deer and Area) has formal protocols between PDD and the CFSA with similar processes and requirements as Region 3.

Region 6 (Edmonton and Area), Capital Health, Community Care, Rehabilitation and Mental Health Division, as well as PDD, have an established protocol to assist in meeting the needs of individuals who require multi-agency involvement. This Protocol has been applied only to youth over the ages of 18 to date.

All regions are in the process of developing an integrated case management process for adolescents with special and complex needs, as part of the *ACYI Policy Framework for Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and Their Families* initiative.

Region 3 reported an Aboriginal-specific initiative. This region has a formal tele-health discharge planning Protocol with some Treaty 7 First Nations (Piikani and Kainai). It is also working to extend this Protocol to all Treaty 7 Nations (overall, there appear to be few Aboriginal-specific transition protocols and programs across the province).

Several respondents from various school authorities identified the Individualized Program Plan (IPP) document for students with special needs as a key transition-planning tool. While not part

of a formal protocol, the IPP process is often done in conjunction with staff from other service sectors.

Survey respondents from various regions indicated there are several informal partnerships that exist between service professionals from CFSA's, regional health authorities (including mental health), PDD, and school authorities. Often, transition planning is undertaken through these informal pathways and exchanges of information. Many survey respondents from the regions stated that transition planning was identified by their organization as a priority area for improvement.

The survey conducted by the working group was helpful in identifying some formal and informal transition planning processes among government and government-funded service providers. Again, however, the survey results should not be considered as representative of all the transition planning protocols, programs or resources in the province.

Cross-Canada Survey

A number of provinces across Canada have developed programs and protocols to assist youth with disabilities in their province to transition successfully to adulthood. The working group conducted a cross-Canada survey to gather information related to existing transition planning resources for youth with disabilities. British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island returned copies of the survey, providing useful information on transition planning initiatives in their respective provinces.

In collaboration with other ministries, British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development has developed the *Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs: A Community Support Guide*. The Inter-Ministry Committee on Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs was also created as government's comprehensive and proactive response to effective transition planning for youth with disabilities.

The Government of Manitoba currently follows a transition planning Protocol that was released in 1989, and updated in 1999. The *Manitoba Transition Planning Process Support Guidelines for Students with Special Needs Reaching Age 16* mandates that staff in the ministries of Family Services and Housing, Health and Education, as well as Citizenship and Youth undertake collaborative planning for youth with disabilities, aged 16 years and older, who require further supports following their secondary education.

Nova Scotia, similar to Manitoba, has assembled the Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC), made up of senior government officials from departments responsible for services for children and youth. Through the CAYAC, a Provincial Transition Committee has been assembled to address transition-related issues. A document, *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years Through to Adult Life*, has been created to mandate transition planning in Nova Scotia.

Prince Edward Island has a *Plan for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder* and their transitions throughout the school system into post-secondary education. This strategy was created in collaboration with relevant government ministries.

Other provincial governments across the country are actively involved in assisting transition planning for their youth with disabilities. For example, the Special Education Unit of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Learning has developed *Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities*, and the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Education has developed *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide*.

Best Practice/Literature Review

- An Ontario research paper:⁷ outlines a number of critical steps in preparing a transition plan. Involve youth with disabilities and their families in the planning and delivery of transition services.
- Shift the focus of service from therapy to supports, including information, advocacy and education, peer support and sharing knowledge.
- Provide individualized services in the local community.
- Start early to help a young person develop the skills and supports needed to live a full life.
- Improve co-ordination and communication.
- Share service providers' knowledge and expertise to guide and support the person in transition.

Research findings generally are consistent with the research findings of the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development⁸, that there are six best practice characteristics associated with transition planning for youth with disabilities. These are:

1. Person-centred Planning
2. Youth Involvement
3. Family Involvement
4. Community Involvement
5. Identification and Use of a Transition Coordinator
6. Inter-agency Collaboration.

Person-centered planning is viewed as particularly important. The British Columbia literature identifies six important steps to the person-centered transition planning approach:

⁷ Stewart, Debra A.; Law, Marcy C.; Rosenbaum, Peter and Willms, Dennis G. (2001). A Qualitative Study of the Transition to Adulthood for Youth with Physical Disabilities. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Paediatrics*, 21(4) 3 – 21.

⁸ British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development (2001). "Transition Planning: Transition to Adulthood". [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/adulthood.htm].

1. Build a transition planning team, including those who can help identify the youth's goals, needs and support requirements. These people may include parents, extended family, teachers, social workers, service providers and friends.
2. Gather information as a team, and ensure that the youth's goals, strengths and needs are paramount.
3. Develop a transition plan as a team, ensuring that all tasks are documented and assigned to team members. The planning can also include service providers that need to be involved.
4. Complete the transition tasks assigned to members of the team.
5. Monitor the transition plan and update the plan if needed.
6. Arrange a final meeting between the youth and the transition team to finalize the plan and ensure that all transition plan tasks are completed.

Other effective practices in transition planning for youth with disabilities, as documented by Flexer⁹, include the following:

Encourage Self-Determination	This includes the elements of self-awareness, decision-making, self-advocacy, as well as identifying ones goals and acting upon them. Youth must understand their needs in relation to their disability, as well as act upon their rights.
Keep Family Involved	Family members should establish definite expectations for youth with disabilities and their support needs to be ongoing.
Emphasize Ecological Approaches	The transition planning team must ensure consistency across all environments in which the youth lives, including school, community, home life, recreational activities, and employment, by being aware of the youth's community, family and culture.
Plan Back to Front	Transition planning focus is placed on the youth's future, working backward to ensure that his/her future goals are reflected in current transition planning.
Coordinate Services	Service coordination provides a universal way for service providers to work together to ensure consistency across policies, through consistent communication, for a more coordinated and seamless transition.
Involve Community	Research has demonstrated that youth with disabilities tend to have more positive transition outcomes due to extensive community involvement. Community involvement and employment opportunities in the community help to foster social development, workplace skills and independent living skills.

⁹ Flexer, Robert W.; Baer, Robert; McMahan, Rachel. "Chapter 3: Transition Models and Promising Practices". *Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities*. Kent State Center for Innovation in Transition and Employment.

Access & Utilize Accommodation Technologies & Related Services	Accommodation technologies and services, including computers, electronic organizers, note-taking technologies, writing assistance, calculators, electronic tutorials and instructional software, aid youth in their reception and communication in a school or work environment. Youth should be provided with technology that meets their needs and keeps their future goals in mind.
Provide Post-Secondary Education Supports	Options should be explored early, and essential skills (like study skills) should be fostered in youth with disabilities to prepare them for the experience. Youth should be taught how to ask for the supports they require in order to complete post-secondary education successfully.
Work for Systems Change	Local systems changes, including cross-system initiatives and new protocols, tend to be driven by teams of transition planners.

The effective practices listed above apply to most transitions facing youth with disabilities. More specific to the transition out of high school, research offers a number of suggestions to help make this transition as smooth as possible, including:

1. Put in place a number of practical work situations where employment learning opportunities and community participation are possible¹⁰.
2. Help youth develop a variety of skills that would be relevant in different employment situations. Youth require a variety of generic skills to keep up with the ever-changing job market.
3. Ensure youth have access to information, counselling and opportunities for post-secondary education and employment. Present them with a variety of options in order to find one that suits their needs.
4. Ensure the continuation of skills training and special education opportunities.

Youth with disabilities require formalized and inclusive processes to support their successful transitions.

¹⁰ Makarchuk, K. (2003). *Overview of the Key Issues Facing Youth in Transition*. The Calgary Children's Initiative, The United Way of Calgary.

