

**DBHS Practice Tool
Transition to Adulthood**



**Developed by the
Arizona Department of Health Services
Division of Behavioral Health Services**

Effective Date: 1/1/2008

Revision Date: 6/26/2012

Revised: 3/12/15

TITLE

Transition to Adulthood

GOAL/WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE THROUGH THE USE OF THIS TOOL?

To strengthen practice in Arizona’s public behavioral health system and promote continuity of care through collaborative planning by:

- supporting individuals transitioning into early adulthood in ways that reinforce their recovery process;
- ensuring a smooth and seamless transition from the children’s behavioral health service system to the adult service system; and
- fostering an understanding that becoming a self-sufficient adult is a process that occurs over time and can extend beyond the age of eighteen.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This Tool is specifically targeted to Tribal and Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (T/RBHAs) and their subcontracted network and provider agency behavioral health staff who participate in assessment and service planning processes, provide case management and other clinical services, or who supervise staff that provide service delivery to adolescents, young adults and their families.

TARGET POPULATION(S)

All adolescents and young adults enrolled with a T/RBHA who are or will be experiencing transition at the age of 18.

ATTACHMENTS

[Attachment A: Housing](#)

[Attachment B: Resources](#)

DEFINITIONS

[Adult Recovery Team](#)

[Caregiver](#)

[Annual Update](#)

[Child and Family Team](#)

[Assessment](#)

[Family](#)

[Behavioral Health Category Assignment](#)

[Family Involvement](#)

[Family Member](#)

[Peer/Recovery Support](#)

[Guardian](#)

[Person Centered Planning](#)

[Individual Service Plan \(ISP\)](#)

[Serious Mental Illness \(SMI\)](#)

[Natural Support](#)

[Special Assistance](#)

BACKGROUND

The psychological and social development of adolescents transitioning into young adulthood is challenged by the economic, demographic, and cultural shifts that have occurred over several generations. Sociologist researcher, Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., as Network Chair of the Network on Transitions to Adulthood stated, “Traditionally, early adulthood has been a period when young people acquire the skills they need to get jobs, to start families, and to contribute to their communities. But, because of the changing nature of families, the education system, and the workplace, the process has become more complex. This means that early adulthood has become a difficult period for some young people, especially those who are not going to college and lack the structure that school can provide to facilitate their development.”¹ While some individuals adapt well as they transition into the responsibilities of adulthood, others experience challenges such as those youth who have mental health concerns.

In 2002, one study found that about three-fourths of young adults with a diagnosable mental health condition at the age of 26 had first been diagnosed while in their teens.² Adolescents with mental health concerns are at a higher risk of dropping out of high school, not finishing college, abusing drugs or alcohol, having unplanned pregnancies, being unemployed, and are more likely to have a criminal past. Approximately 24 to 39 percent of adolescents with mental health disorders experience at least one of the above noted outcomes compared to 7 to 10 percent of their peers without disorders.³ Among 18-25 year olds, the prevalence of serious mental health conditions is high, yet this age group shows the lowest rate of help-seeking behaviors.⁴

As the transition to adulthood has become more challenging, youth with mental health needs struggle to achieve the hallmarks of adulthood such as finishing their education, entering the labor force, establishing an independent household, forming close relationships, and potentially

¹Furstenberg, F. The Network on Transitions to Adulthood. Retrieved November 25, 2009, from <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/about/index.html>

² J. Kim-Cohen et al. (2002). Prior Juvenile Diagnoses in Adults with Mental Disorder. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60, 709-17.

³ Osgood, D. Wayne, Foster, E. Michael, Flanagan, Constance & Ruth, Gretchen R., editors. (2005). *On Your Own without a Net: the Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations* (Chapter 10, J. Heidi Gralinski-Bakker et al., and Chapter 11, Phillip M. Lyons, Jr. & Gary B. Melton).

⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/>

getting married and becoming parents.⁵ While these may be considered the trademarks of adulthood from a societal viewpoint, some studies suggest that youth may conceptualize this transition in more “intangible, gradual, psychological, and individualistic terms.”⁶ Top criteria endorsed by youth as necessary for a person to be considered an adult emphasized features of individualism such as accepting “responsibility for the consequences of your actions,” deciding one’s “own beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences,” and establishing “a relationship with parents as an equal adult.”⁷

Oftentimes, youth who successfully transition to adulthood are those that acquire a set of skills and the maturational level to use these skills effectively. Transition planning can emphasize interpersonal skill training through a cognitive-behavioral approach to help youth develop positive social patterns, assume personal responsibility, learn problem-solving techniques, set goals, and acquire skills across various life domains.⁸

With transition to adulthood occurring at later ages and over a longer span of time, many young people in their 20’s may still require the support of their families. Involving families in the transition planning process and identifying the individual support needs of their children recognizes the diversity that is needed when accessing services and supports. Youth who have been enrolled in government programs due to family hardship, poverty, physical, or mental health challenges are often the least prepared to assume adult responsibilities. For others, such as youth leaving foster care, they must acquire housing without the financial support of a family.⁹

Eligibility for public programs, such as Medicaid, Social Security, and vocational rehabilitation, as well as housing and residential services, may engender planning for changes at the age of 18. Youth who have disabilities that significantly impact their ability to advocate on their own behalf may require a responsible adult to apply for guardianship. Other youth may benefit from a referral to determine eligibility for services as an adult with a serious mental illness (SMI). Thus, it is the responsibility of the behavioral health system to ensure young adults are provided with the supports and services they need to acquire the capacities and skills necessary to navigate through this transitional period to adulthood.

⁵ Osgood et al. (2005). *On Your Own without a Net: the Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations* (Chapter 10, J. Heidi Gralinski-Bakker et al., and Chapter 11, Phillip M. Lyons, Jr. & Gary B. Melton).

⁶ Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. (1997). Young People’s Conceptions of the Transition to Adulthood. *Youth & Society*, 29(1), 3-23.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Osgood, D. Wayne, Foster, E. Michael, Flanagan, Constance & Ruth, Gretchen R., editors. (2005). *On Your Own without a Net: the Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations* (Chapter 3, He Len Chung, et al., and Chapter 4, David Altschuler).

⁹ Osgood, D. Wayne, Foster, E. Michael, Flanagan, Constance & Ruth, Gretchen R. (February 2005, Issue 18). Network on Transitions to Adulthood Policy Brief. *Programs and Policy Goals for Helping Vulnerable Youth as They Move into Adulthood*.

PROCEDURES

I. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Persons receiving services in Arizona's public behavioral health system may experience various transitions during the course of their care and treatment. Please refer to [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 901, Transition of Persons](#) for policy requirements when overseeing the following types of transition:

- *3.17.7-A. Transition from child to adult services*
- *3.17.7-B. Transition due to a change of the Behavioral Health Provider or the behavioral health category assignment*
- *3.17.7-C. Transition to Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) Program Contractors*
- *3.17.7-D. Inter-T/RBHA Transfer*
- *3.17.7-E. Transitions of persons receiving court ordered services*
- *3.17.7-F. Transitions of persons being discharged from inpatient settings*
- *3.17.7-G. Transitions of persons receiving behavioral health services from Indian Health Services (IHS)*

The purpose of this tool will be to address the recommended practice for transitioning youth from the children's behavioral health service system to the adult service system with a focus on the activities that will assist youth in acquiring the skills necessary for self-sufficiency and independence in adulthood. T/RBHAs and their subcontractors are expected to follow the procedures clearly outlined in [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 901, Transition of Persons](#), which require that **transition planning begins when the youth reaches the age of 16**. However, if the Child and Family Team (CFT) determines that planning should begin prior to the youth's 16th birthday, the team may proceed with transition planning earlier to allow more time for the youth to acquire the necessary life skills, while the team identifies the supports that will be needed. Age 16 is the latest this process should start. For youth who are age 16 and older at the time they enter the behavioral health system, planning must begin immediately. It is important that members of the CFT look at transition planning as not just a transition into the adult behavioral health system, but also as a transition to adulthood.

When the adolescent reaches the **age of 17** and the CFT believes that the youth may meet eligibility criteria as an adult with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI), the T/RBHA and their subcontracted providers must ensure the young adult receives an eligibility determination as outlined in the [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 106, SMI Eligibility Determination](#). If the youth is determined eligible, or likely to be determined eligible for services as a person with a Serious Mental Illness, the adult behavioral health services case manager is then contacted to join the CFT and participate in the transition planning process. **After obtaining permission from the parent/guardian, it is the responsibility of the children's behavioral health service provider to contact and invite the adult behavioral health services**

case manager to upcoming planning meetings. When more than one T/RBHA and/or behavioral health service provider agency is involved, the responsibility for collaboration lies with the agency who is directly responsible for service planning and delivery.

If the young adult is not eligible for services as a person with a Serious Mental Illness, it is the responsibility of the children’s behavioral health provider, through the CFT, to coordinate transition planning with the adult general mental health provider. Whenever possible, it is recommended that the young adult and his/her family be given the choice of whether to stay with the children’s provider or transition to the adult behavioral health service provider. The importance of securing representation from the adult service provider in this process cannot be overstated, regardless of the person’s identified behavioral health category assignment (SMI, General Mental Health, Substance Abuse). The children’s behavioral health provider should be persistent in its efforts to make this occur.

Requirements for information sharing practices, eligible service funding, and data submission updates are outlined in the following policies:

- Prior to releasing treatment information, the CFT, including the adult service provider, will review and follow health record disclosure guidelines per:
 - [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 1401, Confidentiality.](#)
- If the young adult is not Medicaid eligible, services that can be provided under Non-Medicaid funding will follow policy guidelines per:
 - [ADHS/DBHS Policy Manual Policy 110 Special Populations;](#) and
 - [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 601, Co-payments.](#)
- The behavioral health provider will ensure that the behavioral health category assignment is updated along with other demographic data consistent with:
 - [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 1601, Enrollment, Disenrollment and other Data Submission.](#)

Youth, upon turning age 18, will be required to sign documents that update their responsibilities with relation to their behavioral health treatment as an adult. Some examples include a new consent to treatment and authorizations for sharing protected health information to ensure that the team members can continue as active participants in service planning. A full assessment is not required at the time of transition from child to adult behavioral health services unless an annual update is due or there have been significant changes to the young adult’s status that clinically indicate the need to update the Assessment or Individual Service Plan (ISP).

II. KEY PERSONS FOR COLLABORATION

Team Coordination

When a young person reaches age 17 it is important to begin establishing team coordination between the child and adult service delivery systems. Per [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 901,](#) this coordination must be in place no later than 4-6 months prior to the

youth turning age 18. In order to meet the individualized needs of the young adult on the day s/he turns 18 a coordinated effort is required to identify the behavioral health provider staff who will be coordinating service delivery, including the services that will be needed and the methods for ensuring payment for those services. This is especially critical if the behavioral health provider responsible for service planning and delivery is expected to change upon the youth's transition at the age of 18.

Orientation of the youth and his/her family to potential changes they may experience as part of this transition to the adult behavioral health system will help minimize any barriers that may hinder seamless service delivery and support the youth's/family's understanding of their changing roles and responsibilities. It might be helpful to engage the assistance of a liaison (e.g., family and/or peer mentor) from the adult system to act as an ambassador for the incoming young adult and his/her involved family and/or caregiver.

As noted in the [ADHS/DBHS Practice Tool Child and Family Team Practice](#), the young adult, in conjunction with other involved family members, caregivers or guardian, may request to retain his/her current Child and Family Team until the youth turns 21. Regardless of when the youth completes his/her transition into the adult behavioral health system, the CFT will play an important role in preparing the Adult Recovery Team (ART) to become active partners in the treatment and service planning processes throughout this transitional period. Team collaboration between the child and adult service provider for transition age youth is more easily facilitated when agencies are dually licensed to provide behavioral health service delivery to both children and adult populations.

Family Involvement/Cultural Considerations

Family involvement and culture must be considered at all times especially as the youth prepares for adulthood. Although this period in a young person's life is considered a time for establishing his/her independence through skill acquisition, many families and cultures are interdependent and may also require a supportive framework to prepare them for this transition. With the assistance of joint planning by the child and adult teams, families can be provided with an understanding of the increased responsibilities facing their young adult while reminding them that although their role as legal guardian may change, they still remain an integral part of their child's life as a young adult. It is also likely that the youth's home and living environment may not change when they turn 18 and are legally recognized as an adult.

During this transitional period the role that families assume upon their child turning 18 will vary based on:

- individual cultural influences;
- the young adult's ability to assume the responsibilities of adulthood;
- the young adult's preferences for continued family involvement; and
- the needs of parents/caregivers as they adjust to upcoming changes in their level of responsibility.

Understanding each family's culture can assist teams in promoting successful transition by:

- informing families of appropriate family support programs available in the adult behavioral health system;
- identifying a Family Mentor who is sensitive to their needs to act as a "Liaison" to the adult behavioral health system;
- recognizing and acknowledging how their roles and relational patterns affect how they view their child's movement toward independence; and
- addressing the multiple needs of families that may exist as a result of complex relational dynamics or those who may be involved with one or more state agencies.

Some youth involved with the child welfare system may express a desire to reunite with their family from whose care they were removed. In these situations it is important for the CFT to discuss the potential benefits and challenges the youth may face.

System Partners

Coordination among all involved system partners promotes collaborative planning and seamless transitions when eligibility requirements and service delivery programs potentially change upon the youth turning 18. Child welfare, juvenile corrections, education, developmental disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation service delivery systems can provide access to resources specific to the young adult's needs within their program guidelines. For example, students in special education services may continue their schooling through the age of 21. Youth in foster care may be eligible for services through a program referred to as the Arizona Young Adult Program (AYAP) or Independent Living Program (ILP)¹⁰ through the Arizona Department of Economic Security/Department of child safety (ADES/DCS).¹¹

System partners can also assist young adults and their families/caregivers in accessing or preparing necessary documentation, such as:

- birth certificates;
- social security cards and social security disability benefit applications;
- medical records including any eligibility determinations and assessments,
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Plans;
- certificates of achievement, diplomas, GED¹² transcripts, and application forms for college;
- case plans for youth continuing in the foster care system;
- treatment plans;
- documentation of completion of probation or parole conditions;
- guardianship applications; and
- advance directives, etc.

¹⁰ Refer to <https://www.azdes.gov/main.aspx?menu=150&id=1944> for eligibility requirements, services, and resources.

¹¹ Refer to *ADES/DCSDCS Policy Manual Chapter 16: Independent Living Services and Supports* at <https://app.azdes.gov/DCYF/CMDPS/DCS/POLICY/SERVICEMANUAL.HTM>.

¹² Commonly referred to as a General Education Diploma or General Equivalency Diploma.

Natural Support

Maintaining or building a support structure will continue to be important as the youth transitions to adulthood and has access to new environments. This is especially relevant for young adults who have no family involvement. For some youth, developing or sustaining social relationships can be challenging. The child and adult teams can assist by giving consideration to the following areas when planning for transition:

- identify what supports will be needed by the young adult to promote social interaction and relationships;
- explore venues for socializing opportunities in the community;
- determine what is needed to plan time for recreational activities; and
- identify any special interests the youth may have that could serve as the basis for a social relationship or friendship.

Personal Choice

Although young adults are free to make their own decisions about treatment, medications, and services, they are generally aware that their relationships, needs, and supports may not feel different following their 18th birthday. They may require assurance that their parents are still welcomed as part of their support system, that they still have a team, rules still apply, and that information will be provided to assist them with making their own treatment decisions. However, some young adults may choose to limit their parent's involvement, so working with youth in the acquisition of self-determination skills will assist them in learning how to speak and advocate on their own behalf. This may involve youth developing their own understanding of personal strengths and challenges along with the supports and services they may need. When planning for transition, teams may also need to provide information to young adults on how the behavioral health service delivery systems operate in accordance with the following:

- the [Arizona Vision and 12 Principles](#) in the children's system, and
- the [Guiding Principles for Recovery Oriented Adult Behavioral Health Services and Systems](#).

III. CLINICAL AND SERVICE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

ADHS/DBHS supports clinical practice and behavioral health service delivery that is individualized, strengths-based, recovery-oriented, and culturally sensitive in meeting the needs of children, adults, and their families. Transitioning youth to adulthood involves a working partnership among team members between the children's behavioral health service system and the adult service system. This partnership is built through respect and equality, and is based on the expectation that all people are capable of positive change, growth, and leading a life of value. Individuals show a more positive response when there is a shared belief and collaborative effort in developing goals and identifying methods (services and supports) to meet their needs.

Crisis and Safety Planning

The team is responsible for ensuring that crisis and safety planning is completed prior to the youth's transition as outlined in the [ADHS/DBHS Practice Tool Child and Family Team Practice](#). For some youth, determining potential risk factors related to their ability to make decisions about their own safety may also need to be addressed. Collaboration with the adult case manager and/or ART will ensure that the transitioning young adult is aware of the type of crisis services that will be available through the adult behavioral health system and how to access them in his/her time of need.

Special Education Planning

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (hereafter referred to as IDEA)¹³ ensures that all children with disabilities have available to them a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Per IDEA, school districts are required to assist students with disabilities to make the transition from school to work and life as an adult. This postsecondary transition must be addressed not later than the student's first IEP to be in effect when the youth turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team. Measurable postsecondary goals for education/training, employment, and independent living, when appropriate, include a coordinated set of activities that addresses the following areas:

- instruction;
- daily living skills;
- related services;
- functional evaluation;
- post school adult living;
- community experiences; and
- employment.

While IDEA mandates services and programs while the youth with disabilities remains in school (which can be up to the age of 22), there are no federal mandates once the individual leaves the school system.

For any youth who is currently being served under an IEP plan, collaboration with the IEP team¹⁴ in transition planning is imperative to ensure the alignment of IEP goals with the goals contained in the behavioral health ISP. The CFT, in conjunction with the adult service provider, would consult with the minor's parent/legal guardian or the young adult, if age 18 or older, to obtain their permission to participate in the IEP meeting for the purpose of coordinating transition planning and services between the behavioral health and education systems. For young adults, age 18 and older, where legal guardianship has been established or the right to make educational decisions has been delegated to another responsible person, permission to participate in IEP meetings is obtained from the student's identified legal representative.

¹³ <http://idea.ed.gov/>

¹⁴ <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CTopicalBrief%2C9%2C>

Transition Planning

The length of time necessary for transition planning is relevant to the needs, maturational level, and the youth's ability to acquire the necessary skills to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. When planning for the young person's transition into adulthood and the adult behavioral health system, a transition plan that includes an assessment of self-care and independent living skills, social skills, work and education plans, earning potential, and psychiatric stability must be incorporated into the ISP.¹⁵ Living arrangements, financial, and legal considerations are additional areas that require advance planning.

1. Self-care and Independent Living Skills

As the youth approaches adulthood the acquisition of daily living skills becomes increasingly important. Personal care and hygiene can include grooming tasks such as showering, shaving (if applicable), dressing, and getting a haircut. Learning phone skills, how to do laundry and shop for clothes, cleaning and maintaining one's personal living environment, use of public transportation or learning how to drive are other suggested areas for transition planning. Acquisition of various health-related skills includes fitness activities such as an exercise program, nutrition education for planning meals, shopping for food, and learning basic cooking techniques. Planning around personal safety would address knowing their own phone number and address, who to contact in case of emergency, and awareness of how to protect themselves when out in the community.

2. Social and Relational Skills

The young adults' successful transition toward self-sufficiency will be supported by their ability to get along with others, choose positive peer relationships, and cultivate sustainable friendships. This will involve learning how to avoid or respond to conflict when it arises and developing an understanding of personal space, boundaries, and intimacy. Some youth may require additional assistance with distinguishing between the different types of interactions that would be appropriate when relating to strangers, friends, acquaintances, boy/girlfriend, family member, or colleague in a work environment. For example, teams may want to provide learning opportunities for youth to practice these discrimination skills in settings where they are most likely to encounter different types of people such as a grocery store, shopping mall, supported employment programs, etc. Planning for youth, who have already disclosed to the behavioral health service provider their self-identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, may include discussions about community supports and pro-social activities available to them for socialization. Adolescents who do not have someone who can role model the differing social skills applicable to friendship, dating, and intimate relationships may need extra support in learning healthy patterns of relating to others relevant to the type of attachment.

3. Vocational/Employment

¹⁵ ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual 901, Transition of Persons.

An important component of transitioning to adulthood includes vocational goals that lead to employment or other types of meaningful activity. While a job can provide financial support, personal fulfillment, and social opportunities, other activities such as an internship or volunteering in an area of special interest to the young adult can also provide personal satisfaction and an opportunity to engage socially with others. The CFT along with involved system partners work together to prepare the young adult for employment or other vocational endeavors. It is imperative that a representative from the adult behavioral health system be involved in this planning to ensure that employment related goals are addressed before, during, and after the youth's transition to adulthood.

Service planning that addresses the youth's preparation for employment or other meaningful activity can include:

- a) utilizing interest inventories or engaging in vocational assessment activities to identify potential career preferences or volunteer opportunities;
- b) identifying skill deficits and effective strategies to address these deficits;
- c) determining training needs and providing opportunities for learning through practice in real world settings;
- d) learning about school-to-work programs that may be available in the community and eligibility requirements;
- e) developing vocational skills such as building a resume, filling out job applications, interviewing preparation, use of online job sites, etc.; and
- f) learning federal and state requirements for filing annual income tax returns.

Youth involved in school based work activities (paid or non-paid) are able to "test the waters" of the work world, develop a work history, better understand their strengths and weaknesses, explore likes and dislikes, and begin to develop employment related skills necessary for their success in competitive work settings. School based work activities can start as early as middle school yet should begin no later than the youth's freshman year of high school. Once youth reach the age of 17, they can be given work experience in the community, whether it is through a volunteer or internship experience. It is best for school and community-based work experience to be short term, so that youth can experience a variety of employment settings and perform different job duties in more than one vocation to assist them in identifying possible career choices. These work related opportunities will assist teams in determining where the youth excels or struggles in each type of work undertaken, the types of supports that might be needed, and what the best "job match" might be in terms of the youth's personal interests and skill level.

As youth narrow their career focus, it is useful to tour employment sites, job shadow, and interview employers and employees who work in the youth's chosen fields of interest. It may be necessary to plan for on-going support after a job has been obtained to assist the young adult in maintaining successful employment. Identifying persons in the job setting who can provide natural support such as supervisors and co-workers, as well as employer related accommodations may be necessary to ensure that the young adult can continue to perform his/her job duties.

Vocational/Employment Considerations for Youth with Disabilities

For youth who have a disability, regardless of whether or not they are in Special Education, may be eligible for services through the Arizona Department of Economic Security/Rehabilitation Services Administration (ADES/RSA) under a vocational rehabilitation (VR) program¹⁶ when transitioning from school to work. The high school can refer youth with a disability to the VR program within two years before they leave school, if VR and the school have jointly funded programs, or within one year following the youth's exit from school if the provision of VR services is expected to occur after the youth leaves school. Planning for employment is done in conjunction with the youth's VR counselor through the development of an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE). Including the VR counselor in the school's IEP planning that might involve VR services is necessary since only VR personnel can make commitments for ADES/RSA program services. Refer to ADES/RSA¹⁷ for information on the VR process regarding intake/eligibility, planning for employment, services, and program limitations.

4. Education

Collaboration between the CFT and the education system is helpful with preparing youth and their parents/caregivers in developing an understanding of what happens as young adults transition from secondary education to adult life. In 2008, the Arizona State Board of Education approved Education and Career Action Plans (ECAP)¹⁸ for all Arizona students in grades 9-12. The ECAP reflects a student's current plan of coursework, career aspirations, and extended learning opportunities in order to develop the young adult's individual academic and career goals. Asking the youth to share his/her ECAP with the rest of the team may provide information to assist with transition planning.

Education Considerations for Youth with Disabilities

Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*¹⁹ protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funds. Recipients of these funds include public school districts, institutions of higher education, and other state and local education agencies. This regulation requires a school district to provide adjustments that can be made by the classroom teacher(s) and other school staff to help youth benefit from their education program through a 504 Plan that outlines these services and accommodations.

While youth are in secondary education, IDEA requires public schools to include transition plans for each student with a disability beginning with the IEP that is in effect when the youth reaches the age of 16. These transition plans are required to include the following eight components:

¹⁶ <https://www.azdes.gov/main.aspx?menu=32&id=1300>

¹⁷ https://www.azdes.gov/main.aspx?menu=32&id=1602&ekmense=349952e0_32_122_1602_6#

¹⁸ <http://www.azed.gov/career-technical-education/student-education-career-action-plans/>

¹⁹ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

1. Measurable Postsecondary Goals (MPGs) in the areas of:
 - a. Education/Training,
 - b. Employment, and
 - c. Independent living (if needed);
2. MPGs are updated annually;
3. Age appropriate transition assessment;
4. Coordinated activities;
5. Course of study;
6. Annual goals that are aligned to the MPGs;
7. Student invitation to these meetings is required; and
8. Outside agency participation with prior consent from the family or student that has reached the age of majority.

Transfer of Rights' Requirement for Public Education Agencies

Under Arizona State law, a child reaches the age of majority at 18. The right to make informed educational decisions transfers to the young adult at that time.

According to IDEA,²⁰ “beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child’s rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under section 615(m)”²¹ must be included in the student’s IEP. This means that schools must inform all youth with disabilities on or before their 17th birthday that certain rights will automatically transfer to them upon turning age 18.

In order to prepare youth with disabilities for their transfer of rights, it is necessary for parents/caregivers to involve their child in educational decision making processes early. The CFT, in conjunction with the adult behavioral health provider, can assist the youth/parent/caregiver with the following:

- a) having the youth actively participate in IEP and transition planning to ensure his/her voice is heard;
- b) assisting the youth in developing positive relationships with involved school personnel and other agency service providers;
- c) discussing potential decisions before IEP meetings so the youth is informed and can actively participate in advocating for his/her wishes; and
- d) including the youth in decisions that impact his/her life inside and outside the school setting.

“A student with a disability, between the age of 18 and 22 who has not been declared legally incompetent and has the ability to give informed consent may execute a *Delegation of Right to Make Educational Decisions*. The Delegation of Right allows the student to appoint his/her parent or agent to make educational decisions on his/her

²⁰ Federal law dealing with the education of children with disabilities.

²¹ Per IDEA Part B Sec. 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)(cc) at: <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>

behalf. The student has the right to terminate the agreement at any time and assume his/her right to make decisions.”²² Additional information pertaining to a special education transfer of parental rights and an example of a *Delegation of Right to Make Educational Decisions* form is provided in the Arizona Center for Disability Law’s *Legal Options Manual*.

For additional information related to special education transitions refer to the publications posted by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).²³

Summary of Performance

A Summary of Performance (SOP)²⁴ is completed for every young adult whose special education eligibility terminates due to graduation from high school with a regular diploma or due to exceeding the age eligibility for FAPE²⁵ under State law. A public education agency (PEA) must provide the youth with a summary of his/her academic achievement, functional performance, and recommendations on how to assist in meeting the young adult’s postsecondary goals.

Postsecondary Education Considerations

When postsecondary education is the goal for young adults, transition planning may include preparatory work in the following areas:

- a) identify academic strengths to assist with matching the young adult’s interests with the right school;
- b) determine the best fit between the young adult’s needs and the type of postsecondary setting (e.g., university, community college, technical or trade school, etc.);
- c) assist in the identification of and application process for various financial resources (e.g., scholarships, financial aid, student loans, etc.);
- d) discover the types of proficiency testing or assessments that are required for admission such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT);
- e) assist with skill development to ensure the young adult is able to organize school assignments, manage his/her time, identify and set priorities, and break projects down into manageable steps;
- f) consider potential summer school courses or other options to determine an area of study or vocational interest;
- g) attend informational meetings at a local college and network with current students; and
- h) promote the development of the young adult’s self-advocacy skills to support his/her success in a postsecondary setting.

²² <http://www.azed.gov/wp-content/uploads/PDF/TR05.pdf>

²³ <http://www.azed.gov/ess/SpecialProjects/transition/>

²⁴ <http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/SpecialProjects/transition/6-09SUMMARYOFPERFORMANCE-Instructions.pdf>

²⁵ Free appropriate public education (FAPE)

5. Medical/Physical Healthcare

Planning can include assisting the youth with:

- a) transferring healthcare services from a pediatrician to an adult health care provider, if pertinent;
- b) applying for medical and behavioral health care coverage, including how to select a health plan and a physician;
- c) preparing an application for submission at age 18 to the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) for ongoing Medicaid services²⁶;
- d) obtaining personal and family medical history (e.g., copies of immunization records, major illnesses, surgical procedures, etc.)²⁷;
- e) information on advance directives, as indicated in the [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 801, Advance Directives](#);
- f) methods for managing healthcare appointments, keeping medical records, following treatment recommendations, and taking medication;
- g) how to identify healthcare concerns, address questions during appointments, and consult with doctors regarding diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis; and
- h) assuming responsibility for understanding and managing the symptoms of their mental illness and obtaining knowledge of the benefits, risks, and side effects of their medication.

6. Living Arrangements

Where young adults will live upon turning age 18 could change based on their current housing situation (e.g., living at home with family, with a relative, in a residential treatment center (RTC), other out of home treatment setting, etc.) or whether or not they decide to choose housing on-site while pursuing their postsecondary education. Youth who do not have the support of their parents or extended family, or who may be under the care and custody of the child welfare system, may require intensive planning to evaluate their ability to live independently, identify the level of community supports needed, and match the type of living environment to their individual personality and preferences. Each situation will require planning that specifically uses the young adult's strengths in meeting his/her needs and addresses any personal safety concerns. The most common types of living situations range from living independently in one's own apartment with or without roommates to a supported or supervised type of living arrangement. If needed, the team may assist the young adult with completing and filing applications for public housing or other subsidized housing programs. Refer to [Tool Attachment A: Housing](#) for further information on housing options, state and federally funded programs, and other areas for consideration when addressing housing needs.

²⁶ Youth at age 18 who remain in foster care are enrolled in Young Adult Transitional Insurance through the Arizona Division of Children, Youth, and Families, rather than being enrolled in Medicaid services through AHCCCS.

²⁷ For youth in foster care, teams work with Department of Child Safety's personnel to obtain personal and family medical history as this information will be requested at future medical appointments.

Youth living in a Level 1 RTC at the time they turn age 18 can continue to receive residential services until the age of 22 if they were admitted to the RTC before their 21st birthday and continue to require treatment. A licensee of a Level 1 RTC may also admit individuals who are younger than age 21. Refer to [A.A.C.R9-20-505](#) for further information on requirements for Level 1 RTCs and limitations related to contact between minors and adults residing within the same treatment facility. [ADHS/DBHS Policy and Procedures Manual Policy 1101, Securing Services and Prior Authorization](#) provides procedural information and criteria for services that require authorization.

Licensed residential agencies may continue to provide behavioral health services to individuals age 18 or older if the following conditions are met per [A.A.C.R9-20-404](#):

- person was admitted to the agency before his/her 18th birthday and is completing high school or a high school equivalency diploma, or is participating in a job training program; or
- through the last day of the month of the person's 18th birthday.

7. Financial

Assessing the financial support needed will include identifying how much money is required to support the young adult's living situation and how s/he will obtain it. This will include determining whether the income from employment will pay the bills or if Social Security disability programs (SSDI²⁸ or SSI²⁹), food stamps, or other emergency assistance will cover the young adult's financial responsibilities. Depending on the special needs of the young adult, arranging for a conservator or guardian may also be necessary.

Together, the team should review and update any federal and/or state financial forms to reflect the young adult's change in status to ensure there is no disruption in healthcare or financial assistance services. Youth who are eligible for SSI benefits as a child will have a disability redetermination during the month preceding the month when they attain age 18. This determination will apply the same rules as those used for adults who are filing new applications for SSI benefits.³⁰ The team can assist the young adult and his/her family/caregiver with identifying any changes related to Social Security benefits, including opportunities for Social Security Work Incentives.³¹

Young adults who learn about financial matters prior to age 18 have a better opportunity to acquire the skills necessary for money management. Skill development can include:

- a) setting up a simple checking and/or savings account to learn how it can be used to pay bills, save money, and keep track of transactions;
- b) identifying weekly/monthly expenses that occur such as food, clothes, school supplies, and leisure activities and determining the monetary amount for each area;

²⁸ Social Security Disability Insurance

²⁹ Supplemental Security Income

³⁰ <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-cdrs-ussi.htm>

³¹ <http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm>

- c) learning how to monitor spending and budget financial resources;
- d) education on how credit cards work and differ from debit cards, including an understanding of finance charges and minimum monthly payments; and
- e) understanding the short and long term consequences of poor financial planning (e.g., overdrawn account [Non-Sufficient Funds fee], personal credit rating, eligibility for home and/or car loans, potential job loss, etc.).

8. Legal Considerations

Transition planning that addresses legal considerations ideally begins before the youth turns 18 to ensure the young adult has the necessary legal protections upon reaching the age of majority. This can include the following:

Document Preparation

Some families/caregivers may decide to seek legal advice from an attorney who specializes in mental health, special needs and/or disability law in planning for when their child turns 18 if they believe legal protections are necessary. Parents, caregivers or guardians may choose to draw up a will or update an existing one to ensure that adequate provisions have been outlined for supporting their child's continuing healthcare and financial stability. Other legal areas for consideration can include:

- guardianship;
- conservator;
- special needs trust; and
- advance directives (e.g., living will, powers of attorney).

Legal Considerations for Youth with Disabilities

Persons with developmental disabilities, their families and caregivers may benefit from information about different options that are available when an adult with a disability needs the assistance of another person in a legally recognized fashion to help manage facets of his/her life. Refer to the Arizona Center for Disability Law's *Legal Options Manual* for access to information and forms. This publication also addresses tribal jurisdiction in relation to the guardianship process for individuals who live on a reservation. While this resource is focused on planning for individuals with disabilities, teams can utilize this information to gain a basic understanding of the legal rights of individuals as they approach the age of majority.

9. Transportation

A training program, whether a formal or informal one, may be useful in helping the young adult acquire the skills necessary for driving or when using public transportation. Planning can include assisting the youth with test preparation and acquiring a driver's permit. Use of a qualified instructor, family member, or other responsible adult can provide the youth with "behind the wheel" driving experience including how to read maps or manage roadside emergencies. If obtaining a driver's license is not feasible, skill training activities

for using public transportation can include reviewing bus schedules, planning routes to get to a designated location on time, and learning how to determine the cost and best method of transportation for getting to and from work or scheduled appointments.

When transitioning to the adult behavioral health system, educate the family and young adult on the transportation options available through the adult service delivery system. This will help support the young adult's continued attendance at behavioral health treatment appointments, as well as assist the team with identifying and planning for other transportation needs that are not necessarily associated with accessing medical or behavioral health services.

10. Other Considerations

Some young adults may need assistance with acquiring proof of personal identification if they have not done so by the age of 18. Additionally, young adults may require further information explaining the mandatory and voluntary registrations that become effective at the age of majority.

Personal Identification

The team can assist the youth with acquiring a State issued identification (ID) card in situations where the young adult may not have met the requirements for a driver's license issued by the Arizona Motor Vehicle Division.³² An identification card is available to all ages (including infants), however, the youth may not possess an Arizona identification card and a valid driver's license at the same time.

Mandatory and Voluntary Registrations

Selective Service registration³³ is required for almost all male U.S. and non-U.S. citizens who are 18 through 25 years of age and residing in the United States. Registration can be completed at any U.S. Post Office and a Social Security number is not needed. When a Social Security number is obtained after registration is completed, it is the responsibility of the young adult male to inform the Selective Service System.

Upon turning age 18 the young adult can register to vote. Online voter registration is available through Arizona's Office of the Secretary of State.³⁴

11. Resources

Refer to [Attachment B: Resources](#) for access to additional information that may assist the CFT and adult behavioral health service provider with transition planning activities.

³² <http://www.azdot.gov/mvd/>

³³ <http://www.sss.gov/>

³⁴ <http://www.azsos.gov/election/voterregistration.htm>

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

This Practice Tool applies to T/RBHAs and their subcontracted network and provider agency behavioral health staff who participate in assessment and service planning processes, provide case management and other clinical services, or who supervise staff that provide service delivery to adolescents, young adults and their families. Each T/RBHA shall establish their own process for ensuring that all staff have been trained and understand how to implement the practice elements as outlined in this document. Whenever this Practice Tool is updated or revised, T/RBHAs must ensure their subcontracted network and provider agencies are notified and required staff is retrained as necessary on the changes. Each T/RBHA, upon request from ADHS/DBHS, is required to provide documentation demonstrating that all required network and provider agency staff have been trained on this tool. In alignment with [A.A.C. R9-20-205 Clinical Supervision](#) requirements, the supervision of this Practice Tool is to be incorporated into other supervision processes which the T/RBHA and their subcontracted network and provider agencies have in place for direct care clinical staff.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- Coordinated planning for seamless transitions from the children’s behavioral health service system to the adult service system
- Active collaboration between CFTs and ARTs for the purpose of transition planning
- Increased opportunities for youth to acquire the necessary skills to assume the responsibilities of adulthood
- Engagement of families in the transition planning process that recognizes the diversity that is needed in identifying the individual support needs of their young adult
- Improved self-advocacy skills in transition age youth