

A photograph of three young adults with disabilities laughing together outdoors. On the left, a young woman with curly hair, wearing a purple shirt, is laughing. In the center, a young man with short brown hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, is laughing and has his arm around the woman. On the right, a young man with dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt, is laughing. They are sitting on a bench in a park-like setting with flowers in the background.

# EMPOWERED TRANSITIONS

A GUIDE FOR YOUTH WITH  
DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES





# ABOUT THE ARIZONA COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON TRANSITION (AZCoPT)



## MISSION

The Arizona Community of Practice on Transition (AZCoPT) collaborates to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities by developing and supporting systems coordination, promoting high-quality transition services, and providing professional development and resources. AZCoPT utilizes best practices and evidence-based strategies to ensure effective and sustainable outcomes across Arizona.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Informing and educating the public and each other
- Addressing unmet needs through collaboration
- Evaluating the transition process and system
- Articulating and recommending data-driven outcomes and improvements (policy and program)
- Strengthening local teams by supporting development/expansion, removing barriers, and enhancing creative problem solving



## CURRENT PARTNERS





# INTRODUCTION

The Empowered Transitions document provides information for families of youth with disabilities to help their young person gain the foundational skills they need to prepare for success as they move from childhood into adulthood, with respect to their goals in the following areas: self determination, post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. This tool is appropriate for use by a youth, who may need assistance from a parent or guardian, a teacher, or a mentor. While this document targets youth with disabilities, it can be used for any youth who is preparing for life as an independent adult.

The Empowered Transitions document starts by identifying skills that are developmentally appropriate for a ten-year-old “typical” child in the aforementioned four areas, and progresses by two-year levels up to age 21. Youth with developmental delays should start with the beginning level of information to make sure they have discussed and understand that information about themselves before moving to the next age level of skills. Adults or older youth who are helping a young person discuss these skills should help the youth to understand why these skills can be helpful.



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
10 - 12

## Self Determination

- Know the name of your condition/disability and how it affects you
- Identify and/or describe what helps you to be successful (accommodations or support at school, at home, or in the community)
- Know what an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan meeting is and participate in the planning and running of your meeting
  - If you don't know what an IEP or 504 Plan is, ask your teacher or principal
- Help answer questions about yourself during healthcare visits
- Begin to describe your support system (who, how, where)

## Post-Secondary Education or Training

- Describe the classes you enjoy
- Explain what you like and dislike at school, at home, in the community
- Demonstrate how you solve problems, the strategies you use
- Explore how you learn best, what you find helps you the most

## Employment

- Help plan and contribute to your household routine or chores
- Explore what you want to do in the future for a job, such as your “dream job”
- Demonstrate the ability to make choices and talk about your decision-making strategies
- Follow instructions/directions and finish what you start

## Independent Living and Community Participation

- Make healthy food choices; exercise
- Participate in activities outside of school or in the community
- Develop friendships and learn how to be a friend
- Use Assistive Technology
- Identify and tell others about your likes and dislikes
- Participate in meetings that are about you and your future
- Learn how to make decisions by practicing making choices; learn from poor choices you make



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
12 - 14

## Self Determination

- Identify how your condition/disability affects you in your daily life
- Describe the accommodations you currently use
- Explain how your accommodations help you and how they could be improved
- Contribute information about yourself at your IEP or 504 Plan meeting (how you learn best, your likes and dislikes, your dreams for your future)
- Complete the check in process during health appointments
- Prepare questions for your healthcare provider before an appointment
- Continue to build your support network (or system)

## Post-Secondary Education or Training

- Demonstrate time-management skills
- Demonstrate organizational skills
- State the requirements for high school classes and your options for high school classes or programs of study
- Explore the acceptance requirements of post high school opportunities that interest you
- Learn about accommodations for learning at the postsecondary level

## Employment

- Help plan and contribute to your household routine or chores
- Explore what you want to do in the future for a job, such as your “dream job”
- Demonstrate the ability to make choices and talk about your decision-making strategies
- Follow instructions/directions and finish what you start

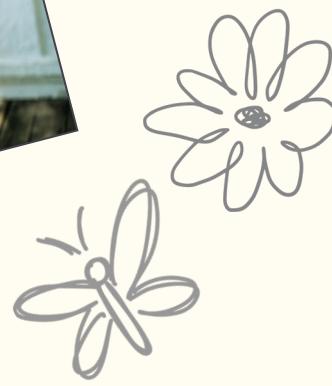


# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
12 - 14

## Independent Living and Community Participation

- Be able to talk about your health requirements and medication needs
- Continue to participate and expand your participation in activities outside of school and in your community
- Develop relationships (peers, friends, mentors)
- Learn about community resources that can help you develop independent living skills
- Practice safe and responsible technology use
- Learn about person-centered thinking and planning practices, and start using them
- Start making a list of your strengths, needs, interests, skills, hopes and dreams
- Share your thoughts and feelings about your life at meetings that are about you and your future
- Continue to practice making choices to develop decision-making skills



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
14 - 15

## Self Determination

- Participate in assessments and understand how the results relate to your transition plan
- Lead your IEP/504 meeting
- Identify and begin to coordinate support (people, services, or providers) or create a circle of support for yourself
- Use and continue to build your personal support system or network
- Talk about your wants and needs appropriately
- Practice making your own doctor's appointments and ordering prescription refills
- Learn when to use an insurance card, the information it contains, and how to contact customer service
- Know what to do or who to tell when you feel ill and what to do in case of an emergency
- Explore community resources that can help you develop leadership skills
- Find out about Pre-Employment Transition Services workshops and how you can request them from Vocational Rehabilitation

## Post-Secondary Education or Training

- Develop a graduation plan, including the list of credits needed
- Explore post-high school training options and visit those of interest to you
- Explore the areas where you need support (learning, personal care, household tasks, work tasks), including assistive technology
- Consider that actions have consequences and what that means for you
- Find out about Pre-Employment Transition Services workshops and how you can request them from Vocational Rehabilitation



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
14 - 15

## Employment

- Practice employability skills
- Continue job or career exploration activities
- Participate in work-based learning experiences
- Continue to develop a career portfolio and link it to your Summary of Performance (SOP) and your Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP)
- Identify and explore all opportunities for employment
- Learn about what you can offer to an employer (skills, abilities)
- Learn about and use resources to help you find a job
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services from Vocational Rehabilitation

## Independent Living and Community Participation

- Use community resources to help develop independent living skills
- Practice developing healthy relationships
- Practice going into the community with less support
- Practice and use the transportation options available to you
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services from Vocational Rehabilitation
- Take classes or workshops that teach self-sufficiency skills
- Practice making decisions about your life; be prepared to explain and support your decisions
- Begin seeing your doctor alone for part of each visit
- Take an active role in planning for your own future, including advocating for yourself
- Explore independent living options and the support you may need as an adult



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
16 - 17

## Self Determination

- Realize and understand barriers and solutions
- Independently discuss with high school staff your needed accommodations and supports
- Understand adult rights and responsibilities, including how your privacy rights (and your parents' access to your medical information) will change at age 18
- Continue leading IEP/504 meeting; provide direct input into the development of your IEP/504 goals
- Work with your current doctors to make a summary of your medical history and identify possible adult health care providers
- Explore health care organizational tools
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD
- Finalize legal options and alternatives to guardianship with your family/support system
- Use and continue to build your support system

## Post-Secondary Education or Training

- Maintain academic success; keep your grades up
- Complete post-school education/training applications
- Complete college/post-high school training entrance requirements
- Apply for scholarship opportunities and explore funding sources to support your goals
- Contact disability resource service office in post-secondary settings to determine needed documentation and available support
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
16 - 17

## Employment

- Use employability skills
- Continue development of a career portfolio
- Engage in work-based learning and experiences
- Use your career portfolio and link this information to your Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP)
- State and know how to get the accommodations and support you need for employment
- Discuss additional training or skills you need to continue or enhance your employment
- Seek competitive, integrated employment
- Understand and use services that will help you stay employed
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD

## Independent Living and Community Participation

- Continue making healthy choices
- Continue making life choices and understanding the consequences
- Continue involvement with community opportunities and services that may assist you
- Develop financial management skills
- Manage your own transportation arrangements
- Lead decision making about your life
- Understand potential changes in government benefits and work incentives related to employment
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD
- Take the initiative in planning for your future, including advocating for yourself
- Create opportunities to take responsibility and be accountable
- Show self-sufficiency skills and competence in decision making
- Develop an independent living plan and identify the support needed for adulthood



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

AGES  
18 - 21

## Self Determination

- Direct your personal assistance services
- Understand cultural diversity
- Understand and use cause and effect strategies
- Consider others' points of view
- Further develop self-advocacy skills as they relate to your postsecondary goals
- Assume adult rights and responsibilities
- Talk with your adult health providers about your condition/disability and how it affects you
- Use an organizational tool during health care visits
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD
- Use and continue to build your support system

## Post-Secondary Education or Training

- Finalize postsecondary education/training plan, including documentation of your disability
- Understand and use the Summary of Performance (SOP)
- Coordinate services and supports with disability resource services
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD
- Independently discuss your accommodations and support needs with instructors/trainers



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

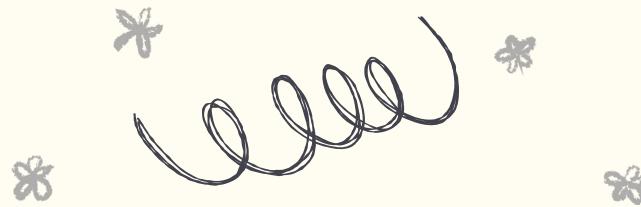
AGES  
18 - 21

## Employment

- Master employability skills
- Engage in work-based learning or experiences
- Use your career portfolio and link the information to your Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP)
- Request and use accommodations and support needed for employment
- Seek competitive, integrated employment
- Understand and use services that will help you stay employed
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD

## Independent Living and Community Participation

- Develop a plan for a balanced life (time management, school, work, leisure)
- Register for selective service, register to vote
- Engage with your local Center for Independent Living
- Practice financial management skills
- Manage your own transportation arrangements
- Engage with adult support services to ensure coordination of services
- Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR) and/or Employment services from DDD
- Make informed decisions about your life
- Know your support system and use it
- Use work incentives when employed and applicable
- Take the initiative in planning for your future, including advocating for yourself
- Implement an independent living plan and the support needed for adulthood



# ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

## SELF DETERMINATION

- How do you make decisions and use community resources?
- How do you talk about your disability and what you need for support?
- What are your goals, and what is your plan to reach them?

## EMPLOYMENT

- What are your career goals?
- How will you reach those goals?
- What support and/or resources do you need to reach your career goals?

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION/TRAINING

- What postsecondary education or training options are available to you?
- What documentation do you need to be eligible for disability-related services?
- What types of accommodations can you receive from postsecondary education/training programs?

## INDEPENDENT LIVING & COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Where do you want to live as an adult?
- What kind of support will you need for transportation, medical issues, daily living, and leisure-time activities, and how will you pay for what you need?
- How will you maintain and increase your social network?



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Arizona Community of Practice on Transition created an online resource with descriptions of the services from many agencies and organizations that serve youth with disabilities. Here's the link to "Navigating Life Transitions: Arizona's Transition Resource Guide."

[Navigating Life Transitions: Arizona's Transition Resource Guide](#)

