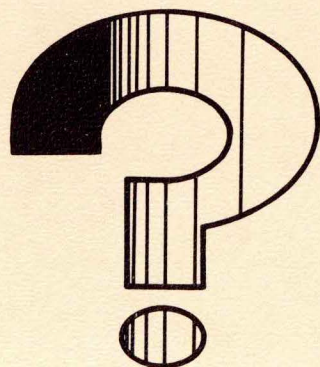


**A PARENT HANDBOOK:
TRANSITION
FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE**

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**PREFACE
SECTION A: WHAT IS TRANSITION?**

**A PARENT HANDBOOK:
TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE**

John W. Struck

PREFACE

SECTION A: WHAT IS TRANSITION?

May 1987

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
PREFACE	iv
SECTION A: WHAT IS TRANSITION?	
Transition Is	A-2
Transition Planning Procedures	A-2
Assessment	A-4
Roles of Participants in Transition Planning Procedure	A-4
Steps in Transition Planning Procedure	A-6
SECTION B: WHERE ARE WE GOING?	
Employment Options	B-2
Competitive Employment	B-2
Supported Employment	B-3
Placement in Sheltered Workshop or Work Activity Center	B-4
Living Arrangements	B-4
Living with the Family	B-4
Living Independently	B-4
Supervised Living Arrangements	B-5
Residential Care Facility	B-5
Family Life Home	B-5
Intermediate Care Facility	B-5
Social and Leisure Skills	B-6
Social Skills	B-6
Leisure Skills	B-7
SECTION C: WHO CAN HELP US GET THERE?	
High School Programs	C-2
Programs Offered by Special Education	C-3
Programs Offered by Regular Education	C-4
Post-high School Programs	C-5
University and College Programs	C-5
Merged Area Community Colleges	C-5
Private Vocational Schools	C-6
Rehabilitation Facilities	C-6
Military	C-6
Employer Training Programs and Apprenticeships	C-7
Adult Service Agencies and Groups	C-7
Vocational Rehabilitation	C-8
Department of Human Services	C-9
Job Training Partnership Act Services	C-9
Department of Employment Services	C-9
Social Security Administration	C-10
Advocacy Groups and Self-Advocacy	C-10
SECTION D: WHAT CAN YOU DO?	
Transition Tips	D-2
Questions to Ask	D-2
You are Important	D-4
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Parental Needs Assessment	D-7
Appendix B: Examples of Formal Transition Plans	D-8
Appendix C: Listing of Sample Social Skills	D-10
Appendix D: Employability Skills Checklist	D-11
Appendix E: Leisure Interest Checklist	D-12
Appendix F: Transition Resources — State Level	D-13
Appendix G: Examples of Advocacy and Support Groups	D-14

PREFACE

The purpose of this handbook is to give you, *a parent of an adolescent with disabilities*, information, practical suggestions, and questions to consider as your son or daughter leaves the world of a high school student and moves into the world of an adult.

We have divided the handbook into four sections which answer four questions: WHAT IS TRANSITION? WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHO CAN HELP US GET THERE? WHAT CAN YOU DO? In the first section, "What is Transition?" we discuss what transition is, why it is important, and a transition planning process. In the second section, "Where are we going?" we talk about various employment options and living arrangements once your son or daughter leaves school. In "Who can help us get there?" we share information about high school programs, post-high school programs, and adult service agencies. In the last section, we discuss your role in transition and provide you with some questions to ask future employers, training institutions, and service agencies. This section also includes the Appendices. For ease of reading, each section is presented independently. We encourage you to read the sections in order, starting with **Section A: "What Is Transition?"**

This handbook does not attempt to provide *all the information or all the answers*. Certain parts of the handbook may apply more to some parents than to you, and all services may not be available in your particular part of the state. Take what you need from the handbook as you begin the transition from being a parent of a high school adolescent to being a parent of a young adult. **ENCOURAGE AND EXPECT SCHOOLS, ADULT SERVICE PROVIDERS, YOUR DAUGHTER OR SON, AND YOURSELF TO COMMUNICATE, COOPERATE, AND COMMIT TO DEVELOPING A PLAN THAT LEADS TO A MEANINGFUL ADULT LIFE.**

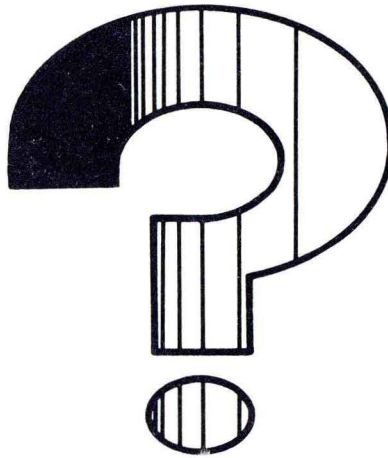
Your investment for reading this is nothing more than time. Your return is valuable information that will help you and your son or daughter as he or she makes the transition from school to adult living.

Finally, this document is possible only through the work of many people. Appreciation is given to the following individuals for their assistance in preparing the handbook. Work group members: Charles Abel, Linda Appleby, Jerry Caster, Peter Downie, Kathy Green, Deb House, Raymond Morley, Edward O'Leary, Fred Olson, Deb Samson, Linda Tisue, and Marvin Tooman. Assistant editors: Debra Brower, Ellen Doll, Michael Hooley, Cynthia Miller, and Yvonne Reisen. Typing assistants: Jane Bowling and Diane Dahlheim.

Good luck on your journey through this handbook on transition.

INTRODUCTION

In this first section, “**What Is Transition?**” we discuss what transition is, why it is important, and a transition planning process. Although the material contained in this section applies equally to both males and females, we have used male nouns and pronouns throughout the entire section so that it is easier to read. *A reminder as you read this section: be sure to encourage and expect schools, adult service providers, your daughter or son, and yourself to communicate, cooperate, and commit to developing a plan that leads to a meaningful adult life.*



SECTION A: WHAT IS TRANSITION?

SCENE ONE:

(Bob & Clare White, Mark's parents, have just come home and are discussing the day's happenings.)



Bob: "Clare, I got a call from school today; they want to have a meeting about developing a transition plan. Do you know anything about it?"

Clare: "No, Mark hasn't said anything."

Bob: "I'm a little confused. I thought we had Mark's staffing for this year. I wonder what a transition plan is?"

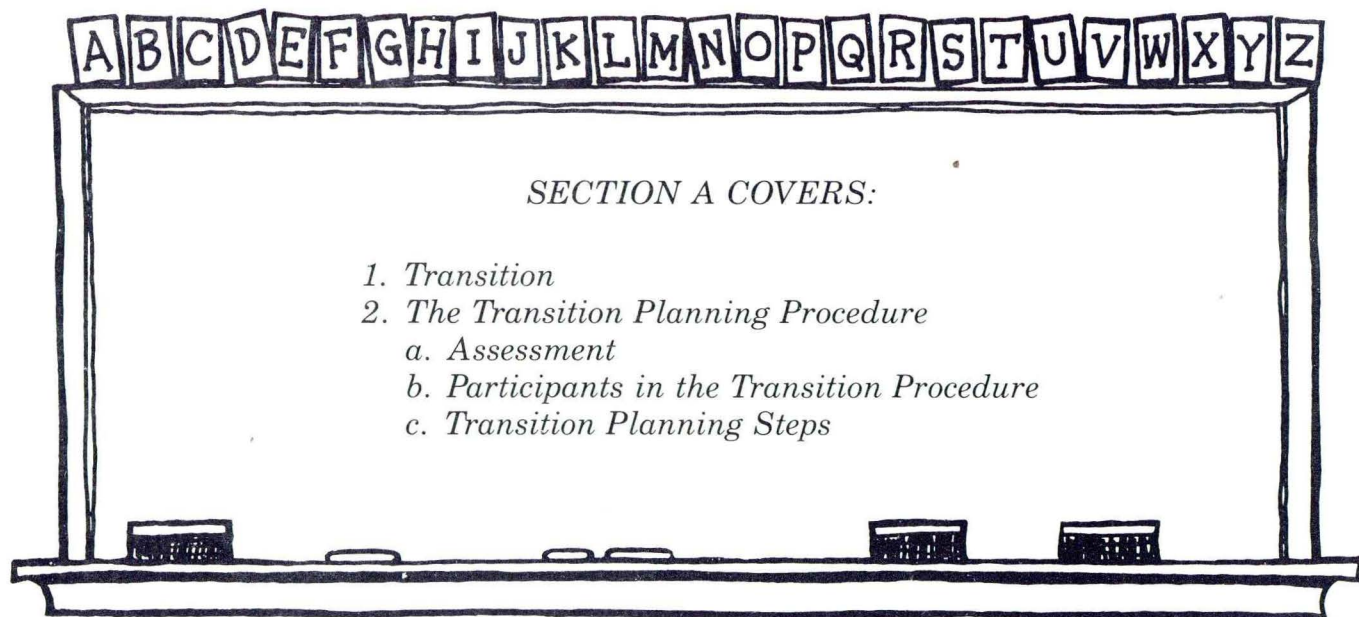
Clare: "I hate to take time from work; but, maybe we should attend the meeting."

Bob: "Individual Educational Plan, transition, objectives, this form and that form — sure gets confusing — hope all of this is going to help Mark. Anyway, let's go to the meeting next Monday and find out *what a transition plan is.*"

Does this situation sound familiar? Could it easily happen to you? Chances are you are asking some of the following questions.

1. What is my son going to do when he gets out of high school?
2. Where is he going to live next year or in five years?
3. What type of job is he going to have?
4. Should or could he go to college?
5. Is his special class preparing him to be a productive adult?
6. Who are out there as resources? How do I contact them?
7. As a parent, what should I expect from my son?

If so, keep reading, this is written for you. Let's go to the chalkboard and review the major points within this section.



SECTION A COVERS:

1. *Transition*
2. *The Transition Planning Procedure*
 - a. *Assessment*
 - b. *Participants in the Transition Procedure*
 - c. *Transition Planning Steps*

Transition Is . . .

Transition, according to the dictionary, is defined as a “passing from one condition, place to another.” Examples of transition are when your son moves from junior high to high school and high school to adult life. Job changes and family moves are also examples of transition. Transition requires some advance planning in order to make the move less hectic, more efficient, and successful. The following definition of transition was developed by the Iowa Transition Advisory Board (ITAB). Transition is

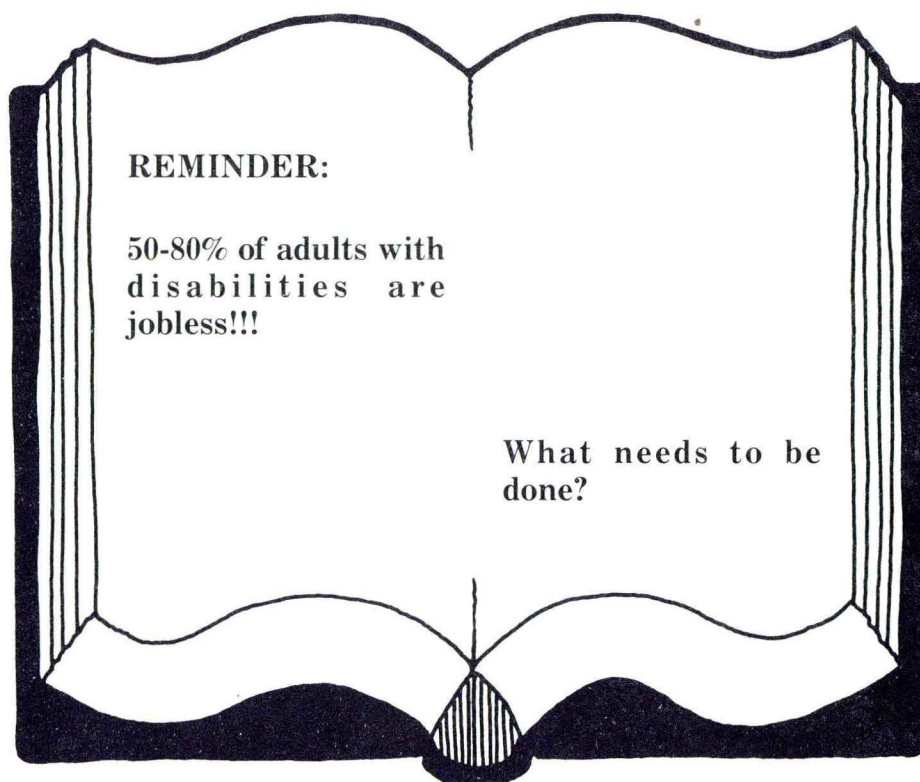
a cooperative planning process for a student with a disability to establish and implement a series of programs and services leading to his or her post-school employment. This process should include the student, parents, advocates, school, youth and adult service providers and employers.

Transition is important to you as a parent because as your son moves from high school into the adult world, a variety of needs may exist. These needs include (a) vocational, (b) social, (c) recreational, and (d) living. Some students will not need any help in meeting these needs; others will need services for a short period of time. Students with more severe disabilities may need help on an ongoing basis.

Transition Planning Procedures

Many young adults with disabilities are having trouble making a successful transition from high school to adult life. The need for planned transition services can be supported by looking at unemployment rates for workers with disabilities. Unemployment among persons with disabilities is far above the rate for persons who are nondisabled. Current figures from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the Iowa Department of Education show that between 50 and 80 percent of adults who report a disability are jobless. These figures suggest that young adults with disabilities are not making the transition from school to adult life successfully. A transition planning

procedure should make your son's move from school to adult life more successful. Let's summarize some of this information by looking at the book of facts.



The transition planning procedure is a plan to develop a line of communication and cooperation among (a) you, (b) your son, (c) the special educator, and (d) adult service providers (agencies who offer their services) while your son is in high school. It is also a way to identify individual needs and services necessary for the movement of your son from school to adult life.

The major responsibility for developing the transition plan is shared by you, your son, and the special educator while your son is still in school. Through a planning procedure, appropriate post-high school services are identified and adult service providers are made aware of your son's needs at least one to two years prior to graduation. You, your son, the special educator, and appropriate adult service providers are called the transition team.

The transition planning procedure is designed to be used with all individuals and is an important part of your son's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). It is *not* meant to take the place of vocational goals or objectives in the IEP. Participation in high school vocational programs such as home economics or shop should be included in the IEP and should also be included with the transition goal—not in place of that goal.

The transition planning procedure is an important part of your son's movement from school to post-high school life. Your family, your son, school staff, and adult service providers must work together to identify the services needed for your son to lead a meaningful life.

The following sections talk about the transition planning procedure in more detail. The first section talks about assessment, which is an ongoing part of transition planning. The remaining two sections talk about the roles of each group in the process and suggest some actual steps in the planning procedure.

Assessment

Assessment is the process of gathering information on your son's strengths and needs. Some form of assessment or testing is recommended when you try to identify specific transition objectives and the type of support or assistance needed to meet the objectives. The general purpose of any assessment is to answer two questions: What are your son's needs at this time? What special services or programs of instruction are needed to meet these needs?

Assessment is ongoing. It happens over and over. Each time an assessment occurs it can be formal and structured or informal and unstructured. A specific test that is printed by a company and used nationwide is a formal assessment. An interview with your son is an informal assessment technique. Assessment information is gathered through paper and pencil activities, interviews with you and your son, observations of your son in a work setting, checklists, or on-the-job experiences.

No matter who does an assessment or what materials are used, the information provided should be used for further decision making. For example, a vocational assessment of your son provides information about his (a) dexterity, strength, and endurance; (b) work habits and attitudes; (c) interests (what he likes to do and the working conditions under which he performs best); and (d) skills that he has that can be used on a job or in school.

The following statement is an example of assessment information gathered by a work experience coordinator at an Area Education Agency (AEA). This statement is based on the student's job experience.

Cindy showed real interest in working at the dry cleaners. She was dependable, showed up for work each day, and was willing to work overtime when needed. However, she was very shy and did not interact with co-workers at lunch or breaks.

Once assessment information is gathered, it can be used in planning specific vocational goals and objectives in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the Transition Plan. For example, knowing that Cindy was shy and did not socialize with co-workers could result in an objective in the IEP dealing with the development of certain social skills for Cindy.

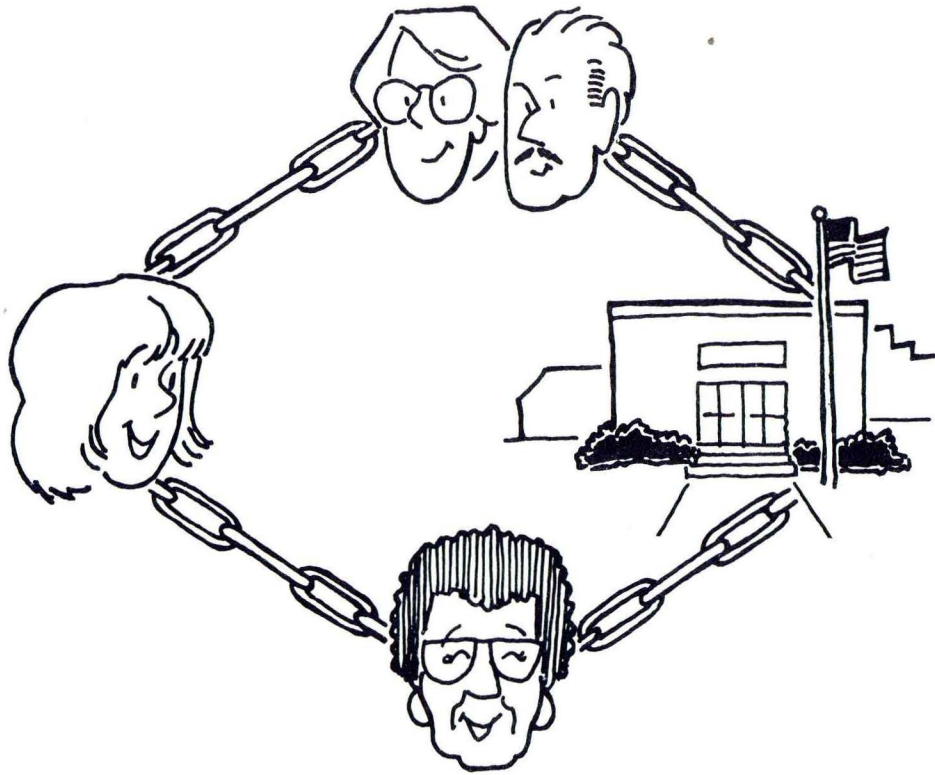
The importance of assessment and using the information cannot be stressed enough. In closing this section, let's look at a comment made by a parent.

The single most obvious way to begin addressing transition is for IEP teams, including parents, to learn to make meaningful and related goal choices based on much more than a feeling.

Roles of Participants in Transition Planning Procedure

The idea of moving a young adult with disabilities from high school to the adult world is not easy. Many people are responsible or have a part in the planning of the transition. In

order for the transition to be successful, everyone must come together. The following illustration shows this.



Let's look at the roles of the different participants.

You. Along with your son, you share responsibility for transition planning. You and your son are the decision makers who help determine which services your son will need. Your values, expectations, level of information, and your son's needs help decide what will be addressed in the transition plan. Your role in transition planning is that of an informed consumer: the more information you have, the better your decisions will be concerning your son's school and adult life. For your convenience, a "Parental Needs Assessment" for transition planning is included in the Appendices (see Appendix A). This will help you determine how much you need to learn about transition.

Your son. Your son should also be involved in planning for his transition from school to adult life. His interests, needs, and desires should be taken into account when programs are selected and when goals and objectives are established. A transition planning procedure is structured so that you and your son can act as your own advocates. Acting as your own advocates means knowing what you want and asking for it. Some young adults do not have, and will not develop, the ability to advocate for themselves in the adult world. If a young adult cannot advocate for himself, you, the special educator, or adult service provider must take a more active role in transition planning.

Special educators. One of the responsibilities of special educators is to prepare your son for post-high school life. Effective and useful instruction increases the chances of success after leaving school. Special educators must communicate with you early in your son's school

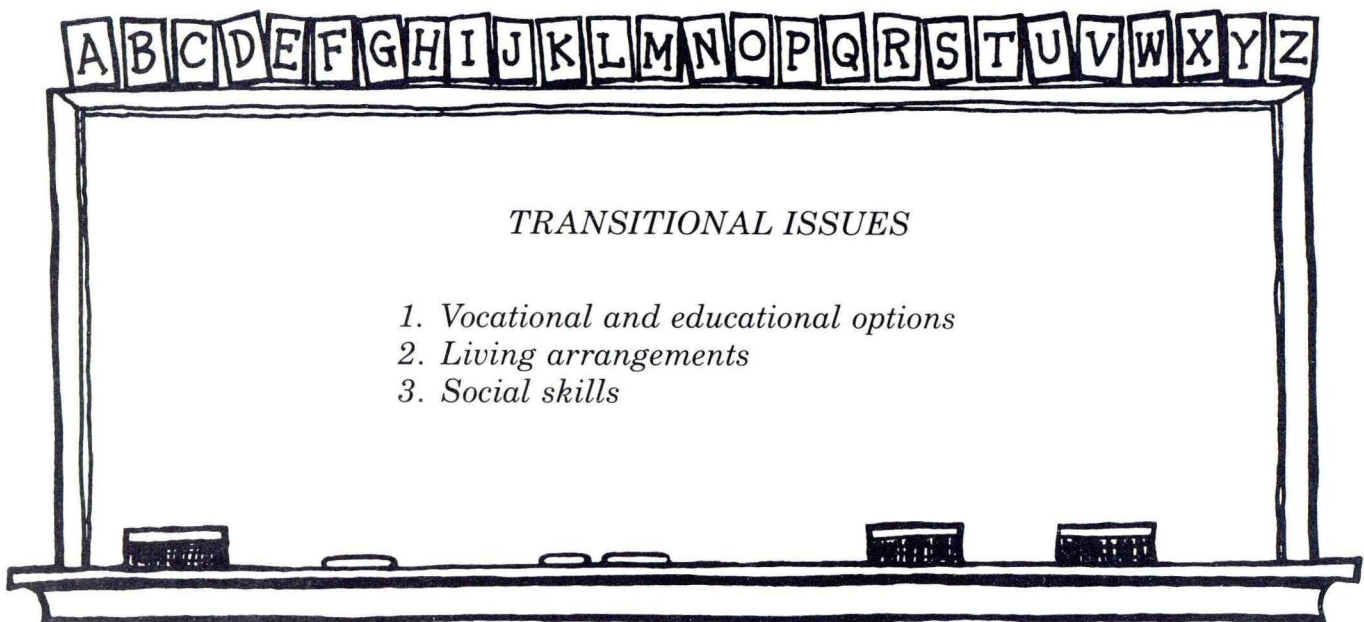
program to help identify realistic post-high school goals. Special educators should also provide information to you about adult service providers and may refer you or your son to adult service providers. In some cases, special educators will need to be actively involved in meetings between adult service providers, you, and your son.

Adult service providers. The role of adult service providers (agencies that provide services to adults with disabilities) in a transition planning procedure is one of consultant or information provider. Adult service providers should provide enough information about their service options so you and your son, the special educator, and other service providers can plan for your son's transition. They should also help you in getting services before your son's graduation. The appropriate adult service providers should attend the staffing held in the spring of your son's junior year. Participation of adult service providers allows them to become aware of your son's needs and give suggestions on how to meet some of his needs now as well as in the future.

Steps in Transition Planning Procedure

Schools are required by law to let you know in advance that your son will be graduating or completing his school program. This notice must be given 18 months before your son is scheduled to leave school. Transition planning should begin as your son enters high school; or at the latest, at the start of his junior year or next to the last year of programming. The planning procedure should focus on your son's needs and issues which have the most influence on his success in the adult world.

Typical issues to be addressed are listed on the chalkboard.



A certain timeline can be used for the procedure. Let's review a sample timeline. This timeline and its activities are taken from Grant Wood Area Education Agency's (AEA 10) Transition Strategies Project (see Appendix B for examples of formal transition plans). Even though your school may not be following a timeline, knowing the activities may help you with planning your son's transition from school to adult life. This is only a sample timeline. Some activities could take place earlier in your son's high school years.

Spring semester of sophomore year. Although most of the planning begins in your son's junior year, some activity can begin in the spring semester of your son's sophomore year. The activities which might occur in the sophomore year are:

1. The special educator contacts you to arrange a transition meeting to be held early in the fall of your son's junior year.
2. The special educator gives you and your son a copy of this handbook (*A PARENT HANDBOOK: Transition From School to Adult Life*) for some basic information on transition.

Fall semester of junior year. Your son's junior year is an appropriate time to formally begin a transition planning procedure. The following events might take place during your son's junior year.

1. Based on your son's needs, you, he, and the special educator develop a plan. This process continues with input from adult service providers throughout your son's junior and senior years.
2. The team selects and records objectives based on your son's assessment results. Responsibilities and timelines for you, your son, and the special educator are identified.
3. The special educator gives copies of the transition planning procedure to each team member. The Transition Plan is incorporated into your son's current Individual Educational Plan (IEP).
4. With the help of the special educator, you and your son contact the adult service providers who are identified in the Transition Plan.
5. The transition team (you, your son, the special educator, and *all appropriate service providers*) meets at the end of your son's junior year to discuss needs, concerns, and modifications to the Transition Plan for your son's senior year.

Fall semester of senior year. Throughout your son's senior year, you, he, the special educator, and adult service providers continue to work as a team to be sure that appropriate contacts have been made and that services are ready for your son's graduation. Any necessary changes to your son's transition objectives are shared with *all* team members.

The transition planning procedure is designed to allow for any changes in your son's goals and needs throughout the two years that the plan is in place. His current performance level must be taken into consideration as the plan progresses. Objectives may be modified because of the changes in his performance.

Spring semester of senior year: senior staff out. This is the last time the team members meet in school surroundings. The activities that occur during your son's last semester are:

1. All members of the transition team (you, your son, special educators, and adult service providers) attend the senior staff out meeting.

2. One of the special educators acts as a recorder to identify specific services that each adult service provider will provide following graduation.
3. The special educator provides updated copies of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and accompanying Transition Plan to each team member.
4. The team determines who will take the lead to coordinate your son's transition from school to the adult world.
5. Your son graduates and the *planned* transition from school to the adult world begins.

You have finished with Section A. Please continue to **Section B: Where Are We Going?"**

