

Cross Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs



November 2009

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I. Introduction

The Government of British Columbia is committed to improving cross-ministry collaboration for youth with special needs and their families, in order to facilitate the transition to adulthood.

This *Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs* has been developed to:

- improve access to existing resources and supports, and;
- ensure that a coordinated transition process occurs for youth with special needs and their families.

This protocol has been jointly developed, and is endorsed, by the following ministries and organizations to advance these commitments:

Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD)
Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)
Ministry of Education (EDUC)
Ministry of Health Services (HSERV)
Ministry of Housing and Social Development (HSD)
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG)
BC Housing
Community Living BC (CLBC)
Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT)

II. Background

Youth are faced with a number of challenges and opportunities when they are planning for the future, which include: consolidating their identity; expressing their sexuality; establishing social networks and relationships; accepting responsibility for decisions and behaviours, as well as their consequences; establishing and accomplishing education and employment goals; achieving financial independence; pursuing independent living arrangements, and; managing legal issues.

For youth with special needs and their families, a coordinated transition process will assist in preparing youth to face these challenges and contribute to his/her success in adulthood.

Transitioning to adulthood involves more than identifying and coordinating services. It also involves setting goals for all areas of adult life, exploring and adopting new adult roles and making decisions about the future. Many youth with special needs require support to make such decisions. Parents and others play a central role in supporting youth to make decisions and plan for their future. A transition process that actively engages the youth and his/her family will lead to the development of a transition plan to coordinate supports and services and assist the youth to achieve his/her full potential.

Transition planning is required for all youth with special needs, to facilitate skills development and the identification of, and access to, opportunities and supports needed in adult life. It is important to develop a transition plan, regardless of the funded government supports that the youth will be eligible to access in adulthood. Transition planning must be individualized, as youth have varying degrees of support and funded service needs.

Transition planning, using a person-centred approach, focuses on the youth within the context of his/her family, community and culture. A transition plan is developed to assist the youth to achieve his/her personal goals and aspirations. A focus on strengths and abilities has been shown to enhance service planning and outcomes. The plan can identify required actions to assist the youth and his/her family to access both informal community supports and formal services in the areas of education, health and social services. The plan must reflect the cultural identity of the youth and his/her community.

Transition planning for Aboriginal youth must consider the youth, his/her family, community, values, and culture. In addition, transition planning for Aboriginal youth requires collaboration with Aboriginal nations, communities, organizations, and the federal government to ensure an integrated and culturally appropriate network of supports and services.

Developing individualized transition plans requires cross-ministry collaboration to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach.

This protocol provides the overarching framework to support the transition planning process; cross-ministry support and collaboration is required. At the community level, administrators of signatory ministries and organizations will need to collaboratively develop agreements or other mechanisms to operationalize this protocol.

III. Youth Served

A youth with special needs is defined as a young person between the ages of 14 and 25 who requires significant additional educational, medical/health and social/environmental support, beyond that required by youth in general, to enhance or improve his/her health, development, learning, quality of life, participation and community inclusion (adapted from B.C.'s [*Cross-Ministry Children and Youth with Special Needs Framework for Action*, 2008](#)).

Youth with special needs have significant limitations in age-appropriate daily activities at home, school and in their communities, in one or more of the following domains:

- cognition and learning
- communication
- sensory domains (vision and hearing)
- movement and mobility
- interpersonal interaction and relationships (social, emotional, behavioural)
- community, social and civic life
- general tasks and demands (including developmentally appropriate activities of daily living, such as self-care)

A broad definition will promote transition planning for youth, regardless of their individual abilities to meet eligibility requirements for adult services. This definition does not expand established program eligibility.

It is estimated that approximately 8.3 % of the youth population in British Columbia will require transition planning support, with 4,400 14-year old youth expected to begin the transition planning process every year.

IV. Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Promote a cross-ministry commitment to a collaborative transition planning process for individual youth and their families, which will lead to the development of an individualized transition plan for each youth.
- Outline roles and responsibilities of signatory ministries and organizations in supporting youth and their families through the transition process.
- Ensure cross-ministry collaboration occurs for information sharing to support:
 - individual youth and their families through the transition process, and;
 - system capacity planning.

V. Guiding Principles

This protocol promotes a coordinated transition planning process that is:

- youth-centred
- family-focused
- holistic
- strengths-based
- focused on positive cultural identity development for Aboriginal youth
- focused on supporting youth to live as fully and independently as possible
- focused on supporting youths' lifelong wellness and participation and inclusion in their communities
- responsive to the unique cultural identities and diversity of youth
- comprehensive and integrated across service sectors
- innovative and flexible
- evidence-based
- sustainable
- accountable to youth, their families and others involved
- aligned with Jordan's Principle until age 18
- respectful of youths' rights as per the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (including the [General Comment No. 11: Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention](#)) and the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

VI. Strategies Supporting Youth Transition Planning

1. Transition Planning Process

Appendix A describes the transition planning process for youth with special needs and their families that will lead to the development of an individualized transition plan.

2. Government Supports and Services

Appendix B outlines the supports and services for youth between the ages of 14 and 25 that are available through key ministries, Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies, crown agencies and the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia. Each organization has responsibility for establishing the specific eligibility criteria for the supports and services it provides.

3. Transition Planning Roles and Activities

Appendix C presents a working draft of Roles and Tasks for Transition Planning Team Members. This will serve as the framework for:

- clarifying roles for cross-ministry support and collaboration at the community level;
- developing agreements or other mechanisms to operationalize this protocol (e.g., Ministry of Children and Family Development and Community Living BC operational agreement to ensure that youth transitioning into CLBC services receive transition planning), and;

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- developing new, and revising existing, resources such as information guides for youth with special needs, their families and service providers. Signatory ministries and organizations will jointly develop and/or revise these resources, with the input of youth with special needs, their families and service providers.

4. Information Sharing

For the purpose of supporting youth transition planning, signatory ministries and organizations will coordinate and document authority(ies) and processes for sharing information. This will be done in accordance with legislative requirements.

VII. Review

This protocol will be reviewed by administrators of signatory ministries and organizations on an annual basis for three years to:

- assess the effectiveness of cross-ministry collaboration;
- determine whether roles and responsibilities of signatory ministries and organizations are clear, and;
- evaluate the effectiveness of cross-ministry information sharing.

Subsequent reviews will be conducted every three years. Any signatory ministry or organization may ask for a review before the end of the three-year term.

Appendices may be amended by the agreement of administrators from signatory ministries and organizations.

VIII. Dispute Resolution

In any cooperative endeavour involving service providers funded by different ministries, issues and problems may arise. In accordance with the principles that underpin this protocol, dispute resolution will take place as close as possible to the level at which the decisions were made.

For local transition planning issues, youth, family and other transition planning team members will use the service provider's existing complaint/dispute resolution processes, and may also need to involve the responsible ministry, organization or authority. Where planning for First Nations youth under the age of 19 involves a disagreement between the federal and provincial governments regarding access to available health and social services, the child-first approach under Jordan's Principle must apply.

When an issue is not resolved locally, it will be raised to the next decision-making level within the appropriate ministry, organization or authority. As part of this or at subsequent steps in the dispute resolution process, managers and senior administrators may need to discuss issues related to this protocol with their colleagues from relevant ministries, organizations or authorities, in an effort to resolve the dispute as quickly as possible.

IX. Appendix A – Transition Planning Process

Transition planning for youth should begin at age 14 and may continue beyond age 19 to ensure that there is a coordinated and supported process both during adolescence and into adulthood. Youth and their family members are central to the transition planning process and are supported to actively participate. Starting early allows time to create a transition plan that:

- includes informal community supports, and;
- facilitates timely access to adult services for youth who are eligible.

The transition planning process for youth with special needs involves the following.

1. Initiate the Transition Planning Process

The transition planning process is initiated by:

- providing the youth and family with information on transition planning and the process;
- assisting the youth and family to identify possible transition planning team members, and;
- providing the youth and family with information about consent for information sharing with other transition planning team members.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) initiates the process for youth who are 14 years of age and accessing special needs supports and/or services from MCFD.

Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies with guardianship delegation initiate the process for children in their care at age 14.

The Ministry of Education – teachers will begin to develop transition goals, beyond school completion, as part of secondary students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), if not already in place.

2. Establish the Transition Planning Team

The transition planning team is comprised of individuals who play a role in the youth's life or who may play a role when the youth becomes an adult. The team includes the youth and his/her parent(s)/foster caregivers, as well as a variety of others (depending on the youth and his/her circumstances). The team may include family, friends, representatives from community and cultural organizations, school staff, ministry staff, and service providers. For Aboriginal youth, the team should include members from appropriate community and cultural organizations. Team members may change over time, depending on the stage of transition planning.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development arranges a meeting of possible transition planning team members for youth accessing special needs supports and/or services from MCFD, in order to formalize the team's membership.

The Ministry of Education includes possible transition planning team members when formalizing transition planning goals as part of the student's IEP. Where there is a need for a formal transition

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plan in addition to an IEP, the IEP planning team may be reformed with additional members to establish a transition planning team.

3. Identify the Transition Coordinator

The transition planning team collectively identifies the most appropriate person to coordinate the transition planning process and subsequent action plan. The Transition Coordinator plays a key role by providing organizational and administrative support to the team, including overseeing the composition of the transition planning team and adjusting membership as needed.

4. Gather Transition Planning Information

The Transition Coordinator works with the youth and his/her family to organize and gather information that will assist in:

- understanding the youth and family's support needs, and;
- developing the transition plan.

Information may be gathered from a variety of sources, including transition planning team members, and past, present and future service providers.

5. Develop the Transition Plan

The transition planning team collaboratively develops an individualized plan to address the youth's needs and the goals identified by the youth and his/her family. The transition planning team assists youth and their families to identify and access required assessments. The transition plan focuses on the youth's abilities and strengths and connects these to his/her dreams, goals and desires. The plan is future-oriented and aligned with the youth's cultural identity. The plan includes actions, milestones and timelines (including a timeline for applying for adult services, as required), as well as individual responsibilities for achieving milestones.

6. Implement the Transition Plan

Once the plan has been developed, the youth is supported in implementing it.

7. Monitor and Review the Transition Plan

The transition planning team determines a schedule to review, evaluate and update the plan at least once per year.

Adapted from the [Alberta Children and Youth Initiative: Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Disabilities \(2007\)](#) & the British Columbia [Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs: A Community Support Guide \(2005\)](#).

X. Appendix B – Government Services and Supports

The following is a list of government-funded organizations that can be involved in the transition planning process for youth with special needs (ages 14 to 25 years). This list includes a description of the types of services and/or supports provided that may be available to a youth preparing for, and/or entering, adulthood (depending on whether or not he/she meets the established eligibility requirements).

Organization	Government Services and Supports
BC Housing*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration of subsidized housing and programs that offer housing options
Community Living British Columbia*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community living supports and services for eligible adults with developmental disabilities (ages 19 and older) • Support for developing and implementing Individual Support Plans • A range of supports and funding options that honour choice, including Individualized Funding • Supports, including employment support, individual and group day supports, and home living options for adults who live away from their parents' homes • Family supports, including respite
Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning material for youth with special needs transitioning from K12 to post-secondary (financial resource access, assessment requirements, services and technology access) • Contact information regarding post-secondary institutions financial aid and disability services • Grants, scholarships and loan funding for students with permanent disabilities • Adult special education programs with a focus on developing vocational and employment skills
Ministry of Children and Family Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of services for children and youth (ages 0-18) with special needs and their families (e.g. At Home Program, Family Support Services such as respite, Key Worker services for children and youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Nursing Support Services, Autism Funding) • Residential services, guardianship and transition planning assistance for children and youth in care - also provided by Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies (DAAs) • Financial support and services for former children and youth in care to advance educational, rehabilitative and/or employment opportunities • A range of specialized mental health services including community-based Child and Youth Mental Health services, Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre (residential and non-residential options for youth with significant psychiatric and behavioural difficulties) and Youth

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Organization	Government Services and Supports
	<p>Forensic Psychiatric Services (assessment and treatment services to young offenders).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing • Programs for at-risk or sexually exploited youth, youth custody and community youth justice services
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to boards of education for children and youth with special needs • Individualized Education Plan development and transition goals as part of that plan • Work experience / pre-employment preparation • Provincially- and locally-developed curriculum
Ministry of Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home and Community Care may provide health care and support services, including home care nursing, community rehabilitation (occupational and physical therapy), and other community-based services • Primary Care - Transition between Paediatrician and General Practitioner care (including Shared Care/Collaborative Models of Care) • Regional Developmental Disability Mental Health Services – ages 14 and older • Adult Community Mental Health and Addictions Services • Child and Youth Addiction services • Health Authority Specialized Programs (e.g. Vancouver Island Health Authority Neuropsychiatric Clinic) • Acute psychiatry – adult and adolescent units
Ministry of Housing and Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment programs • Income Assistance, including Persons with Disabilities (PWD) • Health Supplements and Programs (e.g., medical and dental benefits, volunteer supplements, bus pass, etc)
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (Crime Victim Assistance Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance and benefits to victims of an injury due to violent crime • Medical/health related services • Vocational services • Disability aids • Home modification, vehicle modification/acquisition • Income support/lost earning capacity at age 19 for claimant who remains unemployable due to an injury from a violent crime
Public Guardian and Trustee of BC	<p>Child and Youth Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as a co-guardian with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and DAAs for youth under continuing custody orders, and is responsible for the protection of the financial and legal interests of children and youth under continuing custody orders • Management of trust funds as Trustee

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Organization	Government Services and Supports
	<p>Services to Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on situations of abuse, neglect or self-neglect of adults or youth nearing the age of majority, who may not be mentally capable of managing their own legal/financial affairs • Acts on behalf of adults who have been deemed mentally incapable, including as a temporary substitute decision- maker regarding health care decisions <hr/> <p>Estate and Personal Trust Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration of Public Guardian and Trustee Educational Assistance Fund for eligible former children and youth in care

** The Ministry of Housing and Social Development provides oversight to two crown agencies: Community Living BC, which funds supports and services to adults with developmental disabilities and their families; and BC Housing, which delivers integrated housing services.*

XI. Appendix C – Roles and Timelines for Transition Planning Team

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XII. Glossary of Terms

Children in Care/Youth in Care: Children under age of 19 years who are in the custody, care or guardianship of a director or a director of adoption as designated under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*, the *Adoption Act*, or the *Family Relations Act*. For the purpose of this protocol, the term ‘youth in care’ is used to refer to those over the age of 14.

Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency (DAA): An Aboriginal agency that has responsibility for the administration of all or parts of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*, through a delegation agreement with a director under the *CFCSA*.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A documented plan developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, modifications, and services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

Informal Community Supports: Family, friends, neighbours and/or community members who provide social support, which can include advocacy and/or help with monitoring services. Additional support is derived from participation in associations (e.g. social clubs and groups) or community activities that have public participation (e.g. sports teams, horticultural society, faith communities, etc). Formal government-funded services augment, rather than replace informal community supports.

Jordan’s Principle: A child-first approach to ensuring that jurisdictional funding disputes do not prevent or delay First Nations children from accessing available health and social services.