



DAWN Transition Times

DAWN Center for
Independent Living

Volume 1, Issue 1
September 2012

Elements of a Successful Transition Plan

By Helen Bradfield, DAWN Independent Living Transition Specialist

Making a smooth transition from high school to adult living depends on many factors, but mostly on a successful collaboration between the student, their family, and the various resources available to assist them in the achievement of their goals. Many areas such as independent living, post-secondary education, and employment should be included in the transition plan for students to make their shift to adult life.

Independent living suggests that a student will someday live on their own and make all of their own decisions, which is not necessarily the case for every individual. Ultimately, independent living is about making choices, assuming responsibility, and pursuing personal talents, interests, passions as independently as possible. For transitioning youth, it's about empowering them to grow into adulthood and find their place in the world, doing for themselves to the best of their ability.



Having a disability makes planning for independent living an extremely important part of helping a young person with a disability get ready for life after high school. The more involved the disability, the more likely it is that independent living will be a subject of serious discussion—and preparation.

Another aspect of transition is considering post-secondary education. Is college right for the student, or maybe vocational school, or taking a class in a specific area of interest? There are no right or wrong answers because this stage of transition is individualized to fit each student. Whether or not a student decides to pursue some sort of post-secondary education is their individual choice, and what might not be right for them at this time might possibly be right for them later.

Employment may seem like a very distant goal for students right now; however preparing for a future career starts early in a child's life and happens in many different ways. Exploring a variety of jobs as a student will help them be better prepared to decide on a career path and eventually be successful at work. Encourage them to think about jobs they would like and help them to develop a sense of responsibility by giving them household or school-based chores.

Accessing the complex network of adult service providers can be very overwhelming for parents and the transitioning students. If you know what questions to ask then the process can be much less daunting. The following questions should be asked in order to make sure the student will receive the services they need:

- ◆ Can you work with my child and at what age will they qualify for services?
- ◆ Is there a fee or do we need a specific funding source?
- ◆ How many people do you serve and what is the age range?
- ◆ Can we sign up for your services or do we need a referral?
- ◆ What transportation options are available to us?



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A Glimpse of the Future at DAWN

By Carolee Marano, DAWN Program and Outreach Coordinator

Transition is something each and every one of us experiences in life, and it's no different for DAWN. Our organization is about to embark on some significant transitioning of our own.

Firstly, changes at the State level will result in significant changes in the way DAWN will deliver youth transition services from this year forward. Intensive planning is taking place right now among collaborating agencies, including the State of New Jersey's Department of Labor and Workforce Development – Division of Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the Department of Education – Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and the 11 Centers for Independent Living serving the various counties in NJ including DAWN. As part of the transformation, DAWN's school-based student transition program, STEP-UP, no longer will be offered in its current form, but in its place, DAWN will offer Morris, Sussex and Warren counties a robust menu of transition services including key elements of STEP-UP, as well as additional services, on a fee-for-service basis. Just as with STEP-UP, local schools will have the opportunity to retain and offer DAWN's transition services to their transitioning students and families. We will be adding a Transition page to our website at www.dawncil.org in the near future, and will be posting updates there as we gain more information.



Secondly, DAWN was very recently awarded a \$45,000 Community Employment Grant from the prestigious Kessler Foundation to establish DAWN as an "Employment Network" service provider under the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program. Once we gain Employment Network status, DAWN will begin to provide Independent Living services aimed at helping adults with disabilities who are currently receiving SSI or SSDI benefits but want to work to secure and sustain gainful employment. In the future, we envision continuing to work with DVRS to help people reach their employment goals. As part of this effort, DAWN will offer a continuum of Independent Living services to transitioning students to support successful outcomes in all areas and at all stages of their adult lives. So, with significant changes to our youth transition services and the implementation of a brand new employment services program, DAWN is making a bold transition of our own to support others in achieving THEIR goals in transitioning to adult life and toward gainful employment.

A College Student's Perspective on "Employment First"

By Lori-Ann Norcross, East Stroudsburg University College Intern at DAWN



My name is Lori-Ann Norcross. I'm 22 years old and I'm interning at DAWN under the area of transition working with DAWN's Independent Living Specialist, Helen Bradfield. I go to East Stroudsburg University and my major is in Rehabilitation Services. I would love to pursue a career in transition. As college students, my classmates and I are learning all the new outlooks on transition. The main one is a movement called "Employment First." In April 2012, New Jersey became the 14th state to adopt this initiative. Employment First says that employment is the first and preferred outcome for all people.

When I hear the words "employment first" I think of Tony Coelho, author of the American's with Disabilities Act, saying, "Give us the right to be fired!" People with disabilities deserve to have equal rights, which means being included in competitive employment, having real wages, real benefits, and being in a real business setting. Raising expectations for people who have a disability is very important; no matter how severe the disability is, every individual has valuable capabilities. In order to achieve this we must focus on strengths-based practices. Being able to self-advocate and being able to express personal strengths and interests is key to placement in a job in which any individual will be successful and happy. Parents, teachers, and agencies must work together to help students find their strengths and interests. After graduating high school, these young adults should walk away with knowledge and experiences of different jobs so they can pursue and start a career in something they love.

So, What About College?

By Helen Bradfield, DAWN Independent Living Transition Specialist

For a typical student trying to navigate the world known as “college”, knowing how to maneuver their way around can be frustrating and overwhelming, but when you add in a disability, the pressure intensifies. If parents and students know how to access services and ask the right questions, then the task of attending a post-secondary institution will not seem so scary.

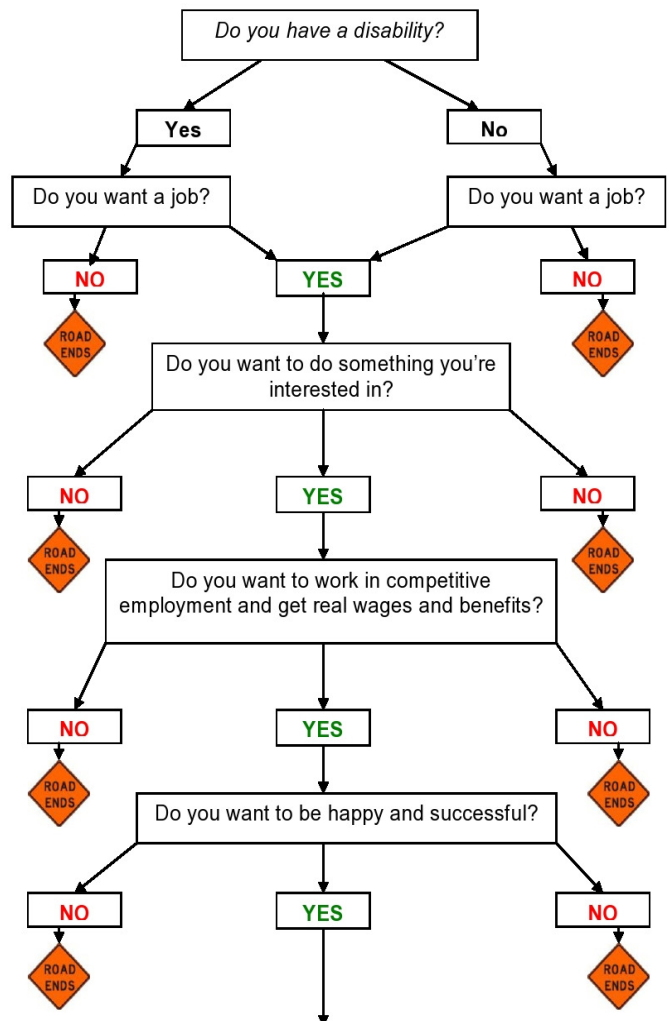
The following are some questions that students and their families can ask to make sure they receive the appropriate services:

1. Should my child disclose their disability on the college application?
2. Are there any scholarship opportunities for students with disabilities?
3. Can my child have a therapy dog with them in class and in the dorm room?
4. What exactly is “Disability Support Services”?
5. What kinds of housing options are available for my child in college?
6. What kind of planning is available to my child at the college level in place of his/her IEP/504 Plan?
7. Will accommodations in college be the same or similar to the ones my child had in high school?
8. Does the Disability Support Services person have expertise in my child’s disability?
9. Are private tutors available?
10. Will the college keep me informed of my child’s academic progress?
11. What would be an example of a reasonable accommodation?
12. Does DVR have a role in the college process, and if so what is it?

These are just a sampling of questions that parents and students should ask, but of course more can be added depending on the school and the needs of the individual student. The only silly questions are the ones that you do not ask.

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up someplace else.”
 ~ Yogi Berra, New York Yankees Baseball Catcher, Outfielder and Manager from 1946—1965.

Choosing Your Path



Everyone wants to be on the path to happiness and success!
 Ask us how DAWN can help you toward getting there!

“Choosing Your Path” Chart Concept Contributed by Lori-Ann Norcross

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”
 ~ Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt



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Awaken to independence.



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A Word About DAWN

DAWN Center for Independent Living empowers people with disabilities who strive to take control of their own lives by:

- ◆ Providing tools that encourage independence and self-advocacy;
- ◆ Promoting public awareness of the rights, needs, and desires of individuals living with disabilities;
- ◆ Offering community activities that create new experiences and opportunities;
- ◆ Creating informed communities that advance the Independent Living Philosophy.

All of DAWN's programs and services embody the principles of the Independent Living philosophy, which asserts that people with disabilities should have the same civil rights, choices, and control as do people without disabilities. We invite anyone interested in more information about DAWN, Centers for Independent Living, or the Independent Living Movement to contact us to learn more about the work of ensuring the rights of people with disabilities, and about how to become involved.

About The DAWN Mural

The artist, Arlene Sullivan from the [Changing Images Art Foundation](#), was commissioned to create a design outline incorporating the DAWN logo which was to be painted by the participants of [Franki's Fund](#). The participants worked diligently to bring color and life to the design. They were focused and excited to create the artwork and amazed at what they accomplished when they saw the finished product. The mural represents one of the many hidden talents many young people with disabilities possess that are often untapped. Smaller versions of the mural are on display at DAWN's offices in Hackettstown and Sparta.



“We are fighting for our rights. And it doesn't matter if you're in Russia or if you're in Brazil or if you're in the United States. The issue is still the same. We are fighting for our place in the sun. And it's a wonderful struggle. And it gives us strength and in the process we will change ourselves and we will change this world.”

~ Ed Roberts, “Father” of the Independent Living Movement

Photo: Lydia Gans