Planning for Transition Assessment

A Guide for Multi-Agency Teams

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Introduction

Planning for Transition Assessment is a guide for multi-agency teams to use in planning transition assessment with individual youth and families. The systematic transition assessment process outlined in this guide provides a step-by-step approach to defining and focusing both initial and ongoing transition assessment.

Planning for Transition Assessment describes the role of transition assessment within the larger context of transition planning. The guide includes templates and discussion prompts for each of the 5 steps in this team-based process.

What **is Planning** for Transition Assessment?

Planning for transition assessment is a structured process for conducting transition assessment. Working through this process results in the team having a detailed, coordinated plan to guide all aspects of gathering transition assessment data and information.

What is novel about actually planning before conducting transition assessment is that a multi-agency team:

- Crafts questions that guide the choices for transition assessment tools and methods
- Creates a plan to collaboratively gather transition assessment data to address the questions
- Coordinates to implement the plan for gathering, analyzing and summarizing the transition assessment data

Following this process makes it possible for the team to develop of a multi-agency, multi-year transition. plan. Such a plan provides clarity to the youth's path forward in the transition from school to adult life.

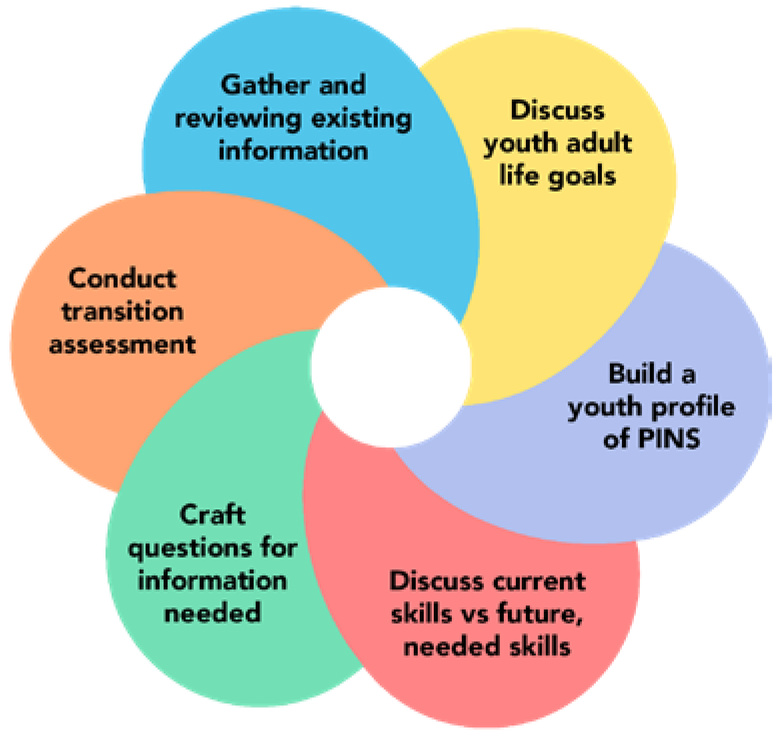

Figure 1. Transition Assessment Planning is an Ongoing Cycle of:

- *Gathering existing information*
- *Discussing the youth's adult life goals,*
- *Building a profile of the youth PINS (Preferences, interests, needs and strengths)*
- *Discuss the youth's current skills vs. the needed skills for adult life*
- *Crafting question to pinpoint information and data needed by the team*
- *Conducting, analyzing and summarizing transition assessment*

“Transition Assessment is defined as an ongoing process of collecting data on the individual’s needs, preferences and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living and personal and social environment’s – “

The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children

What is the Purpose of Planning for Transition Assessment?

The purpose for transition assessment planning is to ensure that enough of the right kind of data and information is generated. The transition assessment information that results from a planful approach to transition assessment allows the youth, family and team to make thoughtful and informed decisions about future life goals. Transition assessment, planned and implemented by a multi-agency team, is the common thread that connects all the components of a youth’s plan for transition, within school and with agency partners into adulthood. The corresponding person-centered transition plan affords the youth and family the details and information necessary to know what the next steps are up to and beyond high school graduation.

Key features of the planning for transition assessment process are that a team:

- Creates and utilizes a profile of the youth’s PINS (Preferences, Interests, Needs, Skills)
- Crafts questions to guide transition assessment
- Pinpoints the unique and specific assessment information needed

The questions crafted by the team are essential to organize the transition assessment process. The questions provide direction and purpose to transition assessment. The questions specify gathering data and information that are meaningful for building a comprehensive transition plan that lays out, over time, the youth’s path to adult life.

The data and information gathered through transition assessment is the foundation for a comprehensive, individualized transition plan. Without this foundation, transition plans are fragmented, vague, and ineffective at providing a clear path for the youth to follow as he/she moves from the role of student to the role of adult. It is likely that over time team members will change. When a plan for transition assessment exists, it provides a built-in way to orient and update new team members.

Transition assessment is a structured, coordinated effort to collect data on students’ strengths, needs, preferences, and interests related to their postsecondary goals (Sitlington). Transition assessment connects data and information to the multi-agency plans the team makes for the youth to achieve his/her adult life goals. The multi-agency team is the gateway to ensuring eligible youth are connected to agency services in a timely manner. Youth who leave school without connections to agency partners experience delays to getting services. It takes time to go through each agency’s referral, intake, assessment and eligibility procedures separately. Adult service agencies then have to start from scratch to get to know the youth and their adult life goals.

Why Plan with a Multi-Agency Team?

Schools and agencies have overlapping responsibility to serve and engage with transition youth. It is time and resource efficient for schools and agencies to collaboratively fulfill these activities rather than for the school and then each agency to attend to them separately. Many youth with disabilities may be eligible to receive services from one or more agencies while in school and into adulthood. Representatives from these agencies can be members of the youth’s multi-agency team. Agencies such as Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD) may have services to offer youth still in school. Each community may have additional agencies, community organizations or non-profit entities that are important to include. Youth may already be receiving services from agencies that should also be included, such as foster care, transportation, adult tutoring or mental health services, to name a few.

It is never too early or too late to begin planning for the transition the youth will make to adult life. 'Transition' is a life-long process for all of us.

Multi-agency teams also experience incidental learning from each other and about the other agencies. When agency partners explain and enact agency-specific protocols while the team is together, each person gets a better understanding of the intricacies and requirements of each agency. Better understanding facilitates the development of a multi-year transition plan designed to coordinate the services and actions provided by various agencies within a single plan.

It is never too early or too late to begin planning for the transition the youth will make to adult life. 'Transition' is a life-long process for all of us. Ideally, transition planning begins while youth are in school, by age 14. A multi-agency team is the vehicle to consolidate transition assessment, ultimately resulting in a seamless plan for transition that avoids duplicating efforts across agencies.

Planning with a Multi-Agency is Not Extra… Just a Different Way

It may seem that using a multi-agency team to plan for transition assessment means 'one more meeting' and 'one more thing to do'. Well, yes, and no. Planning with a multi-agency team does represent a new practice for transition assessment. However, it is not something 'extra'; rather, it is a different way to address each agency's intersecting requirements for transition assessment and data collection during the transition years.

Once the members of a multi-agency team get to know each other, and become familiar with this process, ongoing communication and planning is easier. Questions can be answered, information can be shared, issues problem solved and additional separate meetings avoided. With a little practice, the steps in this process become an 'automatic' way for the team to think about transition assessment and other types of agency data gathering processes that occur during the transition years.

What Tests are Recommended for Transition Assessment?

Transition Assessment is *not* a test, a set of tests or a protocol of tests administered to all youth during pre-set time periods or at certain grade levels. Transition Assessment *is* an ongoing process, continually implemented and individually tailored to a youth and his/her plans for adult life. Transition Assessment IS a gathering of information through the use of various methods, tools and processes identified by the team as useful for the specific youth. Assessment tools and strategies are chosen because they will yield information to answer specific questions about that youth's preferences, interests, needs and skills (PINS) in relation to the youth's desired adult life goals.

Transition assessment provides the team with the foundation necessary for developing a multi-year collaborative transition plan that provides the youth with the instruction, experiences, activities, agency linkages, etc. to close any gap, refine or revise plans.

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A Multi-Agency Youth Transition Planning Team:
Advantages and Opportunities

Youth and Family have opportunity to:

- Directly ask questions and gain clarity about proposed activities and services offered by a variety of entities
- Actively participate in all aspects of transition assessment
- Add, as an equal partner, their viewpoints to the transition assessment planning process
- Use the transition assessment data to make informed decisions and choices
- Get to know a contact person for each agency on the team

Agencies Can:

- Explain agency procedures and services
- Directly answer questions to clarify agency-specific procedures, services, timelines, etc.
- Make connection to the right person in their agency to initiate an impending action or procedure
- Add an 'adult life' perspective viewpoint

The Team Collectively:

- Coordinates transition assessment and transition planning activities before and beyond graduation from high school
- Has transition assessment information to begin agency-specific requirements for referral, intake and eligibility, when appropriate
- experiences a reduction in the duplication of actions and activities across agencies by using the same transition assessment information and meetings to complete agency-specific requirements and procedures
- Improves and streamlines ongoing communication, building relationships across agencies

Educators Can:

- Provide background information about the youth
- Talk about interventions and strategies that have and have not been effective
- Answer questions about transition-related school experiences
- Describe the youth's learning styles
- Discuss any challenges the youth experiences in specific environments, sensory, motor or behavioral concerns

Build Your Team

Use the below set of questions as a checklist to identify potential multi-agency team members to contribute transition assessment information about the student's PINS or adult life goals.

Student

- Let's ensure the student is the focus of our multi-agency team. Have we conducted interviews, observations, formal and informal assessments, or provided opportunities for experiences?
- How has the student described their own preferences, interests, skills/strengths, and needs?

School Team Members

- What general educators teach or support the student?
- What special educators or intervention specialists support the student?
- What paraprofessionals or other school staff support the student?
- What related service providers support the student?
- What nurse or school medical staff support the student?
- What extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, or volunteer opportunities does (or did) the student participate in during school? Are there advisors or support staff for these activities that may know the student?
- Has the student participated in any vocational training programs or opportunities? Are there instructors, job coaches, or other school staff associated with these opportunities that may know the student?

The Family

- How have we included the family voice in this conversation? Does the student's caregivers extend beyond their parents?
- Are there other caregivers, family members, or natural supports the youth or family would like as part of the team?
- Are there siblings who support or advocate for the student?

Agency Partners

- Is the youth eligible for or already connected with the local County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD)?
- Is the youth eligible for or already connected with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)?
- Is the youth already working in the community? Where are they working and who supports them?
- Is the youth connected with a mental health professional either within the school or externally?
- Is the youth receiving any behavioral support assistance from a local professional or organization?
- Is the youth connected with recreational, club programs, or summer camps outside of the school?
- Is the youth participating in a faith-based organization?
- Does the youth volunteer with or receive mentorship from anyone or an organization?
- Is the youth receiving any wraparound, case coordination, or other family supports?
- Is the youth in foster care or involved in the juvenile justice system?

Who is Your Team?

Name	Agency	Role/Position	Email	Phone

- **The primary purpose of transition assessment is to provide the team with data and information useful for:**
  - Developing adult life goals
  - Begin and continue transition planning
  - Refining the transition plan as needed
  - Describing any gap or mismatch, with data, between the youth's current skills and skills needed for the future.

How Should Teams Approach Planning for Transition Assessment?

Meaningful planning requires a process. This guide includes templates to assist the team in engaging in a 5 Step transition assessment planning discussion process. With a little practice, a team will automatically begin to think through these steps. While the steps are listed here in a linear fashion, discussion does not typically unfold in this way. There is guidance and instructions and a planning template with discussion prompts for each step, making it convenient for the team to keep track of important information as it naturally comes up during discussion.

The templates provide a structure for each discussion, and places to keep track of information that comes up 'out of order' until the team can discuss it more fully. The transition planning process is designed to address five basic questions:

- **Question One: Adult Life Goals**
  What are the Youth's Plans?
- **Question Two: Youth Profile**
  What are the Youth's Preferences, Interests, Needs and Skills? (PINS)
- **Question Three: Right 'Fit'**
  How well aligned are the youth's *current* skills to the set of skills needed in the FUTURE?
- **Question Four: Unanswered Questions**
  What other or additional information does the team need to know?
- **Question Five: Assessment Plan**
  What assessment tools, methods, strategies will be used to address the assessment questions?

Before convening a team meeting, review the transition assessment planning steps in this document. This will prepare the team members to capture important information as it comes up in discussion that might be more relevant to another step later (or earlier) in the process.

Transition Assessment is *not* a test, as set of tests or a protocol of tests administered to all youth during pre-set times or at certain grade levels

How is Transition Assessment incorporated into a Transition Plan?

People working with youth in transition often refer to a 'transition plan.' But what does it look like? Where is a transition plan found? Some information useful for planning transition is embedded in official agency documents such as the IEP (Individualized Education Program), ISP (Individual Service Plan) and IPE (Individual Plan for Employment). Official documents, by design, include only information required by the agency, including services that agency will provide. An agency plan, by itself, does not serve as a comprehensive plan that describes how the youth will transition to adult life. Many agency documents are written to reflect annual events or a limited time span. Progress over a longer time span is often difficult to track. Each agency's document details that agency's commitment to interacting with the youth. A plan that pulls together each team member's commitment to the youth's transition provides a cohesive and authentic plan that the youth, family and professionals can follow.

When teams use a single, common planning process each agency can access the information they need for agency documentation. Since each team member has also benefited from participating in the transition assessment planning process they are primed to initiate transition planning. A comprehensive, cohesive transition plan can be developed using a Backwards Planning process. Transition assessment and backwards planning are designed to go hand-in-hand. As transition assessment data and information is available and analyzed it is used as a foundation for backwards planning. A brief description of the Backwards Planning process and planning template are included in this document. More information and tools for Backwards planning can be found on the Employment First website at the Transition Planning tab. Go to: https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav_id=451

Bringing together a multi-agency team for transition assessment and planning

Prior to beginning transition assessment planning, identify members for a multi-agency team for the youth. This team always includes the youth and family. Other team members should include the professionals and others who are now, or may be in the future, connected to supporting the youth in the transition to adult life.

Transition assessment planning is an informal process and is effective when those who know the youth come together as a team.

Startup activities before beginning to plan for transition assessment:

- Identify members for a youth's multi-agency team
- Gather together existing information about a youth from multiple sources, including the youth and family

Not sure where to start? Here are some questions to ask:

- **Is the youth still in school?**
  Consider teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals and other educators
- **Is the youth currently receiving services from an agency?**
  Talk with the youth and family about other agencies from which the youth is receiving services. Some examples: County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD), Mental Health, Medical professionals, and others
- **Is the youth age 14?**
  Youth with disabilities are presumed eligible to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) beginning at age 14. Contact the local OOD office for counselors in your area to invite them to the youth's team

A multi-agency team adds value to the transition assessment planning process. Each person offers a perspective about the youth from their vantage point – as a family member, adult agency partner, educator, therapist and most importantly, the youth. Each person has a unique relationship with the youth and the opportunity to see him/her in a variety of environments. This results in a richer and more comprehensive youth profile that informs the path to adult life.

The sections that follow for each step in the transition planning process have a consistent format:

- Guidance and directions for discussion at this step
- A template to use during planning meetings for summarizing the team's discussion

The templates in this document are to guide and document team discussions and planning and are not just forms to fill out. Download the document and save it to your device/computer. The templates are fillable.

Use the template on the next page for Step 1. The template guides the team through the transition planning process.

Question One: Adult Life Goals

What are the Youth's Plans?

Guidance and Directions

Gather together current (within the previous calendar year) existing information about the youth from a variety of sources, such as schools, agencies, the family and the youth:

Formal - reports and documents from the school and agency partners, classroom data, reports from other teachers and therapists, job coaches and other providers

Informal - classroom observations, conversations and interviews with the youth and family, interest inventories, observations in community and work environment

This first discussion in the transition assessment planning process leads the team toward developing a shared understanding of the youth's plans for the future through three viewpoints:

1) Youth's viewpoint

2) Collective Team knowledge viewpoint

3) Career Development viewpoint

What are the Youth's Plans? (Youth's viewpoint)

Planning for Transition Assessment starts at the 'end' – with a discussion about youth's plans for adult life. The youth's plans have bearing on the knowledge, skills, independence, mobility, sensory tolerance, etc. that he/she will need. This question is addressed time and again. Question one is the touchstone that aligns all other components of a transition plan. The adult life goals the youth wishes to pursue is the consistent 'measuring stick' for progress. PINS necessary for the youth to assume the roles and responsibilities of adult life are the point of reference for all discussions and actions regarding transition assessment and transition planning.

What skills and knowledge are needed to achieve the youth's adult life goals? (Collective team knowledge viewpoint)

The team pools their knowledge about the skills and resources all people need to achieve plans like those of the youth. The team may know a little and need to add to their knowledge of the youth's particular adult life goals. The information and questions the team pulls together here begins the process of identifying areas for transition assessment. The adult expectations required of the youth's desired adult life goals are the 'standard' against which the team can determine skills the youth needs to gain as well as gaps or disconnects with the youth's current skill set.

Where is the youth on a career development continuum? (Career development viewpoint)

Career development is a life-long process for all people. In Ohio, the career development process is called the Career Connections Framework. The Framework includes a continuum of three Stages: Career Awareness, Career Exploration and Career Planning. By high school, youth are expected to be at the stage of Career Planning. Lots of youth may not be at that stage yet, indicating that they need additional exposure to careers and the world of work (Career Awareness and Exploration) in order to meaningfully participate in the Transition Assessment and Transition Planning processes.

This does not mean that the team 'suspends' any planning while the youth gains career development opportunities and experiences. It does mean that the team ensures career development is provided within the planning for transition assessment and transition planning. Career Connection resources are available at:

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Career-Tech/Career-Connections/Career-Connections-Framework

Even when adult life plans are uncertain, there are many general skills that can be assessed that pertain to all areas of adult living and working, such as basic employability and worker skills, decision making, living safely, financial literacy and so on.

Transition assessment is a ‘comparison’ between current skills and skill sets needed for the future. Early in the process adult life goals can be vague and undefined. As the planning and career development continue, goals become more specific and detailed. Even when adult life plans are uncertain, there are many general skills that can be assessed that pertain to all areas of adult living and working, such as basic employability and worker skills, decision making, living safely, financial literacy and so on. Even without specific career or occupational plans, the team starts the transition assessment process while building the youth’s career awareness and exploration and other basic skills for adult living and working.

Gather existing information about the youth

The team starts the planning process by reviewing information that already exists about a youth’s skills and plans. First reviewing existing information assists the team to know what additional transition assessment information is needed for a more comprehensive, holistic picture of the youth’s PINS and plans.

Use the prompts on the next page to start a team discussion

What are the Youth's Plans?

Initial Planning Date:____________________ **Planning Updated:**____________________

Questions to facilitate Team discussion:

- What does adult life look like for this youth?
- Where does he/she want to live?
- What type of employment options are of interest
- What type of adult learning is preferred or would benefit the youth?
- How will he/she access and engage in the community as an adult?

Adult Employment Goals

Adult Learning and Continuing Education Goals

Adult Living and Community Engagement Goals

Questions to facilitate Team discussion:

- What skills and knowledge are needed to achieve the adult life goals?
- What skills are needed for the desired employment? Community engagement? Adult Living?
- Is training or adult education necessary for the desired employment? Community engagement? Adult Living? What options are available for adult education/training?
- Are specific academic or technology skills needed?
- What experiences are pertinent to achieving these goals?
- What are the priorities for personal, social, self-determination or communication skills for the desired adult activities?
- What is the community' need for the type of employment desired?
- What is the salary/benefit expectations or impact?
- What skills and resources are necessary to achieve the adult living situation described?

Summarize what is known about the skills, knowledge and resources that are needed to reach the desired adult life goals

Questions to facilitate Team discussion:

- Where is the youth on a career development continuum?
- How well prepared is the youth to meaningfully participate in a planning process about adult life?
- How has the youth participated in career awareness activities?
- In what ways has the youth experienced the world of work?
- To what extent does the youth envision him or herself as a worker?
- What work experiences has the youth had? in school? In the community?
- Have the youth's work experiences provided exposure to an array of career and occupational areas?

Make note of strengths and ideas to enhance the youth's career development

Question Two: Youth Profile

What are the Youth's Preferences, Interests, Needs and Skills? (PINS)

Unlike eligibility processes that tend to focus on current deficits and needed supports, the transition assessment planning process and resulting Youth Profile are:

- Strength Based
  discovering what the youth can and likes to do
- Future Focused
  creating a profile of the youth that is relevant to being a future adult
- Youth Centered
  building a profile of the youth's current skills as they relate to the skills necessary to achieve her/his adult life goals
- Team Oriented
  coordinating with agency partners to conduct, analyze and summarize transition assessment from a variety of perspectives

The Youth Profile that results from Transition Assessment provides critical information needed to begin to 'tell the story' of how the youth's current skills and abilities relate, or fit with the level and types of skills needed to achieve his/her adult outcomes. The team will analyze each new piece of information as to how it informs the youth's adult life goals and the strategies, services and supports necessary to prepare the youth to achieve them.

The Profile is continually updated, summarizing new information and keeping it current and useful for transition planning. Information can be incorporated into official agency documents such as the IEP (Individualized Education Program), ISP (Individual Service Plan) and IPE (Individual Plan for Employment).

Prior to gathering new or additional transition assessment information, the team organizes what is already known about the youth (from the Step One discussion), as it relates to his/her adult life plans, into a Youth Profile. Team members, including the youth and family, contribute additional information to the Youth Profile. The Profile summarizes what the team collectively knows about the youth's PINS (Preferences, Interests, Needs and Skills). It is useful to organize what is known about the youth into these four broad PINS categories. This Profile is continually updated as new information and data is gathered and as the youth's adult life plans change or are refined.

Use the prompts on the next page to generate team discussion about youth PINS. Write or type the information into the 'four square' 'graphic. There is natural overlap among the PINS categories – items could be both an Interest and a Skill, for example. Or a Need might also be a Preference. Items could be recorded in more than one area and similar or 'opposite' items could appear across categories. There could be differences of opinion about which category is best suited to list a youth's PINS. That's OK! The discussion that takes place is more important than the PINS category.

Sometimes it is easier to think and talk about what is NOT liked or preferred. Especially for initial efforts to plan for transition assessment, the discussion can get started with questions to the youth about their dislikes and things they tend to avoid. The team may then be able to ask some questions to bring out information about 'positive' PINS.

Team members may also have questions regarding aspects of the youth's PINS especially those considered critical for future success. The questions can also be noted in the 'four square' graphic. Additional team discussion can focus on how the youth's PINS inform her/his current preparedness to achieve adult aspirations. Contemplate the PINS as a 'whole' and discuss how this profile informs the youth's future plans and identities other information the team can use for planning.

Pull information from both formal and informal data to help identify and describe youth PINS. View the resulting items through an 'Adult Life Lens' and highlight the PINS that are current assets to build on and those that should be built up to enhance opportunities for future success. Make note of the source of the information and data. Sources might include a person reporting the information or it may come from an assessment tool or method.

Youth Profile: Where is the Youth Presently?

Initial Planning Date(s): ____________________ **Planning Updated:** ____________________ **Name:**____________________

Preferences

- Who I choose to spend time with.
- What I choose to do during my free time.
- How I prefer to receive information
- How I prefer to communicate
- Preference for working. Alone? With 1 person? Groups?
- Environmental preference. Open? Private? Active? Quiet? Bright? Dark?
- Some things I really like? Things I really do not like?
- When do I feel encouraged? Motivated?

Interests

- What fascinates me
- What gains my attention
- What is meaningful to me
- What is motivating or reinforcing to me
- Hobbies or collections?
- Favorite things, people, places, etc.
- What I like to do around the house
- Things I know a lot about
- What makes me happy

Skills/Strengths

- My talents, gifts, abilities
- What I am good at doing.
- When I am most independent
- What helps me to be successful
- My skill set for learning
- When I feel confident
- How I best show what I know how to do
- What I have a knack for doing well

Needs

- What challenges me.
- What requires help.
- What is difficult for me.
- When I request assistance.
- What helps me feel most comfortable or safe.
- ‘Needs’ that currently require another person to be present.
- What helps me to learn something new
- What helps me to try something new

Question Three: Right Fit

How well aligned are the youth's current skills to the set of skills needed in the future?

'Right Fit' means viewing the youth's PINS in light of any gap or disconnect with skills needed to obtain her/his adult life goals. The 'Right Fit' discussion is intended to consider the youth's plans from a variety of angles. For example:

- Are the plans a good fit with the youth's personality?
- Is the youth likely to feel satisfied and fulfilled?
- How do these plans fit with the youth's needs for support?
- How does the youth's background information and academic preparation match with skills needed for the future?
- Are there potential issues that arise from the environment and settings?
- Are the youth's choices rooted in facts and information?
- Are the choices supported by the youth's family?

The team will return to a discussion about the 'Right 'Fit' time and again, as new information about the youth is gained. Because transition assessment is ongoing, the team should expect to see progress or differences over time as the youth engages in instruction, has experiences and is provided services to gain new skills and address any gaps between current skills and skills needed for the future. Team communication on a regular basis allows the team to put into place responses to any problem, unexpected occurrences or other issues in a timely manner.

Transition assessment data and information make it possible to base the 'Right Fit' discussion on facts, and not on opinion or conjecture. Transition assessment adds the ability to measure or quantify gaps and disconnects. Gaps and disconnects are expected, since most youth are still learning and gaining skills for adult life. When included in a Backward Plan, strategies, experiences, instruction, services and supports can be planned to close the gap or lessen the impact of a disconnect.

This is also an ideal time to review any current supports the youth is receiving, particularly those provided in a school setting. Supports provided in school settings are designed to maximize success in that setting, but often do not carry over to adult or work environments as successfully. The team should review supports, accommodations and modifications as to how effective or appropriate they would be in the youth's adult life. Discuss alternatives, technology or natural supports the youth can begin to explore now. Identify skill or behavioral gaps that can be addressed with instruction and services.

It is natural for young people to change their minds about future careers, discover new interests and preferences and gain skills that lessen or modify their needs. Transition assessment and transition planning must be dynamic and responsive to changes.

There may be times when all team members are not in agreement about the 'fit' between the youth's current skills and skills needed to achieve post school goals. The data and information gained through transition assessment provide facts to use in resolving any differences. Having a discussion, based on facts, allows the team to objectively consider in what ways the youth's plans for the future are a good match or fit with her/his profile, and in what areas there are gaps or disconnects to address with transition services and further assessment.

The transition assessment process provides facts to assist the team to talk about differences of opinion in a productive manner. The facts can be used to:

- Measure how close or far away a youth is to the obtaining skills needed for adult life goals.
- Point to additional questions to address with further transition assessment.
- Determine transition services such as instruction, experiences, linkage's to agencies, related services, services provided by agency partners, etc.
- Explore adjustments to adult life goals that are supported by the facts as a better match or fit.

Use the template on the next page to notate important information and ideas from the discussion.

Initial Planning Date(s): ________________

Planning Updated: ________________

Questions to facilitate discussion:

- What supports will be needed to maximize the youth's independence in the identified future environments?
- Do these plans constitute an adult life that is valued by the youth/family? Are they meaningful to the youth and family?
- Related to adult life plans, how do the youth's current skills compare with those needed to achieve the outcomes?
- What are potential areas for skill building, gaps or disconnect between the youth's skills NOW and the skills NEEDED?
- Is the team on the same page about the alignment between current skill sets, experiences etc., and the skills he/she will need for the future?

Use facts gained through Discussion in Steps One and Two to summarize information on the 'match' or 'fit' between the Adult Life Goals and Current PINS

Question	Was there a 'match' or 'fit'? Describe it.	Was there a 'disconnect' or 'gap'? Describe it.
Overall, how do the adult life goals reflect the youth's PINS?		
How do the environments in which these goals will take place match with the youth's preferences?		
How does the targeted work, adult learning, living situation, community participation reflect the youth's interests?		
How are the youth's needs able to be supported within these goals?		
How will the youth's skills be utilized within the adult life goals?		

Discussion Summary

Are there specific PINS that need to be developed to create a better match or fit with the youth's adult life goals?

Has other important information surfaced during this discussion?

What ideas does the team have for narrowing gaps between the youth's PINS and plans?

What additional questions about the 'fit' or match need to be probed with transition assessment?

Question Four: Unanswered Questions

What other or additional information does the team need to know?

All types of assessment tools and methods are possible, including:

- Commercially available tests, surveys, assessment systems, etc.
- Those created by teachers, the family, youth and other transition professionals for interview, surveys, structured observations, classroom assessment, etc.
- Open market and free items available on the web.

Guidance and Directions

Question Four consists of two components:

1) Questions about the youth's skills that will guide transition assessment; and

2) Questions to gather additional information the team needs to enhance their knowledge related to the youth's adult life goals

By this point, the team will have discovered much about the youth and his/her current PINS and in what ways they are a fit or match for the youth. In this step, the focus shifts to identifying the additional information needed by the team to inform the youth's path forward. Depending on where the team is in the process with this youth, gathering the additional information is the initial or additional round of transition assessment. As the team continues to meet over time, new information can impact the direction and/or adult life goals the youth wishes to pursue. And, in this ongoing process, any changes in the youth's adult life goals may necessitate adjustment to the transition services provided to the youth such as instruction, services, experiences, supports, etc. for the youth.

The nature of Transition Assessment is ongoing and a bit like 'peeling an onion' – answering the first set of questions leads to the next, deeper layer of questions. Spending time up front planning for Transition Assessment ultimately leads to a more time and resource efficient process. Team members use tools and methods to gather just the information that will address a transition assessment question. Team members can avoid spending time and resources on assessment tools and methods that will not provide information useful to planning for that youth's transition. Additionally, by discussing what is already known about the youth and their goals prevents spending time and resources gathering the same information. Instead new questions are posed that assessment data can address.

How does a team know what transition assessment tools and strategies to use?

Teams choose assessment tools and methods that will 'answer' the assessment question that is posed. The collective knowledge of the team assists in determining appropriate methods and tools for assessing the youth in response to the question. Teams that plan, implement and review transition assessment together are then positioned to collaborate to develop the transition plan and determine what other transition assessment information they need to know.

In planning, the team will craft a number of questions for transition assessment. Use the prompts on the next page to guide team discussion and record important information

Transition assessment planning is a more time and resource efficient process when a transition assessment question is developed first. Some examples:

- Transition assessment is tailored to the unique needs of the youth by using his/her PINS as the foundation
- All team members, including the youth and family, share responsibility to actively gather transition assessment
- A multi agency team contributes from a variety of viewpoints, and broadens the pool of assessment tools and methods to address the questions
- A youth's unique needs may require a particular type or format for assessment in order for him/her to '"show what they know"
- Some tool and methods can assess multiple skills, gathering information to respond to more than one assessment question
- A process that starts with a question steers the team away from collecting information already available from another source

Questions to facilitate Team Discussion:

- Does the team need more information about the youth's PINS such as:
- employability/job skills?
- skills to support independence?
- "Soft skills"?
- Transportation?
- Technology skills?
- self-care?
- self- determination?
- career development?
- Is more formal data needed about youth's current skills or interests to complete or refine the profile?
- Is there more information needed about the match between the current skill sets and the needed skills for adult life?

Identify questions about the Youth's PINS that need to be explored with further assessment.

Questions to facilitate discussion:

- What skills, education, academics, training are required for the type of employment or adult living skills the youth desires?
- What personal, worker, social, communication, self-determination, independence skills or other occupational skills are needed?
- What are the predicted labor market needs for the industry or business reflected in the youth's goals?
- What options for postsecondary education/training are indicate for achieving and maintaining adult life plans? What entities provide the continuing education/training and where/how is it available?
- What skills and supports are necessary for the adult living situation described?
- Are agency linkages/support necessary?

Some teams need more information about the youth's adult goals in order to create meaningful coordinated transition plan. Additional information helps the youth, family and team envision the path that must be navigated.

Identify questions to gather information the team will need about PINS related to the youth's adult goals in order to create a collaborative and coordinated plan.

Question Five: Transition Assessment Plan

Part A: Discussion to determine tools and methods

What tools, methods and strategies will be used to address the assessment questions?

As a team, talk about which tools and methods that:

- Will directly address one or more of the transition assessment questions
- Provide data that is valid for the area being assessed
- Allow the student to 'show what they know'
- Are compatible with the environment selected for assessment
- Might require special training or licensure to administer
- Are accessible to the youth: Cultural or language barriers? Sensory, communication, reading or other considerations?

The transition assessment questions generated through discussion for Question Four consists of Part A, Discussion about tools and methods to use for transition assessment and Part B Development of a transition assessment plan. Other discussions the team has had along the way also may have generated assessment questions. The questions are the anchors for the Transition Assessment plan. These questions afford everyone who is a part of the youth's multi-agency team, including the youth and family, to take an active role in gathering transition assessment data and information. The diversity of perspectives that emerges when everyone partakes in the assessment process results in comprehensive assessment data for the team to unpack and analyze as to how it contributes to informing the youth's plan for transition to adult life.

Sometimes, several assessment tools and methods are needed to gather data and information to thoroughly 'answer' just one of the questions. Other times an assessment tool can address several questions and assess a variety of skills at the same time.

Transition assessment that includes a variety of formal and informal measures, gathered by a multi-agency team with diverse perspectives results in a rich portfolio of information to use in developing adult life goals and a coordinated plan to achieve them.

The transition assessment process provides mutual benefit for the team's professional partners. All agencies have assessment processes that generates information to contribute to the transition assessment data. Conversely, agency team members can utilize the information and data from the team's transition assessment for official agency processes and documents.

Opportunities for transition assessment can (and do) occur in everyday activities with the youth. With assessment questions in mind, the team is positioned to take advantage of natural interactions to gather transition data. Not all types of assessment require that time is specifically set-aside for it. Consider all interactions with the youth at home, at work, in the community, classroom, etc. to be potential sources for gathering transition assessment data.

The goal of Transition Assessment is to have data and information useful for the youth and family to use to make decisions with the team about the transition to adult life. Transition assessment is an ongoing and cyclical process of planning, implementing, reviewing, analyzing and incorporating new data into the youth transition plans.

Schedule a meeting for a time after the transition assessment plan is implemented. At this meeting the team will analyze and summarize the assessment data and information to discern what it means for the youth's adult life plans. Guidance for analyzing and summarizing transition assessment follows the plan templates. Use the template on the next page to develop the plan the team will follow for transition assessment.

Transition assessment that is guided by a plan provides the foundation for a multiyear, multi-faceted transition plan that is comprehensive, collaborative and coordinated. Guidance for developing a transition plan, called a Backwards Plan, follows in the last section of this document.

There are two basic categories for assessment: Formal and Informal.

Part B: What is the plan the team will follow to address the assessment questions?

There are two basic categories for assessment: Formal and Informal. Formal assessments are standardized instruments that include descriptions of their norming process, reliability and validity, and recommended uses (NTACT, 2016). In contrast, informal assessments generally provide descriptive information but lack formal norming procedures.

Some types of Informal Assessment Measures

- Interviews, questionnaires and surveys
- Structured observation
- Anecdotal records
- Environmental/situational analysis
- Curriculum based assessments
- Interest inventories
- Preferences assessments
- Transition planning inventories
- Community or work-based observations
- Simulations
- Demonstrations
- Student Products

Some types of Formal Measures

- Adaptive Behavior Scales
- Independent living assessments
- Aptitude Tests
- Career/Vocational assessment
- Interest assessments
- Achievement Tests
- Personality/Preference profiles
- Occupational skill assessments
- Work task or training evaluations
- Classroom content tests
- Standardized tests
- Trade and industry exams

Some Domains to Consider Assessing

- Assistive and mobile technology
- Self-care skills
- Employability skills
- Orientation and mobility, travel training
- Personal safety and health care needs
- Mental health needs
- Communication skills and/or systems
- Daily living skills/financial literacy
- Decision making/problem solving skills
- Worker skills
- Career Development
- Self-Determination

The Transition Assessment Plan on the next pages has five columns to notate details of how the transition assessment data will be collected. From the left of the template, the columns are:

Column 1: Questions to explore with assessment.

Use this column to list the questions the team generated in Step 4 and other steps along the way. Teams should list one question per row.

Column 2: Tools and methods to be used or considered to address the question.

Use this column to list assessment tools and methods that a team member will use to gather the information to address the assessment question. Sometimes a team member may investigate a suggested tool or method to learn more about it. The figure on the page 18 provides some guiding questions to explore appropriateness and uses for a tool or method being considered.

Column 3: Who will collect the information? When will it be collected?

Name the team member or members assigned to gather transition assessment data and information. Commit to a date or deadline for the information to be gathered. The team member assigned to gather the data uses the tool and methods decided on by the team. Consult with the team for guidance if something unexpected occurs with either the tool/method or the timeline.

Column 4: When will the assessment results be reported to the team?

Set a date for the team to review, analyze and summarize the assessment results. The team can decide if an in-person meeting is needed (this is preferable to allow discussion) or to touch base virtually.

Column 5: What answers were discovered?

Use this column to summarize the assessment results and indicate what components (on the previous templates) should be updated or changes. Information about how to summarize transition assessment is included in the next section. Make note of the date when the assessment was conducted.

Use the template on the next page to build a comprehensive, collaborative Transition Assessment Plan. A collectively written plan for transition assessment is a tool for communication across team members and their agencies. School and agency partners will have insight and ideas about assessment information that is useful to consider particular transition services available through their agency. The written transition assessment plan is critical to orient new team members to the youth's PINS and the transition assessment gathered thus far.

What assessment tools, methods and strategies will be used to answer the assessment questions?

Questions to be explored with transition assessment	Tools/methods to be used or considered to address the question	Who will collect the information? When will it be collected?	When will the assessment results be reported to the team?	What answers where discovered?
1.				Date: Update Plan Information
2.				Date: Update Plan Information
3.				Date: Update Plan Information
4.				Date: Update Plan Information
5.				Date: Update Plan Information

Questions to be explored with transition assessment	Tools/methods to be used or considered to address the question	Who will collect the information? When will it be collected?	When will the assessment results be reported to the team?	What answers where discovered?
6.				Date: Update Plan Information
7.				Date: Update Plan Information
8.				Date: Update Plan Information
9.				Date: Update Plan Information
10.				Date: Update Plan Information

After transition assessment information and data have been gathered, set a time for the team to analyze and summarize new transition assessment data and information. Schedule this follow-up meeting at the close of the transition assessment planning meeting.

What does this transition assessment information mean for the youth's adult life plans?

- Questions useful for analyzing and summarizing transition assessment data and information to determine how it:
- Inform, refine or revise the youth's future life plans?
- Give rise to information useful for the team to better understand PINS needed by anyone to achieve the youth's desired adult goals?
- Indicate progress for the youth's career development?
- Add to, refine or change the youth's PINS?
- Bring to light new PINS to explore further?
- Provide the factual information and data the team can use to discuss any differences of opinion regarding the youth's adult life plans?
- Indicate new career or occupational interests?
- Lead to discussion of the impact of any gaps and disconnects between current and future skill sets?
- Show progress from any previously completed assessment?
- Lead to additional questions for assessment?
- Inform the ways in which the youth's plans are a good 'fit' or 'match' with their PINS?
- Clarify ways to address any gaps or disconnects with supports, activities, agency linkages, experiences, instruction, etc.?

Because of the ongoing nature of transition assessment, the 'follow-up' meeting can also be used to plan the next round of transition assessment. During the follow-up meeting, the team reviews all the data and information gathered and reflects on how it adds insight into the youth's plans for achieving his/her adult life goals.

What does it mean to analyze and summarize the transition assessment?

As the team reviews the transition assessment data, they should ask: 'So What Does this mean for…?' the various components of the youth transition plans. Analyzing and Summarizing the data are ways to consider how it informs, adds to, changes, accelerates, etc. the youth's transition plans.

Analyzing transition assessment data and information starts with the team reviewing individual test results and data gathered using other assessment tools and methods. The team examines the results to discover what the data reveals about the youth's adult life goals. The transition assessment data brings to light new information to incorporate into the components of the updated transition assessment plan, the youth's transition plan and formal agency plans.

After pulling apart the assessment information to analyze it, the team is ready to summarize what they have learned about the youth in relation to the pursuit of his/her adult life goals.

In Summarizing the information, the team puts together all the transition assessment results into a new 'whole' that expands on the youth's profile of PINS. Summarizing deepens the team's understanding of how the individual assessment results, taken together, indicate the nature and interrelationship of all the parts. Look for patterns across assessment sources. Consider how individual results complement or contradict each other. The team can add or revise information on the corresponding templates in this guide. The results of the individual assessments are important in themselves. However, what is significant about the transition assessment process is how the data, when merged across individual sources, impacts the youth's plans for adult life and informs the path to get there.

The team can use the column 'What answers were discovered' on template to make note of the information gained for each assessment question. That will make it convenient to have the individual results all in one place for summarizing the assessment across all results to answer the question 'So what does this mean for…?'

Data analyzed and summarized by a multi-agency team is useful to each person and agency involved. The team should strive to avoid agency jargon, and team members are encouraged to ask questions when terms or vocabulary aren't clear. Each agency can use the transition assessment data and information pertinent to agency specific forms and procedures.

At this time, the team also prepares for additional transition assessment, using questions the team generates in analyzing and summarizing the assessment results. And this ongoing cycle repeats time and again as the youth moves through the transition years.

When teams are new to following this transition assessment process, it may be necessary to use this guide and add any new information to each of the templates. With practice teams will become familiar with each of the steps in this process and will routinely think in this manner, making it less necessary to use the templates in this step-by-step guide. Transition assessment is the foundation for transition planning. The team is now poised to begin or continue a Backwards Plan with the youth. Information about Backwards Planning follows.

Backwards Planning

Using Person-Centered Thinking to Develop a Transition Plan

A team can choose to include anything in a Backwards Plan that is relevant. Some examples:

- Questions to explore with transition assessment
- ideas for classes or academic progress
- actions or activities the youth and family will lead
- suggestions for effective strategies, interventions or supports
- thoughts about additional environments or circumstances for the youth to experience
- proposals for services and agency referrals

The data and information that results from the Transition Assessment Plan is ready to be organized into a coordinated person-centered Transition Plan. A Backward Plan provides the details for addressing the question: "How will the youth get there?'. A multi-agency team coordinates services and support offered by each agency through a collaboratively developed Backwards Plan. The plan does not belong to any one agency and does not rely on agency specific knowledge or language. Yet the results of the process are valuable to schools and all agency partners.

Backward planning is a person-centered process a team uses to develop the type of multiyear, multi-faceted plan that all team members can engage in and understand. A Backwards Plan supports, but is apart from, formal agency plans (IEP, ISP, IPE). A Backwards Plan is informal in nature and as such has the advantage of including the details and information not always appropriate to include in formal plans. The 'I" plans are necessary to document agency responsibilities and meet legal requirements. They 'belong' to the agency that generates them. The Backwards Plan does not belong to any one agency and primarily belongs to the people who it will benefit most – the youth and family.

Formal plans are frequently annual in nature, making it impossible to see how the youth's transition plan will unfold year to year. A Backwards Plan provides a way for families, the youth, and professionals to all gain valuable insights into how all the pieces of the plan work together to create a seamless path to adulthood. A multi-year plan can sketch out points in time when a youth might be ready to participate in or benefit from a particular service. The agency that provides that service can talk about expectations and outcomes. Youth and families can ask questions. For youth still in school, educators can provide instruction and services that prepare the youth to experience maximize benefit from participation in the service. Multiyear, backwards planning complements and informs formal agency documents.

Backwards Planning is a thought process that comes naturally when any type of long-term plan is made. it's important to know something about what the goal or intended result of a plan is so that its clear what steps, in what order are necessary to get there.

Backwards Planning is forward thinking – even if that sounds like a contradiction in terms. Backwards planning provides a way for the team to plan for activities over a number of years into the future, without having to work out all the details immediately. The team can plan for what action comes next or prepare for another action further ahead in time.

In some cases, the team may wish to add milestones that show growth. For example, in the row titled "Independence", the team may wish to set yearly goals of increased time working independently with the identified supports in place. Some blocks will identify a service that needs to be provided for progress to continue. This might be a Pre-ETS service or a particular class. Some services are formal. Some 'services' may be experiences provided by family, such as visiting colleges or chores in the home.

Steps for Backwards Planning

- **Step 1 – Adult Life Goals**
  Defines the adult life goals that will be the target of the planning process
- **Step 2 – Milestones**
  Represents the adult life level of skill and knowledge for which the youth needs to be prepared
- **Step 3 - Baseline**
  Defines the starting point and gives an indication of how much or how long is needed to achieve the Milestones
- **Step 4 – The Gap**
  A gap is the difference in skill level, experience, performance, etc. between the Baseline and the Milestone. Closing the gap is the singular purpose of transition
- **Step 5 – Initial Steps**
  List ideas, strategies, activities, experiences, agency linkages, services and anything else designed for the youth to close the gap

The steps to backwards planning intentionally overlap the steps for transition assessment planning. The same information gathered using one process is also used and updated in the other process. This back and forth of information between transition assessment and planning illustrates how the processes are dynamic and ongoing. A variety of tools for Backwards Planning can be found on the Employment First Transition Planning website. Click on the Employment First, Transition Planning tab at: https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav_id=451

Services versus Needs

As teams begin to populate the Backwards plan with ideas for transition services of all kinds, keep in mind the distinction between a service and a need. This distinction between the two terms is critical to an accurate understanding of what will be provided to the youth and why the particular strategy or service was chosen. A service is provided to move the youth forward in gaining the skills, experiences and agency linkages. A service is a response to need uncovered during transition assessment. A need means describing the types of skills, experiences, supports etc. that prompts the team to think of a specific service to explore.

For example, a team member may say something like "he needs speech therapy" or "she needs Summer Youth Work Experience", both of which refer to the name of a specific service. In order for the team to know if a service or what aspect of service this youth needs, they need to be clear about the particular aspect or need of the youth the service being considered will address. Think in a different way about what a service is able to address and if others, beyond the providers of the service, should also address the same youth need.

The difference between a service and need is illustrated below:

Service	Need
He needs Speech Therapy	He needs to improve communication skills and be able to use them in multiple settings and circumstances.
The team follows agency procedures for accessing speech therapy. Sometimes provided in a separate setting, based on a speech assessment	Knowing what aspect of 'speech therapy' seems appropriate guides speech assessment and recommendations
Speech therapy is mainly provided by a speech and language pathologist	Multiple team members and others can assist the youth with practicing the same skills he is gaining through speech therapy in authentic environments.

Service	Need
She needs Summer Youth Work Experience	She needs to gain work experience in the community to gain knowledge about a variety of jobs and workplaces, increasing career development and build on her PINS
Follow procedures to become eligible for OOD and apply for the service	Knowing that career development and expanding PINS is what 'she' needs to get from the service guides the service provider to gather useful data
'She' participates in the Summer Work Experience Program and the provider gathers information standard for all participants.	The team meets with the provider of the service to ask them what data is collected about youth while participating in the service. The team requests for data to also be collected specific to identified youth needs

Step 3: Basline. Consider the current situation or the youth's current set of skills and knowledge. Describe where the youth is at this point in time in relation to each one of the items described in Column 6. This is where the youth is right now.

Step 2: Future Skills and Knowledge. In light of the goal selected, what skills, knowledge or milestone will be needed for the person to be ready to accomplish the goal? Describe these in Column 6. The descriptions may be loosely defined if the goals is still not clear. This is where the youth is going.

Backwards Planning

Name: ______________________________

Desired Outcome / Adult Goal: ______________________________

Step 1: Adult Goal

Current Date: ________ Current Skill (Baseline) identified by AATA or Discovery (or other known information)	Steps to Reach milestone Target Date to Accomplish ________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish ________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish ________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish ________	Target Dates: ________ Future skill or milestones required in order to achieve desired goals/outcomes
Interests, Skills, Preference, Needs, etc.:					Interests, Skills, Preference, Needs, etc.:
Communication					Communication
Independence					Independence
Social/Social – Emotional					Social/Social – Emotional
Work/Employment/ Leisure Skills or Knowledge:					Work/Employment/ Leisure Skills or Knowledge:
Academics					Academics

Step 4: The Gap. Reflect on "The Gap". The difference between Column 1 and Column 6 define "The Gap'. Closing this gap is the core of the work during transition. Backwards Planning is about identifying steps that need to occur over time that will help close that gap and bring the youth closer to achieving the desired adult goals.

Step 5: Initial Steps. Review the Questions 3 and 4. Those questions that impact the areas represented by the rows of the Backwards Planning form should be early steps in the process. Once you have more information, it makes it easier to plan additional steps.

Backwards Planning Template

Name: ______________________________

Desired Outcome / Adult Goal: ____

Current Date: __________ Current Skill (Baseline) identified by AATA or Discovery (or other known information)	Steps to Reach milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Target Dates: __________ Future skill or milestones required in order to achieve desired goals/outcomes
Interests, Skills, Preference, Needs, etc.:					Interests, Skills, Preference, Needs, etc.:
Communication					Communication
Independence					Independence

Current Date: __________ Current Skill (Baseline) identified by AATA or Discovery (or other known information)	Steps to Reach milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Steps to Reach Milestone Target Date to Accomplish __________	Target Dates: __________ Future skill or milestones required in order to achieve desired goals/outcomes
Social/Social – Emotional					Social/Social – Emotional
Work/Employment/Leisure Skills or Knowledge:					Work/Employment/Leisure Skills or Knowledge:
Academics					Academics