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ABSTRACT

This brief discusses the transition of high school students with disabilities to adult life. Federal law provisions that require a transition plan for all students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are reviewed and a checklist is provided that outlines positive transition planning practices that can be used for self-evaluation and program development. The newsletter explains outcomes areas in transition planning, including issues and concerns about housing, employment, postsecondary education, and community living. It recommends that providers and students consider that: (1) the Statement of Needed Transition Services should be developed prior to the completion of the IEP; (2) ancillary school services such as guidance and extra-curriculars can be used to meet transition goals; (3) employment-related transition goals can be addressed in vocational education programs or employment after school; (4) daily living skills can be addressed in classes offered by the school; and (5) all transition goals may be accomplished both in school and in the community. The Massachusetts Transition Initiative is explained and a list of Massachusetts and national resources is provided. Four checklists are also included that can help students prioritize and think about what they want to do with their lives after high school. (CR)

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The Institute Brief

Institute for Community Inclusion

A University Affiliated Program

September, 1995

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Just the Facts...

According to The National Longitudinal Transition Study (1988-1993) commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP):

- The national dropout rate for students with disabilities is 32%.
- Fewer than 17% of the students who drop out enter formal post-secondary training upon completion of their high school programs.
- 43% of youth with disabilities remain unemployed three to five years following high school.

These types of statistics have prompted local, state, and federal governments to enact laws regarding transition for students with disabilities.

Moving On...

Planning for the Future

Think back to when you were in high school. Remember how exciting and terrifying it was. How did you make decisions? How did you plan for the future? Did you even think about the future? What or who would have helped you begin to plan for your life?

Successful transition from high school to adult life is a cooperative process that involves student choice, parent involvement, informal supports, and use of community resources, as well as more formal procedures, and interagency collaboration. In a time of shrinking resources it is imperative that transition related issues for students with disabilities be linked to programs and initiatives that exist for general education students and to nontraditional resources (e.g., School-to-Work Opportunities Act, Goals-2000, family and school partnerships, school and business partnerships). Linking these initiatives and resources together is fiscally sound, creates a forum for sharing a broad range of expertise, helps bridge the gap between regular and special education, and brings a broader wealth of supports and options to schools. Ultimately this approach results in mobilizing the entire community to build the capacity of the local school to address the transition needs of all students.

While this newsletter will provide an introduction to transition at its ideal, it is crucial to address the realities of adult services that youth and parents face at transition time. Many school professionals wait until students are 20 or 21 or are in their last year of school to see what slots are available in the adult service system—by then it is too late to begin any type of comprehensive planning. Student choice may be disregarded because of the lack of time and planning. Employment possibilities and independent living options for young people with disabilities are frequently dismal. Given the fact that sufficient supports are not readily available, it often seems ludicrous to dream or have a positive vision of one's potential. While services do exist after age 22, they are often provided in segregated settings and waiting lists are long. We must acknowledge the realities, understand the urgency of this situation and become energized to take action. With careful planning, mutual respect and understanding, students, parents, educators and adult service providers can work together to achieve a future that is vastly different from what is available today.

Defining Transition

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101-476), IDEA, is a federal law that contains specific language about transition. The Statement of Needed Transition Services is required for **all** students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This must be developed no later than age 16 and, if appropriate for an individual student, beginning at age 14 or younger. This requirement also applies to students who are in collaborative programs and out-of-district placements. The outcomes of a student's transition must be documented in the Statement of Needed Transition Services that accompanies the IEP. Transition planning requires that the school district must:

- ◆ Invite the student and family to the team meeting;
- ◆ Consider student's needs, preferences, and interests;
- ◆ Include future oriented outcomes, goals and objectives in instruction, community experiences, employment and post-school adult living;
- ◆ Provide a functional vocational evaluation, if appropriate;
- ◆ Invite the liaison from the appropriate human service agency, if applicable; and
- ◆ Describe interagency responsibilities or linkages before the student leaves the school setting.

Transition from school to adult life is an exciting time, filled with many hopes and dreams. It can also be a time of uncertainty and turmoil. All students must think about where they want to live, whether they want to work or go to school, and what to do for fun. These decisions are hard for all students, but they can be especially difficult for students with disabilities. Often, students have not had practice making decisions, trying new things, or independently seeking support and assistance. Students should be

encouraged to take the lead in a transition process that will enable them to develop the decision-making and problem-solving skills they will need to succeed in life. This type of planning is good practice for all students leaving high school and preparing for work, post-secondary education and community living.

Schools are responsible for providing a wide range of coordinated activities that lead to employment, community living, and post-secondary education outcomes. When appropriate, transition planning documents can include the acquisition of daily living skills and a functional vocational evaluation.

Transition means different things to different people. Students who are interested in college often have to make plans to leave home, learn a new set of school "rules" and norms, deal with being away from home for the first time, and so on. Students who choose to work after school must decide what type of job would be satisfying to them, decide if the job can pay the bills, and think about living on one's own or not. Students may choose other options like volunteer work, travel, or other non-work related options. Making these choices will impact one's financial situation and perhaps one's living arrangements.

Students must be encouraged from a very early age to explore ideas and take chances. Their decisions must be supported by families, friends,

Federal regulations make it clear that transition services should be provided across a variety of locations, including within the community, according to the student's choices and needs.

teachers, and others to assist them in realizing their dreams.

Transition Planning Survey

The following checklist provides an outline of positive transition planning practices that can be used for self-evaluation and program development.

- 1. Students are invited to attend their IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 2. Parents are invited to attend their child's IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 3. Significant others (e.g., friends, advocate) are invited to IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 4. Strategies are documented and in place to secure student's preferences and interests whether they attend the IEP/TEAM meeting or not.
- 5. Appropriate adult service agencies are invited to the IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 6. Informal/nontraditional supports or resources (e.g., representative from local business, community college) participate as appropriate.
- 7. Strategies (e.g., Person Centered Planning) are in place to assist the student/family and school personnel in preparing for the IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 8. Strategies are in place to secure participation by adult service agencies when they do not attend the IEP/TEAM meeting.
- 9. The linkages and responsibilities of the adult service agencies are specified on the Statement of Needed Transition Services.
- 10. All students, age 16 (or younger if appropriate) who have IEPs, have a documented transition plan as part of their IEP (i.e., Statement of Needed Transition Services).
- 11. The Statement of Needed Transition Services addresses all outcome areas (i.e., instruction, community experiences, employment, recreation opportunities, post-secondary education, daily living skills, functional vocational evaluation).
- 12. If the Statement of Needed Transition Services does not include each of the above areas, the reason an area is not needed is specified.
- 13. Goals and objectives on the IEP reflect the outcome areas identified on the Statement of Needed Transition Services.
- 14. The Statement of Needed Transition Services reflects the student's and family's choices.
- 15. The Statement of Needed Transition Services is reviewed annually.
- 16. Necessary accommodations are provided at the IEP/TEAM meeting (e.g., assistive technology, interpreters for an individual who is deaf or who speaks a foreign language).
- 17. Parents express satisfaction with transition plans for their children.
- 18. Students express satisfaction with their transition plans.

Pictures of Transition

The following ideas illustrate some of the many choices and possibilities that exist for life after high school. The examples listed may seem quite ordinary, but may take years of thinking, talking and planning to be realized.

pursue a fashion design career, get an apartment, live on your own, get a job that pays well, go to baseball games, live with a friend, go shopping, go to clubs on weekends, begin a family, work part time, go to the movies, go out to dinner, go out with friends, live with another family, go camping, take weekend excursions with friends, buy a car, go to yard sales, travel, sing, go to health clubs, go to college, take a painting class, study yoga, become a doctor, marry a doctor, write a book, drive a truck, have pets, garden, work for an art store, pursue a hobby, eat out, go bungee jumping, go in-line skating, drive a snow plow, cook in a restaurant, be an administrative assistant, deliver mail, call into a radio talk show, host a radio talk show, go into modeling, take a cruise, work for an engineering firm, sail a boat, play a sport, watch a sport, volunteer, go to the library, join the YMCA, use a computer, buy a stereo, learn to drive, buy a house, open up a money market account, become a social worker, become a teacher, work as a secretary, answer telephones, race cars, join NOW, join a political party, go catalog shopping, vote, get on the internet, use a CB, go swimming, fly an airplane, fly in an airplane, be a stewardess, impersonate Elvis, go to a show, visit a new city, relocate, change your haircolor, live on a ranch, become a farmer, work in a museum, travel, become computer literate, build houses

What Is "Good" Transition?

It is difficult to define what "good" transitional planning will look like for schools. It will vary from each district based on the needs of the students, their families, and the individual makeup of the schools in that area. What is most important is that transition planning and information about transition become integral parts of schools' general information for all educators, students, and parents. Like any new program or requirement in a school, making sure that someone from the school take responsibility for disseminating information and educating the school community is essential. To facilitate change, it is important that administrators, including principals, department heads, and superintendents, send the message that transition planning and documentation become routine in their school communities.

Outcomes of Transition Planning

The following outcome areas highlight issues and areas of concern when planning for transition.

Housing

Given the general lack of affordable housing and individualized supported living options, it is never too early to start thinking about and planning for a place to live. Although many schools are not concerned with housing during the transition years (typical high school students live with their family), most people do move away from their family home shortly after high school, or at the most, within a few years after leaving high school. For students with disabilities, especially those who may need continuing support, the best time to begin examining options is several years before they leave high school. Often, when an examination of housing options is put off in lieu of "more important" issues, students end up remaining with their parents much longer than they wish.

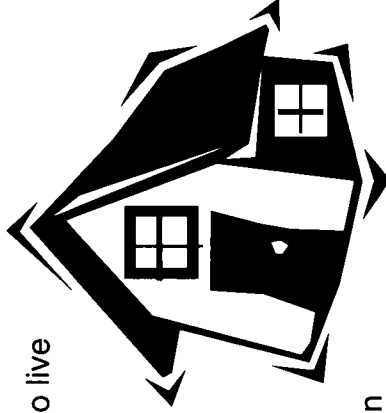
Students and families need to become familiar with the various kinds of housing that exist and with the supports that are available to assist them. Although the resources in the preferred community need to be considered, it is crucial to remember that housing options for people with even the most severe disabilities are the same as for everyone in the community. Further, specific types of supports need not be restricted to specific housing options. Proper levels and types of supports can be provided wherever someone chooses to live. Proximity to work, recreation, and shopping may all play a part in

Have You Thought About...?

Below are 4 checklists that can help students prioritize and think about what they want to do with their lives after high school. These questions may be a starting point for students as they begin to think about what is important to them and how they can make informed choices about their future.

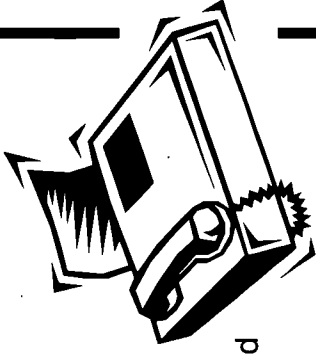
Housing Checklist

- Do you want to live alone or with other people?
- Do you want to live close to family? friends?
- What kind of housing do you want? (unit in apartment complex; multi- /single family home; etc.)
- How will you pay for housing?
- Do you need financial assistance to live where you choose?
- Do you need accessible parking?
- Do you want to live near work? school?
- Where will you shop, do laundry, socialize?
- Do you want to live in a rural, urban or suburban setting?
- What kinds of support will you need to live in your place of choice? (personal care assistant, financial, modification to dwelling?)
- Will your living situation need any accommodations on the inside or outside?



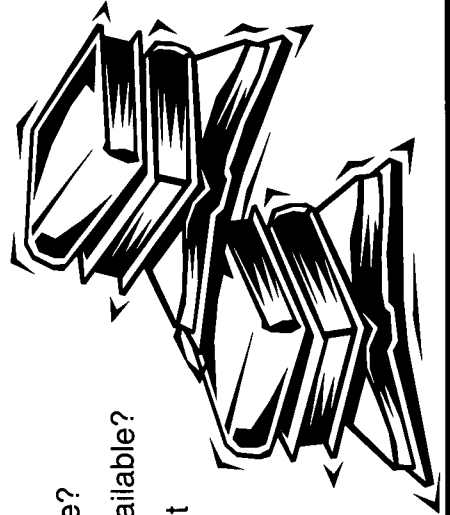
Employment Checklist

- What are your interests?
- What kinds of work/activities do you enjoy?
- What are your skills?
- How much money do you need to earn to support your lifestyle?
- Where do you want to work?
- Where is work located in relation to transportation and where you live?
- Do you need further education and training?
- How many hours are you willing to work?
- What does the job pay?
- Does the job have benefits?
- Will having a job affect social security benefits?
- Will the job provide flexibility for ongoing medical needs?
- How flexible are the hours?
- Does the job fit your work style? (noisy, quiet, casual, formal)
- Is the job challenging enough?
- Is there room for advancement?
- What kind of supervision is needed?
- Does the job offer any staff development opportunities?
- Do you have any physical requirements? (need to sit for periods of time, etc.)



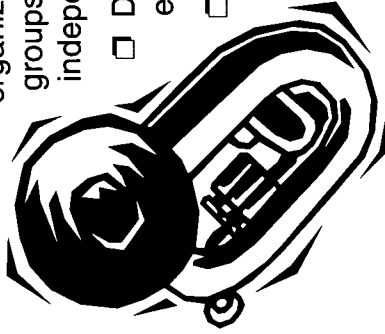
Post-Secondary Education Checklist

- What kind of college/university do you want to attend?
- Do you need an admission test? (SAT, ACT)
- Are there other requirements for admission? (interviews, GPA)
- Are there alternative admissions policies for students with disabilities?
- How will you pay for tuition?
- Do you want to live on or off campus?
- What kind of assistance do you need to meet college requirements? (reading, writing, note taking, studying, scheduling, getting to & from classes, personal care, recreation)
- Will you be able to complete college work in given amount of time?
- Are there support groups/services available for students with disabilities throughout the duration of college?
- Does the school have tutoring services? Is tutoring available?
- Are notetakers available?
- Are taped textbooks available?
- What special equipment is available?



Community Living And Recreation/Leisure Checklist

- What kind of social situations do you prefer? (large groups, small groups, one to one, nightclubs, sports)
- Do you enjoy certain activities more than others?
- What type of budget do you have?
- If there were no financial restrictions, what would you choose to do?
- Have you tried a wide array of activities such as organized groups (aerobics/drama class), informal groups (going to the mall with friends), independent activities (music lesson, gardening...)?
 - Do you need accommodations, or specialized equipment?
 - Do you need assistance in registering for activities?
 - Do you know where to register to vote?
 - Are you able to vote independently?
- Will you need assistance to vote?
- Do you know where your polling place is?
- Is there someone to provide necessary explanations?
- Do you know where necessary stores are located?
- Do you know where public transportation is?
- How do you prefer to meet people? (recreation activities, work, being introduced, want ads)



deciding where an individual chooses to live. For example, if one has to rely on public transportation, it is critical that one lives in an area that has adequate public transportation service.

Employment

In order to prepare for the world of work, students must develop work-related skills before they leave school. These skills may include: resume writing, interviewing, how to dress for work and interviews, physical stamina, promptness, problem solving, personal hygiene, following directions, accepting criticism, completing tasks in a timely fashion, working cooperatively and independently, developing social relationships, and understanding how job accommodations can assist them. This is a large list of skills to master. However, the better a student is at these individual areas, the more employable she/he can be. Students can get involved in school-based work programs, talk to guidance counselors about career exploration, or secure paid work experiences, like after-school jobs, in order to begin to prepare for the world of work and begin to make choices based on these experiences.

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the services offered through state agencies (e.g., Dept. of Employment and Training, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Dept. of Mental Retardation, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind). Additionally, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act may create work options through your school.

Post-Secondary Education

Students who choose to continue their education after graduation need to familiarize themselves with entrance requirements prior to leaving high school. In addition to two- or four-year colleges, post-secondary experiences can include continuing education opportunities both for credit and for fun. Conferences, workshops, meetings, cultural centers (e.g., museums), and adult education centers all fall under the heading of further education and may assist an individual in achieving his/her goals.

Many colleges and universities have developed programs, supports, and/or special services for students with disabilities. The services offered vary from school to school. Some colleges aggressively recruit individuals with disabilities or with specific kinds of disabilities. Others are not as progressive about making accommodations. Generally speaking, supports for students with cognitive disabilities are more difficult to find. In any case, students must be able to advocate for the accommodations they need and inform their administrators and/or individual instructors.

The transition plan should address the areas that the student identifies as most needed to increase his or her knowledge and skills in order to prepare for transition.

Gathering information that is pertinent to college prior to leaving high school is a great help in the admissions process. In a student's personal file, there may be information that verifies a disability, which is what most schools require prior to providing accommodations. Other items in a personal file might be a student's most recent IEP, a doctor's letter verifying disability, school transcripts, a portfolio of previous work, transition plans, a learning style inventory, and immunization records. Post-secondary institutions are only legally obligated to provide accommodations to students with disabilities when the accommodations are requested and the need documented. Students must know which academic tasks are difficult and then ask for assistance. Students are not required to disclose their disability during the application process.

Community Living

Living and participating in one's community is an important part of adult life. Individuals with disabilities must realize that they have the same rights and responsibilities as do all law abiding citizens. Participation in the community can take many forms. Voting, helping out a neighbor, participating in a town sports league, and shopping are but a few activities we take for granted in our community. It is necessary that students leaving

high school become aware of the activities available in their community of choice and seek out the places/activities that interest them. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, all options that are available to individuals without disabilities are available to individuals with disabilities. One need not consider only the “special” activities, but rather consider the array of available community options.

In Conclusion

To begin to accomplish transition goals, students and their support teams must look at both non-traditional as well as traditional resources in a community. Very often, it is the community-based, non-disability oriented programs that provide the best information and assistance in achieving community outcomes. To rely solely on adult human services agencies, who often maintain a “slot mentality,” can often lead to less than ideal outcomes. Successful transition means that the outcomes for the student with the disability are based on the **student’s** own dreams and choices. Successful transition is not entering a work program and a living situation where there is a spot available that the student has not chosen, seen or is not interested in.

Consider this...

- The Statement of Needed Transition Services should be developed prior to the completion of the IEP to ensure that the goals and objectives of the IEP reflect the student's vision.
- Know your rights to live where you choose, have a career, belong to the community and access all public services and buildings.
- Ancillary school services such as guidance and extra-curriculars can be used to meet transition goals (e.g., a guidance counselor who assists with reading want ads, or developing life-long leisure interests through club participation).
- Employment related transition goals may be addressed in vocational educational programs, jobs within the school (e.g., work in the main office), or employment after school.
- Daily living skills can be addressed in classes offered by the school such as food purchase in home economics, check balancing in a math course, or personal hygiene in health related courses.
- Know where to go for information—become familiar with local adult service agencies.
- All transition goals may be accomplished both in school and in the community.

The Massachusetts Transition Initiative

The Massachusetts Transition Initiative (MTI) is a five-year systems change grant with the Department of Education, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP) at Children's Hospital, Boston, and University of Massachusetts/Boston. Other participating agencies include the Department of Employment and Training, the Federation for Children with Special Needs and the Service Delivery Areas of the JTPA. The purpose of the grant is to assist school districts, students, families, adult service agencies, and community-based providers to develop strategies that support youth with disabilities as they move from school to meaningful outcomes in adult life.

The MTI provides training and technical assistance to schools across Massachusetts on topics related to transition such as relevant laws, student leadership, organizing local Transition Planning Committees, Person Centered Planning, facilitating linkages on local and regional levels, finding and sharing resources, and completing the Statement of Needed Transition Services. For further information, please call Pam Boudrot at (617) 287-7597 (voice/TTY)

Resources

The following list includes the primary transition agencies in Massachusetts. They can provide you with information on adult service agencies as well as their own services.

State and Local Resources

Division of Medical Assistance

Customer Service (800) 841-2900
(617) 348-5500

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

(617) 727-5550
(800) 392-6450
(800) 392-6556 (TTY)
(617) 727-5960 (fax)

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

(617) 727-5106 (V/TTY)
(800) 882-1155 (V/TTY)
(617) 727-0890 (fax)

Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

(617) 727-5500
(617) 727-9842 (TTY)
(617) 727-5500 x-490 (fax)

Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation

(617) 727-5608
(617) 727-9866 (TTY)
(617) 727-9867 (fax)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

(617) 727-2700
(617) 727-2682 (TTY)
(617) 727-2559 (fax)

Massachusetts Department of Social Services

(617) 727-0900
(617) 261-7440 (TTY)
(617) 261-7435 (fax)

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

(617) 348-5600
(617) 348-5599 (TTY)
(617) 727-3210 (fax)

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

(617) 727-2183 (V/TTY)
(800) 245-6543 (voice)
(617) 727-1354 (fax)

Community and State Colleges throughout the state have disability services to assist students get the supports and services they need to be successful in post-secondary education. Check your local phonebook or public library for numbers.

Federation for Children with Special Needs

95 Berkeley Street, Suite 104
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 482-2915 (V/TTY)
(413) 562-3691 (Western Mass/voice only)
(800) 331-0688 (V/TTY)
(617) 695-2939 (fax)

The Federation is an advocacy organization who can assist students, their parents and others with information on advocacy, the laws and other issues relating to transition.

Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities

27-43 Wormwood Street, Fort Point Place
1st Floor
Boston, MA 02210-1606
(617) 727-5540
(617) 345-9743 (TTY)
(800) 462-5015

Phone hours 11:00-4:00, M, T, Th, F
(617) 345-4318 (fax)

ICID provides free information, referrals and problem-solving assistance for individuals with disabilities, their families, friends, employers and service providers.

National Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

PO Box 6123
Morgantown, WV 26506-6123
(800) 526-7234 (V/TTY)

**Center for Minority Special Education
(CMSE)**

Hampton University
PO Box 6107
Hampton, VA 23668
(804) 727-5434 (voice)

Federal Resource Center (FRC)

Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20009-1202
(202) 884-8000 (voice)

**HEATH Resource Center National
Clearinghouse on Post-secondary Education
for Individuals with Disabilities**

American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036-1193
(800) 544-3284

National Alliance of Business (NAB)

1201 New York Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 289-2888; (800) 787-2849
(202) 289-2977 (TTY)

National Center for Youth with Disabilities

University of Minnesota, Box 721
420 Delaware Street, SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0392
(612) 626-2825 (voice); (612) 624-3939 (TTY)

**National Council Of Independent Living
Programs (NCILP)**

2111 Wilson Blvd, Suite 405
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 525-3406 (voice); (703) 525-3407 (TTY)
(703) 525-3409 (fax)

**National Information Center for Children
and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)**

PO Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013-1492
(800) 695-0285 (V/TTY)

**National Rehabilitation Information Center
(NARIC)**

8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(800) 346-2742 (V/TTY)
(301) 588-9284 (V/TTY); (301) 589-1967 (fax)

**Northeast Regional Resource Center
(NERRC)**

Institute for Program Development
Trinity College of Vermont, McAuley Hall
208 Colchester Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 658-5036 (voice), (802) 860-1428 (TTY)

Parents Are Vital in Education (PAVE)

6316 S. 12th Street
Tacoma, WA 98465
(206) 565-2266 (V/TTY)

**President's Committee on Employment of
Persons with Disabilities (PCEPD)**

1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036-3470
(202) 376-6200 (voice); (202) 376-6205 (TTY)

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The mission of the Institute for Community Inclusion is to work to create and preserve a quality life for people with disabilities and their families through training, research, information sharing, and service with and for individuals with disabilities and their family members, community members, service providers, and policy makers. For further information, please contact:

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