ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Interagency Transition Team Development and Facilitation

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

Creating Opportunities for Youth With Disabilities to Achieve Successful Futures

The College of Education & Human Development

University of Minnesota

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U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

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Interagency Transition Team Development and Facilitation

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NCSET was established *to create opportunities for youth with disabilities to achieve successful futures*. Headquartered at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, NCSET provides technical assistance and disseminates information focused on four major areas of national significance for youth with disabilities and their families:

- Providing students with disabilities with improved access to and success in the secondary education curriculum.
- Ensuring that students achieve positive postschool results in accessing postsecondary education, meaningful employment, independent living, and participation in all aspects of community life.
- Supporting student and family participation in educational and postschool decision-making and planning.
- Improving collaboration and system linkages at all levels through the development of broad-based partnerships and networks at the national, state, and local levels.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Essential Tool

The purpose of this Essential Tool is to assist state-level transition coordinators and others responsible for forming, conducting, and evaluating the performance of interagency transition teams that are focused upon the school and postschool needs of youth with disabilities. This Essential Tool is designed to guide the coordination efforts of people working at the grassroots level up through the state government. This Essential Tool will assist state interagency transition teams to operate in an efficient and successful manner. In turn, this Essential Tool will help guide your work toward the primary purpose of an interagency transition team: to improve postschool outcomes for youth with disabilities who are transitioning from secondary school to adult living.

This interagency transition team Essential Tool will help state transition coordinators and other current or potential interagency team facilitators learn:

1. Why it is valuable to form and use an interagency transition team;
2. The purpose of an interagency transition team;
3. What an interagency transition team does;
4. The roles and responsibilities interagency transition team leaders/facilitators and members need to follow to fulfill their duties;
5. Who should serve on an interagency transition team and how to select members;
6. The most opportune times for interagency transition teams to do their work;
7. Where various interagency transition teams fit into state, district, and local systems;
8. How to solve problems regarding typical transition issues encountered within the team; and
9. How to evaluate the activities, actions, and value of an interagency transition team.

The authors hope that this Essential Tool will help teams better form, organize, plan, prepare, conduct, and follow-up interagency transition team efforts. We include multiple tools that are designed to assist leaders in meeting these objectives on each point of this path.

Who Should Use This Essential Tool?

This Essential Tool is intended to assist current and future interagency team leaders and members to establish, conduct, and evaluate their teams. While state-level transition coordinators and their teams are the Tool's target audience, information presented is also useful to those working at the regional and/or local levels to support individuals with disabilities in transition from secondary school to adult roles.

People interested in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of interagency transition teams might include:

- State education agency transition coordinators;
- Adult service providers working with transition-aged youth;
- Departments of vocational rehabilitation, health, and human services;
- Local education agencies;
- Parents of youth with disabilities;

- Persons involved in the transition planning portion of the Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Workforce development agencies;
- Advocacy organizations;
- General education personnel;
- Special education personnel;
- Specialized schools (e.g., schools for the blind or deaf);
- Social Security Administration; and
- Postsecondary education institutions.

Because states have different structures and needs, team leaders will want to examine options that best represent the interest or focus for their own interagency transition team. One commonality among states is that there are usually three groups who are served by interagency transition teams: state-level agencies, district-level support personnel, and school-level personnel who work with family members and students. While working at these levels, teams have found the following activities to be beneficial, depending upon the focus of their settings, roles, and responsibilities:

- Developing cross-agency policies or addressing policy barriers to facilitate transition from secondary school to postschool roles (state level);
- Developing procedures and guidelines to utilize interagency transition policies in local schools (district level); and
- Working with individual students during IEP meetings and other interagency transition meetings to identify appropriate postschool options (such as college, employment, or community living situations) (school/student planning level).

How to Use This Essential Tool

This Essential Tool is designed for practical use by people responsible for forming, conducting, and evaluating interagency transition teams. It is intended to generate ideas and offer suggestions and potential solutions to assist an interagency transition team in meeting its objectives.

The remainder of Section I offers background information about why interagency transition teams exist. The following section introduces the nine Principles of Teaming – a set of guiding concepts that we believe are fundamental to interagency transition team success. Subsequent to this, readers will find four "tools" intended as "how-to" guides for starting, conducting, and evaluating interagency transition teams. Each of these tools includes sequenced steps, "pull-out" worksheets, and suggested practices. Each tool also seeks to apply the nine Principles of Teaming as presented in the preface to Section III. Section IV offers effective practice summaries using activities from model interagency transition teams in four states. Finally, additional resources (i.e., references and Web sites) are included as these may be helpful for team leaders in building and maintaining an interagency transition team.

The authors hope that this Essential Tool will underscore the value of interagency teams, demonstrate how these teams can work to bring together family members and agency representatives, and emphasize how interagency teams may prepare for, improve, and coordinate services for youth with disabilities in transition.

BACKGROUND ON INTERAGENCY TRANSITION TEAMS

Beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through the 1990s, interagency transition teams were widespread, generating information and strategies that are useful now as important examples of both effective and ineffective interagency teaming (Blalock & Benz, 1999; Blalock, 1996; Everson & Guillory, 1998; Halpern, Benz, & Lindstrom, 1992). Over the years, interagency transition teams have continued to function with varying degrees of success. Those that have not attained a level of desired success might not have generated appropriate membership, elicited the desired level of commitment, implemented guidelines on how to operate, or conveyed an understanding of what they were convened to do. These kinds of problems often result in poor meeting attendance and a lack of overall participation.

In some states, new and renewed interagency transition teams are now being mobilized. Both those who are returning to the process of interagency teaming, and those who are attempting to revitalize their interagency transition teams can benefit from the experience gained over the last decade, as well as from the wealth of knowledge generated prior to 1995 and presented as concisely as possible in this Essential Tool.

What are Interagency Transition Teams?

An interagency transition team brings together a variety of stakeholders who are supporting youth with disabilities so they can have the best chances for success as adults. Because states most often deliver services through agencies designed to meet a specific set of outcomes – e.g., state departments of education are concerned with educational outcomes and departments of health are concerned with health outcomes – interagency teams at the state level are often comprised of representatives of all agencies involved in preparing, connecting, and receiving youth with disabilities as they transition from secondary school to postschool environments. At community or school levels, individuals representing these needs are more likely to be on those teams.

Interagency teams serve varied purposes. These are to:

- Identify local needs or discontinuity in policies, procedures, services, and programs that hinder youth with disabilities from achieving desired, valued outcomes;
- Increase the availability, access, and quality of interagency transition services through the development and improvement of policies, procedures, systems, funding, and other mechanisms for providing seamless transition services to youth with disabilities and their families;
- Help other service representatives understand the educational service system including laws, regulations, and policies related to transition services; roles and responsibilities of families and district personnel; roles of local or regional interagency planning teams; and roles now expected of other service agencies involved in the transition process; and
- Enable youth with disabilities to live, work, and continue to learn in the community, with supports if necessary, as adults.

Why Interagency Transition Teams Exist

State and local interagency committees focused on transition have emerged and expanded due to several factors. First, it just makes good sense for professionals to work collaboratively to provide and coordinate services for youth with disabilities. Second, federal legislation in the fields of education, employment, health, mental health, and others have strongly encouraged cross-agency collaboration in addressing individual and family needs. Finally, families are increasingly requesting help from schools and adult service providers in arranging for and coordinating community services needed by their child as he/she transitions from school to adult life.

The multi-faceted needs of individuals with disabilities led to the belief that effective interagency transition would require collaboration. So, interagency transition services became a coordinated set of activities designed to achieve specific outcomes. Individual needs are meant to be the first priority, taking into account preferences, potential, abilities, and interests. The goal of transition services is to develop the linkages and skills necessary for success in postsecondary education, adult education and training, adult services, independent living, community participation, a specific job or career, and/or integrated community living.

Transition planning and services are required by federal and state laws. Such services are intended to prepare individuals with disabilities to live, learn, and earn in the community as adults. For some students this could mean that while they are still in school certain skills may be emphasized that will not be needed until leaving school. Transition planning and services target students still in school as well as those who have dropped out or who may be incarcerated in a juvenile or adult facility (NCSET, 2002).

The following are some of the benefits successful interagency transition teams offer to a diverse group of agencies, organizations, families, and individuals:

- State agencies working together may discover common, cross-agency goals and how they can work in concert toward addressing the needs of youth with disabilities.
- State agencies will recognize what other agency services are available in their states.
- State agencies will also learn which services are lacking in their states.
- State agencies and district personnel can develop and implement action plans to accomplish team objectives.
- State agencies, district personnel, family members, and students may benefit from new services and activities, as well as new connections to existing services.
- State agencies, district personnel, family members, and students can build trust and supportive linkages between sometime adversaries.
- State agencies, district personnel, family members, and students will all have an opportunity to understand different agency cultures and requirements.
- District personnel, family members, and students may discover peer support among team members.
- District personnel will be better able to prioritize needed services.
- District personnel will better understand how different agencies and groups operate and who (or what) drives their objectives.
- Family members and students may attain team outcomes that they are unable to accomplish through their own individual efforts.

Ensuring Evidence-Based Practices are Presented

This Essential Tool is intended to be illustrative of interagency team practices and procedures and is based on available research, literature, and personal correspondence with members of interagency transition teams. A Web-based search using Google and Yahoo search engines was conducted to uncover information about state interagency transition teams. Searches using sample key words were conducted, with the following results:

“Transition teams” – 266 Google returns; 10,700 Yahoo returns
“Interagency transition teams” – 81 Google returns; 77 Yahoo returns
“State-level transition teams” – 2 Google returns; 2 Yahoo returns
“Using teams in the transition process” – no returns Google or Yahoo
“Membership of interagency transition teams” – neither Google nor Yahoo returns
“Issues considered by transition teams” – neither Google nor Yahoo returns

While a Web-based search for information on transition teams returned many results, as the search terms became more narrowly defined, data became sparse. A search for “interagency transition teams” yielded limited returns. While much activity has occurred with interagency transition teams over the years, little has been written or published about how such teams worked and what contributed to their effectiveness. A good example of this is the work of the Connecticut Interagency State Transition Team. While this state program is cited later in the document as an example of an excellent interagency transition team, nothing about the team has been written. The agency does not have a Web site; information we received was obtained through personal correspondence and discussion.

Other resources employed to conduct a literature search for this Essential Tool were:

1. *Integrative review of papers and studies addressing interagency transition teaming to assist youth with disabilities in secondary school, transition, and postschool environments as described in documents and professional journals (Stodden, Conway, & Chang, 2004).* Computerized searches were conducted of numerous documents and online databases including the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Psychological Abstracts, and Education Abstracts. Search terms included: transition teams, interagency transition teams, using teams in the transition process, state-level transition teams, membership of interagency transition teams, and issues considered by transition teams.

2. *Search and analysis of federal policy documents focused on interagency transition teaming to assist youth with disabilities transitioning from secondary school to postschool environments.* Documents, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), were searched and analyzed for common and discrepant language influencing the delivery and coordination of transition services within secondary schools and postschool settings. Additional documents discussing federal policy impacts upon youth with disabilities making the transition from secondary school to postschool settings were reviewed, including Collet-Klingenberg's *The Reality of Best Practices in Transition: A Case Study* (1998) and Blalock's *Community Transition Teams as the Foundation for Transition Services for Youth With Learning Disabilities* (1996).

   Full citations for these and other articles are included in the references section.

3. *Web-based search for documents on transition services produced by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education; the National Institutes for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR); and the Institute of Education Sciences (formerly OERI).* Project staff conducted a Web-based search for interagency transition team model programs funded by OSEP, NIDRR, and the Institute of Education Sciences.

A thorough search of the above documents as well as numerous contacts with persons working in the field of transition revealed a pattern of difficulty in forming and maintaining successful state interagency transition teams. In Section IV, the authors have included examples of four states that are doing an admirable job of conducting interagency teams with positive outcomes.

Each state is at a different phase in this process. For example, Arizona is in the process of re-grouping from more local-oriented teams to a state team. Connecticut has worked through a committee format that has sparked numerous accomplishments. Pennsylvania and Colorado also have many achievements, but differ in their organization from one another and the aforementioned states.

FOUR TOOLS FOR INTERAGENCY TRANSITION TEAMS

Overview

The following tools are suggested as a means to support the process of developing, conducting, maintaining, and evaluating a state interagency transition team. To assist the reader in using the following tools, nine Principles of Teaming are shared in the beginning of this section. The authors believe these Principles serve as a useful guide to becoming involved in any team effort. While this Introductory Tool is comprised of one summary reading and a worksheet, Tools 1-4 are more lengthy, integrating recommended practices as they relate to the Principles with explanatory narrative and sequenced activities and practices. Thus, each of these tools can be used as a "how-to" guide, offering: 1) a sequence of recommended **steps**; 2) tips on **how to apply the principles**; and 3) sample **worksheets** for team members and/or leaders to use. These comprehensive tools are:

Each tool begins with a purpose statement and listing, in sequence, what is included in the tool. This is followed by a narrative overview of important discussion points of the tool.

Introductory Tool: Using Teaming Principles to Guide Your Work

The following nine Principles of Teaming (Stodden & Smith, 1996) are a set of quality indicators for high-functioning teams. The Principles are integrated within each tool and aligned with the activities presented. They encompass fundamental concepts and quality indicators of effective interagency transition teaming, and may optimize the success of an interagency transition team. These principles are based on more than a decade of development and evaluation across several states and local settings.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of the Principles is that all team members are active participants and have an equal voice in decisions. These Principles may prove invaluable when shared and explored with all team members. If conflicts arise during team problem-solving activities, referring to the Principles can be a way to arrive at consensus.

Each Principle is briefly explained in this introductory section. A synopsis is provided in chart form, and a worksheet is given for a group activity to make use of the Principles.

The Nine Principles of Teaming (Stodden & Smith, 1996)

Principle 1: A team reflects and demonstrates a shared/collective vision.

A collective vision is the dream or goal that aligns the team in pursuit of its mission. It encourages team members to band together toward a common destination. Although a collective vision may evolve and change slightly as time goes on or as new team members are added, its core intent is to speak to a constant view of a preferred future. The vision reflects a gathering and building of ideas, feelings, and actions. The team revisits the vision and its related mission regularly to keep it current and present in each team member's mind. The vision provides the team aspiration as well as guidance for discussion and problem-solving. It reflects the ideals for which the team stands. The team vision is crucial knowledge for recruiting members of the team. If a potential team member does not share the team's vision, this could spell disaster for achieving team outcomes. This is why one of the four tools in this section focuses on careful recruitment of team members.

results in movement toward	***results in movement away from***
• Collective purpose	• Private purpose
• Activities related to mission	• Random activities unrelated to mission
• Agreement on agenda	• Hidden agendas
• Collective direction	• Unguided direction
• Unlimited goals	• Narrow goals

Principle 2: A team promotes empowerment of all members.

Empowerment is essential to a highly effective team. Team members must share power in making decisions and taking action while working toward the vision or mission. Each member must feel that power is equalized and believe that he or she makes a difference. An empowered team focuses on strengths and capabilities; utilizes the contributions and resources of its members and supporters; has a depth of knowledge about central issues; follows effective operational procedures and is aware and competent in diversity issues; creates an effective networking system; communicates openly; and shares responsibility. The team demonstrates power through, rather than power over, attitudes and behavior. An empowered team is a vehicle for making improvements in individuals' lives, classrooms, schools, organizations, and communities.

results in movement toward	***results in movement away from***
• Equity between members	• Disparity between members
• Integrated training opportunities	• Segregated training opportunities
• Fluid and interchangeable team roles	• Rigid team roles
• Team tasks assigned on basis of expertise	• Team tasks assigned on basis of power or authority

Principle 3: A team demonstrates shared decision making.
Each individual on the team demonstrates shared participation and responsibility in the decision-making process. This can occur in a variety of ways such as consensus building, using team agreement strategies, or other collaborative processes. It is essential that team members feel shared ownership for decisions and assume responsibility for their results. This does not mean that each member is expected to be equally knowledgeable or play an equal role in a given process or task, since members all bring different skills and interests to each situation. By getting to know and recognize each member, the team can determine equitable ways to make decisions while maintaining the integrity of individual members, as well as their right to agree or disagree.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Cooperation • Horizontal influence • Broader dialogue • Leader facilitation • Flexible decision-making	• Competition • Leader domination • Restricted dialogue • Vertical control • Rigid decision-making	

Principle 4: A team demonstrates synergy – the whole is more than the sum of its parts.
Interagency teams gain when the relationships among its members add value to the efforts of the team as a whole. That is, the members of the team collectively create visions, ideas, and solutions not likely to occur if they were working in isolation. What makes this happen is often difficult to recognize. However, it usually comes from group discussion, in which a feeling of trust has developed and people are free to think creatively and not feel criticized. Synergy can manifest itself as high energy, enthusiasm, humor, and the motivation to tackle the "impossible."

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Time spent well together • High goals • Higher order thinking • Plans of action • Strength in "the pack"	• Time in isolation • Non-challenging goals • Regurgitation thinking • Plans based on reaction • Strength in "the wolf"	

Principle 5: A team highly regards diversity as a necessary part of creativity and collaboration.
Maintaining diversity within a team requires the creation of an environment where it is safe to share important aspects of oneself – beliefs, wishes, ideas, strengths, weaknesses, curiosities, and uncertainties. Along with the sharing, there is respectful acceptance of differences and differing perspectives. The essence of teaming is to encourage the participation of a diverse group of individuals with a common cause. Within the team, practices reflect respect for cultural, ethnic, gender, and economic status of members. As processes of the team and content areas are dealt with, these diverse perspectives become infused.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Acceptance of opinions • Group action • Fixing the system • Diverse thinking within group • Inclusion	• Suppression of dissent • Individual actions • Fixing the blame • Group-think • Exclusion	

Principle 6: A team fosters the full inclusion and participation of people impacted by its actions.
Teams must be provided opportunities to engage in thoughtful, provocative conversations with large numbers of participants and persons who have a stake in the team's outputs. Inclusion in the teaming effort is a given, and the team process reflects how full participation is to be achieved. Major stakeholders are involved to the degree most beneficial to their needs. An environment is created to ensure that people are included who are invested in

the team's vision and impacted by its actions. Not only do team members believe in full participation, but they act to achieve it. This requires the creation of neutral and accessible environments, and provision of supports and accommodations for team members who have historically been overlooked. This principle fosters open communication where everyone has a voice and can influence team decisions.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• "Us" mentality • Supports • Focus on questions • Inherent inclusion	• "We-them" mentality • Barriers • Focus on problems and solutions • Tokenism	

Principle 7: A team facilitates the self-determination and personal growth of itself and its individual members.
An interagency transition team that fosters self-determination will provide each member with personal benefit for his or her efforts. Such a team inspires individual expression and growth as well as collective action and team growth. Although ownership regarding the team is strong, each team member feels that he or she is a unique entity within the team. Increasingly, members can effectively seek, find, and utilize the personalized services they need for personal development and progress. Teams and individuals change and grow as they acquire new attitudes, information, skills, and experiences. There is a shift from dependence on outside sources for meeting needs to sharing expertise with others.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Transformation • Actualization • "Adhocracy" organizations • "We" is better than "me"	• Stagnation • Frustration • Bureaucratic organizations • "Me" is better than "we"	

Principle 8: A team is responsive to its authentic (ecological) context.
A team is a complex, living system that both impacts and is impacted by its local environment. Real-world, on-site issues and problems of team stakeholders must be addressed, and stakeholders must be able to relate and use personal experiences as the context from which to address these problems. The team operates in an interdependent and reciprocal fashion with full consideration given to the local system in which agendas appear. There is a web of connectedness to actual on-site problems and solutions.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Interrelated decisions • Cumulative interactions • Holistic scanning and interpretation of environment	• Decisions that occur in a vacuum • Isolated perspective • Environment does not affect the team	

Principle 9: A team reflects and demonstrates a dynamic and fluid quality.
Teaming is a dynamic process in which content is produced and transformed continuously. A constantly evolving team remains flexible, adaptable, and accommodating. The team must be conscious about its own operations and have a process for training and re-focusing. Leadership must be situational and roles within the group must not become static. As well, the team must constantly monitor both its internal processes and the external environment for changes that affect team goals and decisions.

results in movement toward			*results in movement away from*
	• Building on strengths • Improved processes • Multi-dimensionality	• Eliminating weaknesses • Status quo • Uni-dimensionality	

Introductory Tool: The Nine Principles Reflections Worksheet

Directions: Distribute and fill out after reading or discussing the nine Principles of Teaming; then share the team's responses to determine areas that need attention. After carefully writing answers, share responses one question at a time, hearing from every individual in a team circle first, then allowing open discussion.
Note: All team members can use this sheet to reflect on their view of the Principles. This may be especially useful when the team first meets and as new members join.

Team Member: ________________________ **Role:** ________________________

1. A team reflects and demonstrates a shared/collective vision.

The vision of this team is ________________________

____

2. A team promotes empowerment of all members.

I can best serve this team with my strength(s) of ________________________

____

3. A team demonstrates shared decision-making.

When a major team decision must be made, who will lead the decision-making? ________________________

____

My role in team decision-making is: ________________________

____

4. A team demonstrates synergy – the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Individual team member contributions toward team goals might include: ________________________

____

No matter how inspired a specific team member's ideas might be, when the whole team develops an idea it is more likely to work because: ________________________

____

5. A team highly regards diversity of opinions as a necessary part of creativity and collaboration.

My perspective is part of the whole, not the whole part. If there comes a time when we cannot see the same vision, I can agree to ____

6. A team fosters the full inclusion and participation of people impacted by its actions.

I am contributing my skills and time to this vision. What I need to feel successful, accomplish the goals, and help others contribute is ____

7. A team facilitates the self-determination and personal growth of itself and its individual members.

What I am hoping to get from this experience is ____

8. A team is responsive to its authentic (ecological) context.

We are partners in a bigger picture, which is ____

9. A team reflects and demonstrates a dynamic and fluid quality.

We are part of completing a dynamic journey. The journey is not over, merely changing. I began the journey when ____

I can continue to grow through this adventure by learning how to ____

10. Additional thoughts or questions: ____

Tool 1: How to Build an Effective Interagency Transition Team

The purpose of Tool 1 is to provide interagency team leaders information on how to assemble an effective interagency transition team, particularly at the state level. Tips for recruiting and interviewing potential team members, including key players, are offered.

The box below shows all the activities included in this Tool. Following the box, Tool 1 begins with an overview about interagency teams, and moves to a section about recruiting team members. Each of the items presented in the box will be discussed in the following narrative text.

Contents of Tool 1

A. Overview

Different types of interagency transition teams will operate at different levels within your state. Legislation (such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997) typically depicts teams at the student level (for individualized transition planning) and the state- or community-level (for interagency collaboration), but varied levels may operate concurrently. For example, a student and his or her family have personal goals, while local education agencies (LEAs) integrate community goals and student desires while meeting state laws. Some states will also have district or regional teams serving as intermediaries between the state-level teams and local ones. Their goals will be similar to those of an LEA, but on a larger scale, and at the same time reflect state goals, but on a smaller scale. State agencies want students and their families to achieve their personal goals, communities to be satisfied with services, and regions or districts to operate effectively. They must also look at how these goals and interactions align with state policy and address federal mandates. Any given state may have interagency transition teams that include the following levels:

- State-level transition policy teams,
- District/or regional transition guideline teams,
- School-based or community transition planning teams, and
- Individual transition planning teams aligned with the IEP.

Each of these levels impacts and interacts with the other levels; therefore, teams will vary significantly by location and purpose. Their various purposes subsequently drive their membership and activities. All teams should be multidisciplinary in nature, with members sharing a common aim. The following paragraphs offer a more detailed explanation of teams at each level. While all these teams are important, this Essential Tool focuses on state interagency transition teams and will move solely to that focus in the section on recruiting members.

State-level transition teams (sometimes called "transition advisory councils") necessitate interagency collaboration at the state-level that is intended to enhance transition at all levels. These teams serve as vehicles for developing model transition programs, identifying transition policy and procedures, creating training materials for school and agency personnel, and maintaining communication among diverse geographic areas.

If your team is a state-level team, critical members must include youth and family members as well as representatives from: the state education agency; postsecondary education; secondary special education; vocational rehabilitation; employment agencies; the Social Security Administration, independent living centers or organizations; and community agencies that serve adults.

Regional or district transition teams focus upon developing procedures to carry out state goals by detailing how actions would occur to implement state and federal policy, often as applied within smaller state geographic divisions. These teams will continue to facilitate interagency collaboration, but will do so at the regional or district level. Like the broader state team, a regional team will want to develop model transition programs, identify interagency transition needs and procedures, provide training to school and agency personnel, and maintain communication within relevant geographic areas. Like the community teams, this type of team will also attempt to develop action plans and solve problems.

Community transition teams identify common directions, develop action plans, solve problems, and encourage interagency collaboration, creating community training and employment opportunities for students, and seeking additional sources of support (financial, policy, etc.). Community transition teams must be made up of a "representative membership" – that is, members who represent the inhabitants of the area they serve in terms of ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic level, occupation, gender, age, and disability (Halpern, Benz, & Lindstrom, 1992).

If your team is a mid-level team, the critical members must include: a family/youth representative; one representative from each district or area educational agency (should include postsecondary, special, and general secondary education); vocational rehabilitation representative; employment representative; Social Security Administration representative; independent living representative; and adult agency providers.

School-based transition teams typically work on making curricular changes, developing individualized transition planning tools and procedures, integrating vocational assessment into transition planning, or developing instructional delivery options that will affect more than one student. These groups may already exist in the form of building-based curriculum committees, teacher-agency support teams, etc.

If your team is a school-based team, the critical members must include: special education and general education teachers; family/youth representatives, vocational rehabilitation representative; employment representatives; and juvenile justice personnel, where appropriate.

Individualized transition/education planning teams help a single student at a time to identify, plan for, and achieve his or her future goals in education, work, and life. This team, also referred to as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or a "multidisciplinary team," is student-focused and together decides on all the postschool outcome-oriented goals and objectives to be included in the IEP.

If your team is an individual student team, the critical members must be: students with disabilities and their families/guardians; advocates for the student and family; school personnel such as special educators, counselors, transition specialists, department heads, and vocational rehabilitation counselors; adult service agency representatives; and juvenile justice personnel, where appropriate.

B. Who to Recruit?

Who are the right people for the team and why?

State interagency transition teams vary in membership from one state to another. The model state teams that are discussed in Section IV of this Essential Tool have memberships ranging from representatives of a dozen state organizations to teams of almost 40 individuals. Since states have flexibility in how they implement transition, these teams reflect the diversity of each state and its goals. An optimal state team includes a wide range of representatives from state organizations as well as professionals, family members, and individuals with disabilities. Whether a team is convened for local or state-level transition purposes, to be successful it must have individuals with a vested interest in the transition outcomes of youth with disabilities. Stakeholders from agencies who have an active role in transition and who can also identify the transition needs of youth with disabilities – both those needs that are being met, and those that are unmet – are a good place to begin recruitment. Soliciting recommendations from all those contacted might be useful, as well as raising the question at early team meetings. Valuable potential stakeholders may not be among the obvious persons or agencies that team leaders contact, so an open mind to all interested parties is recommended.

In researching diverse transition teams, and communicating with a number of transition coordinators, it became apparent that each one builds an interagency transition team representative of the particular needs and options existing in its state. While similarities between all the states exist, so do differences, and any interagency transition team must reflect its own unique circumstances. Given that, we offer below a list of potential team members that can strengthen any state team:

- State transition coordinator;
- Special education coordinator;
- Special and general education representatives from all levels (elementary, secondary, and higher education);
- Vocational rehabilitation state coordinator;
- Employment representatives;
- Social Security Administration representative;
- Developmental disability representatives;
- Independent living representatives;
- Adult agency providers;
- Family members and youth with disabilities;
- Other interested school personnel (i.e. secondary and postsecondary educators, department heads, counselors, special services staff, trades and military training officers);
- Other social services representatives, including mental health and juvenile justice staff (probation officers and educators);
- Residential service providers;
- Transportation representatives;
- Public safety representatives; and
- Leisure and recreation services representatives.

C. Enticing the Right People

Incentives to offer potential members

One of the purposes of this Tool is to make future meetings a better experience than they may have been in the past.

Some people serve on many boards simultaneously. What do these busy people get from their participation? While incentives may differ from one person to the next, some common rewards are found in:

- A need to stay active;
- A desire to serve the community;
- A desire to meet like-minded people;
- A belief in the mission of the organization;
- A desire to increase the value of one's résumé;
- A desire to offer one's skills and knowledge to others; and
- A desire to know what's going on in the community.

There are probably at least as many reasons to become a group member as there are members of a group. But successful groups seem to have the following characteristics in common when they recruit and retain members. They are:

- Clear about their team's missions and goals;
- Clear about a time limit to the service requested.
- Clear – and accurate – about the time commitment involved;
- Clear – and accurate – about the work commitment involved;
- Clear about what kinds of characteristics they wish to add to their team; and
- Clear in developing guidelines for the team and what team members can do.

Teams might offer some more concrete incentives as well. These could include:

- Tuition stipends and university credit;
- Common and comfortable meeting sites for teams;
- Administrative support; and
- Mini-grants to teams for implementing their action plans.

How to find, interest, and involve potential members

Team members can be recruited in many ways, from newspaper advertisements or other publicity to membership as a job requirement. The more specifically a team can state what it is looking for in a team member and what roles it needs filled, the more likely it is to find the most helpful candidates. Some organizations actually make charts of characteristics they want in a team member, which can be as specific as a teenager with cerebral palsy or as broad as someone with a legal background. Charts are filled out with current team member characteristics, and then people are sought to fill those traits that are currently missing from the team. This also helps potential team members because they can see what roles they might fill and if those include an aspect of their lives they wish to share with the team.

Some organizations like to have current members contact potential members. This could be done through a phone call, e-mail, or actual meeting. Perhaps the most important part of recruiting a new team member is to be enthusiastic in welcoming him or her to the team, while being honest about what is expected. Recruits may want to share a résumé with the team or even attend a meeting or two to see if the process of the meeting and topics addressed are something in which they want to participate.

People who show initiative and commitment by attending meetings before they are members are often the most productive team members once they become a part of the group. This is also a great way for current team members to meet potential members in an informal way.

The authors have found the general guidelines discussed above to be true in their personal experience. To help you even more with these criteria, this section concludes with a "Potential Member Checklist" worksheet.

Applying the Principles of Teaming to Tool 1

How to Apply Principle 2: Empowering Members

Before conducting the activities in this Tool, review Principle 2 as a guide to good teaming practices at this stage in your planning. Let potential members know that empowering every member will be an important aspect of your interagency transition team, and that there are many benefits to being on a truly empowered team, such as:

- Receiving new information on content, processes, best practices, and resources;
- Participating in courses, seminars, in-services, and hearing guest speakers;
- Networking with other teams;
- Getting support from other team members;
- Improving personal skills (i.e. public speaking, presentations, training trainers); and
- Increased confidence from having an equal say in decision making and being respected for one's work and opinions.

Once your interagency transition team meetings are well underway, additional suggestions for applying this Principle can also be considered (these are integrated in the remaining tools).

Tool 1: Potential Member Checklist

Date of Interview: ____________________

Name: ____________________

Position or Title: ____________________

Agency Name and Address: ____________________

____

Agency Telephone and Fax: ____________________

Personal Telephone (work, cell, home): ____________________

E-mail: ____________________

Attribute	Rating: *4 - Excellent* *3 - Good* *2 - Fair* *1- Poor* *0 - Not clear*	Comments
Depth of knowledge of transition issues		
Capabilities and expertise		
Strength-focused		
Aware and competent in diversity issues		
Communicates openly		
Shares responsibility		
Networks effectively		
Has access to resources		

Comments: ____________________

____

____

Recommendations for other team members: ____________________

____

____

Tool 2: How to Determine Initial Roles, Responsibilities, and the Team Vision

The purpose of Tool 2 is to support team leaders and members in understanding their roles and responsibilities on interagency transition teams as initial meetings begin. Since roles and responsibilities are often decided as the vision and/or mission of the team becomes clearer, these two early stages of interagency transition planning are offered together in this Tool.

Contents of Tool 2

A. Creating a Vision and Mission Statement

Why/How do we create a vision and mission statement?

Agencies and individuals joining an interagency transition team will enter the process with their own agency mission or personal vision in mind. For agencies, these may not be congruent, as agencies often have different missions. State interagency transition teams often start with a broad mission attuned to the goals of transition in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. However, each state has the opportunity to refine this vision to meet its own unique needs. One of the first responsibilities of any team is to discuss, formulate, implement, and instill a method for evaluating its vision and mission statement(s).

The best way to create a team vision and mission statement in which the entire team will be invested and will want to succeed is to be sure all stakeholders are involved. This may cause the process to be much longer than the sample activity given below, but it will be worth the effort when the entire team is motivated to pursue a cohesive vision.

The team vision needs to be expressed as clearly as possible so that everyone on the team feels comfortable with it. This cannot be overemphasized because the vision will determine the interagency team's organizational goals, partnerships, and the strategies it develops to meet objectives. In addition, a strong, concise mission statement will help outsiders understand the purpose of the interagency team and may offer compelling reasons for them to get involved.

Sample activities to create a vision or mission statement

ACTIVITY ONE

1. In groups of five, take 20 minutes to discuss and identify key words and phrases of a "preferred future" for individuals with disabilities in transition from secondary school to adult living.
2. In the same groups, take 20 minutes to draw a picture of the group's "preferred future." One person can draw, or everyone can contribute, but it needs to reflect the group's ideas.
3. Take 10 minutes to write one to three sentences using key words or phrases to describe your group's "preferred" picture. This is the beginning of a team mission statement. The team can further clarify and refine this statement at follow-up meetings.

4. Take about two minutes per small group and share the group's "preferred" picture (collective vision) with the whole team, as well as the group's statement describing the picture (beginning mission statement). Note any similarities in the drawings. At a later date, pull the words together into one mission statement.

ACTIVITY TWO

- Create a logo or coat of arms (a drawing of a shield to show pride in the team and mission);
- Use cards with words or phrases created by team members to elicit visions and determine commonality; and
- Orient new members to the vision and mission statement.

ACTIVITY THREE

Team members may find this exercise useful to focus and sensitize themselves to the importance of a topic at any meeting:

1. Give each team member an envelope and small sheet of paper.
2. Have everyone list the major thoughts running through their minds unrelated to the mission (e.g., work, family, etc.).
3. Put the paper in the envelope. Seal it with the member's name on the front, and then ask team members to agree to forget about these thoughts until the meeting is over at the scheduled time. Or allow them to write their personal thoughts on sticky pads of paper for others to see and help them solve after the meeting is done.

B. Deciding the Roles and Responsibilities of the Team Leader and Each Member

What are team leaders' and team members' responsibilities?

Clearly, most state-level interagency transition teams will have as their leader the state transition coordinator. In some states, it may not be possible for these individuals to delegate some of their power. In this case, initial roles and responsibilities will simply be assigned by the team leader. However, this may change over time, and leaders should remember that the ideal team is more democratic than hierarchical in its functioning. For this reason, recommendations for practices and activities are given below.

As a team, the shared responsibilities of all members are to:

- Decide on the mission to meet the transition services needs of the state's students with disabilities;
- Provide administrative leadership to develop and implement transition services across agencies;
- Solve problems and eliminate barriers;
- Establish policies and procedures for service delivery and coordination; and
- Allocate personnel and funding resources to address needs.

Team responsibilities for efficient organization can include decisions about:

- How often to meet;
- Where to meet;
- What happens between meetings;
- Who's responsible for keeping team members informed of team activities;

- Who's responsible for record-keeping at meetings;
- Who's responsible for keeping meetings on track and on time;
- Who's responsible for publicizing meetings;
- Who's responsible for ensuring meetings are publicized and run according to state law; and
- Who's responsible for informing the team about upcoming meetings and/or distributing information (e.g., agendas, minutes, etc.) to members ahead of time and providing materials in accessible formats.

Team responsibilities for solving issues and guiding the implementation of transition services include:

1. Identifying community resources;
2. Clarifying roles of service providers;
3. Developing and updating interagency service agreements;
4. Coordinating community awareness;
5. Seeking new funding and supporting existing programs;
6. Coordinating job development and placement among service providers;
7. Developing strategies for overcoming barriers;
8. Establishing a communication network among service providers;
9. Coordinating staff development activities;
10. Making research-based future projections;
11. Sharing information related to employment of individuals with special needs;
12. Identifying community needs in employment and adult services; and
13. Assisting with program evaluation.

How do team members learn their roles?
Organizers of teams sometimes make the mistake of assuming team members automatically understand their roles and responsibilities. This is usually not the case. Two sample worksheets, "Team Member Roles and Responsibilities" and "Team Member Checklist," are offered at the end of this section and are designed to help team members learn about their roles.

Applying the Principles of Teaming to Tool 2

How to Apply Principle 1: Reflecting a Shared Vision
Before conducting the activities in this Tool, team leaders should review the first Principle as a guide to good teaming practices. While this Principle is inherent in the activities provided above, revisiting why such activities are recommended may help you assure your team of the relevance of what you are doing, and lead ultimately to the team's achieving better process and performance outcomes.

Tool 2: Team Member Checklist

Directions: Each incoming member should receive the materials listed below. The team leader and members can use this checklist to ensure that members have all necessary documents. (Documents will need to be developed by the team.)

Mission Statement:

By-Laws:

Policies and Procedures:

Committee Roles and Responsibilities:

Meeting Schedule (or Calendar):

Date	Time and/or Place	Reminders

Tool 2: Team Member Roles and Responsibilities Worksheet

Directions: This can be first completed by a membership committee chair or equivalent, and then maintained and amended by each team member during his or her term(s) of service.

Transition Team Position: ______________________________

Term(s) of Service: ______________________________

____

____

Organization Represented (if any): ______________________________

____

Committee Membership(s): ______________________________

____

____

Committee(s) Responsibilities: ______________________________

____

____

____

____

____

Tool 3: How to Conduct Interagency Transition Team Meetings

The purpose of Tool 3 is to assist teams to conduct effective team meetings, resolve typical transition issues or barriers, and move from preparations to actions. Tool 3 will begin with a discussion about how to conduct initial meetings, then move on to a section about "Moving from Preparations to Actions."

Contents of Tool 3

A. Preparing For and Conducting Initial Meetings

How to describe the purpose of the meeting

A first meeting has the potential to set the tone for the entire team for months, and perhaps even years, to come. While many members may desire to broach many different objectives and agendas at a first meeting, most attendees will probably leave with a high level of frustration if they do not find a cohesive, organized meeting that provides some concrete accomplishments.

Team members know they are gathering for a specific goal – in this case, to assist with the transition of youth with disabilities. To ensure everyone has the same objectives, it is often helpful to provide a handout, accessible to all participants, with a written statement of the team's mission.

Once that is completed, ground rules for the team are helpful. A set of ground rules can begin with the nine Principles of Teaming described earlier. If everyone can agree to conduct team meetings with a similar set of expectations, it will help facilitate the entire process.

Brainstorming issues, within the parameters of the mission, can be very helpful at a first meeting. For example, discussing transition activities and issues that team members are already knowledgeable about might lead to identifying committee agendas, committee members, and initial timelines. Refinement of the vision might also occur.

The question may arise concerning who should conduct the first meeting. We recommend that whoever calls the meeting begin to conduct it, but be prepared to discuss with the group who will conduct future meetings.

How to facilitate a well-organized meeting

The various roles within interagency teams are likely to evolve and/or rotate over specific periods of time. However, at the outset, the team leader or originator should act as facilitator until the team selects one or more members to perform that duty. Thus, once introductions have been made, the initial task of the team leader (or the person calling the meeting) when convening all members for the first time is to clarify role responsibilities, and then determine who will accept the roles of:

- Facilitator, whose responsibility is to moderate team meetings and processes with objectivity and a depth of knowledge;
- Recorder, whose responsibility is to take and keep accurate notes of meetings;

- Time-keeper, whose responsibility is to keep the team to its meeting schedule; and
- Spokesperson, whose responsibility is to speak effectively on behalf of the team.

Agreeing on the members who will be first in these roles at this earliest stage in your meetings, and rotating these responsibilities over time, is an example of how to apply Principle 3: Sharing the Decision-Making.

Setting the ground rules for your meeting

Establishing ground rules needs to be a team process set at the first interagency team meeting. The following is an example of a modified consensus-building process that may be used until the team agrees upon its own decision-making process.

HOW TO IDENTIFY GROUND RULES AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

1. Brainstorm possible ground rules. Team leaders/facilitators should remember that, while brainstorming, judgments and discussion about ideas are suspended. If needed, both judgments and discussion can occur later, but brainstorming is meant to be a spontaneous, non-threatening activity. If the group is large (more than 9 people) break into smaller groups and compile results from each group to develop a large group list. The recorder could use an easel with large sheets of blank paper to post at the end of the meeting. Sample ground rules are:
   - Stay until the end;
   - Use active listening;
   - Keep group notes in a team binder;
   - Acknowledge everyone's contribution;
   - Be respectful of other people's points of view;
   - Use a consensus-building decision-making process;
   - Share the responsibilities for maintaining the team; and
   - Start on time. If you cannot be on time, let someone know.
2. Clarify and cluster ideas. Do this on a large blank paper positioned where everyone can see it.
3. Select ground rules. If there are many ideas, prioritize them. The following is a quick method to prioritize items: Each person is given a weighted system of one, three, and five points to identify their three favorite ideas. Place five points on the favorite item, three points on the next favorite, and one point on the third favorite. Add the points on each item to see what the group sees as its top priority.

What does a typical agenda look like?

Pre-planning the first interagency team meeting is important for leaders wanting to instill a sense of positive and purposeful collaboration, as well as set the tone for efficiency by ensuring that the meeting starts and ends on time. Below are generic sample agenda items that are appropriate for state or local level interagency teams. Not all items need to be addressed in a single meeting, but all should be addressed early in the team's schedule of meetings.

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

1. Introduction of team members – this may include an activity to get acquainted, establish positive tone, etc. (see Tool 2)—15 minutes;
2. Purpose of meeting—5 minutes;
3. Approval of the agenda by team members—5 minutes;
4. Approval and/or reading of the minutes from previous meeting—15 minutes;
5. Selection of volunteers to facilitate initial meeting (see Tool 1)—5 minutes;
6. Presentation on the status of individual(s) in transition and/or the service system(s)—20 minutes;
7. Statement of achievements/strengths (e.g., educational, vocational, assessment, residential, recreational)—20 minutes;

8. Identification of opportunities for growth or needs—20 minutes;
9. Discussion of desired outcomes for individual(s) in transition and/or the service system—30 minutes;
10. Listing of current known available resources—15 minutes;
11. Listing of current known needs—15 minutes;
12. Development of possible strategies—30 minutes;
13. Finalization of procedure for follow-up and confirmation assignment of responsibilities—20 minutes;
14. Closure or summary—15 minutes; and
15. Scheduling of next meeting date, place, and time (determine who will need to be present)—10 minutes.

B. Moving from Preparations to Actions

What resources does the team already have?

An excellent method to apply Principle 4: Demonstrating Synergy is resource mapping, as it elicits higher-order thinking, creative visioning, and problemsolving. It is valuable for interagency teams to employ resource mapping at various times in their planning sessions, including when the team first convenes, to create its vision and before it devises a strategic action plan. Mapping is a methodology that can be useful to link and align school, community, district, and regional or state resources with organizational goals, strategies, or expected outcomes for teams attempting renewal. Mapping is also a useful activity to inspire newly-created interagency transition teams to begin envisioning potential outcomes based on resources uncovered.

Essential Steps to Resource Mapping

1. Orient the team to its shared vision, mission statement, and priorities;
2. Identify all complementary resources (e.g., human, fiscal, or programmatic) from multiple sources that can be aligned to accomplish the vision. Also determine whether existing resources are being used effectively to achieve expected outcomes;
3. Note any priorities that lack resources and design solutions to fill those gaps; and
4. Implement an ongoing process that maximizes all relevant resources by employing them in a strategic way to accomplish common goals.

Resource mapping enables interagency teams to build systems that serve individuals with disabilities in transition rather than targeting funds based on criteria and categories. Moreover, resource mapping can help community or state agencies identify a need for additional policy or legislation to fill a gap or enhance an existing program. This methodology can allow team members to acquire valuable information about different agencies' policies, procedures, funding streams, and collaborative practices. As well, mapping can guide the team in compiling a comprehensive set of policy recommendations across agencies and/or identifying further opportunities for interagency collaboration. A set of worksheets for interagency transition teams to use is provided at the end of this Tool.

Before using these worksheets, teams are also advised to review Principle 5 on valuing diversity. Some suggestions to get the most out of the resource mapping activity that this Principle encourages are:

- Structure teams so they invite diversity;
- Encourage the sharing and accepting of differing perspectives; and
- Ensure that the setting is comfortable for small and large group work (i.e., consider furniture, lighting, fresh air, time of day, needs for providing food, etc.).

How to create a strategic action plan

Most likely, when the interagency transition team convenes for the second meeting a strategic action plan will be developed. This plan should include (a) a schedule of meetings including, perhaps, public ones; (b) what is to be accomplished at each meeting, and (c) how and by whom meetings will be facilitated.

To segue from envisioning the mission statement to formalizing major tasks, the interagency team needs to list its desired outcomes, goals, and wishes. These are what team members want to see happen so the team can move toward realizing its vision or mission. A simple three-step process taking approximately 30 minutes should be sufficient:

1. Brainstorm a list of areas in which team members would like to see change (quality jobs for all individuals with disabilities, inclusive recreational and leisure activities, natural support systems, etc.);
2. Clarify and cluster the team's list; and
3. Prioritize and select areas for action planning. (See above, *How to Identify Ground Rules and Operational Procedures*.) At this point, the team is ready to develop an action plan for each desired outcome.

How to Create a Strategic Action Plan

1. In groups of no more than five, discuss and clarify a desired outcome/goal until everyone has a common understanding and is in agreement. Write it at the top of the action plan worksheet.
2. Brainstorm activities/strategies that will lead to the outcome. Be creative.
3. Clarify and cluster activities.
4. Prioritize and select activities.
5. Determine resources needed such as people, materials, equipment, money, time, etc.
6. Determine who will do what by when.
7. Repeat steps 1-6 for other desired outcomes.
8. Group spokesperson(s) report to the team on action plan activities. Include additional ideas, as appropriate, from the entire team.

Some of the common tasks team leaders can anticipate may include:

1. Developing state-level cooperative agreements;
2. Implementing agreements within each agency or organization;
3. Ensuring each team member has responsibility to follow through on a specific task;
4. Creating a new position specifically to implement transition;
5. Incorporating transition activities into specific staff duties already assigned;
6. When an organization or agency has both state and local levels, assigning transition coordination and responsibilities at all levels and linking them;
7. Agreeing upon meeting schedules;
8. Submitting a plan to appropriate government agencies; and
9. Submitting annual reports to appropriate government agencies.

Applying the Principles of Teaming to Tool 3

How to Apply Principles 2-9

While all the Principles can be applied to this Tool, it may be most useful for leaders and their teams to first focus on those Principles mentioned below:

- Principle 3: A team demonstrates shared decision making.
- Principle 4: A team demonstrates synergy – the whole is more than the sum of its parts.
- Principle 5: A team highly regards diversity as a necessary part of creativity and collaboration.

Because this Tool addresses nearly all the activities of an interagency transition team, it also incorporates the nine Principles of Teaming. While Principles three through five are clearly inherent in specific recommendations above, they, along with the other Principles, need to be considered in all of the team's processes. Various approaches can be used to ensure this happens, and team leaders and facilitators should encourage team dialogue to direct just how this occurs. Your team may choose to review the Principles in an ongoing fashion at team meetings, with the team only considering a single Principle at one meeting, then the next Principle at a subsequent meeting, and so on. To avoid having members feel a particular Principle has been chosen because someone feels the group is somehow failing to apply it, teams could agree to review the Principles in the order they are presented in the Introductory Tool. Alternately, teams who prefer a direct problem-solution approach could encourage members to discuss how well the team is applying or exhibiting a specific desired Principle and how changes and/or improvements can be made (e.g., suggestions could be taken anonymously). For a more formal assessment of how well the team is applying the Principles, the worksheet in Tool 4 below can be used.

Tool 3: Resource Mapping Worksheet

Use this worksheet as a starting point to envision potential outcomes for your team – either individually or at regular meetings throughout the year – to set priorities, streamline collaboration efforts, and improve process and performance outcomes. The activities presented below may take up to two hours, but can be completed in steps during two to four sequential meetings.

Directions: As a whole group, begin by writing the answers to the questions in Activity A below. Then, break into groups of no more than five and complete Activities B, C, and D. Encourage groups to leave no blanks and to apply the Principles of Teaming to achieve the best ideas. Have each group choose a presenter to summarize and share with the whole team the resources uncovered, ideas worth exploring further, and areas where needs remain. Allow open discussion after each small group presents. Finally, have individuals complete Activity E and return to the facilitator for follow-up recommendations.

The team vision is: ______________________________

____

Our mission statement is: ______________________________

____

My name and role are: ______________________________

A) Focusing Questions

1. What are the team's most important goals or priorities right now?

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

2. What are the expected outcomes of these goals?

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

3. What are our current strategies to achieve these goals?

Goal A:	Goal B:	Goal C:

4. How can these strategies be improved upon?

Goal A:	Goal B:	Goal C:

B) Assessing Current Resources

4. Are existing resources being used effectively to achieve our goals? Yes or No?

Goal A: ______________ Goal B: ______________ Goal C: ______________

5. Which priority goals lack resources and what are those resources?

Goal A:	Goal B:	Goal C:

6. What solutions might fill these resource gaps?

Goal A:	Goal B:	Goal C:

C) Resource Brainstorming

7. What resources do we know other agencies or individuals have?

Human Resources *(number of volunteers and staff, expertise, etc.)*	Fiscal Resources *(funding sources, reasons for lower costs, etc.)*	Programmatic Resources *(policies, procedures, collaboration, etc.)*

8. Who are these agencies and can we align with them to accomplish our vision?

Family/School	Community/District	Regional/State

9. Who can we contact to discover other resources (e.g., different agency policies, procedures, funding streams, and collaborative practices, etc.)?

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

D) Applying Resources to Needs

10. Which of the resources above can be used to fill the needs (e.g., strategy challenges and/or resources gaps) identified in Activities A and B?

Goal A:	Goal B:	Goal C:

11. Which priorities need additional policy or legislation to fill a gap or enhance an existing program?

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

12. Who can we collaborate with to compile a comprehensive set of policy recommendations across agencies?

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

E) Concluding Ideas

13. As a result of the resource mapping activities, I am most inspired by these possibilities for achieving our team's goals:

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

14. I feel I can contribute personally by doing the following things to achieve these goals:

a) ______________________________

b) ______________________________

c) ______________________________

Tool 4: Knowing if Your Interagency Transition Team is On-Track and Meeting its Goals

The purpose of Tool 4 is to support interagency transition teams to evaluate their effectiveness and prepare appropriate reports of their progress. Materials presented here can help teams evaluate their performance and determine their progress in achieving the goals they set out to accomplish. Materials are presented to "Check in With Team Members" and "Evaluate the Team's Progress." These include suggestions for Consensus Building and thoughts regarding the preparation and reasons for outside evaluation of the state interagency transition team's progress.

Contents of Tool 4

A. Check In With Team Members

Does the team feel it is doing well?

Team members appreciate comments and feedback about their efforts. Effective teams do regular "process checks" to assess and discuss how well the team is working together in defining and pursuing their goals. The worksheet "Team Performance Rating Scale Assessment," which follows at the end of this Tool, outlines dimensions interagency transition teams can consider when thinking about their process and development. This worksheet may serve as a useful starting point when team leaders or members perceive that their goals are not being met as they envisioned.

Building consensus

When teams have concluded that they are not doing as well as they desired, one approach is to engage in consensus-building to address specific challenges. The suggestions below can serve as general guidelines to assist teams to address issues. This is another method that incorporates Principle 3: Sharing Decision-Making, and so teams may wish to review the goals of this Principle detailed on page 10 before engaging in these tasks.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Decide on a time allocated for discussion.
2. If agreement is not reached during that time, agree to postpone the decision, break into small groups for consensus-building, or take two-thirds agreement with minority opinions noted.
3. Implement routine procedures to give information on whether or not participants felt included in the decision-making process.
4. Facilitate basic decision-making steps: define the problem, generate possible solutions, evaluate these solutions, and create an action plan.

Additionally, interagency teams can consider developing operational procedures to produce "constructive conformity" regarding mechanical and administrative matters. The team first identifies the matters that can be dealt with in this way to save time and facilitate activities. The team members agree to consistently follow these procedures. The following worksheet, "Diverse Thinking 'Hidden Squares' Activity," is designed to show how what seems obvious at first may not be and that team members would do well to attend to the desires, needs, and concerns of their fellow teammates.

B. Evaluate the Team's Progress

Getting outside evaluation

Whenever an individual or a group sets priorities, it is desirable to know how effective they have been from the perspective of outside stakeholders or recipients of services. To that end, the following are some questions which might be asked of agency personnel, educators, or family members of youth with disabilities in transition about how well the interagency state transition team has met its goals and objectives. These simple questions which could be asked of such persons external to the team are found at the end of this Tool on the "Sample External Evaluation Worksheet."

As it is important for teams to regularly collect data on all their activities and the outcomes of their efforts, using worksheets such as the one provided in this section can assist the data collection process. Gathering and analyzing data on a quarterly, semi-annual, and/or annual basis will make reporting on the interagency transition team's progress much easier. Periodic external reviews by persons impacted by the team's efforts (such as youth with disabilities, their parents, etc.) can be very valuable and an excellent way of applying Principle 6: Fostering Participation of People Impacted by the Team's Actions. Also, Principle 8: Being Responsive to the Authentic (Ecological) Context is a concept that should be reviewed when planning and soliciting outside evaluation, as it reminds teams of the wealth of opportunities that they can consider when striving to reach their goals.

Preparing quality assessment reports for state review

Eventually, most states will be asked to use standards and indicators to determine if their transition programs are working and if they provide quality services. Applying the Principles of Teaming should enable interagency transition teams to be ready for this request for data.

Applying the Principles of Teaming to Tool 4

How to Apply the Principles of Teaming to Tool 4

The text above has indicated how to specifically apply these Principles:

- Principle 3: Sharing Decision-Making
- Principle 6: Fostering the Participation of People Impacted by the Team's Actions
- Principle 8: Being Responsive to the Authentic (Ecological) Context

However, as with all the tools, the nine Principles of Teaming must be woven into all the processes of an effective interagency transition team. The worksheet provided below, "Team Performance Rating Scale," is designed to be used in a team meeting as a risk-free method for members to voice their opinions about their progress and whether they are applying all the Principles of Teaming with success. This assessment instrument specifically asks members questions that relate to every Principle. While the worksheet includes a line for team identification, the response does not need to be the member's name or role. This line can be deleted to keep responses truly anonymous, or numbers can be assigned to each member privately so that follow-up can be done by leaders or facilitators in a one-on-one fashion, if it is more prudent to do so. The final question of this instrument prompts teams to consider whether they solved policy, procedure, and practice problems and whether they achieved the transition service outcomes they hoped the students with disabilities in transition, their families, and the agencies that work with them would all experience.

Information gleaned from this worksheet can also be added to the data interagency transition teams collect and report to states and others.

Tool 4: Team Performance Rating Scale

Date: ____________________

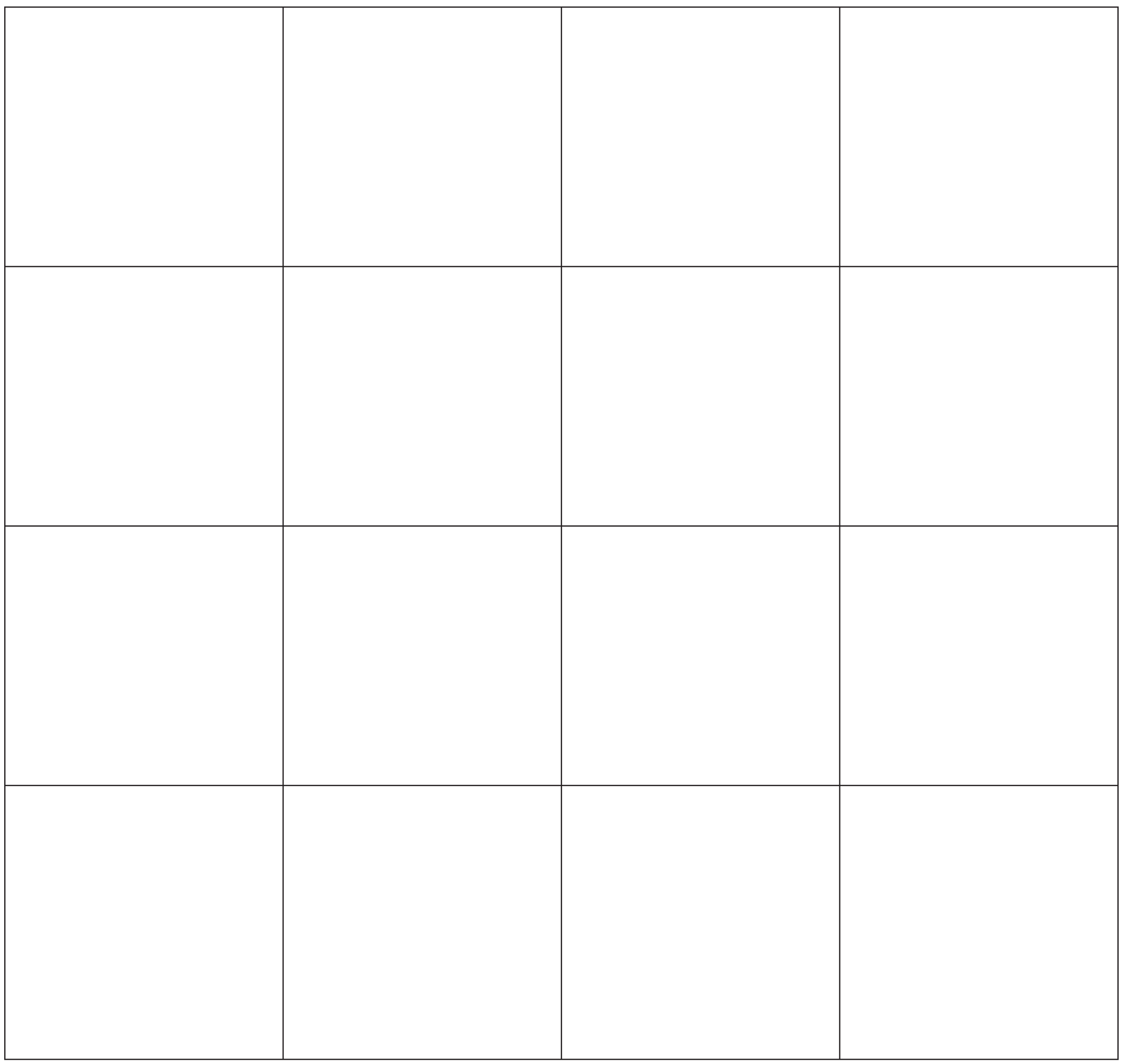
Directions: Circle or underline the number that most accurately reflects your sense of the team's process and development at this time, using 5 to show strong agreement and 1 to show strong disagreement with each statement.

Team Identification: ________________________________	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. Commitment:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members understand group goals and are committed to them.					
2. Acceptance:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members are friendly, concerned, and interested in each other.					
3. Clarification:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members acknowledge and confront conflict openly.					
4. Belonging:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members listen to others with understanding.					
5. Involvement:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members include others in the decision-making process.					
6. Support:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members recognize and respect individual differences.					
7. Achievement:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members contribute ideas and solutions to problems.					
8. Pride:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members value the contributions and ideas of others.					
9. Recognition:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members recognize and reward team performance.					
10. Satisfaction:	1	2	3	4	5
Team members encourage and appreciate comments about team efforts.					
11. Overall Goal Achievement:	1	2	3	4	5
The team is solving problems and achieving its goals.					
12. Using Team Principles:	1	2	3	4	5

Team members used the nine Principles of Teaming and solved policy, procedure, and practical problems.

Tool 4: Diverse Thinking “Hidden Squares” Activity

How many squares are in this visual?
Directions: Quickly count the total number of squares and report and compare your answer with your partner/ team. Present your findings to the group.



COVER THIS PORTION WHEN COPYING!

Answer: 1 whole, 16 individual, 9 of 4 squares each, and 4 of 9 squares = 30. Like the problems we face, many parts (and combinations of parts) comprise the whole. This exercise teaches us to dig deeper into problems, visualize them differently, and see various combinations of parts to what appears to be a whole problem.

Tool 4: Sample External Evaluation Worksheet

Name: ____________________________

A. Please answer the following three questions:

1. Did you know that [name of state] has a state interagency transition team?	Y N
2. Do you, or did you ever in the past, have any interactions with the state interagency transition team?	Y N
3. Would you like information about the state interagency transition team?	Y N

B. If you have had any interactions with the state interagency transition team, please respond to the questions below using the following scale:

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. If you have had occasion to interact with the state interagency transition team, was it a pleasant experience?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Did the state interagency transition team meet your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Would you contact the state interagency transition team again?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Would you recommend contacting the state interagency transition team to your friends?	1	2	3	4	5

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE-BASED MODELS OF INTERAGENCY TRANSITION TEAMS

This section provides examples of some outstanding state interagency transition teams. These states were selected through a Web search for information, personal correspondence with individuals familiar with interagency state transition teams, and in some cases, correspondence with state representatives. While the authors tried to be consistent with information from one state to the next, the unique nature of each state and its interagency transition team sometimes did not lend itself to this objective. Further contact information is included if more in-depth information is desired.

The authors express thanks to each of these states for sharing information or giving permission to use their data in this Essential Tool.

Arizona

http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/transitionservices/

Background

In Arizona, Transition Services is located within the Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services Division. Transition services – working with students, families, school personnel, and other state agencies – strives to:

- Assist students to visualize life beyond high school and to develop a long-range plan for attaining that vision, including mapping out needed classes and experiences; and
- Identify and connect students and families with the appropriate agencies, programs, and services prior to exiting school that the student will need to achieve his or her postschool vision.

What are the team purposes?

- To make improvements in the system needed to support and effect improved success for students with disabilities as they prepare for work, independent living, and higher education;
- To identify what is currently working within various individual agencies across Arizona and to identify issues that need to be addressed;
- To articulate a shared vision and driving principles that help to identify the commonalities and ultimately drive decisions;
- To increase the alignment through recognition of the interconnectedness of the various players and implementation of strategies for addressing unmet needs; and
- To create a system for data collection and reporting that gives a more accurate picture of how well the system is doing.

How was the team formed?

Past efforts led to local community transition teams as well as an Interagency Transition Council, but most disbanded when the state systems change project, InterAct Arizona, was sunsetted. An opportunity to attend a national summit sponsored by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) presented a chance to look at partners in a different way. Arizona identified two youth with disabilities, a parent of a child with a disability, the executive director of one of Arizona's two parent training and information centers, and representatives from higher education, vocational rehabilitation, special education, workforce development, and Title I to form the "core team." Together, the nine members attended the NCSET summit in Washington, DC in 2003 and developed a state plan to expand the team to form an Arizona Transition Leadership Team.

Who's on the team?
Thirty-eight people, including five youth with disabilities; family representatives; two staff members from 4-year colleges and universities, two staff members from community colleges, an employer, a developmental pediatrician, and representatives from the following organizations:

- Department of Education;
- Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Division of Developmental Disabilities;
- Workforce Development;
- The Department of Commerce;
- Juvenile Corrections;
- Adult Corrections;
- Two Parent Training Information Centers: Raising Special Kids and Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona;
- The Center for Disability Law;
- The Department of Health Services, Board of Regents;
- City Parks and Recreation;
- Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- Americans with Disabilities Act Office of Arizona;
- The Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- Arizona Schools for the Deaf and Blind; and
- Social Security Administration.

What activities has the team undertaken?
The Arizona team is currently in its infancy. The Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center is providing technical assistance and facilitation of this group; they do not want this to be an "education" group, but a true partnership that forms a cohesive, collaborative interagency council. The group is just beginning to formalize its vision and goals.

When does the team meet?
The team is currently meeting quarterly. Meeting agendas are created from feedback from the full council.

How does the team evaluate its work?
The team is including evaluation in its planning for the future.

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Colorado

http://www.uchsc.edu/projectwin/

Background

Colorado does not presently have an official state interagency team. During the years of their Federal Systems Change Transition grant, a formal state interagency team was facilitated. As that grant ended the committee disbanded, but grew into other transition and school-to-career related coordinating and advisory groups. Outreach efforts to other agencies developed into excellent working relationships with agency partners. This collaborative work led to a consortium of stakeholders that became a coalition coordinated through the Office of Workforce Development.

The original consortium then evolved into Project TRAIN. The Colorado Department of Education actively participated in these efforts. Project TRAIN is the closest entity to an interagency team that Colorado currently has.

Who's On the Team?

Representatives from:

- Consortium of Postsecondary Disabilities Services coordinators;
- Department of Education;
- Department of Health Care Policy and Financing;
- Department of Human Services;
- Department of Labor and Employment;
- Department of Mental Health;
- Developmental Disabilities Services;
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Office of Self-Sufficiency;
- Office of Workforce Development;
- PEAK Parent Center; and
- University of Colorado Health Sciences Center Departments of Pediatrics and Psychiatry.

Two Examples of How Colorado's Collaboration Efforts Have Worked

A fifteen-year-old sophomore who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder receives special education services at his local high school. His parents attended a transition planning workshop where they heard about the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). They then asked the DVR counselor to be invited to their son's annual IEP meeting. The primary role of the DVR counselor is to assist the IEP team in developing goals and objectives that support successful transition to work and community living. The DVR counselor and the transition coordinator plan to share information on DVR and other community resources with the student and his parents. In anticipation of referral to DVR, which will probably occur at the end of this student's junior year, he and his parents will contact the DVR counselor annually to keep the counselor informed of his vocational activities and readiness. Throughout the student's senior year, the DVR counselor will work with him, his parents, and his teachers to determine his vocational rehabilitation needs. In this way, an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) will be in place before he leaves the school system.

In the second example, an 18-year-old woman has been eligible for special education services since sixth grade because of a significant identifiable emotional disability. Several credits short of graduation, she was three months pregnant with her first child, and she considered dropping out of school. A school social worker referred her to the local School-to-Work Alliance Program (SWAP). SWAP is a collaborative effort between DVR and the local school district which offers services leading to employment. The school social worker also connected this student with the teen pregnancy program offered through the school district. Her teacher is assisting her with credit completion by arranging for her to receive credit for some of her vocational and independent living activities and by providing tutoring assistance. Her DVR counselor arranged for a vocational evaluation and provided counseling which resulted in the young woman choosing the vocational goal of Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). The SWAP coordinator arranged for short-term skills training which resulted in attainment of a CNA certification and is assisting her in the search for employment.

Since this young woman met the DVR financial need test, DVR provided uniforms and shoes and is assisting with transportation. The SWAP coordinator referred her to a local mental health/DVR youth enhancement program where she is receiving counseling as she deals with the stress of exiting school, beginning a career, and becoming a parent. She has also been connected with the local workforce center, which will assist her with childcare costs and other supportive services following the birth of her child and her return to work.

When Does the Team Meet?

The Project TRAIN coalition meets about every other month. Smaller work groups meet more frequently, with meetings scheduled by the members of each group based on need. There is also an upper-level group called the Executive Directors Advisory Group (EDAG), which is attended by the Colorado Department of Education Director of Exceptional Student Services.

How Does the Team Evaluate Its Work?

Recent discussions have occurred about components missing from the coalition and strategies that could be used to expand the partnership. Additionally, there are ongoing discussions about this group and its ability to meet all interagency coordination needs since its primary focus is employment. In the next few months, the secondary services team at the Colorado Department of Education will be reviewing linkages to determine strategies to enhance interagency coordination efforts. The Colorado Department of Education team may decide they need a more targeted group in addition to their participation with Project TRAIN.

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Connecticut

Background
Connecticut's interagency transition team has been chaired by Karen Halliday of the state Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education for 12 years. This position is collaboratively funded by the Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education; and the Department of Social Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

What is the team purpose?
The transition team develops its agenda from outcomes which the Bureau of Special Education submits to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education, as well as committee goals. These objectives are highlighted below in a description of committee activities.

Who's on the team?
There are 34 members of the state interagency transition task force. Typically 25-27 people attend every meeting. This is a large committee and the team recognizes this challenge. No new members are added unless someone representing a key discipline (e.g., higher education or labor) resigns. Acceptance of new members is a decision of the full task force.

The team includes transition coordinators from seven school districts, three adult service providers, a representative from one of six Regional Education Service Centers, representatives from four parent organizations (PTI, two statewide parent groups on learning disabilities, and one parent group on autism), and representatives from the following organizations:

- Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education;
- Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education;
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services;
- Department of Mental Retardation;
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services;
- Department of Children and Families;
- Department of Labor;
- Department of Corrections;
- Board of Education and Services for the Blind;
- Higher Education – University of Connecticut – Director of LD Program;
- American School for the Deaf;
- Center for Excellence (UCE);
- Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs; and
- Special Education Resource Center.

How does the team accomplish its tasks?
The task force is responsible for developing a transition Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) on an annual or bi-annual basis that is included in the state's plan for serving students with disabilities.

The transition team developed five working subcommittees charged with carrying out the tasks of the team, described below. The transition CIP aligns with the outcomes the Bureau of Special Education submitted to OSEP at the U.S. Department of Education in addition to others generated by the committee.

<table>
<tr><th>Subcommittee</th><th>Goal</th><th>Strategies include:</th></tr>
<tr><td>Training and Technical Assistance</td><td rowspan="3">To have students with disabilities, two years after exiting school, employed and/or enrolled in postsecondary education</td><td rowspan="2">- Increasing the number of transition coordinators who are sufficiently trained at the postsecondary level
- Utilizing the state-level Transition Coordinator Competencies developed by the Transition Task Force</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employment and Postsecondary Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interagency Collaboration</td><td>- Coordinating the services of schools and adult service providers by developing and implementing clear referral procedures
- Increasing student and family awareness of and access to adult/community service providers by informing them of what is available</td></tr>
<tr><td>Self-Advocacy</td><td>To have students demonstrate the age-appropriate skills for self-advocacy, including identifying personal strengths, challenges, and interests, and making informed life choices</td><td>- Developing a self-advocacy curriculum which teaches students the skills to actively participate in their PPTs; teaches students to identify learning strengths, challenges, and interests; and provides students with opportunities for making informed life choices</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parent Dissemination and Training</td><td>To have parents of students with disabilities ages 3-21 participate as full partners in the planning and implementation of their child's educational program</td><td>- The Bureau of Special Education will cause to be developed culturally sensitive training for staff/families/students in: best practices, self-advocacy skills, opportunities which allow students to be the center of decision-making, inclusion practices, strategies to encourage involvement of families in the PPT process, use of Futures Planning as a tool to developing IEPs, and transition requirements under IDEA 1997</td></tr>
</table>

The full committee meets every other month, with working subcommittees meeting in the off months.

How does the team evaluate its work?
The completion of activities provides quantitative data. Other activities within the bureau (e.g., a statewide follow-up study of those exiting special education, data collected from other state agencies, and information obtained from program review in LEAs) also provides information on the status of overall transition planning, self-advocacy, transition program development, student input, and parent input. The Connecticut team recognizes it has much work yet to be done to comprehensively evaluate student outcomes.

Information about Connecticut's state interagency transition team was developed from personal correspondence with Karen Halliday. The authors thank her for her time and expertise.

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Pennsylvania

http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/

Background

Transition in Pennsylvania is a shared responsibility across 10 offices including four state agencies (Education, Labor and Industry, Public Welfare, and Health), which are parties to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act Memorandum of Understanding (IDEA-MOU). The IDEA-MOU identifies how services for youth with disabilities will be provided and coordinated in the state, the agencies responsible for services, financial responsibility, conditions and terms of reimbursement, as well as procedures to address interagency disputes and coordinate services.

This agreement covers services for students with disabilities at all levels. Transition planning involves a partnership of consumers, school-age services and programs, postschool services and programs, and local communities that result in higher education, employment, independent living, and community participation.

What is the team purpose?

The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education and build the capacity of local educational agencies to provide appropriate services to students who receive special education services. PaTTAN has taken a leadership role in the transition initiatives in Pennsylvania for many years, including the IDEA-MOU activities.

Since the inception of the IDEA-MOU and the initial meetings of the interagency team, the principles of a Community of Practice (CoP) have been advanced by creating a shared agenda to support the successful transition of students to postsecondary outcomes including postsecondary education and training, employment, and community participation.

Pennsylvania's CoP, focusing on secondary transition, embraces the essential elements of a community. The members are a learning community who share a common interest in and responsibility to provide services to youth with disabilities transitioning from school to adult services, and the team seeks to expand the knowledge, experience, and leveraging power of the group.

A major focus of Pennsylvania's Transition CoP is to support and advance the activities of the Local Transition Coordinating Councils (LTCCs) to establish the availability of cross-systems programs and services for Pennsylvania's youth with disabilities. The 63 regional LTCCs have a comprehensive cross-system membership that includes students, family members, educational staff, personnel from outside agencies, employers, higher education representatives, government officials, and other individuals interested in ensuring successful postschool outcomes for young adults with disabilities. The LTCCs are focused on developing best practice transition projects, products, and activities which will enable young adults with disabilities to be successful after high school in the areas of employment, education/training, and community living.

Who's on the team?

The IDEA-MOU interagency team is comprised of individuals who work in the following state offices:

- Department of Education: Bureau of Special Education, Bureau of Career and Technical Education
- Department of Labor and Industry: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of Workforce Investment
- Department of Public Welfare: Office of Mental Retardation; Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; Office of Children, Youth and Families; Office of Medical Assistance
- Department of Health: Bureau of Family Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol

While not a formal party to the IDEA-MOU, the Parent Education Network (PEN), a parent training and information center in Pennsylvania, is an important partner in the planning, development, and delivery of all of the transition training initiatives.

What activities has the team undertaken?

The members of the IDEA-MOU interagency team identified the following guiding principles for promoting their shared vision on secondary transition and for moving that vision forward:

- Identifying common goals;
- Valuing parent partnerships;
- Focusing on student outcomes;
- Continuously working as a team;
- Valuing one another's perspectives;
- Maintaining a welcoming demeanor;
- Building trust across all team members;
- Valuing the opinions of all stakeholders;
- Building relationships with team members;
- Having mutual respect among team members;
- Assuring ongoing communication with all team members;
- Building networks and relationships across "systems" and audiences;
- Creating transition strategies and activities based upon the "bigger picture," and
- Building a foundation by collaborating, cooperating, and communicating.

The Bureau of Special Education, through the PaTTAN system, has provided the majority of financial support for all training and technical assistance activities in Pennsylvania through IDEA 1997 and state improvement grant funds.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, in partnership with the Department of Education, charted a new course through the design and implementation of a financial Memorandum of Understanding. Following final approval by the Department of Labor and Industry and the Department of Education, 39 local and two statewide transition projects were initiated in fall 2003. Each of the local projects fits into more than one of the following categories: outreach-underserved, assessment (vocational), mentoring, employment, and postsecondary education and training.

There are two statewide projects: Capacity Building (State and Local Training and Networking support) and Needs Assessments.

To expand the communication network of the Pennsylvania Transition Initiative, an electronic mailing list was formed in cooperation with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). The IDEA-MOU interagency team is developing an interactive Web site to serve as the hub of information sharing. Policy actions and program guidance have been issued by many partners to their respective field staff in support of the interagency work needed to expand opportunities for youth with disabilities transitioning to postschool outcomes.

- On September 8, 2000, a joint memorandum issued by the Bureau of Special Education and the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs affirmed the roles and responsibilities outlined by the IDEA-MOU.
- On October 4, 2002, a Mental Health and Substance Abuse Bulletin entitled *The Roles and Responsibilities of County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Programs in the Development of a Child's Individual Education Program* was issued.
- A bulletin, *Performance Expectations and Recommended Guidelines for the County Child and Adolescent Service System Program*, which reinforced the principles of cross-systems collaboration, was jointly issued by the Deputy Secretaries for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; Medical Assistance Programs; Children, Youth and Families; Mental Retardation; Juvenile Court Judges' Commission; Health Promotion and Disease Prevention; Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Health; and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- In spring 2002, the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services began funding five pilot projects supporting the transition of adolescents and young adults with mental disorders to adult life. Funds to support these projects are being made available through the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant funds. The projects collaborate with a school district in the region to implement that component of the project.
- The Office of Mental Retardation led the development of local interagency teams to promote employment outcomes of youth with disabilities in three areas of the state.

- The Office of Children, Youth and Families promotes interagency collaboration through their Program Improvement Plan for Child and Family Well Being Outcomes, and especially encourages interagency participation and coordination of services through the Chafee Independent Living Workgroup.
- The state Youth Council also includes cross-agency participation and has included outreach to youth with disabilities in the priorities of the council.
- The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) has played a leadership role in the IDEA-MOU efforts and the Pennsylvania transition initiative. The administration of OVR has established transition as one of the top priorities of the agency. The state plan has included transition goals since 2001. In 2002, 34% of the total number of individuals served were under 25 (national average: 28%).
- Under the auspices of the Bureau of Special Education, a mini-grant program was designed and implemented during the 2002-03 school year to assist local education agencies in implementing research-based practices related to improving transition services to students with disabilities. The schools were required to commit to improving student results. All projects were expected to report quantitative data related to subsequent changes in student achievement and measurable objectives. Clear evaluative methods were required.
- Mentoring mini-grants (up to $7,500) were available for 2002 Transition Conference program participants who wished to enter into a mentoring relationship with others replicating a substantial part or all of their program or project. To qualify for a mini-grant to replicate one of the transition mentor projects, a school district, charter school, or approved private school team had to be comprised of an administrator, teacher, parent, local IU transition consultant, and a community agency representative. Agency participation was strongly encouraged and teams were required to attend the conference. Mini-grants were awarded in the following areas of transition: employment community living/participation; career development/awareness; interagency and community partnerships; self-determination; transition assessment; postsecondary education, and interagency referral process. Oversight of the mini-grants occurred through the PaTTAN system.

When does the team meet?
In fall 2000, a series of meetings were held in seven locations across the state. In planning for one of the first statewide trainings, the IDEA-MOU interagency team met and discussed how to advance an interagency approach to service delivery for students with disabilities. They concluded that local service providers had to have a basic understanding of the range of services provided by schools and other agencies before they could be expected to invite or be invited to the table to cooperatively plan for and provide services to students and clients. These first meetings provided this information by having staff from each of the departments, member offices, and bureaus present basic information about programs, services, and contact information. A cross-systems audience including educators, agency staff, and parents attended the training.

How does the team evaluate its work?
Several evaluative strategies are used, including: determining the feasibility of a cross-systems data-sharing system to identify and track transitioning youth with disabilities across agency boundaries; designing and piloting a post-secondary follow-up survey of youth with disabilities leaving the education system; and establishing data elements and database design to compile data from the OVR transition projects, so OVR is in a position to do a multiple-year follow-up of the employment outcomes of youth with disabilities and the potential impact of the project.

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