Children and families experience many transitions, large and small, over the years. Some predictable transitions occur: when children transition out of early intervention services at age three, when they move from preschool programs into kindergarten, when they approach adolescence, and when they move from adolescence into adulthood. Other transitions might include moving into new programs, working with new agencies and care providers, and making new friends. Some children and families may experience more unusual transitions such as a move from hospital to home. All transitions involve change: adding new expectations, responsibilities, or resources, and letting go of others.

As a parent of a child with special needs such as developmental delays or disabilities, you may be caught up in day-to-day survival. You may ask, “How can I think about tomorrow when I’m just trying to make it through today?” In those moments when you can step back and catch your breath, it may be helpful to imagine the transitions that lie ahead and allow yourself to think about the future.

Tips: Review the timeline and identify where you are. Pick a place for action - you can’t do everything at once! Link with others who have already transitioned.
**Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with: Developmental Disabilities/Delays**

**Parent and Child Interactions that Encourage Independence**
- Birth to 3, or according to your child’s developmental ability
  - Ensure your infant the world is a good place in which to live. The development of a sense of trust is vital to the development of a healthy personality.
  - Allow your child to develop at his/her own individual rate.
  - As a parent it is important to take short breaks from your child to renew energy with which to enjoy him/her.
  - Begin keeping a record of your child’s early intervention, educational and medical history, including immunizations.

**Transition to Preschool: Supports or Services to Consider**
- Birth to 3
  - Contact a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) for services/programs to help you and your child. If eligible, the FRC will coordinate needed services for your family through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Call Family Health Hotline (1-800-322-2588) for your local FRC contact.
  - Seek a parent program for emotional support and networking.
  - Involve your child and family in community and recreational activities that include children with and without delays/disabilities.
  - Begin transition planning (from Early Intervention Program to Early Childhood Special Education Services/Public School Preschool or community program) by age 2 1/2: the FRC coordinates this.
  - A transition plan meeting must be held at least 3 months before your child’s third birthday and a written plan developed.
- By age 3
  - If your child is eligible for Early Childhood Special Education Services an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be in place by your child’s 3rd birthday – or the FRC will work with you to identify other programs/services.

**Supports and Services to Consider (see back for contact information)**

**Programs**
- Transition Toward Preschool
- Transition Toward School
- Transition Toward Adolescence
- Transition Toward Adulthood and Post School Options

**Years**
- Birth
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22

**By ages 3-5, or according to your child’s developmental ability**
- Assign your child chores appropriate for his/her ability level.
- Encourage decision making skills by offering choices.
- Teach consequences of your child’s behaviors and choices.
- Continue involvement in community and recreational activities that include children with and without disabilities.
- Begin asking “What do you want to do when you grow up?”
- Begin teaching your child about his/her disability.
- Begin teaching your child self-care skills: usual skills and those related to his/her disability.
- Begin helping your child interact directly with doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers.

**By ages 6-11, or according to your child’s developmental ability**
- Assess your child’s perception and basic knowledge of his/her disability. Build on his/her understanding.
- Continue teaching your child usual self-care skills as well as skills related to his/her disability.
- Encourage hobbies and leisure activities: include exploring community and recreational activities, clubs, 4-H, Scouts, Campfire, YMCA, sports, etc.
- Continue to encourage decision making skills by offering choices.
- Continue assigning your child chores appropriate for his/her ability level.
- Take your child shopping whenever possible so he/she can help in choices.
- Let your child choose how to spend some or all of allowance.
- Teach your child the consequences of his/her behaviors and choices.
- Allow your child to experience the consequences of a poor choice as well as a good choice.
- Begin teaching your child self-advocacy skills.
- Begin asking your child “What will you do when you grow up?”

**By ages 12-18, or according to your child’s developmental ability**
- Assess your teen’s perception and basic knowledge of his/her disability. Fill in gaps in understanding.
- Continue teaching your teen age-appropriate self-help skills as well as skills related to disability.
- Continue teaching self-advocacy skills.
- Begin helping your teen keep a record of his/her medical history, including conditions, operations, treatments (dates, doctors, recommendations) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) if on an IEP.
- If on an IEP, encourage teen to participate in IEP meeting.
- Begin helping your teen take responsibility for making and keeping his/her own medical appointments, ordering his/her own supplies, etc.
- Begin exploring health care coverage for young adult
- Discuss relationships and sexuality with your teen.
- Help your teen identify and build on his/her strengths.
- Explore support groups, if teen is interested.
- Begin to explore and talk about possible career interests with your teen.
- Help your teen find work and volunteer activities.
- Continue to allow your teen to help with family chores.
- Continue to encourage hobbies and leisure activities.
- Help your teen identify and be involved with adult or older teen role models.
- Begin, with your teen, looking for an adult health care provider.

**By ages 18-21, or according to your child’s developmental ability**
- If on an IEP, you may want to encourage young adult to stay in a school program until age 21, and participate in IEP meetings and Transition Plan, including employment and adult life activities.
- Act as a resource and support to young adult.
- Continue to encourage young adult to be physically active and to help plan and prepare healthy meals for family and self.
- Encourage young adult to participate in support groups and/or organizations relevant to his/her disability.
- Finalize health care coverage plan with young adult.
- With young adult, finalize transfer of medical care to adult provider.

**Transition to Adulthood: Supports or Services to Consider**
- By age 16
  - Transition Plan from School to Post-School options begins for teens on IEPs. They must be invited to participate in their IEP meeting.
  - By age 17
    - Begin exploring health care financing for young adult.
    - Notify Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for teens with and without IEPs by Autumn of the year before they graduate.
  - Notify student of rights that will transfer to him/her on reaching the age of majority at least one year before the student reaches the age of majority (age 18 in WA State).
  - Develop specific decision-making supports as needed by the teen; partial or full guardianship only if necessary.
  - By age 18
    - Check eligibility for SSI the month the teen turns 18.
    - Investigate SSI Work Incentives such as Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).
  - By Age 21
    - For young adults with developmental disabilities, notify Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) for adult vocational services.
    - Can sign up for DDD at any age, the earlier the better.
Children and families experience many transitions, large and small, over the years. Some predictable transitions occur: when children transition out of early intervention services at age three, when they move from preschool programs into kindergarten, when they approach adolescence, and when they move from adolescence into adulthood. Other transitions might include moving into new programs, working with new agencies and care providers, and making new friends. Some children and families may experience more unusual transitions such as a move from hospital to home. All transitions involve change: adding new expectations, responsibilities, or resources, and letting go of others.

As a parent of a child with special needs such as chronic illness or disabilities, you may be caught up in day-to-day survival. You may ask, “How can I think about tomorrow when I’m just trying to make it through today?” In those moments when you can step back and catch your breath, it may be helpful to imagine the transitions that lie ahead and allow yourself to think about the future.

Tips: Review the timeline and identify where you are. Pick a place for action - you can’t do everything at once! Link with others who have already transitioned.
Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with:
Chronic Illnesses / Physical Disabilities

**Parent and Child Interactions that Encourage Independence**

- **Birth to 3-5, or according to your child's developmental ability**
  - Ensure your infant the world is a good place in which to live. The development of a sense of trust is vital to the development of a healthy personality.
  - You are your child's first teacher.
  - Allow your child to develop at his/her own individual rate.
  - As a parent it is important to take short breaks from your child to renew energy with which to enjoy him/her.
  - Begin keeping a record of your child's early interventions, educational and medical history, including immunizations.

- **By ages 3-5, or according to your child's developmental ability**
  - Assign your child chores appropriate for his/her ability level.
  - Encourage decision-making skills by offering choices.
  - Teach natural consequences of your child's behaviors and choices.
  - Continue involvement in community and recreational activities that include children with and without chronic illness/disabilities.
  - Begin asking "What do you want to do when you grow up?"
  - Begin teaching your child about his/her illness or condition, and self-care skills to meet his/her needs.
  - Encourage your child to eat a nutritional diet and to get regular physical activity and exercise.
  - Begin helping your child interact directly with doctors, nurses, therapists, and teachers.
  - Begin teaching child about relationships, their body and personal space.

- **By ages 6-11, or according to your child's developmental ability**
  - Teach your child the importance of a healthy lifestyle as a foundation for reaching and enjoying his/her dreams.
  - Assess your child's perception and basic knowledge of his/her illness or condition. Build on his/her understanding.
  - Continue teaching your child general self-care and health skills as well as skills related to his/her illness or condition.
  - Discuss relationships and personal safety with your child.
  - Turn to your school district's transition offices to start the planning process for your child. Seek the help of your school district's transition coordinator and your child's teacher to assist in this process.

- **By ages 12-18, or according to your child's developmental ability**
  - Assess your teen's perception and understanding of his/her illness or condition. Fill in gaps.
  - Continue teaching your teen general self-help and health skills as well as skills related to illness or health condition.
  - Begin helping your teen keep a record of his/her medical history, including conditions, operations, treatments (dates, doctors, recommendations).
  - If teen has a 504 plan, encourage her/him to participate in any 504 meetings and keep a record of the meetings.
  - Begin helping your teen take responsibility for making and keeping his/her own medical appointments, ordering his/her own supplies, etc.
  - Begin exploring future health care coverage at age 17.
  - Discuss relationships, sexuality and personal safety with your teen.
  - Help your teen identify and build on his/her strengths.
  - Explore support groups, if teen is interested.
  - Encourage your teen to participate in your child's decisions and choices.
  - Begin helping your child to develop self-advocacy skills.

- **By ages 18-21, or according to your child's developmental ability**
  - Act as a resource and support to young adult.
  - Encourage young adult to participate in support groups and/or organizations relevant to his/her illness or disability.
  - Encourage young adult to participate in community leisure activities such as team sports, volunteering, interest groups, advocacy groups.
  - Finalize health care coverage with young adult.
  - With young adult, finalize transfer of medical care to adult provider.
  - For young adult attending college, encourage continued contact with disabled student services as needed for accommodations.
  - Encourage your adult to investigate services provided by Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) if he/she has not already done so.
  - Encourage the young adult to register to vote and follow relevant policy events in his/her community.

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**Supports and Services to Consider** (see back for contact information)

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**Programs**

- **Transition Toward Preschool**
- **Transition Toward School**
- **Transition Toward Adolescence**
- **Transition Toward Adulthood and Post School Options**

**Years**

- **Birth to 3 Program**
- **Preschool Program**
- **School Program**
- **Post School Program:**
  - Employment 
  - Post Secondary education (2 or 4 year college or vocational school)**