

Young adults with I/DD often struggle during the transition process from high school to adulthood. After age 21, young adults with disabilities “age out” of the myriad services and supports provided by law through the school system and transition to the state agency responsible for providing services and supports to adults with I/DD—an abrupt change that many characterize as akin to “dropping off a cliff.”

The transition experience varies greatly across the state, as does access to services and supports through the adult service system/managed care organizations. Services vary depending on whether they are state funded or waiver services, and on which waiver service an individual is receiving.

In order to improve the experience for youth transitioning, and their families and caregivers the legislature established a Task Force “composed of interested parties to determine what can be done to ease the transition from the educational setting and inform the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing of the number of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who may be in need of services in any year”. The Task Force is charged with submitting a report by January 2, 2019, of its findings and recommendations to the Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado Senate, the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives, and the Colorado Joint Budget Committee, or any successor committees.

*Task Force Recommendations include:*

- Dedicated CCB staff to serve as a transition liaison with appropriate funding to support: Staff to focus solely on transitioning students with I/DD. Responsibilities typically include serving as transition counselors to understand the waivers and what might best meet their needs, in the transition period understanding what is in the IEP so that Medicaid and DVR can provide needed services not being provided in the IEP, help collect information and fill out needed forms related to eligibility for waiver services, help youth and parents better understand the logistics and reality of what the transition looks like, and what it means and acting as a liaison to coordinate services among multiple agencies. It is important that there is a connection with early intervention to set people on the right trajectory and gives families a place to learn and grow.
- Youth involvement: Encourage youth participate with their families in the transition process.
- Planning guide or toolkit, and a website for youth and families: a centralized clearinghouse of information that is kept up-to-date and easy to navigate with up to date information. Develop a Planning Guide/ Toolkit to assist with the development of a “future plan,” and to understand the decisions that lie ahead in transitions. The tool assists youth and families on such topics as legal and financial planning, guardianships, public benefits, special-needs trusts, and waiver coverage. Additionally, includes information, education, and training on best practices, accessing and coordinating community supports.
- Parent-Peer and Student-Peer Mentoring programs or networks are needed: Parents and youth need frank conversations and peer support/mentor relationships from parents and youth that have been through similar processes. Important to connect and network a family with other families or youth with other youth for mutual support.

- Youth should also have an opportunity to participate in leadership and self-advocacy programs.
- Transition needs to start early in the schools: Many stakeholders recommend a life-span approach that addresses the developmental needs of children while communicating clear and consistent messages about the value and the potential for youth with IDD. Parents are seeking a more collaborative approach earlier-on (middle school age) regarding the child's potential.
- Setting the right expectations with regards to academic rigor with an eye towards future opportunity: Should raise expectations and create a system where expectations are high which includes teaching kids how to dream and advocate what they want. Engage in practices that reflect a presumption that all people with disabilities are capable of full participation in competitive integrated employment and community life and promote a vision and a culture throughout CDE, schools/ districts, CCBs, and Medicaid to cultivate best practices that result in the outcomes of individual competitive employment or enrollment in post-secondary options.
- Schools should have a team-based approach to transition: CCB and DVR providers and others from the community meet at schools to hear the students present their needs and wants. The input is then factored into the IEP and services. This design reduces siloes and brings the student, providers, and other community members to the table early in the transition process and helps bridge the transition from school to competitive employment. This also ensures a gradual transition by fostering relationships between school district employees, case managers, and parents and guardians prior to the transition. In addition, could help in developing more commo, consistent language between schools, Medicaid and other agencies that work with people with IDD.