

# FOCUS FLYER

## TRANSITION: What is it? When should it be done and who is involved?: The First of a Three Part Series

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Transition is a term that all of us have heard at some point in our school careers. Some of the biggest transitions a child faces is from early intervention to pre-school, from preschool to elementary, from elementary to high school and from high school to graduation and moving on to postsecondary opportunities.

In 1994 the term transition was defined by the Council for Exceptional Children as: the change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. However, transition should not be thought of as something that a student experiences at the end of their high school career. Transition is an ongoing future planning process that looks at the student from elementary school to after graduating high school and going on to postsecondary education opportunities.

In order for transition to be truly beneficial for the individual it must start early in a child's life. However, in most instances transition begins at age fourteen. Transition should not only be thought of as plans for post high school opportunities, it should include many different transition experiences during the child's life.

In the first of this three part series we will look at transition in four different environments; adult services, school age, early intervention, and severe cognitive disabilities.

As parents, teachers, and service providers we think about what is a desirable and realistic future for students who are deaf-blind. In order to help create a meaningful

future for individuals who are deafblind, several issues should be considered. For instance, where will the individual live, how will he or she occupy their time—will they work, go to college or other postsecondary training, what type of supports and social networking are available to them?

These issues should be planned for and addressed by the IEP Team in the early stages of the transition process, preferably while the student is in elementary or middle school.

One tool to use when addressing future planning is the **Person Centered Planning (PCP)** approach. The PCP approach is an excellent way to enhance the IEP objectives and to make sure the goals and future plans are specifically driven by the individual's desires. In addition, it maps out what types of supports the individual wants and needs while taking into account the dreams the individual has for future transition plans.

The PCP also helps to identify who should be involved in the transition process and what part they should play. The transition team should include the individual, school (IEP Team), people outside the school setting such as family, friends, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other service providers as well as any person the individual who is deaf-blind wants to be involved, such as a minister, employer, etc.

One of the considerations during the PCP is to ensure that the development of the student's different skills, such as, communication, independent living, decision-making, and mobility all influence the future options available to the student.

### Article Resources:

#### Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

[www.tsbvi.edu](http://www.tsbvi.edu)

#### DB-Link :

<http://www.dblink.org>

#### Helen Keller National

[www.hknc.org](http://www.hknc.org)

#### Student/Family Transition Manual

Dr. Linda McDowell (USM)

#### P.A.E.S. Program

[talentassessment.com](http://talentassessment.com)

#### Life Beyond the Classroom Third Edition Paul Wehman

**Portfolios** are another effective tool to help in the transition process. The portfolio can focus on background information about the student. It can include information regarding goals, family, friends, emergency contact, educational information, medical needs, what things the student likes to do, or things he does not like to do, educational information, leisure and recreation opportunities, and even job opportunities. Portfolios can also be used in the transition of students for different grade levels and should be updated on a yearly basis.

In addition to the portfolios a **pictorial** or **video resume** could be used to enhance the student's work opportunities. This could be given to potential employers, to show them what work experiences the individual has had. All of this can be done while the student is still in high school.

Other tools that can be used in the transition process are **student transition manuals**. These manuals can be started early in the student's career and they focus not only on the student's interest, needs, abilities, goals & supports, but also include questionnaires for parents. The manuals can be used as a transition guideline for parents and students. Many school districts have manuals they use. Parents should be aware of this and ask what transition manuals are being implemented by the school. (Additional resources will be available at the end of this article).

The transition manuals include information regarding Home Living Options, Recreational and Leisure Options, Vocational/Post-Secondary Education Options, Transportation Options, & Financial Support, the list is endless.

One of the newer transition tools that specifically focuses on vocational opportunities is the Practical Assessment Exploration System by the CTC, INC. This is one of many types of curriculum available.

This program is being used by some of the schools around the state. The P.A.E.S. Program is used in Middle Schools to prepare students for career placement in high school, and in high school for students that are not in regular mainstream classes, to help them find careers they are interested in.

P.A.E.S. provides training in basic vocational and life skills. The training emphasizes skills needed for vocational placement, career training, independent living, and work behavior development. This program is based on a HANDSON experience and provides meaningful career information and knowledge of what careers in-

terest the students.

Now let's shift from tools that can be used in the transition process to services that individuals and families need to be aware of, when planning and preparing for transition from school into the work force or postsecondary education.

When considering life after high school students and families may think, "What do I do? or "Who can help us?" Transition planning by law is required to be an interagency collaboration, that includes local adult service providers, families, and students.

Vocational Rehabilitation is usually the first adult service provider contacted during the transition process. During the transition planning, parents and students should be made aware of agencies like this through the school system and interagency collaboration.


The Mississippi Department of Education provides school systems access to a Coordinator of Transition Services and Transition Counselors. The Coordinator and Counselors help provide students and their families with information regarding what services are available and who to contact. This is a service that is provided while the student is still in high school, to give information on what options are available.

If the student chooses to go through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), then a VR counselor is assigned to the individual. The VR Counselor helps the individual find services after graduation. Once the individual is in the VR system the counselor helps to find employment for the individual. Supported Employment through VR may become involved and pick the individual up on their caseload. In addition, the WIN Job Centers around the state may be used as an employment resource.

Another employment resource is the Home and Community Based Waiver Services (HCBS), which provides Supported Employment Opportunities. These services focus on competitive employment in the community. Customizing employment or job carving is specifically done to fit the needs and interest of the individual. The HCBS programs provide job coaches to assist the individuals with learning the job roles and responsibilities.

Some students may choose a different route such as postsecondary education. These opportunities may include college, personal adjustment training, or independent living.

Students opting for college should contact Disability Support Services (DSS) on campus to help with accommodations for the classroom.



**"Transition should not be thought of as something a student experiences at the end of his/her high school career."**

Accommodations could include interpreters, note takers, FM system, low vision aids, or any other adaptive device. The individual's VR counselor should help with contacting DSS.

Other postsecondary training options may include personal adjustment training for independent living skills. Students may attend places such as the Helen Keller National Center. HKNC provides training related to independent living skills and vocational training skills. States may have access to resources similar to the Helen Keller National Center. This is information a family could receive from the VR Counselor or state deaf-blind project. Families may even contact HKNC via email to get additional resources.

Finally, individuals and their families need to discuss living options. Is the individual interested in living independently, in an apartment, owning his/her own home, living with a roommate, or some other living option? These are questions that may arise. If so, how does an

individual get information on what living options are available? Programs such as Home of Your Own, Creative Community Living Options, and Living Independence for Everyone are good sources to start with.

Just remember transition is ongoing and should start at an early age. Don't wait to plan for transition in the last semester of the individual's senior year. Start planning early and become familiar with the options that are available. Make sure the transition plans are included in the student's IEP as objectives and goals to work towards. Use transition tools such as the transition manuals, student portfolios, video and pictorial resumes, as well as vocational programs within the school system. Being knowledgeable will make the transition go more smoothly.



**"Transition planning is the primary responsibility of the local education agency. However, in 97 IDEA mandated that an interagency approach be taken".**



## TRANSITION RESOURCES

- **A Guide For Students Who Are Deaf-Blind Considering College** A publication from the Helen Keller National Center Technical Assistance Center  
[www.hknc.org](http://www.hknc.org)
- **Life Beyond the Classroom: Third Edition** Paul Wehman (Paul H. Brooks Publishing)
- **High School Transition Management System (Manual)**  
[www.stuhasic.com/hstms/index.htm](http://www.stuhasic.com/hstms/index.htm)
- **Transition Handbook**  
[www.projectteams.org/transition.php](http://www.projectteams.org/transition.php)
- **Student/Family Transition Manual**  
[linda.mcdowell@usm.edu](mailto:linda.mcdowell@usm.edu)
- **Healthy & Ready to Work - Tools & Checklist**  
[www.hrtw.org/tools/check.html](http://www.hrtw.org/tools/check.html)
- **Mississippi State Department of Education Transition Services**  
[www.mde.k12.ms.us/special\\_education/](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/special_education/)
- **HRTW-MS: Adolescent Transition in Mississippi**  
[www.hrtw.org/about\\_us/proj\\_files/hrtw\\_ms.html](http://www.hrtw.org/about_us/proj_files/hrtw_ms.html)
- **Office of State Coordinator of Vocational Education for Students with Disabilities** <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us>
- **Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services**  
[www.mdrs.state.ms.us/client/transition\\_services.html](http://www.mdrs.state.ms.us/client/transition_services.html)
- **T-TAP.ORG** Customized Employment

## MISSISSIPPI SERVICES FOR DEAF-BLIND

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI  
THE DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM,  
INSTRUCTION, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION  
Box 5115  
HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39406-5115

PHONE: 800-357-6530  
FAX: 601-266-4978  
EMAIL: DEAF-BLIND@USM.EDU

### PROJECT STAFF

Dr. Linda McDowell, Administrative Director  
Liz Grantham, Administrative Assistance  
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Cassandra Holly, Project Support Coordinator



**We're on the web!**  
[www.usm.edu/msdb](http://www.usm.edu/msdb)

## UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

- **Southeast Augmentative Communication Conference**  
Oct. 6-7, 2005, Birmingham, AL. 205-251-0165 ext. 263  
Sponsored by the United Cerebral Palsy of Birmingham
- **Technology Seminar: The Magic of Technology**  
Nov. 14-15, 2005, Helen Keller National Center  
Deadline for registration Friday Oct. 7th  
Contact: National Training Team @ ntthknc@aol.com or  
Call 1-516-944-8900 ext 233
- **Professional Development for Employment Training  
Specialists Employment :the Ultimate Goal**  
January 23-24, 2006 Monday—Friday Deadline Dec. 30th  
Doris Plankser- ntthknc@aol.com or 1-516-944-8900 ext 233

**Strategies for Working With Deaf Blind Students & Adults**  
JCIL Deaf & HOH contact: Amy @ 731-664-3986  
Oct. 29th 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. JCIL Community Room

## PROJECT SPARKLE Family Lead for Portfolio Development

CONTACT ..... CINDY WILLIAMSON @ 601-853-8347



## NEW TO THE PROJECT

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Cassandra Holly. I started with the Mississippi Deaf-Blind Project in July. I guess you could say I am 'the new Jennifer Baker'. Jennifer will be missed but is enjoying being a full time mom. I wanted to let you know that I have my Masters in Communicative Disorders and have been a Speech Therapist for 8 years. I have had experience working with individuals who are deaf-blind for 5 years. I have worked with Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind as a Deaf-Blind Specialist. In working as a Deaf-Blind Specialist I helped to teach individuals who are deaf-blind personal adjustment skills, communication and language skills. I was also a job coach and helped with transition into the work environment. My experience has mainly been with adults. While working for the Project I will be responsible for helping students and families with transition planning and providing teachers with ideas for functional work opportunities. If you have questions or would like to contact me, please call 601-984-8218 or email me at [cassandra.holly@usm.edu](mailto:cassandra.holly@usm.edu). I look forward to hearing from you.