

Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation

Transition from School to Adult Department of Mental Retardation Services Focus Groups: Themes and Recommendations

*This is a summary report of five regional focus groups conducted
on:*

- ❖ *April 11, 2007 in West Springfield, MA*
- ❖ *April 18, 2007 in Taunton, MA*
- ❖ *April 23, 2007 in Middleton, MA*
- ❖ *April 25, 2007 in Worcester MA*
- ❖ *May 8, 2007 in Waltham, MA*

Transition from School to Adult DMR Services Focus Groups: Themes and Recommendations

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL RETARDATION

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Gary N. Siperstein, Ph.D.
Richard E. Vincent, DC

Staff Member:

Nancy Landry

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Specific commendations to:

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Pat Pakos, ARC Mass
Lou Nissenbaum, Mass. Families Organizing for Change
Betty Ann Ritcey, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Joe Reale, Mass. Rehabilitation Commission
Gwen Gosselin, Mass. Families Organizing for Change

The Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation
Two Boylston St., Fourth Floor
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 988-3200

Transition from School to Adult Department of Mental Retardation Services Transition Focus Groups: Themes and Recommendations

“This transition is not just about services; it is about creating a life for my son.”

Transition is often described as the life changes, adjustments, and cumulative experiences that occur in the lives of young adults as they move from school environments to more independent living and work environments. (Wehman, 2006) In 1994, the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Career Development and Transition developed a definition that is still considered to be relevant today. *“Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services and natural supports within the community.”*

It is widely acknowledged that most young adults are concerned about what they will do after they finish high school. For some, the continuation of their academic experience will flourish in a post secondary educational environment, for many the ability to locate and secure a meaningful job is the key to independence and future economic success. It is essential for these young adults to acquire the necessary vocational skills and abilities to attract industry and business leaders. Unfortunately, many young adults with disabilities leave high school lacking specific vocational skills that lead to employment and anxiety about how to successfully integrate in to the community.

The 2004 Harris Survey on disability trends, commissioned by the National Organization on Disability (NOD, 2004) surveyed people with disabilities and showed that individuals with disabilities are at a key disadvantage compared to other Americans in several key areas of life including:

- Only 35% of people with disabilities reported being employed full time or part time, compared with 78% of those who do not have disabilities;
- People with disabilities remain twice as likely to drop out of high school (21% versus 10%);
- Three times as many people with disabilities live in poverty, with annual household incomes below \$15, 000 (26% vs. 9 %.)

The President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2005) has stated that unemployment rates for working age adults with disabilities have hovered at the 70% level for at least the past 12 years.

These findings dictate that comprehensive training, development and technical assistance is necessary to improve transition outcomes for all youth. Federal and special education legislation have also directed increased attention to improving transition to ensure post school success. Federal Law IDEA (2004) states that transition services must be designed to be within a “results

oriented” process as opposed to the earlier requirement for “outcome-oriented,” signaling a clear intent to ensure the process includes activities designed to produce success for the individual.

Local investment and effective research initiatives are also gaining momentum, however the need for more generalized practices and support is great. System planners now recognize that *life beyond the classroom* requires the development of skills and abilities to navigate the community, the workplace, finances, social relationships and the creation of a home.

Introduction

The Governor’s Commission on Mental Retardation was established in 1993 as part of a final court order issued by Judge Joseph Tauro. The Commission is an independent citizen oversight body consisting of 13 members appointed by the Governor for a term of three years. The Commission was provided with a comprehensive scope and purpose including the ability to provide a forum for the review of public policy in the area of mental retardation as well as analyzing and identifying systemic areas of concern affecting the human service delivery system within Massachusetts. Many stakeholders, including families, individuals with disabilities, professionals, and policy leaders discussed the difficulties of the transition process for young adults with disabilities residing within our Commonwealth and requested that the Commission explore and examine this issue in greater detail.

In response to the overwhelming demand for further research and analysis, the Commission created a subcommittee to focus on transition of youth from school to adult services. The subcommittee included representatives from the Department of Mental Retardation, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Arc Massachusetts, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, Institute for Community Inclusion, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Bureau of Transitional Planning and the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

Our initial discussions focused on the need for examination of data, identification of system impediments and barriers as well as the need to disseminate and replicate exemplary services and successful transition programs and projects. In addition, the Department of Mental Retardation cited the need for the creation of a brochure or guide that could assist families with the transition process as well as the need to highlight and broadcast exemplary practices that were occurring within various DMR area offices. These practices would be compiled into manual/guidelines for professional staff at the local level to further enhance partnerships with families.

In order to accomplish these tasks, the Governor’s Commission on Mental Retardation in collaboration with the Department of Mental Retardation, Arc Massachusetts & Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change sponsored five regional focus groups on the transition from high school to adult DMR services. The purpose of these focus groups was to solicit information and feedback from families, advocates, individuals with disabilities and professionals to improve the transition process for young adults.

These focus groups were conducted in West Springfield, Worcester, Taunton, Middleton and Metro Boston during the months of April and May 2007.

Findings

We heard from approximately 275 stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth. The format for each focus group session was identical so that data could be analyzed and compared. An effort was made by each region to invite a representative sample of the total population. Families with children between the ages of 14 and 22 were invited as well as those families that completed their transition to adult services. Each DMR regional director welcomed audience members and operations staff from DMR central office provided a context for the evening as well as a brief overview of the turning-twenty two process (Chapter 688) according to Massachusetts law. The next presenters (s) were family members who reflected on their personal experiences with their sons or daughters during the transition process. These presentations were quite moving and provided some candid insight and reflection from the perspective of parents and siblings regarding the specifics of the transition experience. The remainder of the session was geared towards soliciting responses and feedback from audience members through a series of directed questions. (See appendix A) In addition, a voluntary survey was distributed to all participants to solicit additional data from those families who have difficulty speaking publicly or to assist those audience members who wanted to provide additional information beyond the allotted time. (See appendix B.)

The subcommittee wishes to commend and acknowledge those families who spoke so eloquently and compassionately about their family member and the supports needed to ensure success. Many families clearly wanted to relay their frustrations and anxieties, share their successes and provide suggestions on how to improve and enhance the transition planning process.

The following summary highlights the key findings, system impediments and recommendations for enhancing transition planning. It is interesting to note that these sessions were organized according to the DMR regional structure; however the findings were almost universal and consistent regardless of geographic locale.

Provide Timely & Comprehensive Information

The most common theme expressed by parents and other key participants was the need for *more information* about the transition process starting at an earlier age (14-16.) Most families were aware of the Individualized Educational Planning process orchestrated by their local school, however they had minimal understanding of the Individualized Transition Plan and how that process should be completed. Families were unaware of critical timeframes, important linkages, and essential components of transition planning. Several families indicated they were “*unaware of what they did not know and lacked basic information about what questions to ask.*” Many families did not grasp the critical distinction between the entitlement system operated by the Department of Education and the non-entitlement system of the adult service delivery system. Families indicated that due to the complexity of navigating the various state systems coupled with the anxiety of transition and future planning for their sons and daughters, they need to be consistently reminded of critical time lines and transition requirements.

Families expressed frustration about the lack of information about finances and resource allocations in a timely fashion. Many families are working diligently with their family members to develop a vision for the “ideal future adult life” and wanted to know the reality of the financial implications of their vision and direction. DMR staff acknowledged that the “unpredictability” of definitive fiscal allocations can be both frustrating and difficult for many families. Due to the current legislatively mandated budget process, state agencies do not know their final budget

allocations until after the budget is signed off by the Governor. This process begins in January and is usually completed by the end of the fiscal year, June 30. The budget process begins with a document called House 1 prepared by the Governor. This fiscal blueprint is reviewed, debated and revised by both branches of the Massachusetts legislative body, the House and Senate. State agencies are not permitted to provide final guaranteed fiscal allocations until the budget is finalized. Therefore, many families whose sons and daughters turn 22 at the beginning of the fiscal year wait anxiously on “pins and needles” until the final allocations can be approved and released.

DMR also clarified the prioritization process regarding fiscal allocations and informed families of the need to serve those constituents who are homeless or in the care and protection of DSS as first priority. Young adults who are living in residential schools must get placed as a second priority which often leaves little funding for those families who have sons and daughters living at home. Families indicated that this priority structure as well as the lack of sufficient resources to serve all in need, often leaves little room for individualized support options. Families expressed concern that they often felt “*in the dark*” regarding financial allocations and state mandated obligations. Families appreciated knowing the realities of the legislative process, the budget timeframes and the allocation of resources attributed to each DMR region. Families indicated that it is both instructive and important to delineate and clarify the role of the DMR Area Director as the final authority in fiscal decisions. Many families indicated that they thought their case manager/adult coordinator was the final authority for all programmatic and fiscal decisions and strongly encouraged DMR to differentiate the various roles and responsibilities of staff.

Families expressed a strong interest in developing partnerships with human service agencies to assist in addressing the “fiscal realities” associated with developing appropriate service options.

Families indicated that DMR and other agency partners should provide information on a regular basis about available service options post 22 as well as key personnel and contact information. Families expressed concern about the lack of available options tailored to meet the needs of those individuals with complex and severe medical concerns and urged system planners to become more aware of the increasing numbers of young adults who need transition plans that fall “outside the box.”

Technological advances and modern medicines have improved the life expectancy for many individuals with severe challenges and systems need to adapt and adjust to meet these complex needs. Families indicated that early planning is essential for those consumers that fall into this category.

Families indicated that information should be translated and available in several languages so that families who are from diverse constituencies are able to learn about transition planning in a timely and effective manner. Many community-based multi-cultural organizations were developed in order to address the needs of diverse communities. Several families indicated that the state needs to encourage and support greater networking among and between these organizations and the state entities as a way to increase the availability of information for consumers in their “native language.” This is a way to provide information to state social workers and case managers on the unique needs and issues associated with individuals from diverse communities.

The majority of families appreciated the opportunity to share their frustrations and concerns in an open public forum and encouraged system planners to conduct more of these sessions on a regular basis.

Acknowledge Parental Attitudes & Concerns

The second most common thread throughout these forums was the candid acknowledgement from families that they are frustrated, anxious, scared and overwhelmed by the transition process. Many families have felt comfortable in working with teachers and other educational specialists in crafting academic goals for their sons and daughters, however they are “quite fearful” of what will happen when their son and daughter leaves the protective walls of the educational institution to live as a productive adult in society. Families expressed dismay at the often times negative discussions from adult service personnel about the “realities of a non-entitlement system” and the reality that programming in the adult sector is not a “guaranteed right.” Families appreciated the candor expressed by adult agency personnel; however felt that a dose of compassion, understanding and atmosphere of collegiality would work better to ensure a positive result. Families want to be informed of the realities of the system impediments and structures; however they want to feel that all parties are working together towards a common goal. Successful transition planning mandates the establishment of a true partnership between the school, adult service system, family, individual with disabilities and generic community resources.

Families also expressed concern about working with a multitude of support personnel to develop a meaningful transition plan. Families indicated that they have spent countless hours developing relationships with children’s case managers in terms of crafting appropriate supports and services that are unique to their families needs. During the transition process a family often has to work with a new liaison, a Chapter 766 transition coordinator to help process the ITP and the transition phase. This requires a family to educate and inform a “new person” about the needs and desires of their son and daughter to successfully manage in the community as an adult. Once a family is confirmed eligible and accepted into the DMR service delivery system, families are once again instructed and assigned to work with a “new service coordinator.” Families indicated that this process of reacquainting and educating personnel is quite cumbersome, labor intensive and can result in difficult interactions and planning discussions. Families indicated that they have often built up quite positive relationships with children and transition workers in crafting an effective adult option and are not happy nor do they feel it is productive to begin these discussions with a new adult service coordinator after months if not years of active planning with their previous support personnel. Families are not aware of the intermediary role of the transition coordinator and indicated that this fact should be explained early in the process so that families will know they have to “transition to another case worker” as the process unfolds.

Create Meaningful Partnerships

Families acknowledged that although the school system is the “legislatively mandated” initiator of the transition process, the entire spectrum of *community* must be involved. Transition is not exclusively a school-driven experience, nor is it an array of post school vocational choices. In order to craft an individualized plan for each young adult that is tailored to his or her unique needs, public schools, community colleges, universities, adult services programs, social security, vocational rehabilitation, and businesses located in the community must be invited to participate and feel a sense of responsibility for what happens to students with disabilities. Current literature and research have coined the phrase “principles of shared responsibility” for describing the

necessity of all parties involved in transition planning to adhere to a consistent set of guiding practices. Many families expressed frustration at the lack of participation from key partners as they tried to develop future transition planning. Families stressed that there has to be better collaboration between the school systems and DMR. Many felt that educators are unaware of the options available for adults as they leave the high school setting. Several families suggested that ongoing in-service programs be developed for educational personnel about DMR and transition planning and interagency training initiatives be established across the Commonwealth to strengthen these relationships. Families also requested time to visit and preview the available options currently operating in the community, meet with prospective vendor staff and review program models to see if these are compatible with the transition plans being developed.

Professionals expressed frustration and acknowledged that often their large case loads prevent active interactions with all families during the introductory years of transition discussions which many families are encouraged to initiate as early as 14 or 15 years old. DMR and other large human service agencies often can not begin to constructively plan and work with families until two years prior to the graduation of a young adult from high school. Families however were encouraged to remain diligent in working with other community partners in crafting and developing a vision and future adult life for their family member.

DMR and other professionals acknowledged that despite the constant demands of increasing case loads and resource constraints, they remain totally committed and focused on obtaining the best possible services and supports for each young adult to prosper and grow in the community. DMR professionals clearly indicated and operate on the premise that the development of a true partnership is the cornerstone for a solid foundation in developing a long term effective transition plan and outcome. It is interesting to note that several families encouraged other parents to be open and flexible as the transition process unfolds as they found that unique opportunities have been crafted during a more trusting and collegial environment.

DOE professionals acknowledged that often turnover is quite problematic within the special education departments and this disruption in the continuity of contacts within a respective school may hinder a smooth transition process. The onus is on families to remain a vigilant advocate for their son and daughter throughout the entire educational and post secondary experience. Several DOE professionals and families commented on the need for a transition specialist (*within each high school*) to serve as a critical linchpin in the development of a comprehensive transition plan and work collaboratively with the adult agency transition coordinators. These specialists would be a useful addition to a team as they craft future transition plans as they would be well educated and trained in best practices, available alternative curriculum options, resource and technical advisors for classroom teachers and knowledgeable about federal and state transition requirements.

Initiate Secondary Curriculum Reform

Transition into adulthood for all youth with disabilities should be viewed as a right and the goal of education should be to prepare students with disabilities to live and to work in their communities. Federal and local legislative directives are now mandating that transition planning be incorporated into all academic curriculums and increased attention will be devoted to monitoring and assessing their compliance. Families indicated a need for the school systems to alter their curriculum to include functional skills training that reflects those skills required for success in business and industry. Many families shared positive stories of successful “work placements” that occurred during the senior year of a young individual that contributed to their success as they left the high

school environment. Several families commented on the need of the adult human service agencies to share information about successful ‘bridge programs’ and transition options that are working successfully in the Commonwealth. There are many resources and interventions such as mentor programs, career awareness seminars, self-advocacy training, and experience-based education that are successfully utilized and can be modeled and duplicated across the state. Families requested that information on these types of programs be widely distributed and reproduced.

Create additional opportunities for education and technical assistance

The majority of forum participants were pleased to see the establishment of this type of forum and dialogue; however they encouraged all system planners to develop ongoing methods for continual and timely education and technical assistance. Families indicated that additional electronic information would be an asset. Families recommended that DMR create additional linkages on their web page for updates and announcements about the transition process.

Families indicated that a question and answer sheet would be helpful as new families start to approach the transition years. Families enthusiastically supported the idea and concept regarding the development of a manual for area office staff highlighting exemplary practices as well as the development of a brochure for families.

Families applauded the Governor’s Commission on Mental Retardation and other stakeholders for conducting this type of forum and encouraged that this practice continue on a regular basis.

Recommendations

The Governor’s Commission on Mental Retardation subcommittee on transition would like to commend the many families, advocates, professionals, and interested citizens for sharing their concerns, heartfelt stories, criticisms and compliments in an open and public forum. There were many very special moments in these forums; times of joy and times of sorrow as people candidly spoke about the issue of transition. Subcommittee members were genuinely “touched” and learned many important facts and points of concern and are committed to improving the process for all. We especially want to thank Larry Tummino, DMR Assistant Commissioner Field Operations and Victor Hernandez, DMR Chapter 688 Coordinator for their consistent support and effort in orchestrating these venues with the various DMR Regional staff in such a professional and timely manner. We would like to acknowledge Commissioner Morrissey for his unwavering and steadfast support of individuals with disabilities and families.

Given the complexity of the issues presented and the numerous responses gathered from forum participants, it is impossible to include all the recommendations and strategies suggested, however the following is a brief summary of the recommendations that will be reviewed by the subcommittee in the immediate future. These preliminary results as well as final activities will be shared with the Governor and the Secretary of EOHHS for ongoing discussion.

The initial recommendations include:

- Families entering the transition process should have access to additional information that includes critical timelines, essential contacts, and a summary of the key stages of transition planning.

- Increase collaboration between the school personnel and adult agency personnel regarding transition. Interagency training and orientation programs should be increased to expand the knowledge base of each structure.
- Transition specialists should be employed at local high schools to provide technical assistance to teachers and serve as a resource for families as they navigate the transition process.
- Families should receive written information on available service options post high school and opportunities should be made available for families to visit a variety of placement options prior to graduation or termination of special education services.
- Transition planning needs to occur earlier for individuals with disabilities; the Commonwealth needs to reinforce the concept of early and comprehensive planning begins in the middle and early high school years. (ages 14-16)
- Curriculum reform needs to begin regarding “bridging real work” opportunities and skill acquisition in high school.
- Education professionals as well as families should support young adults so they can be the “lead developers” in crafting future alternative options. The concept of early “self-determination” initiatives should be included in all curriculum reform.
- Dissemination of technical assistance materials and guides need to occur regularly and the format should be made available to diverse populations.
- Development of consistent orientation materials for all DMR area offices to distribute to families.
- Renewed sensitivity awareness and ongoing training for both professionals and families to alleviate the anxiety and stress associated with transition.
- Increase networking opportunities for families. (Families who have been through transition can comfort those who are entering the process.)
- Increase networking and translation services for individuals from diverse communities. Expand connections with multi-cultural organizations across the Commonwealth to provide information on transition.
- Produce written materials in various languages and increase availability of interpreters to explain the various processes, timelines and procedures.
- Provide additional information through various media outlets, including the internet, public broadcast television and radio.
- Explore/pilot an effort to restructure the role of the adult “transition specialist/adult coordinator” so that families do not have to transition as frequently between case managers.
- Highlight and broadcast “best practices” regarding transition programs and opportunities so that families/individuals can examine many options. Conduct an annual conference to commend and showcase those programs deemed “exemplary.”
- Create budget/fiscal remedies to alleviate the anxiety of families whose sons and daughters turn 22 in July/August. Explore the availability of securing a two year budget cycle for Chapter 688 (within the adult agency line items) so that families are provided with finalized fiscal allocations.
- Expand opportunities for families, professionals, individuals with disabilities, advocates and concerned citizens to provide public opinion and commentary.

- Create the opportunity for ongoing dialogue between the DMR and the DOE regarding these findings and recommendations. Convene a special task force sanctioned by the Executive office to look into the issues of transition.

The Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation will continue to work with all stakeholders to implement those strategies that will make significant improvements on the system of service delivery and work to eliminate existing barriers and impediments. The Commission recommends the inclusion of personnel from the state Department of Education in future subcommittee work to ensure greater collaboration and strengthening of the transition process. The Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation stands ready to work with executive staff, agency staff and policy leaders within our great Commonwealth to ensure a smooth process of transition for all families and implement a system that is recognized as a national model of excellence.

Appendix A

Regional Transition Focus Group Protocol

Regional Transition Focus Group Protocol

April, 2007

Purpose:

The Department of Mental Retardation is conducting five statewide Regional Transition Focus Groups. The purpose of the meetings is to hear about experiences people are having related to the transition of students with disabilities who are preparing for and entering into adult life. The information gathered will be used to improve transition outcomes for students.

1. *For those families that have already gone through the transition process:*
What information about the DMR transition process was most helpful to you?
 - 1a) When is the best time to receive the information?
 - 1b) What information do you wish you had received?

2. Parents and families should be included in all stages of the transition process. Was there anything in particular that made it difficult for you to participate in the transition process?

3. *For the professionals who are here this evening:* What makes it difficult to participate in effective transition planning and service delivery?

4. Please describe the communication, collaboration, and resource sharing regarding transition between DMR, other adult agencies, and the educational systems in your area?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to share that would improve the transition process and service delivery?

We are going to be reviewing the findings from these forums in order to improve the system and develop some products that will assist professionals and families.

Appendix B

Transition Survey

TRANSITION SURVEY:

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT DMR SERVICES

April/May 2007

The purpose of this survey is to identify what is and is not working with the transition process and services for youth, families, and professionals. This information will be used to improve the system and develop materials that will assist professionals, students, and families.

Please complete the survey by answering the following questions.

The first set of questions relate to demographic information.

1. What is the current age of your child that will be/or has already participated in transition?

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 24+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable | | |

2. Has your son/daughter been found eligible for DMR services?

- Yes No Not applicable

3. Which DMR Area Office is your family assigned to?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Berkshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Lowell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Franklin/Hampshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Merrimack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holyoke/Chicopee | <input type="checkbox"/> Metro North |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worcester | <input type="checkbox"/> Central Middlesex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> North Central | <input type="checkbox"/> North Shore |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Springfield/ Westfield | <input type="checkbox"/> Brockton |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Valley Area/Southbridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Fall River |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Valley Area/Milford | <input type="checkbox"/> New Bedford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Boston | <input type="checkbox"/> Plymouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charles River West | <input type="checkbox"/> Cape Cod/Islands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newton/South Norfolk | <input type="checkbox"/> South Coastal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middlesex West | <input type="checkbox"/> Taunton/Attleboro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |

4. What type of school program best describes your child's current placement?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substantially separate public school | <input type="checkbox"/> Education collaborative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resource room in public school | <input type="checkbox"/> Residential school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive general education classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

5. Does your child currently participate in any after school or recreational weekend activities/programs that are sponsored by any not-for profit agencies?

 Yes No

If yes, how many hours per week does your child participate in after school or weekend activities sponsored by non-for profit agencies?

The next set of questions relate to the transition process from school age to adult services.

6. At what age did your child begin the transition process with DMR?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 | |

7. What information should be provided to family's if/when they are found eligible for adult services through DMR and assigned to a DMR area office? (Please check all that apply.)

- Timely information about the transition process for families
- Chapter 688 and the Individual Transition Plan
- Timely information about service options for students age 14-22
- Information about available service options post 22 or at age of graduation
- A list of the key personnel across human service agencies with their contact information
- Agency participation in transition planning meetings
- Benefits planning information (e.g., SSI, work-incentives)
- Description of DMR service models
- Family Support and Guardianship assistance
- Financial information about costs and services
- Frequently asked questions/answers about transition to DMR
- Role of Transition Coordinator for DMR
- Names/contacts of other families who have participated in the transition process
- Names/contacts of self-advocates who have successfully transitioned into adult services
- Other _____

8. What difficulties have families faced to actively participate in effective transition planning and service delivery? (Please check all that apply.)

- Lack of timely information about the transition process for families
- Lack of timely information about service options for students age 14-22+
- Insufficient information regarding appropriate key contacts across the various human resource agencies
- Lack of agency participation in transition planning meetings
- Insufficient information regarding benefits planning (e.g., SSI, work-incentives)
- Insufficient financial information regarding services and supports
- Not applicable
- ★ther _____

✚\ What has made it difficult for professionals to participate in effective transition planning and service delivery? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- Insufficient training and professional development (e.g. requirements in the IDEA law, benefits planning, adult service options)
- Flexible funding options
- Insufficient inter-agency (human service and educational) contact information regarding personnel involved in transition planning
- Lack of inter-agency participation in transition planning meetings, resource sharing and service delivery
- Insufficient knowledge of alternative placement options
- Insufficient time to adequately plan
- Not applicable
- Other _____

10. If you could change the transition process, what element would you change?

- Ensure timely notification (age 14 or younger if appropriate) of the transition planning process for students with disabilities, across all relevant agencies (e.g., K-12, DMR, MRC, DPH, DMH)
- Be assured that the services and supports that will be provided are based on student/child's future (post-school) goals, needs, and preference
- More and earlier collaboration and resource sharing with school district and other adult service agencies
- Timely information about the transition process and service options for families and professionals
- Participation of adult agencies in transition planning meetings
- Assistance with benefits planning (e.g., SSI)
- Provision of long-term employment supports in competitive or supported employment
- Provision of more inclusive post-school options and related supports (e.g., social, postsecondary education, community living)
- All of the above
- Other _____

11. What proactive way could families provide assistance to the Department in improving the transition planning process in your area?

- Sit on DMR advisory board
- Ensure that a Chapter 688 referral is made at age 18 during transition planning meetings
- Start a Transition Parent-to-Parent group
- Other _____

12. If your family has participated in transition planning and has entered the adult service system, what components were most helpful?

- Communication among school, agencies and families
- Process began between the ages of 18-22
- Information on the transition process
- Information on the service options
- Not applicable
- Other _____

13. What are the most important services you would most like to have from DMR? Please rank order from 1-3 your top 3 services. (select #1 as the most important, #2 second, #3 third priority).

- Long-term job supports in competitive employment
- Social recreational activities
- Residential supports in an apartment or condominium
- Community living
- Family support
- Respite care
- Transportation
- Not applicable
- ★ther _____

14. What do/did you hope the DMR transition process and services would/will be like? Please describe what you envision.

15. What final suggestions do you have for the key stakeholders who are working to improve the DMR transition process?

Thank You for Completing this Survey!
Please mail completed surveys to:
Nancy Landry
Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation
Two Boylston Street
Boston Ma 02116

