



Virginia Intercommunity Transition Council
A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

VITC

Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

HEALTH and WELLNESS

What does health and wellness have to do with transition?

Students with disabilities look forward to lives that include:

- More time to be a teen and less time as a patient
- More time at school or work and less time in the hospital or in physicians' offices
- More emphasis on life and fun and less on health management
- More time planning for the future and less time on surviving today
- More time feeling good about what they do and less time being sick and unhappy
- More time being productive and less time being tired and unmotivated

What is health and wellness?

Many aspects of a student's well-being involve health and wellness. These include:

- Medical home with a primary physician
- Specialty physicians and other health care providers
- Dental health
- Exercise and Fitness
- Mental Health
- Nutrition
- Health risk behaviors
- Safety practices
- Sexuality

What can students do?

Students are the most important member of the health and wellness team. Their hopes and dreams are at the center of planning. To be an active member of the team, the students need to have an understanding of their:

- Health condition(s)
- Medical History
- Medications
- Therapies
- Durable medical equipment

To be an active member of the team, the students need to learn self-determination skills to enhance their ability to make choices and decisions about their lives such as:

- Making medical appointments
- Determining when to seek medical attention
- Taking their medications according to physicians' orders
- Meeting with the physician alone
- Providing input into their Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Identifying the supports they need to participate in school, work, and community
- Identifying their needs, interests, and preferences

How do families fit in?

Families must find the balance between protecting their adolescent and allowing them to be independent young adults. This can be a tough job. To help, families can:

- Assure that the adolescent understands his/her health condition(s) and treatment
- Help the adolescent to keep a record of his/her medical history, including condition(s), treatments (dates, physicians, recommendations), and IEP
- Allow time for adolescent to spend time alone with physician and other medical providers. Involve the adolescent in treatment planning
- Initiate discussion with physician and adolescent about transfer to adult care providers
- Encourage the adolescent to speak with other youths with disabilities with the same medical condition(s) who have successfully transitioned to adult health care providers
- Prepare nutritious meals and provide guidance and health information on nutrition, exercise, dental health, sexuality, and safety
- Observe the adolescent for risk-taking behaviors and emotional problems
- Encourage the adolescent to be an active member during IEP meetings

What are some important areas that the families need to explore?

- **Access to continuous health insurance benefits**
 - When will the adolescent no longer be eligible for health insurance under the family's policy?
 - Can the family afford an individual health insurance policy for him/her?
 - What are the eligibility criteria for public coverage such as Medicare and Medicaid?
- **Emergency planning and preparedness**
 - Emergency medical information form
 - Emergency plan for evacuation
 - Disaster supplies kit
- **Legal matters**
 - Guardianship
 - Legal Right to Consent
 - Advance Medical Directive and Living Wills
 - Wills and trusts
 - Rights under American with Disabilities Act

Who can help?

Local school divisions, Local health departments, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, Major medical centers, Local Red Cross chapter or emergency management office, American Academy of Pediatrics,

Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision (www.brightfutures.aap.org)

Healthy and Ready to Work National Center (www.hrtw.org)

Children with Special Needs Program at Virginia Department of Health
(AdolescentHealth@vdh.virginia.gov)

Take the steps to person-centered thinking
ASK, LISTEN, RESPECT, COMMIT!