

Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs

Frequently Used Acronyms

MCFD: Ministry of Children and Family Development

CLBC: Community Living BC

MHSD: Ministry of Housing and Social Development

Q1: Why was the Protocol developed?

A1: It was created to address the concern expressed by some families around the need for better cooperation and coordination across all service sectors during the transition period from youth to adulthood (e.g., education, employment, health and social services).

It was also developed to focus on the need for youth with special needs to plan early, and to have information about transition planning and services more accessible and easier to understand.

Q2: What is the Protocol trying to achieve?

A2: The Protocol is intended to:

- promote a collaborative approach to the development of individualized transition plans for youth with special needs
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of government organizations that support youth with special needs as they prepare for and transition to adulthood
- set the stage for sharing information across government organizations to assist with the transition planning process for individual youth and their families and to better anticipate the service and support needs for adults with disabilities

Q3: What is meant by ‘special needs’ and who decides if a youth has a special need?

A3: The definition of youth with special needs was adapted from the cross-ministry Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) Framework for Action. This was done to be consistent with the definition of ‘special needs’ used in B.C.’s strategy

to improve access, quality and coordination of services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

The special needs definition in the Protocol and in the [CYSN Framework for Action](#), focuses on individuals who have significant limitations in age appropriate daily activities and require significant additional supports to enhance or improve his/her health, development, learning, quality of life, participation and community inclusion.

It is important to recognize that this Protocol does not change the eligibility requirements associated with the government programs, services and supports accessed by youth with special needs and their families. It is up to each government organization to determine whether or not the individuals it serves fall within the definition 'special needs' as outlined in the Protocol.

Q4: How was this Protocol developed?

A4: The Protocol was developed within the context of planning for the transfer of children's services from Community Living BC to MCFD. It was a project that was co-lead by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Community Living BC. The Protocol was developed jointly by a working group with representatives from:

- Nine government organizations: the Ministries of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Children and Family Development, Education, Health Services, Housing and Social Development and the Public Safety and Solicitor General; BC Housing; Community Living British Columbia; and the Public Guardian and Trustee
- Three youth/family serving agencies: Family Support Institute, PLEA Community Services Society and Bridges to the Future
- Caring for First Nations Children Society (an organization that develops and delivers professional development programs for child and family services staff employed by First Nations agencies)

Q5: How will this Protocol make a difference in the transition process for my child with special needs?

A5: The Protocol brings together nine government organizations that are committed to working together to support transition planning for youth with special needs throughout B.C. For youth and families, this means that service providers and ministry staff across all sectors now have a clear transition planning process that will guide a collaborative approach to planning for youth transitions to adulthood.

In addition, the Protocol provides the foundation for revising information guides, such as *Your Future Now: A Transition Planning and Resource Guide for Youth with Special Needs and Their Families*, and *Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs: A Community Support Guide* (documents are available on MCFD's

[website](#)), to increase awareness around the need for transition planning and the roles of various organizations. It is anticipated that these materials will be revised and become available in the spring of 2010.

Q6: When should we begin the transition planning process for my child and how can my family participate?

A6: Youth and family members are central to the transition planning process and are supported to actively participate. Planning is a very individualized process and will vary depending on the needs of the youth and his/her family. However, the Protocol outlines the transition planning process for youth with special needs and the key components of this process are:

1. Start by age 14. The process is initiated by the key service provider involved with the child. In many cases, this will be a teacher or worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development who will provide the youth and their family with information about the transition planning process and assist them to identify someone to help the young person plan for the future.
2. Establish a transition planning team comprised of individuals who play a role in the youth's life or who may play a role when the youth becomes an adult.
3. Identify the most appropriate person from the transition planning team to act as the Transition Coordinator. This person facilitates the transition planning process, gathers information to assist in understanding the youth and family's support needs and coordinates the development of a transition plan.
4. Develop the transition plan.
5. Implement the transition plan.
6. Update the transition plan at least once per year by the transition planning team.

The transition planning process described in the Protocol is based on transition planning best practices. For more information on transition planning for youth with special needs, see *Transition Planning for Youth with Special Needs: A Community Support Guide* and *Your Future Now: A Transition Planning and Resource Guide for Youth with Special Needs and Their Families*.

Q7: Why should we begin planning for adulthood by age 14?

A7: Starting early allows time to create a transition plan that will help a youth with special needs face the challenges of becoming an adult and address any potential barriers to achieving their goals, such as finding a job and a place to live.

There is also more time for your child to develop relationships with those who will be able to help them as an adult, and to learn how to go about accessing various government-funded services and supports where needed.

Some youth with special needs and their families may consider beginning the planning process for adulthood earlier than age 14; nevertheless, it is recommended it start no later than age 14.

Q8: My child will have limited access to government-funded services or supports as an adult. Do we still need to do transition planning?

A8: Yes. Transition planning for these youth is equally as important as it can focus on the development of specific skills the youth will need as an adult, and ideally on the development of a network of informal community supports that can assist the young person as an adult. This network may include family, friends, neighbours, social clubs and groups, faith communities and others. The planning process may also explore general government adult supports such as subsidized housing, employment programs and income assistance.

Q9: What can we do if we are not satisfied with the individual transition planning process for my son or daughter?

A9: We suggest you first try to resolve the issue or concern informally with someone who is directly working with you and your son or daughter – this is usually the fastest and easiest way to work things out.

If you have already informally discussed your concerns and you're not satisfied with the response, you may wish to speak to someone who is responsible for managing the services or take advantage of one of the existing government complaint /dispute resolution processes.

The Advocate for Service Quality can assist in situations involving transitioning youth with special needs and their families who could benefit from the intervention of someone working independently of ministries and agencies. The Advocate provides information, support advice and referral services. For more information, please see MHSD's [website](#).

For example, concerns related to a youth's education program can be directed to the board of education. Each board of education has an administrator responsible for special education with whom you may further discuss your child's needs. In addition, each board of education has an appeal process in place. The office of the Superintendent will be able to provide information on the appeal process.

If the concern is related to services provided through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, you can contact the local MCFD office and ask about the complaint resolution process. For more information on MCFD's complaints process, please visit the [website](#).

Q10:How will you know if this Protocol is making a difference?

A10: Plans are underway to evaluate the impact of the Protocol. Evaluating the Protocol will be done by a committee consisting of representatives from the government organizations that have signed this Protocol. There is a commitment to reviewing this Protocol annually for the first three years. This will provide the opportunity to modify the Protocol where needed.

An important part of the evaluation process will include the feedback we've received from individuals (youth), their families, communities, service providers, and government organizations that signed on to the Protocol.

You can find a copy of the [Protocol](#) on the MCFD website.