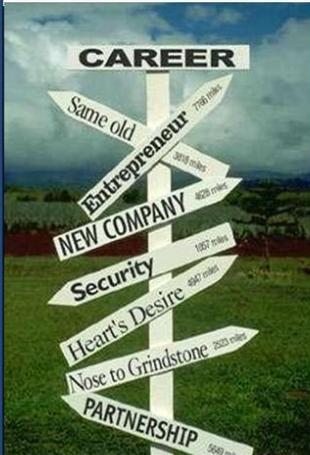


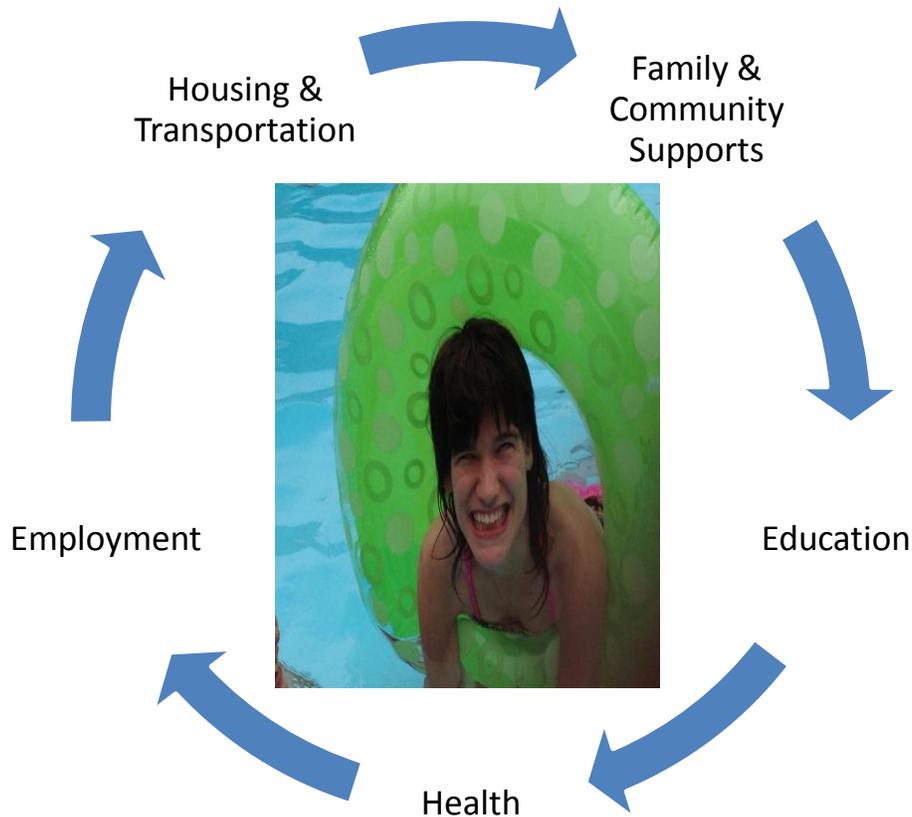
State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities
and Special Health Care Needs (SCR 34)



Executive Summary

- ◆ Education ◆ Employment ◆ Health ◆
- ◆ Housing ◆ Transportation

TRANSITION



“Individuals with disabilities should have, to the maximum extent possible, the same opportunities as all others do...”

-Governor Jack Markell

For a full copy of the report please go to www.gacec.delaware.gov

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State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs Executive Summary

“The difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary is the little extra.” This quote was the framework for discussions from which guided the State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs in making the recommendations you will read in this report. The State Transition Task Force was established by Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 34, which was sponsored by Senator Bethany Hall-Long and Representative Rebecca Walker.

A seed was planted by former Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) staff member Ilka Riddle to develop a Task Force on health and children with special health care needs. Terri Hancharick, Chairperson of the Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) and Wendy Strauss, Executive Director of the GACEC, felt that it would be best to go a step further and discuss forming a multifaceted Task Force. Terri and Wendy felt that the Task Force would be most effective if transition issues were addressed using a holistic approach. Terri and Wendy believed it would be possible to bring individuals from various backgrounds together to discuss services and programs for emerging adults with disabilities and special health care needs. As the founding members of the group, Ilka, Terri and Wendy felt there was a need as well as a desire for Delaware to address these issues.

All of the Task Force work groups included educators, state agency leaders, medical service providers, parents, self-advocates and community members (stakeholders) who recognized that a healthy home, school and agency culture existed and served to motivate all when carrying out their responsibilities within established guidelines. Each work group was afforded the opportunity to present successes and options to challenges within a safe and trusting environment.

At the heart of this Task Force there existed a culture of positive relationships with the process not operating in a vacuum. The quality of these relationships defined the collaborative climate and significantly impacted the productive discussions leading to agreed-upon priorities. Issues were discussed as part of a larger system that is impacted by (among other things) laws, regulations, community norms, values, attitudes and beliefs.

The work groups agreed that when obstacles which impeded the effectiveness of the process were evident, systems and resources were not always in place to provide the time, funding and clear channels of communication needed to plan, adjust and rectify student and family specific issues in a proactive and consistent manner.

These obstacles were presented and discussed by the work groups, who then came to consensus with their recommendations on how to best address these obstacles. Frustration among work group members about practices that worked contrary to those striving to enhance a culture of support in each student's individualized school program and transition to post-schooling and careers was reduced.

The work groups identified priorities which looked ahead not just in months, but in years. By taking the "long view", work group members agreed not to overestimate what can be done in a year, but rather what can be done over the course of multiple years.

It is a priority for all stakeholders to play a major role in communicating expectations, in addition to creating and maintaining a healthy culture. The Governor's Commission on Building Access to Community-Based Services (GCBACS) will assist in the implementation phase. The involvement of the Governor's Commission on Building Access to Community-Based Services (GCBACS), as well the involvement of other state agencies and local organizations is critical to moving the plan forward.

The State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs will continue to meet every other month to receive updates on the progress being made in the suggested time frames. The State Transition Task Force will also actively assist in moving transition initiatives forward.

In the context of the full report, the term "disabilities" refers to all physical, developmental, intellectual, behavioral, learning or mental health disabilities. Some examples of the "special health care needs" referred to in the full report include conditions such as Diabetes, Asthma, Cystic Fibrosis, Epilepsy and/or cardiac conditions.

Throughout the full report, you will notice Profiles in Progress featuring young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs who are either currently receiving or have received special education services. These young adults share their stories of what they are doing now and of what or who assisted them in their own transition process.

We are confident that upon the review, approval, funding and implementation of the priorities detailed in the full report, a consistent best practice approach will result in enhancing programming for all students and clients beyond basic compliancy measures.

The Executive Summary will highlight the main recommendations of the four work groups. *For a copy of the full report please go to the GACEC web page: www.gacec.delaware.gov.*

State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs Foreword

As Governor Jack Markell states in a report to the National Governors Association (NGA) on his initiative *A Better Bottom Line, Employing People with Disabilities*, “individuals with disabilities should have, to the maximum extent possible, the same opportunities as all others do; to live close to family and friends; to live independently and in safe communities; to engage in productive employment and to participate in community life.” In support of this ambitious initiative, the Task Force determined that critical changes were needed by individuals, case managers and organizations that support students in order to ensure a smooth transition from school to a productive and fulfilling life. The aforementioned critical changes need to be made in the following areas:

- Health Care
- Employment
- Education
- Housing & Transportation

The following is based on the federal definition of transition services as stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

(1) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, (including post-secondary education), vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

(2) Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; including instruction, related services and community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school Adult living objectives, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

In spite of supportive legislation (e.g. IDEA, the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], and the Rehabilitation Act), as well as identified best practices, many students are not making an effective, productive transition into adulthood.

Established under the State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs, the four work groups were tasked with identifying gaps in services

and making recommendations for improving transition services within Delaware. Each work group identified barriers and developed an action plan and a timeline.

The Task Force's essential question throughout this process was: "What are the gaps in our current system that prevent our students with disabilities from achieving the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities?"

The full report highlights the strengths of the current systems and identifies challenges with suggested goals, action steps, and timelines that will facilitate the advancement of not only the Governor's initiative on employment, but also the implementation of effective transition services within the areas of education, employment, health, housing and transportation.

Education Work Group Five Broad Areas of Concern

- I. School-based preparatory experiences and student empowerment
- II. Career preparation and multiple work-based learning experiences
- III. Youth development and leadership
- IV. Family involvement and supports
- V. Communication and professional development

Education Work Group Recommendations

- Develop, support and maintain a fully accessible transition guide website to improve access to information about transition planning for students, parents/caregivers, and all interested parties.
- Ensure that the State Transition Task Force’s Action Plan and Action Steps are implemented within the suggested time frame and are sustained for the future.
- Develop a Self-Advocacy and Leadership Curriculum, ensure that student-led IEPs are best practice, and provide an expansion of community experiences and exposure to multiple work-based learning and employment opportunities for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.
- Develop, incorporate and assess youth leadership curricula accessible to students at all Delaware high schools, inclusive of special schools.
- Establish a dedicated Transition Coordinator position in every Delaware high school, inclusive of special schools.
- Change the culture of transition by providing professional development training on transition planning for state, district and school administrators and staff.

Employment Work Group Four Broad Areas of Concern

- I. Create a more responsive employment system for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.
- II. Implement policies and programs that improve the transition process for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs as they transition from school to employment and/or careers.
- III. Foster a supportive employment and career environment for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.
- IV. Build capacity, opportunities and resources for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs as they transition to employment and careers.

Employment Work Group Recommendations

- Enhance multiple work opportunities, paid or unpaid, for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs prior to their exit from school. This may be accomplished through collaborative efforts with EFI, DOE, DVR and DDDS.
- Enable strategic partnerships with and between Delaware employers through coordinated education, training and technical assistance that promotes increased awareness, job development, job shadowing and job internship opportunities for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.
- Provide training for families/caregivers on critical areas related to enhancing employment and career outcomes (e.g. benefits counseling and supporting increased student independence) for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.
- Provide training and technical assistance for schools regarding the successful implementation of work experiences as part of a student's school day.

Employment Work Group Recommendations (cont.)

- Conduct thorough assessments of young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs earlier in school in order to support them in understanding their employment-related strengths and weaknesses. Develop curricula to enhance their career exploration and employment skills.
- Enhance statewide support systems to enable more individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs to access post-secondary education and training.

Health Work Group Four Broad Areas of Concern

- I. Create more responsive systems in Delaware for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.
- II. Implement policies and programs in Delaware that improve health for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.
- III. Lay the foundation for access to information to promote health literacy, transition readiness and success for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.
- IV. Build capacity for the individual health of young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.

Health Work Group- Recommendations

- Create more responsive systems in Delaware for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.
- Implement policies and programs that improve the health of young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs in Delaware.
- Lay the foundation for access to information to promote health literacy, transition readiness and success for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.
- Build capacity for individual health for young adults with disabilities and/or special health care needs and their families/caregivers.

The Health Work Group also made supporting recommendations which are outlined in the full report. For access to the full report please visit GACEC's website at www.gacec.delaware.gov.

Housing/Transportation Work Group Broad Areas of Concern

Housing:

- I. Accessibility
- II. Affordability
- III. Community Based Services
- IV. Housing Systems
- V. Consumer Education and Builder Reluctance

Housing Recommendations

- Legislation to make Source of Income, (SSI, SSDI and housing assistance such as HOPWA) a protected class in the State's Fair Housing Laws similar to race and sexual orientation.
- Legislation to standardize the state's building codes as they pertain to building accessibility features such as ramps, bathroom fixtures, lights and bells for people with sensory impairments, etc. Currently these standards vary from county to county and within municipalities, which impacts costs.
- Legislation that would either provide incentives for developers or require them to set aside fully accessible and subsidized units in affordable housing developments and integrate them into typical housing in multi-family developments.

Housing/Transportation Work Group Broad Areas of Concern

Transportation:

- I. Availability
- II. Accessibility
- III. Training
- IV. Policies and Procedures

Transportation Recommendations

- Legislation to require school districts to begin transportation training for students with and without disabilities in the 7th grade. Transportation options and transportation skills such as fixed route and Paratransit bus familiarization, reading and understanding bus, train and plane transfers and schedules should be taught. Also, appropriate funding should be included for both DTC's Travel Training Program and a Transition Coordinator in each school district who would also provide travel training.
- Legislation to fund a Driver's Training Instructor in each school district to train and test students with disabilities and/or special health care needs so they can obtain a driver's license. Also, for each student with a disability and/or special health care need who wants to learn to drive, fund the ability for school districts to contract with companies that can provide a vehicle that meets the student's individual needs. All students should be able to either learn to drive or learn to use the other modes of transportation.
- Legislation to mandate that transportation providers have a percentage of their fleet set aside as accessible vans and taxi cabs. The legislation should also require a percentage of the taxis and vans to be in service and adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) non-discrimination standards and vehicle design standards.

Afterword

When the State Transition Task Force for Emerging Adults with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs recommendations are fully implemented, we will see the differences in every aspect of our community. We will have more individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs completing high school and going on to attend vocational and secondary schools. We will also see these individuals achieve meaningful employment and careers. Our businesses will be stronger because we will have a more productive work force. Our Medicaid and Medicare costs will be lower because individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs will be working and contributing to their own health care. As individuals with disabilities and/or special health care needs obtain jobs, they will become more independent by renting properties or buying homes. They will be active contributing members of society. Our community will reflect the value that we put into the early transition process.

A personal thank you to all those who contributed their time to bring our vision into existence. Our effort to move to a culture that truly understands the process of transition and its importance is the result of your many countless hours and your dedication. Volunteering your time by attending the Key Informant Group meetings, serving as an editor, being a Design Team member, a Work Group member or a Task Force member has helped lay a solid foundation for change. We are proud of the work and the accomplishment each of you have made. Your spirit of collaboration means so much to us. We thank you for working with us as it has been a pleasure working with all of you.

None of this could have been possible without the support of the prime sponsors of SCR 34. Many thanks to Senator Bethany Hall-Long and Representative Rebecca Walker for helping us begin this important work.

A special thank you to our GACEC staff support, Kristin Cosden.

Again, thank you all for the great work!

Terri A. Hancharick, Co-Chair, State Transition Task Force, Chair GACEC

Wendy S. Strauss, Co-Chair, State Transition Task Force, Executive Director, GACEC

For a full list of Task Force and work group members as well as the full report, please visit the GACEC's website www.gacec.delaware.gov.