Preparing Students with Autism for Post-Secondary Transition

Cortney Fish, MSW, BCBA, LBA

MOCASE Spring Collaborative Conference 2017
Outline

• What is Transition?
• Autism & Transition
• The Importance of Starting Early
• Transition Planning
• The IEP Meeting
• Barriers to Successful Outcomes
What is Transition?
Transition Services

The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

• Focuses on both the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability in school to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing a adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.
Transition Services

• Are based on the individual child’s needs, strengths, preferences and interests

• Includes:
  – instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills, and functional vocational evaluation

• Involves both direct instruction and supported experiences
Purpose of Transition

- To prepare an individual to be a contributing member of society
- To help an individual develop
  - Independence
  - Self-advocacy
  - Self-determination
- It’s never too early to start working on these skills
- Students who have a job at the time they exit high school are 5.1x more likely to be engaged in post-school employment (Silverberg et al, 2004)
Autism & Transition
Autism & Transition

• There are 9,659 students with autism in Missouri
• 3,117 are ages 14-21
• In 2015:
  – 68% of transition-aged adults with autism in MO did not achieve successful employment
Only 58% of youth with autism had a transition plan at the required age according to their teachers (Roux, et al., 2015)
1/3 of youth with autism indicated they wanted to be more involved in their transition planning

(Cameto, et. Al., 2004)
Autism & Transition

• Individuals with autism have less successful outcomes in comparison to typical peers and those with other disabilities
  – Not utilizing strength-based employment
  – Often part time positions
  – Average to above average IQ not associated with better outcomes
Starting Early
Importance of Work Experience Prior to Graduation

Successful Post-Secondary Outcomes

Prior work experience: 90%
No work experience: 40%
Benefits of Early Experience

• Identify preferences and strengths
• Address barriers gradually instead of all at once
• Provide safe environments for missteps
• Provide performance feedback across multiple settings
  – Leads to generalization
• Establish the importance of employment
  – First jobs usually not forever job or the ideal career
Incorporating Work into School

- School jobs/responsibilities
- Community outings with functional goals
- Collaboration with parents for outside employment
- Arranging volunteer opportunities
- Work based instruction (interviews, applications, etc.)
- Competitive employment opportunities
- Career preparation with goal setting

Needs to be a priority within instruction regardless of work or college bound
Transition Planning
Creating a Thorough Transition Plan

Only 4 out of 10 special education students have transition plans that meet timelines and are measurable

(Landmark & Zhang, 2013)
Creating a Thorough Transition Plan

• One of the main goals of IDEA is for students to be prepared for employment and independent living

• IDEA requires:
  - school districts to help students with disabilities transition out of school
  - planning begin by age 16, (ideally it would start at age 14)
  - transition planning be individualized for a specific student
  - the student’s skill set and individual preferences be taken into account
Creating a Thorough Transition Plan

The transition plan should guide the development of the IEP goals, not just be a summary of the IEP
Creating a Thorough Transition Plan

The plan should include:

• Strengths and present academic and functional performance
• Measurable postsecondary goals that are generalizable to employment, education, or independent living
• Corresponding IEP goals that will help the student meet postsecondary goals
• A timeline for achieving goals
Creating a Thorough Transition Plan

The plan should describe:

• The transition services needed
  – Focused on instruction and services for education, training, employment, and independent living

• People or agencies identified to help with goals

• Clarification of how roles will be coordinated

• A plan for identifying post-graduation services and supports, and obtaining the necessary funding for accessing services and supports
Consider Assessments

Areas to Assess

• Interests/Preferences
• Employment Skills
• Soft Skills
  • Adaptive Behavior
  • Executive Functioning
  • Social Interactions
Areas to Assess

• Interests/preferences
  – Talk to them about preferences
  – Discuss strengths & jobs that could be a good fit
  – Exposure to variety of experiences with self and staff rating
Career Clusters Interest Survey

This interest survey is designed to help you identify the career clusters that best match you. Circle each item that matches your personality. Write the number in the white box at the bottom and find your top three career clusters.

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources

Activities that I like to do:
- Learn how things grow and stay alive
- Make the best use of the earth’s natural resources
- Hunt and/or fish
- Protect the environment
- Be outdoors in all kinds of weather
- Plan, budget and keep records
- Operate machines & keep them in good repair

Personal qualities that describe me:
- Self-reliant
- Nature lover
- Physically active
- Planner
- Creative problem solver

Subjects that I like:
- Math
- Life Sciences
- Earth Sciences
- Chemistry
- Agriculture

Arts, A/V Technology and Communications

Activities that I like to do:
- Use my imagination to communicate new information to others
- Perform in front of others
- Read and write
- Play a musical instrument
- Perform creative, artistic activities
- Use video and recording technology
- Design brochures and posters

Personal qualities that describe me:
- Creative and imaginative
- Good communicator / good vocabulary
- Curious about new technology
- Relate well to feelings and thoughts of others
- Determined / tenacious

Subjects that I like:
- Art / Graphic Design
- Music
- Speech and Drama
- Journalism / Literature
- Audio—Visual Technologies

Business Management and Administration

Activities that I like to do:
- Perform routine, organized activities but can be flexible
- Work with numbers and detailed information
- Be the leader
- Make business contact with people
- Work with computer programs
- Create reports and communicate ideas
- Plan my work and follow instructions without close supervision

Personal qualities that describe me:
- Organized
- Practical and logical
- Patient
- Tactful
- Responsible

Subjects that I like:
- Computer Applications / Business and Information Technology
- Accounting
- Math
- English
- Economics
Areas to Assess

• Employment Skills
  – Community Based Skills Assessment (CAS-Autism Speaks/VCU)
  – Autism Work Skills Questionnaire (AWSQ-Ono College, University of Haifa)
  – Becker Work Adjustment Profile (4 domains: cognitive, interpersonal, work attitude, independence)
### Community Based Skills Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Level of Independence</th>
<th>Environments Performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFE AWARE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrates the ability to independently buckle seatbelt</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrates the ability to use different types of transportation (car, bus)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Demonstrates the ability to independently cross the street and maneuver parking lots</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrates transportation safety skills and appropriate behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 out of 29 = _____ %</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>12 out of 12 = _____ %</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFE EXPLORER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Demonstrates the ability to use different types of private and public transportation (car, bus, subway, train)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Prepares to travel to work and community activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Demonstrates the ability to request assistance when using public transportation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Demonstrates the ability to notify others if transportation issues arise</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Identifies emergency protocols when using transportation (eye contact, tone of voice, body orientation)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Demonstrates transportation safety skills and appropriate behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 out of 30 = _____ %</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>18 out of 18 = _____ %</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFE SEEKER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Demonstrates the ability to use different types of private and public transportation (car, bus, subway, train)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Prepares to travel to work and community activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Demonstrates the ability to request assistance when using public transportation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Demonstrates the ability to notify others if transportation issues arise</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Identifies emergency protocols when using transportation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Demonstrates transportation safety skills and appropriate behavior</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Demonstrates the ability to arrange transportation if necessary</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Autism Work Skills Questionnaire

#### C.3 Level of Independence in Working and Studying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Always -5</th>
<th>-4</th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>Never -1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can only follow written instructions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can only follow verbal instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs detailed written explanations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs detailed verbal explanations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs written/verbal demonstration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs frequent approval during work</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs guidance and supervision during work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable of independent learning</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can learn a new subject independently from written material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs approval for every item learned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs work/ study tasks independently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Independence level = [ ]**

**Average score. Total/11 = [ ]**

*Note: When summing scores the items in italics must be reversed.*

Comments regarding independence at work: [ ]
# Becker Work Adjustment Profile

## Interpersonal Relations Domain (IR)

### 1. Personal Relations: Courteous and respectful toward co-workers and supervisors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rude; Uses profanity</th>
<th>Often impolite</th>
<th>Ordinarily polite</th>
<th>Courteous; Polite</th>
<th>Exceptional relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Group Acceptance: Approval and acceptance by co-workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoided by others; Disliked</th>
<th>Has few friends; Tolerated by others</th>
<th>Generally liked by others</th>
<th>Well-liked by most</th>
<th>Sought after by others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Cooperation: Supervisors: Attitude toward supervisors as authority figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defiant; Antagonistic</th>
<th>Often critical of authority</th>
<th>Ordinarily cooperative</th>
<th>Respectful; Cooperates well</th>
<th>Highly cooperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Trustworthy: Reliable and trusting in relations with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cannot be trusted</th>
<th>Questionable at times</th>
<th>Generally trustworthy</th>
<th>Reliable; Dependable</th>
<th>Consistently trustworthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Cooperation: Co-workers: Ability to get along with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Troublemaker; Poor relations</th>
<th>Has difficulty; Quick to argue</th>
<th>Usually cooperative</th>
<th>Gets along well</th>
<th>Excellent relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-centered; Not concerned</th>
<th>Indifferent; Somewhat concerned</th>
<th>Attentive; Group oriented</th>
<th>Actively concerned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consider Goals

- Goals should be SMART and individualized to each student
Overarching Post-Secondary Goal

Austin will work in a full time job that pays at least minimum wage. He will independently travel to and from work using the public bus system.
Measurable IEP Goal

When provided with the local bus schedule and routes, Austin will accurately identify the appropriate bus route and travel times in order to arrive at his work study location on time.
Areas to Focus Goals

• Employment
• Post-secondary education or training
• Independence
• Community participation
• Transportation
• Executive functioning skills
• Self-determination
• Communication and social skills
Promoting Independence
Reduce Adult Support

- Find the balance and fade supports as appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presence of adult support...</th>
<th>Not enough support...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased or prolonged dependence</td>
<td>Lack of engagement with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased peer interactions</td>
<td>Inappropriate engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased teacher attention</td>
<td>Increased self-stim behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling embarrassed/stigmatized</td>
<td>Decreased skill acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of personal control</td>
<td>Loss or regression of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased behavior problems</td>
<td>Increased behavioral problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep a Focus on the Future

Students need to be able to *initiate* and *complete* familiar tasks *without* adult support to be successful in any supported work environments.

*Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*

Continuum of Post-Secondary Work

- Day Care/Supervision
- Supported Work Activity
- Sheltered Work
- Transitional Work
- Community Competitive Employment
The focus of adult support is to teach the use of tools and strategies to foster independence. Adult support should not be the tool.
Executive Functioning
Executive Skills

The “Thinking” and “Doing” Skills

- Response Inhibition
- Working Memory
- Quality (Goal Directed) Task Performance
- Emotional Control
- Organization, Planning, and Prioritizing
- Time Management
- Flexibility
- Task Initiation
- Independent Sustained Attention to Task
Executive Functioning
Which Skills to Target

• Consider what is most limiting independence
• Consider developmental age and grade expectations
• Assess to find an appropriate starting point
  – There are informal assessment checklists for both teachers and caregivers (Dawson, P., Guare, R., 2009)
Executive Functioning

When Deciding on Accommodations

• Is this specific skill one that will be needed in the future?
• Are there acceptable accommodations adults use for this skill?
• Is the child developmentally ready to learn the necessary replacement skill?
Self-Determination
Self-Determination

Combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-directed and autonomous behavior.
Self-Determination Skills

• Decision-making
• Problem solving
• Goal-setting
• Self-advocacy
• Self-regulation
Self-Determination Theory

• Broad framework for the study of human motivation and personality (Ryan and Deci, 2000)
  – Competence
  – Autonomy
  – Relatedness
Competence

The right skills to complete a task

• The ability to do something effectively and/or efficiently
• An individual is more likely to engage in the activity if he/she feels efficacious or competent when completing the task
Autonomy

Deciding for yourself

• Independent from external control or influence

• Facilitates internalization of values
Relatedness

Connection to the social environment

- Need to feel sense of belonging and connectedness to others
- Internalization is more likely when there are supports fostering relatedness
Why These Three?

• Not providing supports in competence, relatedness, and autonomy allows for:
  – A greater likelihood of poor outcomes due to a lack of motivation and initiative
  – Presence of excessive control
  – Lack of connectedness
  – Non-optimal challenges
How to Support Self-Determination?

- Listen
- Acknowledge experiences and perspectives
- Acknowledge improvement; even small or seemingly insignificant ones
- Be responsive to questions
- Provide opportunities to communicate
Self Determination Tools

- The ARC’s Self-Determination Scale
- Brief Resilience Scale
- Missouri Family to Family resources

http://mofamilytofamily.org/get-information/lifecourse/lifestages/transition/
IEP Transition Meeting
Effective Strategies

• Have high expectations
• Prepare the student for the meeting
• Use portfolio based assessment
• Focus on supports rather than programs
• Provide opportunities to explore community and interests
• Involve community and agency members
  - Invite them!

YOU GET A MEETING. AND YOU GET A MEETING.

EVERYONE GETS A MEETING!
Who to Invite

• Adult Service Provider
• Transition Coordinator
• Administrator
• Special Educator
• General Educator
• Related Service Providers
• Student
• Parent/s or Guardians
Effective Strategies

• Address questions about student to the student
• Expect and encourage the student to respond
• Provide visual supports or choices if necessary
• Teach, practice, and anticipate questions and concerns prior to the meeting
Student Involvement Examples

• Teacher brings a student to the IEP meeting for a brief period of time to interact with team
• Student prepares a short statement that he/she distributes or reads aloud to the IEP team
• Student helps writes sections of the IEP for consideration at the IEP meeting using data obtained prior to meeting
• The student co-presents as an equal member of the team
• The student leads the IEP meeting with support from their primary teacher
Barriers to Successful Outcomes
Barriers to Successful Outcomes

- Lack of coordination between agencies, home, and school,
  - including lack of student involvement in the transition process
  - no involvement = no buy in
- Lack of employment experience
- Traditional Vocational Rehabilitation services may not meet the unique needs
- Deficits in soft skills and self-determination
- Limited employer knowledge of ASD
- Poor social skills
- Not accessing accommodations
Addressing Barriers

• This can be difficult
  – Know what the true barriers are
  – Prioritize goals effectively
  – Get all parties on the same page
  – Determine what person/agency is responsible for each part
  – Monitor progress
Monitor the Plan

- Use an action oriented agenda at meetings
  - Include: approximate times and “parking lot”
  - Use a consistent framework for reporting goals and progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Date to Revisit</th>
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</table>
Monitor the Plan

Progress Monitoring – Employment Supports and Interventions

**Goal (define in observable and measurable terms):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention(s) Used:</th>
<th>Baseline: Date Started: Data:</th>
<th>Frequency: □ ___ Times/Day □ ___ Times/Week □ ___ Times/Month</th>
<th>Data Collection Method: Collection Method: Date Reviewed: Data:</th>
<th>Effectiveness: determined by progress towards goal achievement □ Effective □ Somewhat Effective □ Not Effective</th>
<th>Data-Based Decision: □ Continue Intervention □ Increase Frequency /Intensity □ Add additional intervention □ Change intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date Started: Data:</td>
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Thompson Center
For Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
University of Missouri
Resources

Autism Speaks Transition Tool Kit
https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/transition-tool-kit

OCALI Autism Internet Modules
http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/

National Professional Development Center on ASD- Evidence Based Briefs
http://autismmpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/briefs

Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative (MAGI)
http://autismguidelines.dmh.mo.gov/
SPARK – Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge

- SPARK is an online research partnership with the mission of speeding up research and advancing the understanding of autism.
- Eligibility: Individuals with a professional diagnosis of autism.
- Participation can be done entirely at home – registration is completed online.
- Benefits:
  - Gift card
  - Significant genetic results return
  - Future autism research opportunities
  - Access to resources
- For more information visit: https://thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/
Mizzou Online!
Master’s Degree in Autism

Contact Information

Program details:  
Department of Special Education  
573-882-3742  SpEd@missouri.edu

Jena Randolph, Autism Education Program Coordinator  
573-884-1911  RandolphJ@health.missouri.edu

Course enrollment information:  
Mizzou Online  
1-800-609-3727  MizzouOnline@missouri.edu

online.missouri.edu/AutismEd
STRIVE
Self-determined Transition Readiness through Individual Vocational Experiences

STRIVE is a post-secondary education program offering two semesters of non-credit employment skills development at the University of Missouri.

• STRIVE prepares individuals for employment with it’s 3 guiding pillars:
  – Direct Skill Instruction
  – Job experience and coached feedback
  – Peer mentoring

• Eligibility
  – Medical and/or Educational autism diagnosis
  – Ages 18-25 (not enrolled in high school)
  – Have comprehensive (verbal & non-verbal) IQ at or above 85
  – Have a strong desire to work competitively

For more information visit: https://thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/STRIVE
Thank you!
Any Questions?

Contact information:
Cortney Fish, MSW, BCBA, LBA
fishca@health.missouri.edu