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ABSTRACT

This handbook for parents describes the transition planning process for youth with disabilities. The handbook is divided into four sections: an overview of the who, what, where, when, why, and how of transition; consideration and evaluation of future options for the young person; home, school, and community activities that can be immediately implemented; and forms to help guide the transition planning process. The overview focuses on what the child is able to do now, what the child's goals are, what the child needs to achieve those goals, and who serves on the transition team. The options section considers employment options, living arrangements, personal management, socialization, leisure and community participation, further education, transportation, self-advocacy, medical, financial, legal, and insurance issues. Suggestions are offered for home and school activities that can prepare children for adult life. Forms include an adult services referral and contact list, and a parent input form for transition training. (DB)

The Future is Around the Corner!

A Parent Handbook for Successful Transition

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INTRODUCTION

What job will Shawn have in the future? Will Jennifer go to college? Where will Mary live? What will Jamal do with his friends? These are questions all parents ask themselves when they look forward to the future of their children. Adult life can seem so far away when your child is still in school, yet time passes quickly and before you know it, children are young adults and adult life is a short time away.

This handbook has been written to help you explore these questions, and more, as they relate to your child and family. By exploring the future, you, your child, educators, adult service providers, and others in your community can identify activities that will provide supports and services after high school.

This handbook is divided into these sections:

1. *Transition Overview* addresses the who, what, where, when, why, and how of transition.
2. *Dream of the Future* helps you think about possible future options for you and your daughter or son.
3. *What Can Be Done Now?* will guide home, school, and community activities that can take place now.
4. The *Appendix* includes forms that will help guide your transition planning with your child.

This handbook is written to describe the transition planning process all people with disabilities and their families can use. It is **not** written for any particular group of people who have specific disabilities. Since each child is unique, the transition planning team must make plans and decisions based on the specific needs of each individual and his or her family. To gain the most from this handbook, you must think about how this process will work for your child.

TRANSITION OVERVIEW

Transition Defined

The word *transition* implies movement and change. We all go through changes throughout our lives that have an impact on our future. For example, when a person graduates from high school, then enters a two-year technical school, that person is making a transition that will have an effect on other aspects of his or her life. When a person switches jobs, that person is making a transition. A person can make many transitions in a lifetime.

Have you ever taken a vacation across the country without a map? This trip, like transition, requires a plan to help you successfully end up where you want to be. The time to develop a transition plan is while your son or daughter is still in middle school or high school. Planning early helps design an educational program that will logically prepare your child for the future. Public education is guaranteed by law for all children, but adult services are not. Planning for the services your daughter or son will need as an adult while he/she is still in school will help eliminate gaps in the services needed. Transition planning is also important to help "catch" young adults who are thinking of dropping out of school before graduation.

The federal law called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to include transition planning in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) at least by the time the student reaches the age of 16. Transition planning may take place prior to the age of 16 if it is needed by an individual student.

Planning for the transition to adult life has some similarities to and differences from developing the IEP. First it is important to know that in Missouri, transition goals, objectives, and activities should be a part of your child's IEP document if your son or daughter is age 16 or older. Second, just as the educational goals and objectives in your child's IEP are developed by a team, so are the transition goals and objectives which become a part of the IEP. A transition team may have participants similar to your child's IEP team and some new people may be invited to the IEP meeting. For example, it may be appropriate to invite a representative from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) who could help your son or daughter find a summer job so important job experience can be gained. Two other state agencies that may provide transition planning assistance are the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB). They will work with the team to set transition goals and to discuss options available upon graduation. Finally, planning for the future must involve developing a course of action for all aspects of adult life. It would not do much good to plan for and get a job if your son or daughter has no way to get to work. In this example, planning for transportation is very important to keeping a job. Planning must take place for all the adult roles young people with disabilities will soon play.

The Transition Planning Process

Transition to adult life is a complex process. Following are some questions the IEP team members can discuss as they plan for the future for your son or daughter and a list of people who might participate in your child's IEP meeting.

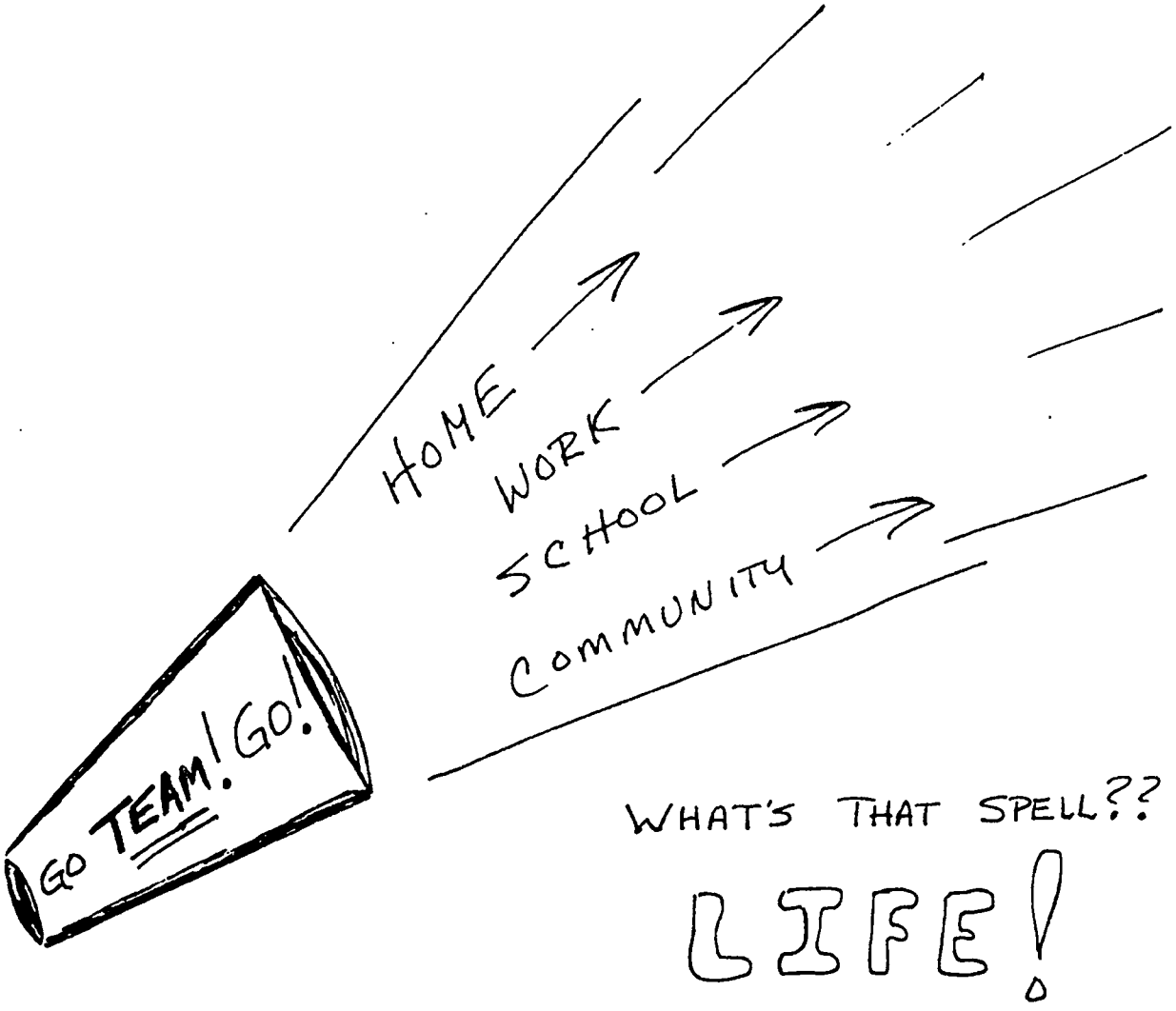
Transition planning is part of the IEP process. Schools are required to address transition during the IEP meeting at least by the time a student is 16 years of age. At the IEP meeting, the team members focus on the future and develop goals and objectives to help your child reach those future goals.

You may have heard the expression: "If you don't know where you're going, any path will take you there." To reach the future, the team must know what path they are taking. To help the team select the right course for your son or daughter, these questions can be discussed. It is suggested that your child be asked to respond to these questions first. After the young adult has had an opportunity to contribute, the other members of the team can build on the student's answers to these questions.

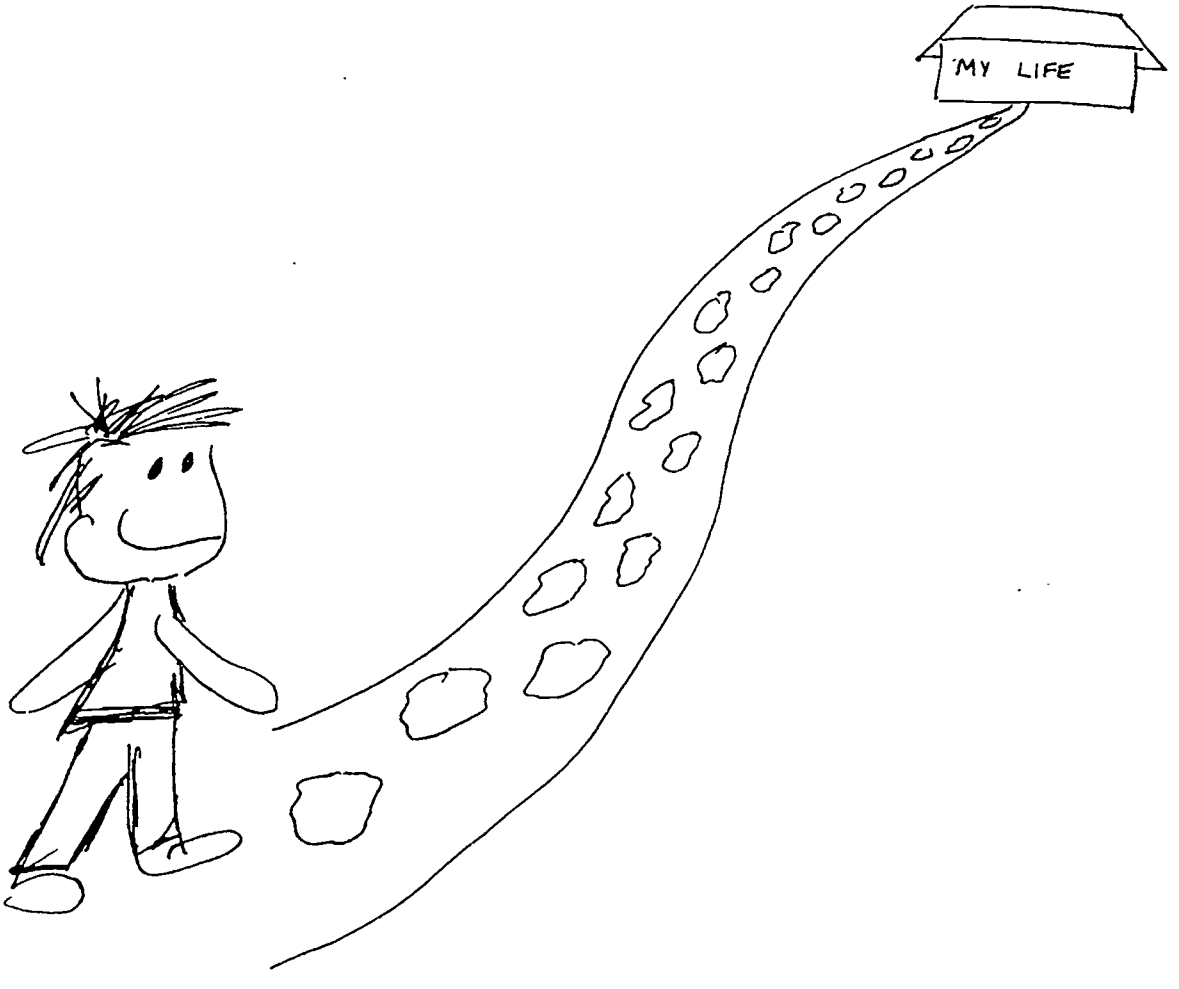
What are your child's dreams after leaving school? The student should be asked to respond to this and other questions about the future, such as: Where would you like to live? What kind of work would you like to do? What activities would you do during free time? How would you get around in the community? What community resources would you use? What support would you need to work, live, and play in the community? The answer to these questions will help the team form transition goals that will be reviewed annually and adjusted when necessary.

What are you able to do now? Again, your child should describe his or her strengths and interests to the team. The team should not focus only on your child's academic strengths, but should look at all aspects of your child's life. You can help by talking about the chores your child does at home and the activities you do as a family. How is your child involved in the community? Share with the rest of the team the strengths your child shows at those times. Discuss the strengths your child shows when interacting with other kids. Professionals who attend the meeting will also provide information they have gathered. These may be results of formal tests, observations, questionnaires, checklists, and interviews of people who work with your child. Discussing the information that was gathered and the information you have to offer will help form the Present Level of Performance section of the IEP. The Present Level of Performance is a written description of your child's present skills.

What do you need to achieve your transition goals? The child should talk with the team about his or her learning needs from all areas of life: home, work, school, community, and recreation/leisure. The team should also discuss the support and training needs of your child that go along with learning needs. Some questions to answer are: Does your daughter/son need more opportunities to interact with students who do not have disabilities? Does your child need more learning activities in the community? Does your child need more opportunities to actively explore personal interests? Do you and your child need information about available community services? Answers to these questions will help the team decide how to meet your child's transition needs.



What are you going to do this year? To set annual goals for the IEP, the team should look at the dreams and needs that were shared when answering the questions above. The annual goals must be created by the team specifically for your child. When writing goals, all members of the team can be creative and make the "stepping stones" that lead to long-range transition goals. Again, the team should look at the future recreational, vocational, living, and community dreams of your child.



Who? What? When? Where? How? What Agencies? These questions help the team define the services your child needs. These questions help decide who will take responsibility for seeing that goals are achieved. This turns goals into action! This involves asking questions, such as: What activities does your child need to reach these goals? What is the most relevant learning environment for your child for each activity? What are the teaching approaches to be used? Who is responsible for each goal? When is the progress on each goal reviewed? What agencies are available to assist me in developing my transition goals? When can these agencies become involved?

The Transition Team

It should be emphasized that many people have responsibility for transition goals. Since transition goals look at all facets of life, it makes sense that you and your child assume responsibility for some goals. For example, your child might be responsible for talking to the school counselor about community colleges that have services for students with disabilities. You might be responsible for contacting adult service agencies who coordinate supported living arrangements. You may want to work on your child's laundry and cooking skills at home, if these are not being addressed in school. Implementation of transition goals should be a shared responsibility.

Transition planning requires that many people be involved. People who should be involved in the transition planning team and their roles are described below.

You. Parents are a critical part of the transition team and the IEP team. To assist with the planning meeting, you may want to think about your desires for your child's future and share your thoughts with school personnel before the meeting takes place (see Parent Input Sheet in the Appendix). Decisions for your child's future need your input, since you will still be a part of that future long after your son or daughter leaves school.

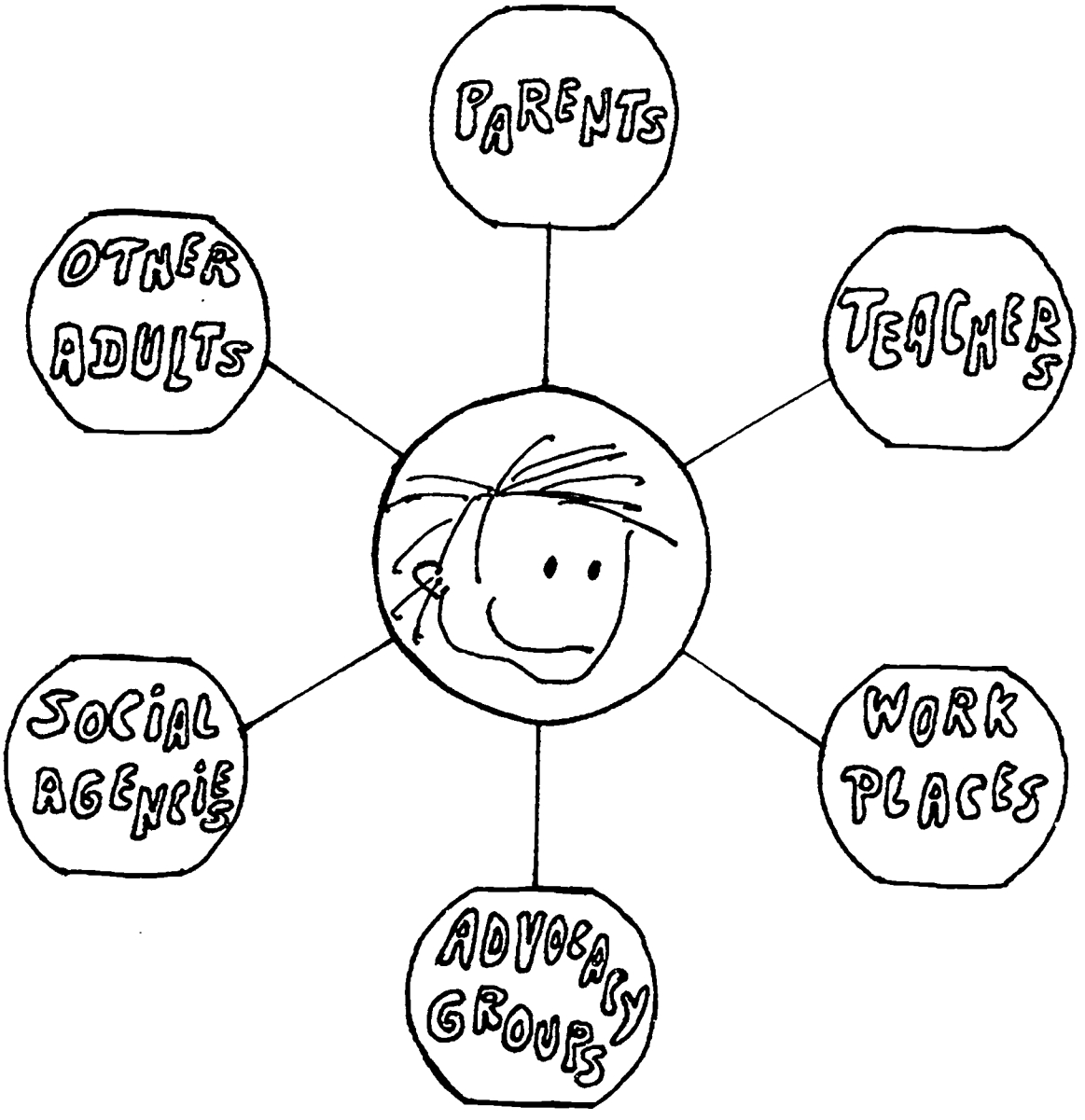
Your daughter/son. IDEA requires that your daughter or son be invited to the IEP meeting if transition goals and objectives are considered. If your child cannot or chooses not to attend the meeting, steps need to be taken to ensure that your child's preferences and interests are considered by the team. Involving your daughter or son teaches your child how to tell others what she/he wants and needs for the future. The program will be more successful with your child's input.

Educators. A special educator, familiar with your child's disability, usually functions as case manager. The case manager's responsibilities include organizing planning meetings, contacting appropriate people and agencies, gathering information, and conducting meetings. The case manager usually runs the meeting and helps the team write transition goals and objectives. This person is actively involved with your child's school program and should be familiar with you and your family. The special educator is also responsible for keeping track of your child's progress, informing you and your child of that progress, and directing you to appropriate agencies. There may also be regular educators, counselors, and therapists working with your child who would be valuable members of the planning team.

Adult service providers. Since adult services are not guaranteed for individuals with disabilities, it is important to involve representatives from other agencies in your son's or daughter's IEP. These agency representatives provide information about services available to your child after he or she leaves school. For example, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Rehabilitation Services for the Blind can be involved with the team in the development of transition plans as early as the student's needs dictate. Often, DVR/RSB will act as consultants up until the time the school is ready for the student to move into off campus work experience.

At that time, the DVR/RSB counselor will complete an application and determine eligibility for services. They can help your son or daughter sign up for services before he/she leaves school. To locate the adult service agencies in your community, contact the resource centers listed at the end of this manual.

Now that the important members of the planning team have been identified and a process has been described, let's look at the areas of adult life that you, your child and other members of the transition planning team will need to discuss.



DREAMING OF THE FUTURE

For both you and your child, completing high school and moving out into the world can be more than just a little scary. The first step in planning for this transition involves thinking about the future. You, your child, and others who are helping you plan must look at all parts of your child's future. It is important to look at more than work. Where will your child live? How will he/she get to work? How will your child's bills be paid? To help you answer these questions and think about the future, areas of adult life are addressed in this section: employment, living arrangements, activities of daily living, social skills, recreation/leisure, community participation, further education and training, transportation, self advocacy, medical concerns, financial arrangements, legal concerns, and insurance needs. As you read through each topic, think about your child's future and the plans needed for your child to reach his or her dreams.

Employment Options

Finding and keeping a job that enables an adult to maintain a quality life style is part of the American dream and important to most adults. Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind can help you explore the many job possibilities available to your child. To help you think about your child as a future worker, the three general types of work—competitive employment, supported employment, and sheltered employment are described below.

Competitive Employment

Many youth with disabilities leaving high school can get and keep a job without any special support services, just as youth without disabilities do. In a competitive job, workers with disabilities are paid competitive wages and are eligible for the same benefits, such as vacation, insurance, and sick leave as their coworkers without disabilities. Some adults with disabilities may need special accommodations to the work setting to do their work independently. Examples of these accommodations include: a desk raised so a wheelchair will roll under it, a headstick to punch computer keys, or directions provided verbally instead of in writing. Competitive employment is an option for many adults with disabilities.

Supported Employment

Although a large number of adults with disabilities can work independently in the community, others will need ongoing support or supervision to work in the community. This type of employment is called supported employment. Support on the job site helps adults with disabilities, who in the past have been considered unemployable, keep a job. In a supported work situation training and support is given by a person called a job coach or employment training specialist. The job coach is employed by an adult service agency. The job coach has many roles on the job site and, in general, is responsible for training and assisting the worker with disabilities. Another important role of the job coach is to maintain contact with the employer to be sure the employer and coworkers are satisfied with the supported worker's job

performance. The job coach may also help with job related issues such as transportation and purchasing a snack during break time.

Sheltered Workshops

Sheltered workshops are businesses that employ adults with disabilities to do contract work for other businesses in the community. They were created to provide employment for individuals with disabilities and give them a chance to develop skills needed to work in a competitive job. Some workers, however, remain an employee of a sheltered workshop for many years. Many sheltered workshops, such as industries for the blind in many states, were set up to provide long-term employment for its workers. Individuals working in sheltered workshops usually earn salaries below minimum wage, based on their work productivity.

Living Arrangements

Adults with disabilities live in a variety of situations—from 24-hour care facilities to alone in a house or apartment in the community. This range of living arrangements provides adults with disabilities and their families options to meet their needs. Facility living arrangements range from group homes of four or more people with disabilities who live in a typical neighborhood to large habilitation centers where hundreds of adults with disabilities live. Facility living arrangements are staffed to provide training in daily living and personal management skills. In supported living situations, adults with disabilities live and receive support in the household of their choice—an apartment, condominium, or house in a typical neighborhood. Supports are individually designed to meet the unique needs of each person so they may reside in the community. The type and availability of support will vary widely, based on the person's needs, abilities, and the resources that exist or can be developed in his or her community. Examples of supports include: a personal care attendant to get the adult with disabilities up in the morning, dressed and ready for work; a roommate without disabilities who helps manage the checking account and household spending; a neighbor who helps mow the yard; a friend who takes the adult with disabilities to worship with him or her. Finally, many adults with disabilities live independently in the community. These individuals rent or purchase a home and do not require any special support or accommodations.

Personal Management

Closely connected with where your child will live as an adult is performing tasks to care for him/herself. Personal needs such as dressing, toileting, and personal hygiene are important considerations when thinking about the amount of support your daughter or son will need to live independently. The more your child is able to manage household chores such as cooking, cleaning, making purchases, and paying bills, the less support she/he will need from others.

A partial list of some of the daily living skills adults are responsible for include: meal planning, purchasing food and other items, food preparation, eating, housekeeping, telephone use, clothing selection, home maintenance, laundry, health and safety, dressing, personal hygiene, and time and money management.

Socialization/Friends

Getting along with co-workers on the job, sharing an apartment with a friend or spouse, attending any social activity, and responding to feedback from an employer all require good social skills. Social skills are those communication skills used in daily living with friends, family members and coworkers. Good social skills are critical for a happy and productive adult life. Adults who do not have good social skills face many barriers. Not having many friends and not being able to secure and hold any type of job may result in segregation and isolation. Appropriate social skills can lead to improved interactions with others and can help form friendships. Learning to establish and maintain relationships with others is helpful in all aspects of adult life. Social skills all adults need include: getting along with others, resolving arguments with others, getting along with authorities, performing routine chores without being reminded, making friends, working as part of a team, expressing anger in an appropriate way, apologizing, accepting and giving compliments, working without arguing, and having good manners.

Recreation/Leisure

Constructive use of free time is just as important for adults as it is for children. Actively participating in sports, making crafts, or being involved in other leisure activities is important for building friendships and having a quality adult life. Adults with disabilities can learn about and participate in community parks and recreation programs, community centers, YMCAs, YWCAs, church groups, and social organizations. Building and maintaining friendships also increases the likelihood that adults with disabilities will have people to "hang out with." Here is a partial list of future leisure activities: baseball, basketball, bowling, ceramics, camping, arts and crafts, football, sewing, listening to or making music, soccer, knitting, dramatics, bicycle riding, woodworking, scouting, horseback riding, traveling, church activities, watching TV, going to movies and plays, swimming, cooking, building models, shopping, board games, painting, card games, crocheting, and dancing.

Community Participation

Community participation relates to activities and services provided in the general public. These include eating in local restaurants, doing laundry at a laundromat, getting the electricity hooked up for the apartment, shopping for groceries, registering to vote, buying stamps at the post office, going to the high school basketball game, attending worship services, and using other resources in the community.

Further Education and Training

Your child may desire to go from high school into further education at a junior college or university, vocational school, adult basic education program or into a rehabilitation facility.

Junior colleges and universities offer a variety of two and four-year programs that result in a degree. Today many colleges and universities have an office to help students with disabilities obtain the services they need on campus. Your child will have to identify him/herself as having a disability and explain the accommodations needed for success in the classroom. Vocational schools can provide classroom and hands on training that will lead directly to a future trade or job. Adult basic education programs teach adult students reading, writing, and math. Vocational schools and adult basic education programs may also have similar services for people with disabilities.

Transportation

When thinking about your child's future, it is very important to think about how your adult child will get around in the community. In some communities, public transportation may be used to get to and from work and the grocery store. Some other possibilities might be: car pooling, walking to work, using transportation services provided for people with disabilities or learning to drive a car. Transportation considerations are important so work and community opportunities are not lost because there is no way to get there!

Self-Advocacy

Most adults like to have control over their own lives. Adults with disabilities also need to have this control and be able to stand up for themselves. This means being able to describe personal strengths and weaknesses and tell others what accommodations are needed at work and at home. It is also important to know the rights that are guaranteed people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336). This law prohibits discrimination at work and in community businesses. Understanding the law and expressing personal capabilities, limitations and needs are necessary to confront the challenges of adulthood.

Medical

Most adults have medical needs at some point in their lives and some have continuous medical concerns. Adults with disabilities need to learn to take over-the-counter and prescription medication and to go to the pharmacy when the medicine supply is low. Some adults need therapy services and must arrange for a therapy provider and funding for those services. Some adults with disabilities need a personal care attendant to help them live independently. Medical needs must be met to ensure adults with disabilities maintain a healthy, independent life style.

Financial

A fact of life is that all adults have to pay bills! Adults with disabilities may need assistance from a public agency, or they may live on their earned income. Financial assistance may be available through Social Security, the Division of Family Services, Employment Security, Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, and the Department of Mental Health. If public assistance is not needed, adults with disabilities must learn to live within their

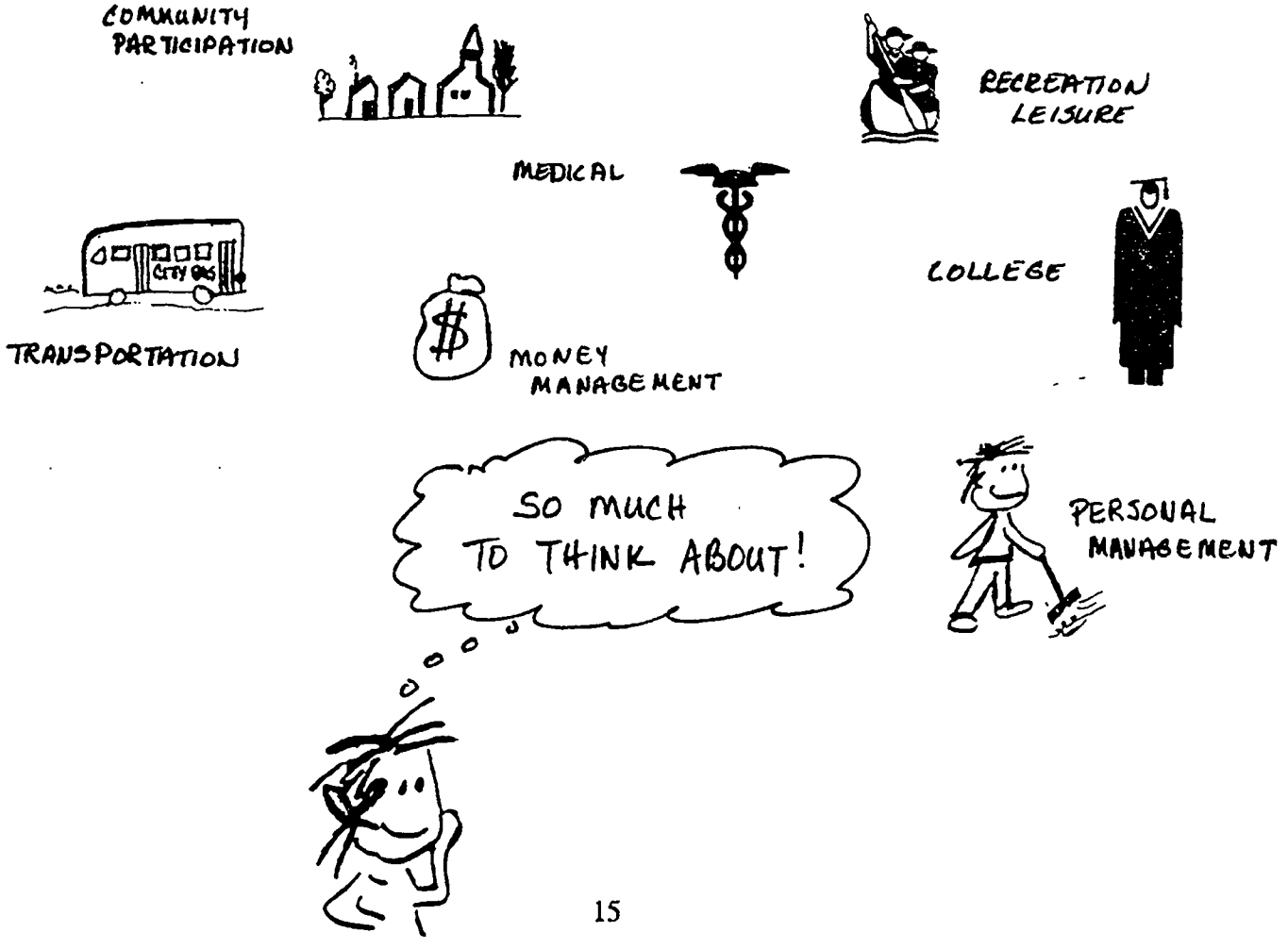
means. Whatever the circumstances of your child and your family, deciding how the bills will be paid is important.

Legal

Guardianship/conservatorship, wills and trusts, and advocacy issues may be important for a secure future for some adults with disabilities. Some adults with disabilities are able to make decisions on their own and do not need another person as a guardian. Some families with a member with a disability will want to insure financial security through wills and trusts. Legal aid, advocacy groups, and attorneys are available to give advice on these important legal issues.

Insurance

Adults with disabilities have a wide range of insurance needs, from Medicaid to various kinds of insurance available to the general public. As an adult, your child may need to know about life, health, dental, workmen's compensation, and automobile insurance. Insurance benefits may be available through work, or private insurance may need to be purchased. Insurance coverage is another fact of life for all adults.



WHAT CAN BE DONE NOW?

Many skills for adult life can be taught at school and in the home. After the transition planning team has looked toward the future, the skills your child needs to learn before graduation should be identified. This section will address a variety of activities and programs in school and at home that can be implemented before a student graduates from school.

In School

It seems to make sense that the purpose of school is to prepare children for adult life. Elementary and secondary schools can identify specific skills children will need for the future and teach them in the most appropriate way for each individual student. Some students will need to be taught to maintain a real checking account and read the newspaper want ads for a job. It is appropriate that other students be taught the regular school curriculum. If we expect students with and without disabilities to live and work together in the community in the future, we must teach them together now. Schools also need to help all students learn how to develop and maintain meaningful friendships that will last into adulthood. Providing work experience and vocational training programs before graduation is also a responsibility of the school. Like all youth making the transition to adulthood, students with disabilities should be taught to speak up for themselves and become self-advocates. Schools can have a powerful influence on students' abilities to develop their own transition plans. Following is a description of only a few activities and programs schools can offer to help with the transition from school to adult life.

Teaching Future Skills

Once the transition planning team has made plans for the student's future, the curriculum, or what is taught, can be decided. Specific skills the student will need to learn to live, work, and play in the community become the student's program. The IEP team will decide the best methods to teach these skills. For some students with disabilities, most skills should be taught in the same way and in the same setting where the student will use those skills in the future. For example, teaching subtraction can more practically be taught by maintaining a checkbook and making deposits at the local bank. Reading, writing and spelling can be taught by reading newspaper advertisements, making a shopping list, and shopping at the grocery store. For these students, the community becomes their "school."

It is also important for all students to learn their personal strengths and weaknesses and how to communicate those to employers in the future. The student should also learn about his or her disability and the accommodations they will need to successfully live and work in the community. Learning about oneself and communicating personal needs is critical for the future.

Learning Together

Children learn about differences and similarities among a variety of cultures, races, religions, and abilities in school. If the future goal is to live, work and play in the community as adults, children must begin to learn about and with each other in school. Currently schools in Missouri and around the country are providing these learning experiences by teaching increasingly more

students with disabilities in regular classrooms. As schools accept all students into their classrooms, plans are needed to ensure that students with disabilities develop friendships and become full members of the school community. One strategy that can be used to facilitate inclusion is the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS). MAPS brings together you, your child, your child's friends and peers, your child's teacher(s), and others, to develop a unique and creative plan to build on the strengths, abilities, and interests of your child to help your child become a part of the school community. MAPS involves a set of questions which this group has equal participation in answering:

1. What is the student's history?
2. What is your dream for the student?
3. What is your nightmare?
4. Who is the student?
5. What are the student's strengths, gifts, and talents?
6. What are the student's needs?
7. What is the student's ideal day?

From these questions, commitments are made to make the ideal day a reality. The MAPS process does not replace your child's Individualized Education Program, but it can become a driving force to assure the most appropriate IEP is put into practice. Although MAPS is typically used for elementary age students, with modifications it can be used for high school students. MAPS brings together people who have a relationship with your child to identify the supports and relationships your child needs to live and learn in the school and community.

Developing Friendships

Starting in the elementary grades, schools can help students with disabilities develop friendships. One way to do this is to form a circle of friends. Friendships are so important to most of us that we cannot imagine a life without others. With friends we laugh, share our troubles, and learn and grow together. Yet many people with disabilities are deprived of mutually satisfying friendships with other people. Sometimes family support, regular schooling, and community living programs are not enough. Everyone needs friends. A formal circle of friends can be convened by school staff or parents by asking acquaintances to volunteer to get more involved in the life of a child with a disability. Peers can find creative ways to help the student with disabilities become more involved in school and neighborhood activities. For example, a phone circle can be formed to call the student in the evening and on weekends. Peers can volunteer to take the student with disabilities to dances, parties, scout meetings, concerts, etc. Peers can also find ways to help the student "fit in", such as suggesting "cool" clothes to wear and teaching the newest dances. Friendships help us rehearse adult roles and a circle of friends can set the stage for the rehearsals to begin.

Providing Vocational Training Experiences

In many high schools a variety of vocational training experiences are available to students with disabilities. Although there may be other options available in your school district, three options, the Cooperative School Work Program, Cooperative Occupational Education (COE) and

community-based training are discussed below.

The *Cooperative School Work Program* is a collaboration effort between the local school and the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. The Cooperative School Work Program is commonly called the co-op program or the work study program. Whatever the name, students with disabilities who can work without the supervision of a job coach or teacher can receive high school credit while working in a community business. In this program, students with disabilities receive valuable work experience during the school day while also earning wages. The high school special education teacher who coordinates the Cooperative School Work Program is called the Vocational Adjustment Coordinator (VAC). The VAC will help you refer your child to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor to determine if your child is eligible for this program. If your child is eligible for the program, the VAC and the DVR counselor will help your child find a job. After a job is found, the VAC will maintain contact with the employer to monitor the student's progress on the job.

Cooperative Occupational Education (COE) is another program that offers work experience and high school credit to students with disabilities. The COE program helps students prepare for jobs through training at a community job site and in school. COE students usually spend half of the school day in class and the other half day on the job site. To be eligible for the COE program, the student must be enrolled in classes at a vocational technical school (which is part of the public school system). The COE program is offered through Marketing/Distributive Education, Building Trades, Business and Office Technology, or Vocational Agriculture classes.

Community-based vocational training is a third option some schools offer to prepare students for the transition from school to work. Community-based vocational training differs from the Cooperative School Work Program and the COE program in that a school employee usually provides supervision and training to the student while the student is at a community job site. Many schools that offer community based vocational training place the student in several different jobs to give the student a variety of experiences. These varied experiences help determine what type of job the student likes to do and what she/he is good at doing. During the last year of school, efforts should be made to teach the student a job that he or she can keep after high school graduation. If the student will need to have a job coach after graduation, connections with an adult service agency that provides supported employment services must be made early. Remember that adult services, such as supported employment, are not automatically provided, and a gap between high school and supported work may occur if early planning does not take place.

Teaching Self-Advocacy

One of the most important skills schools can teach students with disabilities is to stand up for themselves. Most people like to take charge of their lives. People with disabilities do too! Teachers and counselors may hinder self-advocacy when they accept the role of "expert" about the student's needs and the school program. To gain control over their futures, teachers must teach students with disabilities the skills needed to make informed decisions about their lives. To be successful in the world of work, in the community and in social relationships students

with disabilities must have an understanding of and ability to express their capabilities, limitations and needs; know and stand up for their rights while respecting the rights of others; and accept responsibility to contribute their ideas and skills. Students with disabilities must be afforded opportunities to develop and practice these self-advocacy skills before they are confronted with the increased demands and expectations of adulthood.

At Home

Parents also have some responsibility for preparing their child for adult life. Home is the best place to teach many homemaking, money management, mobility, recreation/leisure, and social skills. Parents prepare their children for the future by providing choices and getting the student involved in a variety of activities. Following are a few suggestions to help prepare your child for the future.

Teaching Skills

Parents teach valuable skills that will be helpful in adult life. Homemaking skills such as doing the laundry, washing dishes, or vacuuming can be taught. Giving your child the responsibility to do these tasks will help her/him develop the independence to do these chores in the future. Although it may seem easier to do chores yourself, the time you take to teach your child will be worth it. It is also important that your child does household chores as all the other family members do. This helps your child feel like a contributing member of the family.

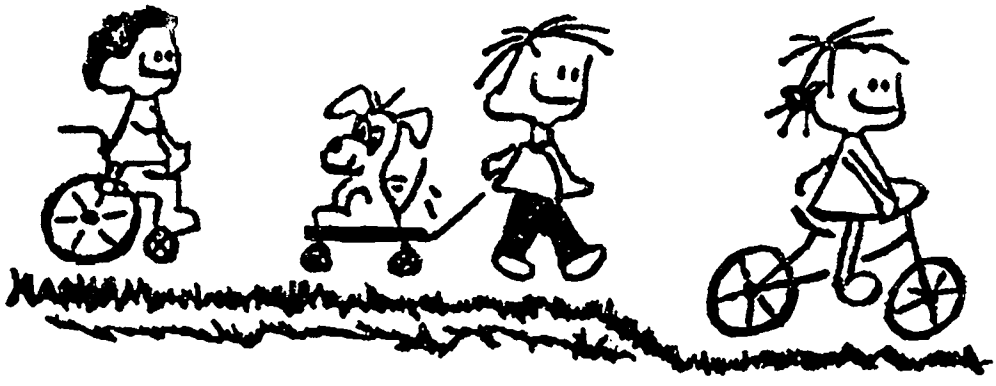
Families can also teach money management skills by giving the child an allowance and helping the child make saving and spending decisions. Family members can also teach a child with a disability how to get around in the community. As a younger child, this might mean learning how to walk to school or a friend's house. For a youth capable of learning to drive, the family can help him/her study for the driver's test. Families also can play an important role in involving their child in recreation/leisure activities. By learning to play a variety of games at home, in the neighborhood, or in organized recreation programs, children learn how to manage their free time and how to get along with others—both valuable skills for the future.

Giving Choices

You can help prepare your child to make decisions that adult life demands. One way to begin teaching your child to make decisions is to give your child choices and honor those choices. People make choices hundreds of times a day. Yet many times, adults limit the choices children are allowed to make. Usually this is done with the intention of being helpful and not wanting the child to fail. Sometimes it is difficult to let go and allow your child opportunities to discover things on his or her own. Yet making choices is part of this discovery process. Choices can be small, such as choosing the red shirt or the blue one. Decisions can be more important and difficult to make, such as choosing to live in a group home or in a supervised apartment. Learning to make and live with choices that are made are valuable lessons for adult life. Some of life's most valuable lessons are taught when poor choices are made and another decision has to be considered. Parents need to think about how they can offer many choices throughout the day to help prepare their children for adult life.

Getting Involved in Typical Activities

All families want to protect all the family members. It is easy to become overprotective and therefore, limit your child's experiences. Although it may be scary and difficult, it is important to encourage your child to be involved in typical activities in school and the community. It is important to encourage your daughter to be in Brownies or go to the football game and school dance on Friday night. Playing with Barbie like the other second grade girls, wearing "cool" clothes and going to pizza parties are important for making friends and "fitting in." By participating in these activities, kids learn how to get along with others and this helps prepare your child for community living and work in the future. If your son or daughter has developed a network of friends and interest in a variety of activities while in school, it is likely those skills and interests will continue into adult life. Again, it is important to let go enough to help prepare for the future—a place to live in the community, a social network, and a job or further training.



GETTING HELP FROM AGENCIES AND LOCAL RESOURCES

Adult services are not mandated as is school. Therefore, it is important to know the resources that are available to people with disabilities. As your family is going through this change of a member graduating from high school, it may be very helpful to get assistance from state and local agencies and resources. Representatives from agencies and resources in your community will provide valuable input into the requirements and qualifications for their agency. Agency personnel also will provide helpful information about the skills needed to be a happy and successful adult.

When planning for transition it is important to look at the resources available to all citizens of your community. For example, many recreational and social activities are offered by city recreation departments or the local YMCA. Civic groups and organizations provide activities and events for citizens in the community. Adult education classes are available to adults who want to discover a new hobby, improve their work skills, or to learn home improvement techniques. Each community has unique resources which can provide its citizens with new opportunities and experiences.

The following organizations can help you identify agencies and resources available to your child in transition. They can help you complete the resource sheet at the end of this manual and make it specific to your child's transition needs.

INFORM is the Information Network for Missouri's Children with Special Needs. INFORM maintains an up-to-date listing of all agencies, services, and programs within the state of Missouri which serve children and families with special needs. A trained person will answer your call, help you find resources in your area and keep your call confidential.
The services of INFORM are available by calling toll free, **1-800-873-6623.** TT/TTY use may access INFORM through Relay Missouri at 1-800-735-2966.

The Center for Innovations in Special Education serves special educators and others involved with the education of children and youth with disabilities. The Center for Innovations in Special Education can help you locate local agencies that provide services in your community. To access names and addresses of service agencies, call the toll-free number, **1-800-976-CISE.** TT/TTY users can access the Center for Innovations in Special Education through Relay Missouri at 1-800-735-2966.

Missouri School for the Blind provides information about and services for children with blindness and deaf/blindness. Missouri School for the Blind staff are familiar with other agencies that provide services to children with vision impairments/blindness. Contact the Missouri School for the Blind at **1-800-622-5672.** TT/TTY users can access Missouri School for the Blind through Relay Missouri at 1-800-735-2966.

MPACT is the Missouri parent-to-parent information, training, and support center. MPACT serves parents of children with disabilities from three offices:

Springfield: (407) 882-7434 (Voice or TDD) or **1-800-743-7634.**
St. Louis: (314) 997-7622 (Voice or TDD) or **1-800-995-3160.**
Kansas City: (816) 333-6833 (Voice) or **(816) 333-5685** (TDD).

Resource Center on Deafness is an information resource available from the **Missouri School for the Deaf.** The Resource Center on Deafness reaches out of Missouri's deaf and hard-of-hearing children and can be reached at: **(314) 592-2543 (TDD and Voice).**

The Missouri Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities maintains an information resource center. The Governor's Committee cooperates with many other agencies and is aware of agencies and services available throughout Missouri. For information, contact the following Governor's Committee offices:

Jefferson City:	**(314) 751-2600** or **1-800-877-8249** (voice or TTY/TDD).
St Louis:	**(314) 832-7443** (voice or TDD).
Kansas City:	**(816) 889-3012** (voice) TT/TTY users have access through Relay Missouri at 1-800-735-2966.

Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (main office)
2401 E. McCarty
Jefferson City, MO 65101-4400
(314) 751-32551 (Voice) or (314) 751-0881.

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
Division of Family Services
619 E. Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101
(314) 751-4249.

Adult Services Referral and Contact List for Transition Planning

Referral Needs	✓ Need	Contact/Agency Name, Address, Telephone
Supplement Security Income		
Medicaid		
Medicare		
Division of Rehabilitation		
Department of Mental Health		
Division of Mental Retardation		
Independent/Supported Living		
Vocational Training		
Residential Services		
Transportation Services		
Recreation/Leisure		
Respite Services		
Family Support		
Counseling		
Guardianship		
Other		

Source: Committee on Transition (March, 1994). *Resources to help students plan for the future.* Portland, ME: Author

Parent Input for Transition Training

So you will be prepared to develop a working transition plan, please answer the following questions. This information will be valuable for the IEP team when developing a post-school program.

1. Will your child be able to enter the adult world without special support beyond the family?

2. Do you know what services are available for your child once he/she reaches graduation?

3. Do you have short-term and long-term arrangements for financial support of your child?

4. Will your child have insurance?

5. What kind of work do you see your child doing? What does your child want to be?

6. What living arrangements will you expect or like your child to have?

7. Does your child have adequate self-help skills if left unattended?

8. Does your child have favorite leisure activities? If so, what are the activities your child enjoys?

9. What kind of transportation will your child need after graduation?

10. Does your child require special medical attention?

(Adapted from Midwest Regional Resource Center, 1982)