

Transition Planning for Students with Mental Health Conditions



Welcome!

Presenter:

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Agenda

- What is Transition Planning/What is Mental Health?
- Impact of an Emotional Disability
- Addressing transition needs
- Strategies and transition activities that can help students prepare
- Share a few helpful tips and resources



What is Transition Planning?

It is an ongoing process that requires a **partnership** among the student, family, school district and as appropriate, other agencies that can provide transition services to help students with disabilities **move from school to adult life**

Every school year, beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect **when a student is age 15** and until the student exits school, there needs to be thoughtful and comprehensive transition **planning**

Purpose of Transition Planning

To help students and families **establish a vision for the future** about where the student will work, continue to learn, and participate in their community

Focus of Transition Planning

Postsecondary goals in the areas of:

- Education and/or training
- Employment and/or other productive activities
- Independent living skills

Coordinated transition activities that will help the student **develop the skills needed** to meet their postsecondary goals

What is Mental Health?

The **World Health Organization** defines mental health as “**the ability to think, learn, and understand one’s emotions and the reactions of others. Mental health is a state of balance.**”

Sometimes we may struggle in small ways but return to that balance. Other times we may have bigger issues and need some help managing them.

“Mental health” is a phrase that **can sometimes come with stigma**, but mental health *is* health—and it’s with us every day.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and The Jed Foundation (JED) <https://collegeguide.nami.org/>

Mental Health Facts

- Mental illness can affect persons of any age, race, religion or socioeconomic status
- Mental health disorders account for more disability than any other illness, including cancer and heart disease (*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*)
- Young adults experience difficulty in seeking or **securing employment, completing or furthering education, and lack overall skills to establish or maintain supportive relationships or to live independently** (*Sondheimer, Clark, & Deschenes, 2007*)
- **Understanding the specific needs of these individuals is an important factor in developing successful transition plans**, which should include team members with expertise in mental health

50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

Students aged 6-17 with mental, emotional or behavioral concerns are 3x more likely to repeat a grade

High school students with significant symptoms of depression are more than twice as likely to drop out compared to their peers

Emotional Disability(ED): *As defined in Education Law* (*Educational Classification*)

A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance:

- an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disability

***Many students with hidden disabilities that affect learning go undiagnosed, and they do not get the special educational services and supports they need early enough**

Impact of Emotional Disability(ED)

- Highest dropout rate of any disability category
- Students are more likely to be held back, suspended, expelled from school
- Can have poor social skills, life skills, coping skills, and anger management skills
- Has among the highest needs for early academic, social and career-transition support to prevent long-term post-school dependence
- Intensified by co-occurring disorders (*i.e. ADD/ADHD, substance abuse issues*)
- More likely to be fired from jobs, arrested or incarcerated
- At risk for suicidal ideation



Considerations for Students with ED

- Normal personality and behavior changes of adolescence may **mimic or mask symptoms** of a mental health condition
- Consider the effects of **trauma**: exposure to violence, victimization, severe neglect, loss, emotional pain, intense fear/threats to safety
- Family, friends and communities are **also affected**
- With suicide ranking as the third leading cause of death among **15 to 24 year olds**, it is vital to **talk about mental health before students transition away from support systems**

Early engagement and support are crucial to improving transition outcomes and increasing the **promise of recovery**

Considerations for Students with ED cont.

- Have a tendency to underestimate the potential for a career
- Despite often having typical intellectual and cognitive abilities, youth with ED may have histories of poor performance in school, leading others and often themselves, to believe that certain careers are out of reach for them
- Youth have a long period in which developmental changes will occur. Behaviors that some students experience will likely decrease as they mature and learn coping skills for managing their ED/mental health condition
- ✓ By providing positive messages of hope for the future, educators and families can plant a seed that will later flower, even if today for some it may seem bleak
- ✓ May have a better outlook for their future if they are aware of the accommodations that employers and schools are required to provide people with mental health conditions
- ✓ Remind students of the higher earnings power and protection from unemployment that each year of post-secondary education brings; working through the possibilities for financing college can also help

Addressing Transition Needs in the IEP

- Student involvement in the transition planning process and the development of their IEP, helps the student to **understand their disability and their strengths, and what academic and social/emotional areas need further development**
- Provides an opportunity for the student to discuss their goals and **learn about accommodations** or modifications that are available to support these goals
- When developing the IEP, discuss with other CSE members the consideration of including **(transition) goals** to specifically address **the mental health needs** of your child



An annual goal is a **statement that identifies the academic, social, physical skills, behavior, or knowledge the student will acquire in one year** in order to achieve their goals for life after high school

Annual Goal-Examples

SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL / BEHAVIORAL FEELINGS/BEHAVIOR OF SELF/OTHERS

- The student will verbally identify situations where they **experience feelings of frustration or anxiety** (*academic or competitive situations, or social interaction*), and will identify and implement strategies to deal with the frustration.
- The student will **identify behavioral triggers** (*e.g., events, thoughts, emotions/feelings*) and **explain how these triggers impact their behavior or on the behavior of others.**
- The student **will correctly point, to identify emotions/feelings** depicted on flashcards/pictures/posters depicting human emotion/feeling (*e.g., sadness, anger, fear, happiness*).

COPING SKILLS

- When the student **expresses a negative emotion** at school (*e.g., frustration, anger, anxiety, sadness, impulsivity*), the student will **identify and appropriately use a coping skill** (*e.g., perspective-taking, assertive-communication, deep breathing, problem-solving, planned positive activities*) to maintain acceptable school behavior.



Focus of Coordinated Transition Activities

to help the student develop the skills needed to meet their annual and postsecondary goals

Mastering academics

- Focus on strengths, reduce absenteeism, prevent dropout

Career education

- Exploration of interests and opportunities
- Career & Technical Education (CTE) coursework
- Available supports

Coping strategies

- Stress, anxiety, depression, anger
- Increase self-awareness, self-esteem, self-control

Independent Living Skills training

- Complete applications, access community services, manage finances, practice healthy behaviors, manage needed prescriptions

Interpersonal relationships, peer support

- Family, friendships, service providers
- Social skills, support groups, a **regular attendee/mentor** at meetings to make sure the youth understands and feels comfortable to express themselves, college/community agency reps

Mental health coverage/services available in postsecondary settings (college, employment, the community)

Service Coordination/Case Management consultation

- Decrease rate of hospitalization, incarceration

Crisis Intervention

- Have an Emergency plan
- Contact information, local mental health resources

Career Preparation Strategies



- Provide opportunities for **temporary** work experiences and **immediate income**
- Arrange connections to **successfully employed peers and role models** with mental health conditions
- Increase use of effective methods of **stress management** to cope with the pressures of work
- Ensure knowledge of and access to a full range of positive **workplace supports and accommodations**

Source: *The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth*

Examples of Accommodations

Test accommodations

- Extended time to ease anxiety

Behavioral accommodations

- Arrangements for the student to exit the classroom environment to a quiet space when needed

Employment/work-site accommodations

- Breaks to connect with an on-site “go-to person” if they are having difficulty

General tips to help students manage anxiety

- Modify expectations and praise small accomplishments
- Prepare for the situation
- Reframe negative thoughts
- Use relaxation techniques
- Peer support



Tips for Schools

- Offer academically challenging educational programs and **supports that engage and re-engage** youth in learning
- Provide opportunities to develop a student's **self-awareness of behavioral triggers** and **reasonable accommodations** for use in education and workplace settings; learn how **disability disclosure** can be used proactively; enhance student competencies in achieving greater **self-sufficiency and confidence**
- Build capacity and **strengthen relationships between educators and pupil personnel services** (school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, nurse); ensure an “**unconditional safety-net**” of support
- Develop **school-community partnerships** with mental health professionals and organizations; improve understanding of the cyclical and episodic nature of mental illness
- **Identify strategies to engage families** and students in supporting mental health and well-being, recognizing key warning signs; emotional support; accessing supports and resources



Watch for Subtle Signs

- A large portion of a school counselor's work surrounds student mental health
- Understanding the subtle signs of a mental health concern like **sleep or appetite changes, slow social withdrawal, or concerning internet or social media searches**, can be just as critical, if not more important, than the more overt and obvious signs like sudden outbursts, fights at school, or a deeply depressed mood
- If your student exhibits subtle signs of change in behavior, make note of it and **bring it to the attention of a school counselor and/or other CSE team members**



Supporting students is a true team effort!

Research:

When We Educate Youth about Mental Illness



...the likelihood increases that they will be able to **effectively recognize signs and symptoms in themselves and others** and will **know where to turn for help**

...we will help young people and their families and communities **feel more comfortable seeking help**, improve **academic performance** and, **most importantly, even save lives**

... it helps students **identify risk and protective factors**, as learning and resiliency can result in positive decision-making and life-long success, which are the primary goals of health and education

Mental Health Education

In 2016, Governor Cuomo signed into law a bill that requires schools to include mental health instruction to be taught as part of the required K-12 health education

The [School Mental Health Resource & Training Center](#) was established by the Mental Health Association in NYS to help schools comply with the law

- Free online mental health training and instructional resources for educators
- Resources for parents and guardians, students and community-based mental health providers



Amendments to Commissioner's Regulation to Sections 135.1 and 135.3 (CR) Part 135 effective July 2018

NYS-Office of Mental Health (OMH)

Eligibility

- **Children (up to 18 years of age with some services available until age 21)** demonstrate deficits in adaption to school, family or other residential settings
- **Adults (over 18 years of age)** demonstrate deficits, related to a mental health diagnosis, in self-care, activities of daily living, interpersonal relations, adaption to change or task performance in work or work-like settings

Referral Process

- Contact your local County Department of Mental Health—Single Point of Access(SPOA) committee. A coordinator can guide the family or individual through the next steps
- Assistance with applications can be provided by school mental health personnel/teams that may be comprised of school psychologists, social workers, nurses, school counselors and building administrators. You can also use existing support networks to make a referral: Mental health personnel, Doctor/Pediatrician, Care manager

Community-Based Services—connect the youth and family with services available in the community (ask about Stabilization Centers and Mobile Crisis Intervention Teams)

Outpatient Programs:

- **Day Treatment Programs**—Integrate mental health and age-appropriate education services **for children and adolescents** until they can attend regular classes
- Employment services (limited)

Residential Programs:

- **Residential Treatment Facilities**—a specialized type of inpatient treatment program **for children and adolescents**
- Residential Services—provide treatment in a residential setting in a variety of community locations that support and assist individuals with their recovery from mental illness

Inpatient/Hospitalization Programs: Community Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital, State-Operated Inpatient Hospital—24 hours per day program which includes psychiatric, medical, nursing, and social services

Home, Hospital, or Institutional Instruction

- Home, hospital, or institutional instruction (sometimes referred to as homebound instruction) is an **educational service** provided by a school district to resident students (public and nonpublic) who are **anticipated to be unable to attend school in person for at least ten days in a three-month period due to physical, mental, or emotional illness or injury.**
- 10 hours of instruction per week at the elementary level(K-6) and **15 hours of instruction per week at the secondary level**(grades 7-12)
- The parent, guardian, or person in parental relationship **must submit a request** to the school district of residence.
- The request must include **written verification from the student's treating healthcare provider** (including mental health providers) demonstrating the student's anticipated inability to attend school in person for at least ten days during the next three months.
- In addition, the request must include a **signed consent authorizing the school** medical director or designee **to contact the student's treating healthcare provider.**

Tips for Supporting Mental Wellness at Home

Talk openly about mental health

- Promotes a safe environment, reduces stigma

Model your own healthy habits

- Use positive coping strategies to manage life's stressors

Spend time together as a family

- Produces a stronger bond, making them feel valued and loved

Participate in community or volunteer activities

- Creates a sense of belonging & purpose, learning how to relate to others

Encourage regular exercise

- Stimulates chemicals that improve our moods, channel negative energy positively

Praise your child's efforts & behaviors

- Confidence and self-esteem increases

Create calm spaces

- Promotes a positive mood and minimize overstimulation

Be prepared for a crisis

- Particularly in times of increased level of stress or challenging situations. If 911 is called-ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer, if available

Tips for Talking to your Child about Mental Health

- Make an analogy to a medical problem
- Give them concrete explanations
- Listen to them and validate their experiences
- Be sure they know this is not their fault
- Have frequent conversations
- Let them ask you questions
- Include the family
- Discuss self-care and prevention
- Don't be afraid to ask about suicide
 - Many parents and caregivers **may be afraid that starting the conversation may cause suicidal behavior, but this connection has proven to be false.** Asking about suicide may be a relief for people of all ages.



Source: NAMI-National Alliance on Mental Illness:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Kids/How-to-Talk-to-Your-Child-About-Their-Mental-Health#MONSTER>

Closing Thoughts: Planning with the End in Sight

Let's make sure...



- Youth feel safe, cared for, valued, useful, and grounded
- Programs enable youth to learn and build skills that allow them to function and give back in their daily lives
- Youth receive training on service systems, purpose of the system, and their rights
- Youth are engaged in the idea that change is possible in their life and the systems that serve them
- Youth are **empowered in their transition planning process** from the beginning and have a voice in what will work for them

Young adults with mental health difficulties are capable of successfully engaging in school, training, and employment. The support these individuals receive as they progress through secondary education can help them realize their potential in life after high school.

Ellison, M. L., Huckabee, S., Golden, L., & Biebel, K. (2020)

Resources: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in the Hudson Valley

- NAMI Westchester County (914) 592-5458 info@namiwestchester.org
- NAMI Rockland (845) 359-8787 info@namirockland.org
- NAMI Orange County (845) 956-6264 info@namiorangeny.org
- NAMI Putnam County (845) 363-1478 namiputnam@gmail.com
- NAMI Mid-Hudson(Dutchess & Ulster Counties) (845) 206-9892 contact@namimidhudson.org
- NAMI **Family-To-Family** a free 8-week program structured to help family members understand and support individuals with serious mental health conditions while maintaining their own well-being.
- NAMI **Basics**
- NAMI **Family Support Groups**
- NAMI **Peer to Peer**
- NAMI **On Campus High School clubs**
- NAMI **Ending the Silence**-an educational program for middle and high school students
- The NAMI **HelpLine**: Available M-F 10am – 10pm
- Connect by phone 800-950-6264
- Text "Helpline" to 62640
- Chat/email: at helpline@nami.org
- In a crisis call or text **988**

Resources: Mental Health



- NYS Office of Mental Health: <https://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/about/>
- Transforming and Strengthening New York State's Mental Health System <https://omh>
- NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services: <https://www.oasas.ny.gov/>
- NYS Center for School Health: <http://www.schoolhealthny.com>

- NYSED Educational Resources <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/mental-health>
- NYSED Office of Student Support Services Social Emotional Learning: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sel>
- MHANYS: School Mental Health Resource and Training Center <https://www.mentalhealthdnys.org/>

- Mental Health Association in NYS, Inc.: <https://mhanys.org/>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness <https://www.nami.org/Home>
- NAMI/JED Foundation-Mental Health College Guide <https://collegeguide.nami.org/>

Any Questions?

Thank You for Attending!

Please complete our brief session evaluation

For more information

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