



Virginia Intercommunity Transition Council
A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

VITC

Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

Student and Family Empowerment

Transition is a natural part of life taking place as individuals grow and mature into adult life. Transition for a student with disabilities is an array of activities which require commitment by all stakeholders including the individual, his or her family members, (including foster parents, guardians, extended family members and individual support providers), and others who the student considers important in reaching a fully integrated life. An integrated life is reflected through participation in natural supports, such as social groups, clubs, recreation, friendship networks, social networking, and an individual having participation in all aspects of community life. For individuals with disabilities, ensuring inclusion along the life span is critically important to ensure the greatest opportunities for smooth transition. Students and families must take a pro-active posture in the transition process to support positive decision making by all concerned parties as well as the broader community including public policy makers.

Leaving high school and entering adult life presents opportunities, challenges, and major changes for all students. Virginia's Intercommunity Transition Council (VITC) is committed to assuring that all young people with disabilities move from secondary school environments into lives of their choosing. Families and students with disabilities must advocate within the local and state business and leadership networks to ensure activities for transition are not constrained by current options or available resources. Thus, it is essential to create communities that promote student and family empowerment based upon person-centered principles. This means transition efforts are most effective when individuals are empowered to make decisions about their lives, assume personal responsibility, and experience choice and control in their lives.

How does your community promote student and family empowerment?

- Do students with disabilities with the involvement of family members lead or actively participate in their transition planning at an early age and continue to be involved throughout their educational experience?
- Are students' and parents' opinions respected during transitional planning?
- Does transition planning include people that the student and parent want at the table who can speak to those things that are important for the student?
- Are the student's abilities, interests, and preferences recognized and respected?
- Do all members of the team take shared responsibility for the final outcome of the transition process?
- Has the student had a variety of inclusive experiences in integrated settings throughout student life?
- Are the student and his or her family members aware and connected to a community support system such as The Arc, Centers for Independent Living, the local Special Education Advisory Committee and natural support systems?
- Does the student take charge with the support of family, educators, and other collaborators to ensure empowerment in the transition process?
- Are family members encouraged to ensure their sons or daughters lead and participate in making transition planning decisions?

- Are students and family members invited to participate in local and regional transition coalition development and planning?
- Do students and family members know about transition and use this information for transition planning and to promote services within the community?

- Are cultural values of students and family members respected and reflected in the transition planning process?
- Are students and family members made aware of and supported to access leadership training opportunities for transitional planning and services?
- Are goals identified by the student and family based on needs and preferences discovered through a person-centered planning process using age appropriate assessments?
- Do students, family members, and transition service providers set high expectations and work to achieve them regardless of perceptions regarding the student's abilities and disabilities?
- Do transition service providers prepare for, include, and promote active participation of students and family members?
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- Are both formal and informal community members invited to participate in transition planning efforts?
- Do administrators practice person-centered thinking by encouraging, facilitating, and expecting transition service providers to promote the active participation of families and student in the transition planning process and in this way ensure all of the above to occur?

For more information contact your local school principal, special education director, local field office for the [Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services - Division of Rehabilitative Services](#) , the [Virginia Department of Education](#); the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (www.peatc.org), the Center for Family Involvement (www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org), the Center for Self-Advocacy Leadership (www.virginiasefadvocacy.org), The Arc of Virginia (www.thearcofva.org), and/or the I'm Determined project (www.imdetermined.org).

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