

**Transition Planning Guidelines**

1. **Introduction to the Transition Process**

1.1. Transition is a process of changing from one state or condition to another. It is ongoing and occurs throughout the lifespan. For students with exceptionalities, there are a number of significant transition points that may require attention. Attending to transitions may help students to avoid high-risk behaviour, improve academic achievement and generally experience more successful life outcomes.

1.2. Careful transition planning can help the student and family to:

* Prepare and deal with change.
* Learn to advocate for the required supports.
* Understand the exceptionality(s) and individual strengths and needs.
* Understand and articulate which strategies and supports work best.
* Develop skills that will help strengthen independence, confidence as a learner and the ability to collaborate effectively.
* Engage in action oriented planning for the future.
1. **Guiding Principles for Successful Transitions**

 The following guiding principles provide an overall framework for transition planning that can support students throughout various stages of transition. (These guiding principles have been adapted from *Guidelines for Supporting Successful Transitions for Children and Youth, Government of Alberta, 2006)*.

2.1. Ensure basic needs are met.

* Address safety and security concerns.
* Address physical and emotional needs.

2.2. Maintain and encourage positive relationships and a sense of community.

* Create opportunities to foster positive peer relationships.
* Encourage students to form connections within the school and community, such as involvement in arts, sports, clubs and volunteer opportunities.

2.3. Provide required supports and resources to students in their new environment.

* Assess current resources to help ensure required supports are in place for transition.
* Provide opportunities for students to learn skills required in the new environment.
* Identify a teacher/mentor that the student can access for questions and support.

2.4. Provide choices and involve the student in the transition process.

* Encourage the student to identify their interests, preferences and goals and assist the student in developing a plan for reaching their goals.
* Take steps to increase the student’s ability to problem solve.
* Promote self-advocacy by helping student to understand personal needs and identify sources of support.

2.5. Support the need for increased independence.

* Foster independence and help the student find a balance between independence and necessary support.
* Be culturally aware and promote cultural identity.
* Encourage self-awareness through exploration of strengths and challenges.

2.6. Build collaborative partnerships with all stakeholders.

* Seek input, feedback and shared responsibility from students, parents/guardians and other stakeholders.
* Share pertinent information with stakeholders to help enhance services, foster a better understanding of the student’s transition needs and ensure a more seamless transition.

2.7. Prepare for the transition and help the student prepare for change.

* Plan early – establish timelines for action.
* Clearly delineate responsibilities of the Program Planning Team members.
* Facilitate contact with the new environment, for the student as well as for other stakeholders.
* Highlight expectations appropriate to the student for academics, rules, routines and behaviour.
1. **Important transition points for which transition planning is required.**

3.1. Entry to Kindergarten

It is important that schools and districts strive to build working relationships with community partners and jointly develop procedures that will allow for a smooth school-entry process. Actions that schools/districts can take include:

* Establishing and maintaining links with community partners that provide services to preschool children and their families.
* Encouraging parental involvement.
* Encouraging early notification from parents, government and community agencies and preschool providers concerning children with transitioning needs who will be entering school.

3.2. Transition between schools

As students transition to a new school, the following must be considered:

* The student’s ability to adapt to new challenges and whether the student will require help adapting to:
	+ Unfamiliar surroundings, routines, and schedules.
	+ Different expectations.
	+ Increased academic demand.
	+ New teachers, staff and likely new classmates and peers.
* Ensuring that student files are updated and transferred to the receiving team prior to the transition.
* Ensuring that required supports are in place and follow-up occurs.

Students who transition to another school and/or community during the school year face additional challenges. It is imperative that everyone involved with the student, including personnel from both the sending and receiving school, parents/guardians and personnel from community/government agencies collaborate prior to and following the transition to ensure that pertinent documentation is transferred, required supports are in place in a timely manner, and follow-up occurs.

3.3. Transition between grades

Transition planning between grades within the same school is the responsibility of the student’s current Program Planning Team (PPT) and the school’s Service Delivery Team (SDT). These teams ensure that the information and programming requirements for each student is up to date and communicated to the receiving teacher(s). For this particular transition period, the transition information is documented in the Record of Accommodations, Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Student Support Plan (ISSP) and no additional transition forms are required. **Transition Plan forms are only required when students are transitioning into Kindergarten, between schools and life after school.**

Each time a student transitions to a new grade, the PPT should ensure that the parents/guardians, student and receiving personnel have a consistent understanding of:

* Supports, resources, strategies and accommodations that have been effective and should be continued.
* The responsibilities of team members, including current classroom/subject teacher and receiving classroom/subject teachers, students and parent/guardians.
* Timelines for action.

3.4. Transition to life after high school

Preparation for transition to life after high school should start early in the student’s schooling to allow adequate time for the student to acquire necessary skills and connections required for adult living. The questions listed below may not be applicable for every student, but should be considered when developing the student’s transition plan:

* Have the student’s interests and skills (including employment related skills) been assessed and/or considered in developing appropriate postsecondary goals?
* Is preparation for admission to and participation in post-secondary education required?
* Does the student require help in developing new skills such as self-advocacy, independence and problem-solving skills?
* Does the student require help in connecting with or getting support from government and community agencies that would work with the student after graduation (supported employment, housing etc.)?
* Does the student need assistance with independent living (social skills, level of independence, transportation, recreation and leisure activities, etc.)?
1. **Who is responsible for transition planning for students with exceptionalities?**

4.1. The PPT is responsible for transition planning, however input from other people may be required. The extent of the involvement of school, district and community personnel will depend upon the requirements of the student.

4.2. It is important to involve the student in the transition process as much as possible, starting from an early age. Research indicates that students’ involvement in the process often results in a better understanding of their strengths and needs, and provides opportunities for the development of self-advocacy, independence and problem-solving skills.

1. **Do all students with exceptionalities require a transition plan?**

5.1. If a student is receiving accommodations, modified prescribed, and/or alternate programming, a Transition Plan is required for entry to Kindergarten, transition from school to school and for life after high school.

1. **When does transition planning occur?**

 Transition planning must occur enough in advance to ensure that the student’s transition needs are adequately discussed and considered and can be effectively addressed.

6.1. Transition planning for **entry to school** should begin at least one year in advance but no later than the end of February prior to Kindergarten entry. This is to ensure that there is adequate time to consider what is required to make the transition as smooth as possible and to discuss the implications for the receiving environment and personnel.

6.2. Transition planning for **grade to grade** transitions occurs annually as part of the program planning process.

6.3. Transition planning for **school to school transitions** should begin at least 9 to 12 months in advance.

6.4 . Transition planning focusing on **life after high school** should begin at least three years prior to school leaving. Again, this is to ensure that all parties are given adequate time to consider and plan for both the upcoming transition and future transitions.

1. **What does transition planning involve?**

7.1. Transition planning involves:

* A collaborative effort.
* Early and systematic planning.
* Planning that is comprehensive in scope.

7.2. Each year, planning must take into account:

* What is required throughout the current school year to help the student meet transition goals?
* What needs to be done before the student transitions?
* What supports, resources, and/or programming are required to enable the student to be successful for the short and long term?

7.3. In each of the above instances, planning will clearly determine the:

* Responsibilities of the sending school and receiving school.
* Responsibilities and/or considerations for the student and/or parents/guardians.
1. **How is transition planning documented?**

8.1. Transition planning is documented on the transition plan forms for entry to Kindergarten, school to school and life after high school.

8.2. Grade to grade transition is documented in the Record of Accommodations, IEP and ISSP and no additional transition forms are required.

1. **Evaluating Assistive Technology (AT) Needs as Students Transition**

9.1. As a student transitions from one environment to another within the K-12 school system, it is important to ensure that AT devices (low tech and high tech) and software currently being used are transitioned with the student. For transitioning for life after high school to post-secondary, work or community environments, the PPT should ensure that AT needs in these environments are discussed and shared with receiving personnel.

AT provided within the K-12 school system remains with the school or district upon graduation or school leaving.

9.2. To help ensure AT needs are considered as student’s transition:

* The PPT will complete the Assistive Technology Transition Form, which is part of the Transition Plan.
* Involve the student by completing the Assistive Technology Student Input Form, which is also part of the Transition Plan.

 9.3. It is recommended that a contact person who is aware of the student’s needs and current use of AT be assigned to communicate with the receiving teacher, school or institution. This ensures that the transition of AT occurs in an effective and efficient manner.