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Infusing a Person Centered Approach  
Into Transition Planning For Students  
with Developmental Disabilities

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For Students with Developmental Disabilities**

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Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability is currently funded by the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council for a three year training and technical assistance grant project: Transition Technical Assistance and Support Project (T-TASP). T-TASP provides training and support to nine demonstration sites throughout New York State that are integrating person-centered planning into transition planning and services for students with developmental disabilities so that they might become active participants in the shaping and realization of their future as adults. This present document is the first of two white papers that are to be written as a part of this project. These two papers address strategies to promote the integration of a person-centered planning approach into current educational and transition planning for students with disabilities. This present paper is the summary of the first eighteen months of the T-TASP project. We hope that the analyses and recommendations are helpful to advocates, families, educators, human service professionals, and leaders in the New York State education arena in their efforts to improve the transition process from school to adulthood for students with disabilities.

We want to recognize the contributions of staff, students and families associated with the nine demonstration sites that contributed their time and suggestions, and assistance in developing this paper. We also want to recognize the advice and support from the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council and the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). Finally, we want to provide special acknowledgement to the following individuals who played key roles in developing the recommendations herein, as well as developing the general conceptual framework for this paper:

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## **Infusing a Person-Centered Planning Approach into Transition Planning for Students with Developmental Disabilities**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1998, Cornell University's Program on Employment and Disability began working under the sponsorship of the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) to establish the Transition Technical Assistance and Support Program (T-TASP). T-TASP works in cooperation with, and provides support to, nine demonstration projects in New York State, which are using a person-centered transition planning approach to expand and enhance services and supports for transition-aged youth with developmental disabilities in their last two years of school. These sites include public high schools, BOCES, independent living centers, and voluntary community rehabilitation agencies. A list of the demonstration sites is included in the attachment section of this document.

The intent behind T-TASP is a two-fold one:

1. To train and support demonstration sites in the development and implementation of person-centered transition plans that are clearly linked to the federal and state legislation and regulation around IDEA and which increase the likelihood of successful community transition for students from school to adult living.
2. To identify pathways through which demonstration sites may, at the completion of the grant, continue to build on the technical body of knowledge established throughout the duration of the project period so that programs and services continue to support students in the active and meaningful planning of their adult futures.

Each project site received training and support in learning about a number of person-centered planning methods and incorporating these approaches into both the transition planning process and the services and supports they provide to students and their families. While various methods of planning are being used, there is a common philosophy and approach that underlies a person-centered approach. Person-centered planning, at its core, is designed to focus on the individual from the perspective of his or her unique interests, skills, needs, preferences and abilities in order to recognize and acknowledge the individual gifts and capacities that each person might bring to their community. This is accomplished through bringing together the individual and those who the individual knows and trusts to explore hopes and dreams for the future, and develop and implement a plan of action to move toward that desired future. Person-centered planning strives to put the individual "in the driver's seat" of determining the destination and the way to go to get to the desired future. The vision, or goal that one drives toward is not constrained by current service options or available resources (O'Brien & Lovett, 1992), rather it challenges people and communities and systems to help blaze new pathways. When available services and supports aren't adequate, the individual and his or her family, education and agency staff, and other supporters work together to customize or create new options and advocate for resources and supports that come as close as possible to the individual's desired vision of the future (Mount et al, 1991; O'Brien et al, 1997). In essence, person centered planning is both an effective planning tool and an instrument for personal, programmatic and systemic change.

Participants within the T-TASP project community rely upon **four key premises** as the basis for the design and delivery of transition services and supports.

1. In order to abide by, and support the intent behind Federal and State legislation that “transition services...(are)designed within an outcome-oriented process...taking into account the student’s preferences and interests...”8NYCRR200.1(fff); 34 CFR 300.18, an array of *person-centered transition planning approaches must be used when assisting the student identify his or her long term adult outcome.*
2. In accordance with section 614 of IDEA, the formal planning process in New York State **must reflect the student, (and family), interest, skills, needs, preferences and abilities** and *facilitate the involvement and progress of the student in the general curriculum,* (8NYCRR200.1 (fff); 34 CFR 300.18). Traditional formal planning processes include, but are not limited to, the Individual Education Program, (IEP), the Individualized Plan for Employment, (IPE), and the Individualized Service Plan, (ISP).
3. Varied new and traditional resources and supports must be sought, created and Utilized to ensure the involvement and progress of the student in the general curriculum, including the use of “related” services, such as rehabilitation counseling, to support and maximize the student’s opportunity for success and achievement in the general education classroom.
4. All students, regardless of their level or type of ability have *the right to*
  - *a Free Appropriate Public Education;*
  - *determine his or her own future*
  - *live, work and play in the real world*

One of the stated goals of this project is to collect data and experiential information from students, families, and professionals connected with the nine demonstration sites, synthesize this information, and present recommendations to the New York State DDPC on what changes can enhance students with developmental disabilities and their families having the opportunity and support to experience transition planning (and services) that are reflective of their interests, preferences, and future visions.

This is the first of two white papers. The first one is being developed to assist the New York State DDPC in determining currently existing opportunities for and obstacles to the integration of a person-centered approach to transition planning for students with disabilities. The second paper will look at the strategies, methods and approaches that have or have not been successful in facilitating person-centered transition planning.

## **Format**

The first section of the paper contains a brief overview of the national and New York State transition policies and a general summary from the project demonstration sites of what their experiences have been with current transition planning practices and services during the first one and one-half years of the grant. The second section presents a conceptual model of how person-centered planning “fits” into the transition planning process, and identifies the necessary elements that need to be in place to have person centered transition planning be effective. The third section presents the recommendations themselves. The fourth, and final section contains the summary and references.

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## **SECTION I: AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSITION POLICY AND PRACTICE**

### **Transition Policy**

In 1983, the amendment to the Education of the Handicapped Act first addressed transition from school to adulthood, allowing for programs to be developed and disseminated for post-secondary education, delivery of transitional services, and the creation of a national clearinghouse on post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities.

In 1990, the Education of the Handicapped Act was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In changing the name, Congress did not make philosophical changes in public policy but rather, attempted to provide assurances that the educational and related service needs of youth with disabilities would be met as a matter of public policy (Meyen & Skrtic, 1995). This amendment further clarified what transition planning, services and supports are; included rehabilitation counseling, social work services and therapeutic recreation as related services; and established an emphasis on transition services with a focus on independent living and community experiences requiring a statement of needed transition services for students by age 16.

IDEA defined transition services as:

*A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated competitive employment including supported employment, continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include needed activities in the following areas: (1) instruction; (2) community experiences; (3) the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and (4) if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.” PL 101-476, 20 U.S.C., 1401 [a] [19].*

It also stated that if a meeting is called regarding a student for the explicit purpose of considering the need for transition services, the school district shall invite the student and a representative of a participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. If the student does not attend, the district shall take steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered. If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not

do so, the district shall take steps to involve the other agency in the planning of any transition services. It also defined a *participating agency* as a State or local agency, other than the public agency responsible for a student's education that is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student. A participating agency would include Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), Office of Mental Health (OMH), a community rehabilitation program, an adolescent and children's clinic, etc.

Coinciding with the reauthorization of IDEA, the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped to provide transition programs and services for all secondary students with disabilities. In 1993 New York State implemented state law and regulations implementing these transition program and service requirements and extending them to students aged 15 to ensure that transition programs and services be provided to students throughout high school to better prepare them for adult life. A Level I Vocational Evaluation was also required for all students with disabilities aged 12 or older to help families and school staff to begin to focus the student's educational program on preparation for adult life.

In 1997 IDEA enhanced transition planning by extending the age requirement to 14. If the student has been determined to be eligible for special education services, the recommendation shall provide for those students age 14, a statement of the transition service needs under applicable components of the student's IEP that focuses on the student's courses of study, such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program. Students age 16 (it still remains age 15 in NYS) will be provided a statement of the needed transition services including, if applicable, a statement of the responsibilities of the school district and participating agency for the provision of such services and activities that promote movement from school to post-school opportunities, or both, before the student leaves the school setting. The category "related services" was also added to the coordinated set of activities.

In addition, the 1997 amendments to IDEA strengthened the connection between special education programs and services and the general education curriculum by requiring a statement in the individualized education program (IEP) that; 1) identifies the programs and services a student needs in order to be involved and progress in general education curriculum, extra-curricular and non-academic activities; and 2) explains why a student will not participate in the above. The above changes were also incorporated into New York State law and regulations in 1999. (NYCRR 200.4).

New York State has long acknowledged the importance of transition planning for students with disabilities and has incorporated transition components into the IEP. Therefore, in NYS a student's present levels of educational performance identify the individual student's abilities and needs. The long-term adult outcomes of where the student hopes to live, learn and work in the community as an adult are also identified. These two components are then used to determine the educational and nonacademic activities that will incrementally build skills and experiences to

prepare the student to reach those long term adult outcomes for living, learning and earning in the community as an adult.

**Project Findings on Transition Planning and Services**

Federal and State legislation and policies provide a coherent philosophy and framework that requires schools to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities, services and supports that prepare a student to successfully enter adulthood through community living, learning and earning. Transition services and the complementary set of coordinated activities must include opportunities for instruction, community experiences, related services, employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if/when appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation across a broad spectrum of life areas. Critical life areas include:

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Employment                      | 5. Making Friends               |
| 2. Education                       | 6. Financial Independence       |
| 3. Living Arrangements             | 7. Having Fun                   |
| 4. Getting Around in the Community | 8. Sexuality and Self-Esteem    |
|                                    | 9. Personal Health/Medical Care |

Local schools are required to involve students and families in planning, and develop individualized services and supports that reflect the preferences and needs of each student, in the most inclusive setting possible. Despite existing legislation and policies to ensure quality transition planning and services, observations made by demonstration project personnel indicate that **many local practices often do not meet the minimum standards** set forth in state and federal regulations.

Students, family members, school personnel, community members, adult service providers and other members of the project community have shared the following comments and observations about (person-centered) transition planning during face-to-face focus group sessions, telephone interviews and written questionnaires conducted between 1999-2000.

**Strengths and Weaknesses for Person Centered Planning in Transition**

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project has provided opportunity to establish a good relationship with VESID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very few families are involved</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I love the forward focus of this type of transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families/students don't know their rights, responsibilities &amp; options</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an increased opportunity to establish partnerships within the school and within the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are not truly welcomed "inclusion" is a barrier, a stigma</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an increased awareness and interest in person-centered planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process is time consuming</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a strength-based, not deficit based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process starts too late (last 2 years of school)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It presents great opportunity to make important changes in our systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited post-school options are available, sought or created—students are still "transitioning" to segregated environments or services</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have done things that would have never been tried before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is resistance to this from Guidance, resource, teachers, BOCES, SETRC</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process will be gone when the money is gone.</li> </ul>

These observations are similar to many of the issues raised by education and disability advocates in reviews of special education and transition conducted over the past several years both here in New York State and across the country (Anderson & Asselin, 1996; Aspel, Bettis, Test, & Wood, 1998; Baer, Simmons, and Flexer, 1996; National Council on Disability, 1999; West & Revell, 1997; Whitney-Thomas & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996). Concerns most frequently mentioned were:

- The lack of transition planning until the final year or two before graduation (Whitney-Thomas & Hanley Maxwell, 1996);
- The lack of individualized planning resulting in standardized goals for everyone (Benz & Halpern, 1993);
- Limited individualized options and supports available in school and community (Chadsey & Shelden, 1998; Furney, Hasazi, & Destafano, 1997; Wehman & Revell, 1997);
- Significant segregation of students with moderate and severe disabilities, especially at the high school level (New York State Department of Education, 1998);
- The lack of student and parent knowledge about and involvement in transition (Guy, Goldberg, McDonald, & Flom, 1997; Whitney-Thomas & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996);
- The lack of school personnel and community agency knowledge and involvement in transition (Baer, Simmons, and Flexer, 1996; Wehman & Revell, 1997); and
- The isolation of transition planning and services from other special and general education curriculum and services (Halpern, 1999; National Council on Disability, 1999). This isolation occurs both at local and state levels, resulting in transition planning and services not being addressed or included in the planning and implementation of other education reform initiatives.

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## **SECTION II: WHERE PERSON CENTERED PLANNING “FITS” INTO TRANSITION PLANNING AND SERVICES**

The current approach to transition planning starts by bringing the student, family, educators, and other parties together to look at present levels of functioning, to identify current and future desires, identify needs, then develop a plan that addresses the services, supports and placements that will assist the students in further defining and developing their goals. A number of assumptions underlie the success of this planning model. They are:

1. Students and families are knowledgeable about and active participants in the transition process.
2. Students and families have a good idea of what they want and what is possible currently and in the future.

3. Students and families feel comfortable in stating and advocating for desired outcomes and services.
4. Schools and community agencies have the knowledge and ability to inform students and families of the range of options available in school and the community, and support the development of these options.
5. There is a coordinated system in place that can support students and families in navigating through the paperwork, regulations, and requirements of the education and human service systems.

The reality for many students, families, schools, and community agencies involved in transition is inconsistent with the above assumptions. Many students and families don't know what they want or what is possible, especially when the student has a severe disability. Students and families often don't feel capable, confident, or supported to speak up for what they want and need, especially in the more formal settings of the annual review. School and agency personnel may not always know what is available, or possible. The recent changes in the New York State requirements for learning standards has added another wrinkle of uncertainty and confusion to the mix. Navigating through a confusing and fragmented system is daunting even for the most experienced professional. Finally, few systems have built a plan to continue to support person-centered transition planning beyond the life of the grant.

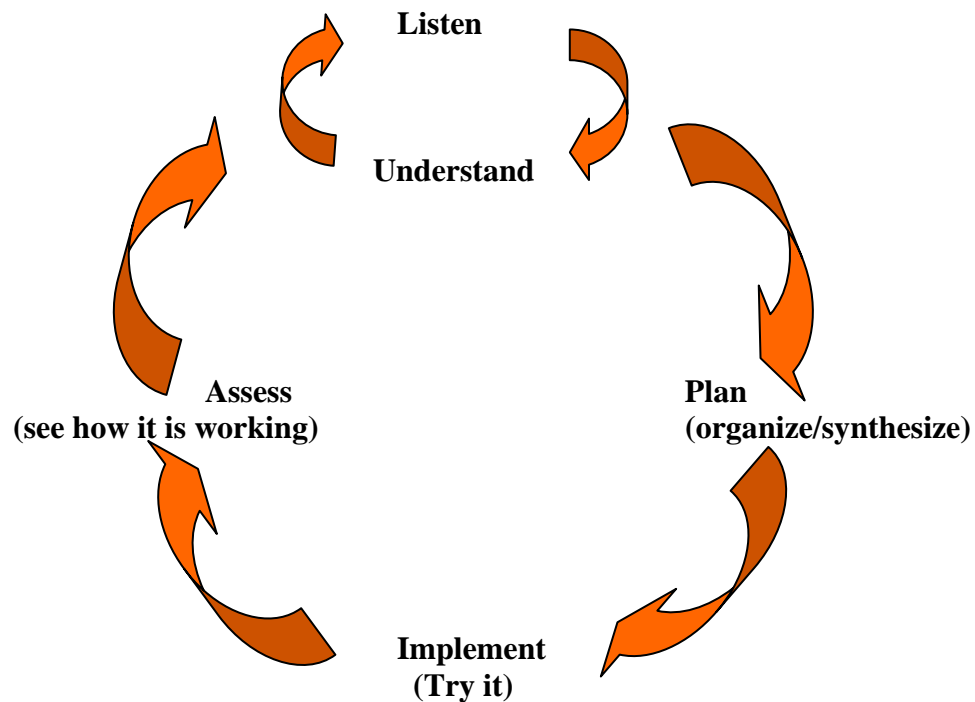
Beth Mount (1999), one of the leaders in the development of person-centered planning, has found that five elements are key to the success and continuation of person-centered planning. Each element by itself, although positive in nature, is not enough to sustain person-centered work over time. These five elements are:

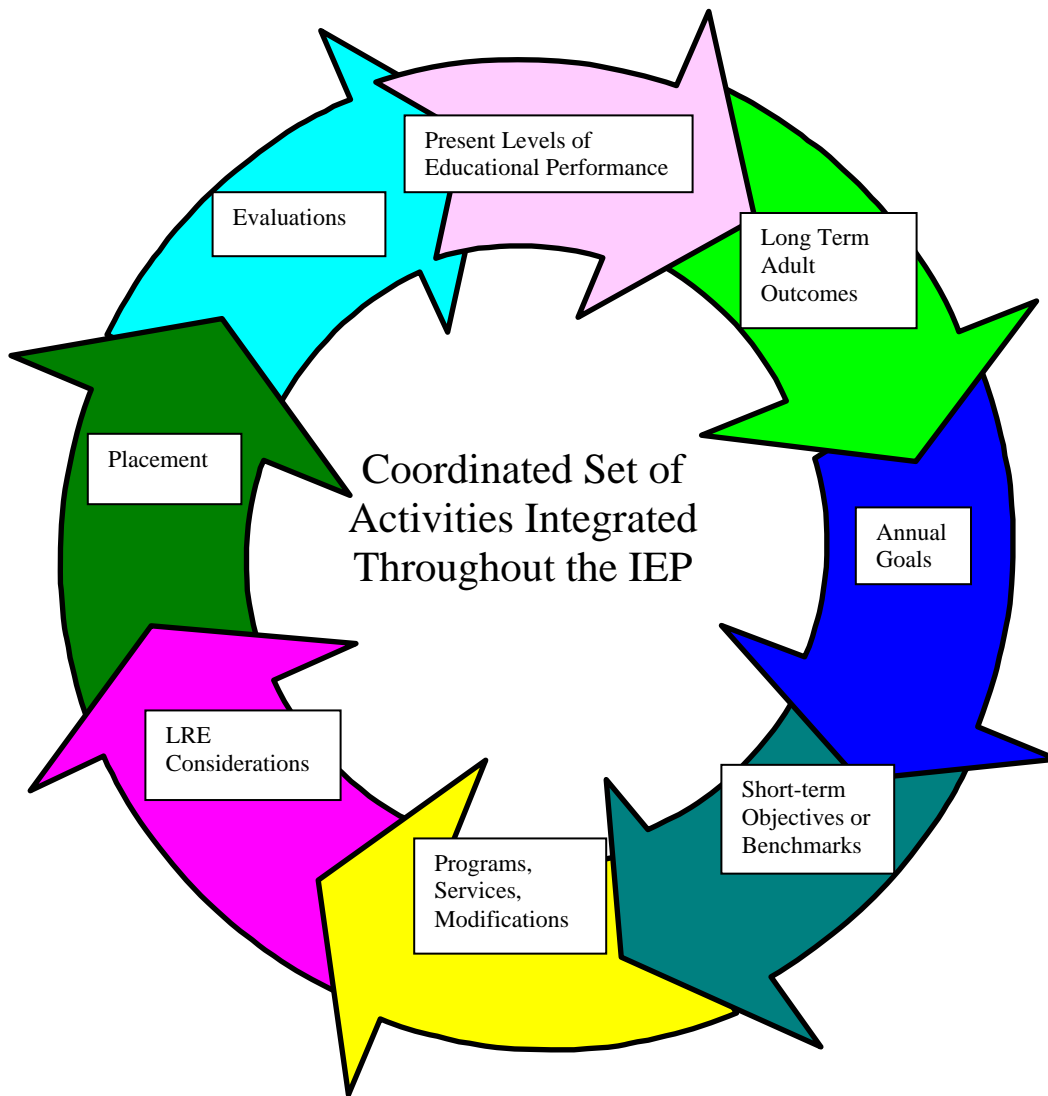
1. **Person-centered planning processes** are learned and used as a matter of course. The focus is on valuing a person's unique gifts, abilities and contributions.
2. **Community building** becomes an intentional action, part of the core work, at the personal, local and global community levels.
3. **Self-determination** is honored and supported.
4. **Flexible use of financial and other resources** is managed to meet the needs of the individual. Existing resources are used creatively and with innovation. New resources are sought or created.
5. **Organizational change**, including the desire and willingness for change, is operant.

There is a great deal of similarity between transition planning and person-centered planning. Drawn from Michael Smull, an eminent leader in the field of person-centered work is the concept of the "learning wheel,"(Smull, 1999). Every experience the person has allows another opportunity to learn about the person's interests, skills, needs, abilities and preferences, (language that is embedded in transition planning protocol), and thus turns the wheel of learning as we add what we have just learned to that which we already knew about the person. The process begins with listening to the person and to the people who know and who care about the student, (family involvement), in order to begin to get a sense of direction, (long term adult outcome). Once some direction is established, the information is synthesized into a preliminary program, (IEP), and implemented, (coordinated set of activities). The next step is to assess how what is being done is going in relation to where things are supposed to be going, (Level I, Level II, functional). Asking a few simple, yet critical questions can do this: "What has been tried?" "What has been learned about what has been tried?" "Given what

has been learned what needs to be learned next?” and finally, “What needs to be tried next?” (the annual review). The values that underlie any person-centered planning process are, in essence, the same values that underlie transition planning processes: supporting people with disabilities in learning, earning, loving and living in their communities.

## The Learning Wheel





## **Components for Successful Person Centered Planning**

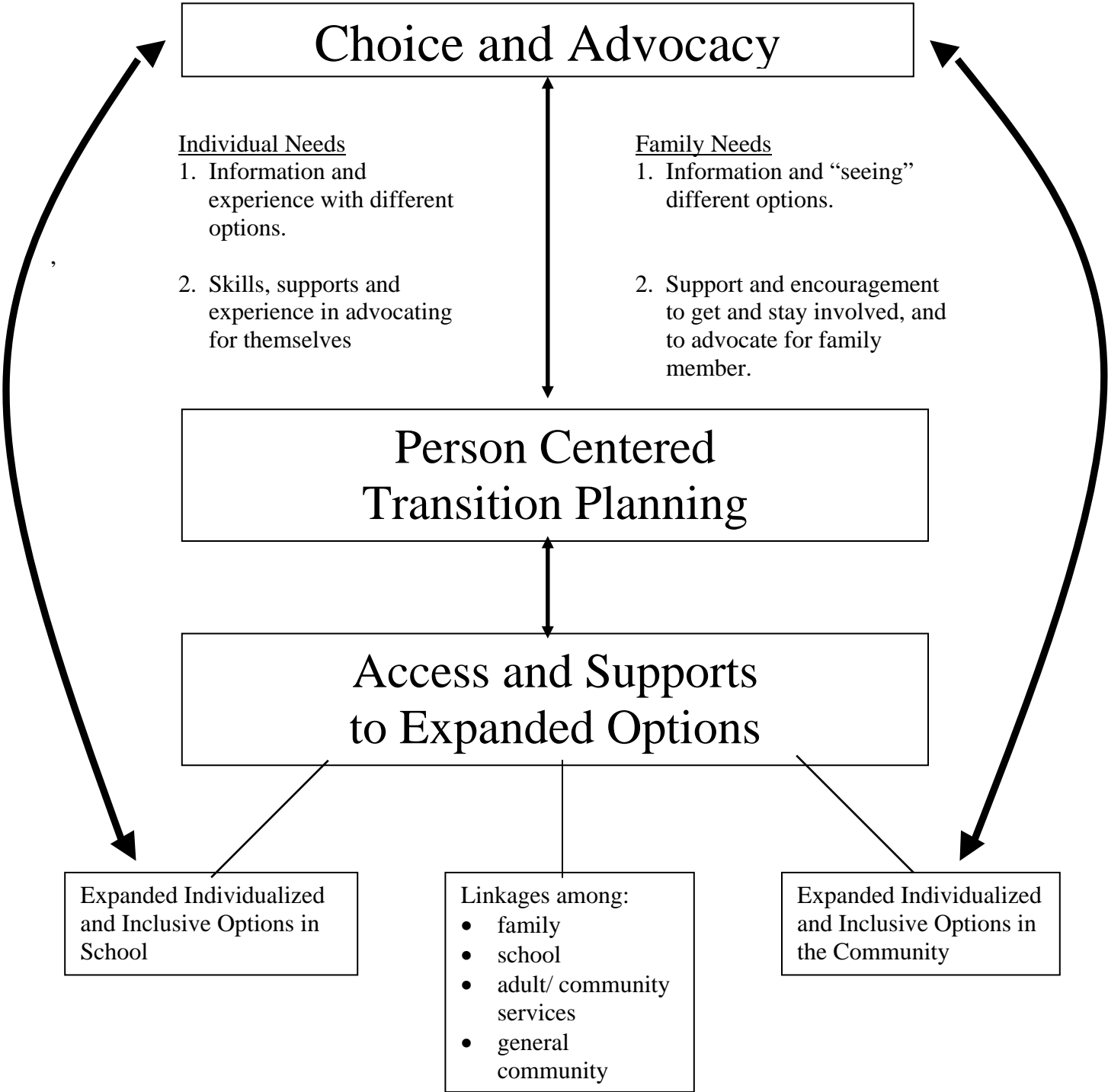
In spite of the obvious compatibility between person-centered planning and transition planning, there is chasm that seems to keep the two worlds apart. Based on the experiences of the demonstration projects, successful implementation of person-centered transition planning will initially require attention to be paid to three components: active solicitation of student and family involvement and genuinely supporting them in advocating and making choices; infusing a person-centered planning approach into the transition planning process, with a strong emphasis on supporting school personnel in learning and applying this technology in the development of the student's IEP, (person-centered transition planning); and access and supports to expand options. These three components are described below and illustrated in the following diagram.

***Component 1 - Choice and Advocacy:*** Students need information about possible options, experiences, and support in choice making and advocating for themselves. In turn, families need information about possible options, “seeing” the options, encouragement to get and stay involved, and support in advocating for their family member.

***Component 2 - Infusing A Person-Centered Planning Approach into Transition Planning:*** Students and families need expanded opportunities and support to explore their interests and preferences, and to develop a vision for the future, in a format and timetable that is customized to meet their needs. Strategies and supports need to maximize involvement and control by the student and family in setting the direction and selecting desired services and support options.

***Component 3 - Opportunities For Individualized, Inclusive Options In School And The Community, And The Resources And Supports To Access Them:*** In order for students and families to have real choices, and for effective planning to occur, there must be a broad array of individualized options in school and in the community available for students. In addition, students and families need the school, funding agencies, and community rehabilitation agencies to develop better linkages to make it easier for students and families to access the various services as they move through the transition process.

# A Person Centered Planning Approach to Personal, Organizational and Systems Change: A Model for Implementation



## **Integrating Person-Centered Planning with Other Education and Human Service Initiatives**

The success of infusing person-centered planning into the transition planning process thus goes beyond just developing a better planning process; it requires changes in the education and adult services arenas. The IEP process must cease to be considered an end unto itself rather than the *means to an end*, namely long-term adult outcomes and involvement in general education curriculum. Fortunately, these needed changes are consistent with a variety of changes in education and human services that are in various stages of development and implementation on a state and national level. The newly revised New York State Learning Standards, (attachment 2), provide an opportunity to support all students to move progressively and successfully toward adulthood.

Person-centered planning has become prevalent in the world of adult service, and its counterpart customer-service, resonates throughout the business community. Self-Advocacy/Self Determination policies and initiatives, supported by the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYS-DDPC), the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), and the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) have been developed and provide direction and voice to people with disabilities, as well as giving support to organizations like the Self Advocacy Association of New York and the Independent Living Centers. These efforts are supporting individuals and their families to exercise greater choice and control over where and how resources are spent and services provided. Recent policies implemented by the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) emphasize the reduction of separate facilities and services for students with disabilities. Ongoing efforts by the Transition Coordination Sites and Syracuse University's School Inclusion Project continue to provide training and technical assistance for best practices in inclusion and transition across New York State. Funding and programmatic changes implemented by OMRDD include the conversion of day treatment to day habilitation, and changes in the Medicaid waiver allow greater flexibility in providing individualized and community-based services for children and adults. Yet another example is the continuation of youth services and work councils federally funded under the Workforce Investment Act. Finally, the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA) and New York State's School to Work initiative were designed to prepare **all** students for employment, including those with disabilities, by providing them with vocational training and work experiences during high school (Norman & Bourexis, 1995).

A person-centered approach to transition requires the melding of resources and expertise that already exist in the areas of school and community inclusion, school to work, supported employment and living, and self-advocacy/determination, and creating new, innovative and expanded options for choice and creating uniquely tailored, individual specific supports if outcome oriented transition planning is to be successful.

### **SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING PERSON CENTERED TRANSITION PLANNING**

The following analysis was performed and recommendations were developed through a several-step process of collecting qualitative and quantitative data from demonstration projects including review of project reports, collection of student data, and qualitative reviews on person-centered transition planning processes conducted by the demonstration projects. In addition, a series of teleconferences, meetings and individual interviews were conducted with demonstration project personnel and project participants, representatives from public and private education and disability organizations, and family and self-advocacy groups. Finally, representatives from the demonstration projects, DDPC, VESID and Cornell reviewed and critiqued several drafts of this policy paper.

The overall goal of this white paper and the subsequent policy paper, is to promote practices that support the development and implementation of person-centered transition planning processes, that build and support system capacity in the continuation of this practice, and that promote high quality supports and services to students and families who are planning for life after high school. The recommendations included in this section aim to promote strategies that:

- Empower students and encourage and support their independence and choice-making;
- Support family and school collaboration;
- Promote schools and adult service agencies to provide individualized inclusive services and supports; and
- Create linkages among the school, adult service agencies, and the community that promote collaboration and to provide options and supports for students.
- Minimize or eliminate the perpetuation of stigmatizing services, programs and supports.

Recommendations are organized under the three components outlined in section two: *advocacy and choice; planning; and expanded options*. Each recommendation takes into account the perspective of the student and the family, and identifies what changes maximize the likelihood of successful transition from school to living, learning, and earning in the community for all students with disabilities.

In addition, the authors of this paper have attempted to develop the recommendation section to be concise and reader friendly; usable by local schools, community agencies, and advocacy groups; and to emphasize, (as much as possible). the shifting of alternative use of resources rather than requiring large expenditures of new funds. Finally, it is hoped that these recommendations challenge the reader, raise expectations, promote debate, and encourage action that leads to changes that positively impact students and families.

## **COMPONENT ONE : CHOICE, ADVOCACY and SKILL-BUILDING**

### ***A. Choice: Use person-centered transition planning as a primary method for the development and continued evolution of the student's long-term adult outcome.***

1. Provide students with experiential learning opportunities for each of the 9 life defining areas described on page 5 of this report. Work with regional Transition Coordination Sites to link these areas to NYS learning standards.
2. Prioritize family involvement in planning process and goal development. Create partnerships with local service providers skilled at person-centered planning facilitation to support school personnel in involving families.
3. Conduct person-centered transition meetings a minimum of twice per year, **prior** to the development of the student's IEP. Hold as many meetings as necessary to "turn the learning wheel."
4. Incorporate strategies for teaching choice making skills into classroom settings. Use a variety of approaches for helping all students make choices and demonstrate preferences. Connect with local self-advocacy/self-determination groups to suggest and/or to create opportunities for learning

### ***B. Advocacy: Make self-determination an outcome of transition planning.***

1. Develop knowledge of and a network to a consortium of community resources, including benefit/entitlement programs that are available within the community for any/all students.
2. Adapt curriculum to include related decision-making exercises for skill building. Consult with local business resources, transition coordination sites, school personnel, etc., to identify and develop appropriate, functional and meaningful exercises.
3. Hold annual and semi-annual information fairs about community resources in the community and with the community for families and students.
4. Work with local service providers to develop a component to support families within the District.

### ***C. Skill Building: Build capacity within and throughout the system to support person-centered transition planning.***

1. Conduct a needs assessment in the following areas for students, families, school personnel, parent partners, community providers, etc.:
  - \*Transition planning, the three R's: Rights, Responsibilities and Regulations
  - \*Self-determination: how to encourage and support choice making for all students
  - \*Self-advocacy
  - \*Developing partnerships for transition
  - \*Accommodations
  - \*Working effectively with families
  - \*Meeting facilitation
  - \*Conflict resolution

## ***COMPONENT TWO: PERSON-CENTERED TRANSITION PLANNING***

***A. Planning: Develop a coordinated set of activities that stem directly from the student's identified Long Term Adult Outcome, that include family involvement and support and are reviewed no less than twice per school year in order to "turn the learning wheel."***

1. Develop the IEP as a means to an end, based on the student's stated long term adult outcome. Incorporate the "learning wheel" questions into the formal review process. (Given the long term adult outcome, what needs to happen? How should that look? What have we tried? What have we learned about what we have tried? What needs to happen next?)
2. Identify and incorporate an outside facilitator into the meeting.
3. Train a cadre of facilitators within school districts.
4. Link the NYS Learning Standards and the 9 Life areas, (p.5) to the transition components of the IEP. Ask representatives from VESID and community agencies to help.
5. Allocate school personnel to work with students, families, community providers/ resources and other school staff around person-centered activities, (i.e.: conducting focus groups, creating peer mentorship programs, developing circles of support, etc.)
6. Include critical players and resources in the development of and implementation of the student's IEP. Invite people into the school and clearly designate assigned roles and responsibilities.
7. Replace any existing automated IEP development system that has standardized goals, objectives and measurements with a person-centered approach. Work with local technical colleges and other community resources to develop such a system.
8. Utilize a "portfolio" approach to student profiles with mutually exclusive sections.

## ***COMPONENT THREE: ACCESS AND SUPPORTS TO INDIVIDUALIZED AND INCLUSIVE OPTIONS***

***A. Evaluate the existing organizational system(s) in the context of providing person-centered transition services and supports.***

1. Use regular conference days/superintendent days to work with school personnel to explore opportunities and weaknesses within the existing structure that support/preclude being able to provide student-specific supports and services. Develop a plan of action.
2. Engage in boundary-spanning activities that incorporate mutually reciprocal relationships between the school, businesses and other community resources.
3. Include all students in the development of strategies for supporting inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms.
4. Review existing staffing patterns. Re-allocate paraprofessionals and teacher aides to support classroom-learning ventures, versus one-on-one individual support. Are these roles so strictly defined that hands are "tied?" What can untie them?
5. Evaluate the links that do/do not exist between the regular education community and the special education community. Explore such areas as: Are guidance counselors knowledgeable about resources available to students with special needs? Are parent representatives versed in transition regulations, responsibilities, etc? Can the special

education teachers team teach with the general education teachers? Can social workers facilitate person-centered processes? Do they have existing relationships with community resources? Can Occupational Therapists serve as job coaches/trainers? How do accommodations get handled in the school? By whom? Do these accommodations support the student's learning style and movement toward the long-term adult outcomes?

6. Develop partnerships with adult service providers and community leaders that foster "seamless" transition from school to adulthood. "Seamless" supports and services are in place and functioning prior to a student's leaving school so that s/he leaves with the supports versus experiencing a gap. Incorporate these partners into classroom and community teaching opportunities for all students.

***B. Link Schools, State Funding Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Youth Councils, Post-Secondary Education Facilities, etc.***

1. Form a school-based resource alliance that fosters partnership & collaboration around a common mission or goal. Include students.
2. Initiate parent and student advisory boards.
3. Build community into the curriculum, incorporate "adjunct" teachers via community members.
4. Share training resources and knowledge bases. Create professional learning days.

**SUMMARY**

Transition as a process was first included in special education policy in 1983 to begin to address the gaps in planning and services to assist students with disabilities to successfully move from school to adulthood. The initial legislation was amended in 1990 to place emphasis on student and family participation in planning; to support students participation in general education; and to ensure coordination among education, state and community agencies in planning for and providing transition services. Despite the intent, a significant number of students, especially those with severe disabilities, and their families are not getting the services and supports they need to earn, learn, live and love in the community as adults.

Person-centered planning has been effectively used by individuals, their families and significant others as a tool for identifying interests, preferences, support needs and abilities; developing a vision of the future; and creating a course of action to make that vision a reality. The development of the Individualized Education Program, (IEP), requires that the same outcomes are achieved for each student. Infusing person-centered planning into transition planning, particularly during periods of student assessment and evaluation, is an effective strategy for supporting the involvement and participation of students and their families, and ensuring that the goals and services reflect their desires. Person-centered transition planning can also serve as a tool for customizing or creating new individualized services and support processes within both the educational and the human service systems. It is an effective means by which to cultivate transition planning that is an "outcome oriented" process and one that meets the requirements for transition put forth by the federal and state legislation, including meeting the recently revised New York State Learning Standards while simultaneously taking into account the individual qualities of the student.

Infusing person-centered planning into the transition planning process goes beyond simply the development of a better planning process; it requires insight, hard work, dedication and a genuine commitment to do things differently both within and beyond the process itself to create the necessary conditions for positive change. It requires the push away from independent system structures and movement toward developing interdependent relationships and combined resources to maximize opportunities for all students. This is the challenge for each and every system in which the student must navigate during and throughout the transition process. Meeting this challenge will require that schools, community agencies and other community resources form partnerships and alliances with one another around the common denominator that is to define and combine financial, human and other resources in uniquely configured patterns that will serve to support individualized student assessment and evaluation. One single entity or system cannot possibly manage this alone. Nor should they have to. As the credo suggested by two early pioneers of student-driven person-centered planning Jack Pearpoint and Marsha Forest says, “together we’re better.”

Federal and state regulations require that each student be provided a free and appropriate education. “Appropriate” can only be accurately determined by means of providing comprehensive and individually tailored methods for assessment and evaluation. The common practice for identifying and developing a student’s Individualized Education Program is to utilize information obtained through school records and psychological reports. While the information contained in these records is valuable, it can be extremely limited in its ability to represent a holistic profile of the student. A person-centered approach to identifying the student’s unique interests, skills, needs and preferences broadens the scope and range of information that is gathered about a student by incorporating information gleaned from a wide spectrum of assessment and evaluation processes while including the critical information available within the traditional reports. Given that the student’s entire educational plan is predicated on the results of the evaluation and assessment process, it is crucial that the process represents as many facets of the student and the family interest as is possible.

The challenge to educational systems, human service systems and community systems is how to effectively provide the opportunities and experiences that are necessary to efficiently meet the vested interest of all of the parties while simultaneously moving toward the attainment of a common purpose. The person-centered planning process, by its very nature, is designed to meet this challenge and can serve to facilitate the development of services and supports that are necessary to maximize the potential for successfully supporting the transition of students from school to adult life.

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## **Transition Technical Assistance and Support Program (T-TASP) Project Description**

*T-TASP* provides the following services free of charge to the demonstration sites. Manuals, brochures, and other products developed through the grant are available for use by schools, community and state agencies, and other transition stakeholders.

- ***Training and Curriculum Development:*** Person-Centered Planning Certificate Program; Train-the Trainer Program in Person-centered Transition Planning; and accompanying manuals and curriculum
- ***Systems Intervention:*** Information and technology support: telephone and video-conferences for project meetings, training and consultation; customized organizational development, technical assistance and training; internet listserv; web site resources and community linkages: and collaboration with local, state and national resources on person-centered planning and transition
- ***Evaluation:*** Quantitative and qualitative analysis of demonstration project processes and outcomes; focus groups; and public policy white papers

### **Demonstration Projects:**

Nine demonstration projects are being funded by of the New York State DDPC in collaboration with the New York State Education Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). These demonstration projects are charged with developing and implementing innovative strategies to utilize person-centered transition planning to support the individualized education program development process, with the goal of expanding the variety and quality of opportunities for students with developmental disabilities both while they are still in school, and when they graduate. The demonstration projects include:

- Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled, Inc. (BCID), Brooklyn, NY  
*Contact: Sharon Shapiro-Lacks 718/998-3000*
- Chemung ARC Chapter NYSARC, Elmira, NY  
*Contact: Christy Edkin 607/734-6151*
- Eastern Suffolk BOCES, Port Jefferson, NY  
*Contact: Carol Sherwood 631/331-8585*
- Footings, Inc., Monroe, NY  
*Contact: Rori Cooper Corbin 914/783-7505*
- Independent Living, Inc., Newburgh, NY  
*Contact: Brian Burke 914/565-1162*
- Job Path/Vera Institute, New York, NY  
*Contact: Fredda Rosen 212/944-0564*
- Johnson City Central Schools, Johnson City, NY  
*Contact: Melissa Korducavich 607/763-1253*
- Monroe #1 & #2 BOCES, Fairport, NY  
*Contact: Therese Zona 716/377-4660 x2730*
- Northern New York Transition Coordination Site, Norwood, NY  
*Contact: Eric Bright 315/386-1175*

## **Project Results: Year One**

The following information was collected using a modified version of GRETTA (Getting Results through Training and Technical Assistance) a data collection tool developed by the National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils, and used by all state Developmental Disabilities Planning Councils to collect information on the processes and impact of funded projects. This information collected reflects status and activities at the end of Year One of the three-year project.

### **Who's Involved**

#### ***Participants in Person-Centered Transition Planning Activities:***

- 194 students
- 151 family members
- 206 school personnel
- 106 other participants

#### ***Organizations involved in Person-Centered Transition Planning:***

- 22 Local Schools
- 22 BOCES
- 33 Vocational Programs
- 17 Independent Living Centers / Advocacy Programs
- 2 Post-Secondary Education

#### ***Training provided on Person-centered Transition Planning:***

- 225 students
- 200 families
- 450 professionals

#### ***A Synopsis of Students' Educational and Vocational Services***

- 15% students participate in general academic education courses
- 44% students participate in general non-academic education courses
- 37% students participate in general occupational education courses
- 6% students spend more than half their day in general academic courses
- 12% students spend more than half their day in general non-academic courses
- 50% students participate in internships, volunteer or paid employment

#### ***Students' Goals for the Future:***

- 47% students have goals from person-centered planning incorporated into their IEP
- Long Term Adult Outcomes:
  - 70% students have a goal of community employment
  - 5% students have a goal post-secondary education
  - 22% students have a goal vocational training / trade school
  - 57% students have a goal independent or supported living

***Project Impact on Policies and Services:***

- 12 new or improved policies
- 15 new services
- 19 improved or expanded services