COMMUNITY PROJECT: THE REDWOOD COAST REGIONAL CENTER’S
TRANSITION HANDBOOK FOR CLIENTS’ FAMILIES

By

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This community project has been done in partnership with the Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) and seeks to fit the needs of service coordinators serving transition age clients and their families. There was not a previously existing resource for the families in the Humboldt, Del Note, Mendocino and Lake County area of California that outlines the opportunities, responsibilities and expectations for the future for youth with a developmental disability transitioning to adulthood. This project focused on creating a handbook for the families that the regional center serves that are on their way from the Children’s to the Adult Unit. The methodology behind creating the handbook involved interviews with professionals working either with the regional center or in a similar field with this population. The handbook follows the self-determination model as a theoretical framework of resiliency in determining client success. After receiving feedback from the interview process, a handbook was compiled to address the important topics and presented to RCRC for the agency to edit and distribute.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lanterman Act of 1969 is the key legislative decision that brought about the various regional centers of California, designed to serve individuals with developmental disabilities and their families (Lanterman Act, 2013). Before the Lanterman Act individuals with developmental disabilities were often placed in institutions. Families were often told by their Pediatricians that the best thing to do for the child was to institutionalize them and tell family and friends that the child had died and to basically forget about them (Braun, 1999). This was supposed to help parents cope with the pain, loss, sorrow, and humiliation that came with having a child with a developmental disability. Culturally individuals with disabilities and mental health problems were often hidden from the public eye (Braun, 1999). The institutionalized individuals were often abused, neglected, over-medicated, and kept in very poor conditions. The families of these individuals started to stand up for the rights of their not-forgotten children as citizens to live free from abuse and have access to health care, education, housing, jobs, and access to resources in their local communities, and not sent out of the area to other mental hospitals (Braun, 1999). Starting in the early 1960’s a group of parents, legislators, consultants, and professionals challenged the state by bringing forth the plight of these persons with a developmental disability. For many years people showed concern and became involved and supportive. Developmental disabilities could affect anyone across multiple political spectrums, races, and economic class and therefore gained a lot
of political support during the civil rights era (Braun, 1999). President Kennedy had a sister, Rosemary Kennedy, with a developmental disability, and for the first time people were able to discuss the diagnosis without fear of humiliation (Braun, 1999). The solution was that they had to develop alternatives to institutionalized settings, and a place for families to go to see what options and resources they have in their local communities. This meant creating services such as respite care, special education curriculum, and other services to address the special needs of people with developmental disabilities from the cradle to the grave. A group of parents and professionals, whom had advocated for years, came to Assemblyman Frank Lanterman trying to get the bill passed during the Reagan Era, a time of budget cuts. However Lanterman had political ties that made it possible for him to make a deal and got the bill signed into law on September 4, 1969 by Governor Ronald Reagan. From 1969 to 1973 Assemblyman Frank Lanterman worked with parent advocates across California. Within two terms in office the regional centers grew in numbers from two to the twenty-one regional centers that exist today; one for every 1 million citizens as originally envisioned (Braun, 1999).

In California the Lanterman Act gave way to a life outside of institutionalization for millions of citizens; a life with dignity and inclusion. This project acknowledges the rough road that advocates faced to provide us with the services that exist for today.
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INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to fit the needs of the Redwood Coast Regional Center’s (RCRC) clients’ families when they are going through a time of transition. The transition-age for regional center clients starts at about fourteen- to fifteen-years-of-age till about twenty-two- or twenty-three-years-of-age and covers the time they leave their school programs and enter adulthood, possibly leaving their family home. Many of the clients’ families lack basic information regarding what to expect as their child with developmental disabilities enters adulthood. The handbook that has been created as a result of this community project is intended to make this transition easier by helping families navigate services and prepare for what is to come. The handbook serves as a way to address the important issues these families face and outline their rights and options in their community. The handbook will also serve as an important resource for the RCRC service coordinators working with families. This community project has been focused on the RCRC’s client population and their families living in Humboldt, Del Norte, Mendocino, and Lake Counties in California.

This project is to be done in partnership with the RCRC agency through the Humboldt County office located in Eureka, California and through communication with the partnering Del Norte, Mendocino, and Lake County offices. RCRC is one of twenty-one regional centers that have been established throughout California from state legislation. Sponsored by Assemblyman Frank Lanterman and others, the regional centers were an answer to the needs of families and individuals with developmental
disabilities; and provided legislatively mandated services that are made available throughout the clients’ lifetime (Lanterman Act, 2013). RCRC is a private non-profit corporation funded through a contract with the State General Fund and the federal government (Vision).

To be a client of the regional centers there must be a diagnosis of a developmental disability and the individual must have a substantial handicap in three of seven life skills areas (Lanterman Act, 2013). A developmental disability is defined as an impairment that begins before age 18, is considered permanent and substantially inhibits a person’s capacity to do at least three of the following: take care of themselves, learn, make decisions, walk or move around, speak and understand clearly, earn and manage income, practice self-care, and live independently (Shannon & Tappan, 2011) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:, 2011). The Lanterman Act defines developmental disabilities as Intellectual Disability, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Autism, or other disability that required supports similar to someone with an Intellectual Disability known as fifth category (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:, 2011). This project’s focus is specifically on the transition-aged population of RCRC clientele and their families. The goal of the project is to develop a handbook for the parents/caregivers of this population outlining what to expect in their child’s future and how to be prepared for what is to come as they enter into adulthood.

**Outline of the Problem/Projects Purpose**

The transition from childhood to adulthood is especially tough on vulnerable populations as they face exceptional challenges finding employment, attending college if
they are able, and living independently (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Often times the services and supports, such as vocational programs for this population, serve much older people and are not equipped to address the special needs of young adults (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Individuals with a developmental disability may have limitations that can rule out certain occupations and independent living without specialized assistance (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Disabled youth also have a poverty rate that is 50 percent higher than among other youth (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010), and optional services could provide more economic security and stability while living as independently as possible. This project hopes to lessen the confusion and stress surrounding the various options, services, supports, and responsibilities among families and clients of RCRC. In many cases parents of children with developmental disabilities strive to be supportive but the cumulative demands of a child with special needs, makes the journey to adulthood more frustrating and difficult to adjust to for the whole family (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). This population of transitioning families has been confronted with its own unique challenges of raising a teenager that a handbook could address in a simplified and outlined way which may be useful for parents and caregivers.

The purpose of this project is to create a transition handbook that is informative and easy to use for RCRC clients’ families. A needs assessment was not necessary beforehand as the idea for the handbook was a suggested community project presented by the agency itself (Kasmire, 2013). The handbook is designed to outline the expectations and responsibilities of parents and their children as they make the transition into
adulthood. The topics to be covered in the handbook will come out of the interview discussions with professionals in the local community that serve this population. The discussion around each topic within the handbook is limited since social workers want to avoid overloading and overwhelming clients and their families with too much information. Instead there will be resources listed in the handbook where they can go to and look up more specific information through a website or by contacting someone via phone number. Because each individual with a developmental disability is different with their own unique set of strengths and challenges, creating a simplified and informative handbook that provides key points, and could be used by a variety of people is more effective and therefore only limited information would be appropriate and needed. By using the self-determination model, clients’ families would be able to research for themselves, the specific options available for the purpose of meeting their own individualized needs and goals.

This handbook also seeks to enhance the social work practice within the agency by providing resources for families that are in line with the agencies values. The service coordinators will be able to use the handbook as a resource to refer families to, which may lessen their workload as they manage multiple clients. Clients and their families could also look up information on their own and come to their service coordinators with more specific questions in regards to services and options in the community. This way the program plan for the individual can truly be driven by them and what they want out of their services and available resources in the community.

**Stakeholders and Their Involvement**
Redwood Coast Regional Center’s Client Advocate for the Humboldt and Del Norte counties is involved with this project as a committee member; and provides the perspective of a client that has gone through the transition period successfully. The children’s unit service coordinators throughout RCRC that have transition-age clients, are also considered major stakeholders because as social workers in the field they have the most practice knowledge and understanding of this populations anticipated needs; and are trying to facilitate smooth transitions for their clients and their families as well. The Client Services Managers in both the children and the adult units at the Eureka office have been able to provide support in obtaining resources and connections within the agency and throughout the community. The Director of Client Services has been involved as far as oversight and is supportive in providing authorization or consent to do the project as well as resources for the purpose of compiling a uniform handbook that meets agency criteria. As an agency, RCRC is a major stakeholder in this community project since the handbook is meant for the population they specifically serve and they will have the handbook as a resourceful tool for service coordinators to disseminate to their clients and their families. After the initial draft of the handbook is compiled it will be reviewed by RCRC before it is approved for dissemination.

**Research Question**

What information should be included in a user-friendly handbook targeting the RCRC transition-aged clients’ families that would be most helpful for them?

**Proposed Solution**
The projects proposed solution is to create a simple, user-friendly handbook for RCRC clients’ families about the services available in their community, options for their child’s future, and an outline for the responsibilities of each party involved that can help facilitate the transition in their lives from school to day program. Using the resources found at RCRC, the service coordinators’ knowledge of the services provided to clients, and through discussions with other professionals in the community, a handbook will be compiled that consists of the important resources in the community that are made available to RCRC clients. The handbook can be used as a tool for families, to enable them to take an active role in creating their own success, and being resilient despite the difficulties and stressors involved with having a child with a developmental disability (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). By providing families with adequate information, the handbook will serve as a guide through the transition process. The goal of this community project is to provide the agency with a draft version of a handbook that they can alter and update to their liking and/or standards for their clients.
METHODOLOGY

The initial planning and brainstorming of this project included a panel discussion which took place at Humboldt State University in a Special Education Transition Planning course, taught by project committee member Dr. David Ellerd. The panel included the Client Advocate and the Adult Unit Client Services Manager at RCRC, as well as a representative from the Department of Rehabilitation, who spoke to a group of prospective special education teachers. The panel setting provided a place to discuss the issues surrounding transition planning and the interagency collaboration that is needed to formulate cohesive plans. This discussion was informative and served as a resource for creating the handbook for families in our community. Different types of service providers spoke about client’s right to self-determination and the difficulties associated with navigating resources in a rural community (Ellerd, Gouvea, Kasmire, Miller, & Siler, 2013).

The methodology that was used in creating the transition handbook involved semi-structured interviews with RCRC service coordinators and other service providers throughout the community that work with the handbook’s target population. The subjects interviewed were contacted via purposive snowball sampling methods as collaboration is encouraged with RCRC’s partnering agencies for the purpose of providing holistic services and supports for clients and their families. Interviews were also conducted with special education administrators in the area to try and get a varied perspective on what should be included in the transition handbook. One limitation in the research is that
interviews were not conducted with parents of RCRC clients for the purpose of creating a handbook for them, because they cannot be expected to know and communicate what they do not already have knowledge about. Instead, professionals working in the field will be targeted for interviews because of their previous experience and knowledge from working with RCRC clients and their families during the transition process. The individuals that were interviewed have had previous experience with clients and families graduating out of school programs and entering adulthood, and may know more about the whole process than parents currently going through the transition.

During the interviews, participants were asked what topics they think are important to cover in the handbook and what they hope to see out of the finished product. Interviews also involved discussion around the purpose of the handbook and gathering resources that the participating professionals felt were useful and could possibly go into the handbook. A list of topics and resources was compiled from the interviews and used as an outline which was filled in with more information to create the handbook.

After the initial draft of the handbook has been completed, it will be given to the RCRC agency, which will have permission to modify it in the future and update it with new information as they see fit. This way a living document/resource is created as a tool for service coordinators, and the individual families they serve, to use in planning their transition goals. This handbook is to stay true to being a community project by staying open to feedback and critique so that it is constantly improving to meet the needs of the targeted population.
Theoretical Framework

The theory used for this project is the self-determination theory as it is in line with the RCRC vision (Vision), as well as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Ethical Responsibilities to Clients (Ethical Responsibilities to Clients, 2013). RCRC put a lot of thought and effort into creating their in-depth Vision Statement and it may therefore be included in the handbook as it is the theory that drives practice. A part of the RCRC vision includes “educational efforts which focus on teaching relationships rather than care giving; which teach support rather than control; which teach communication rather than regulation. We promote informed exploration and risk taking,” (Vision). This is important especially with vulnerable populations, such as the developmentally disabled, as they do not always have the ability or power to take control of their lives and live independently. In the NASW’s Ethical Responsibilities to Clients it clearly states: “Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals” (Ethical Responsibilities to Clients, 2013). It also states that “social workers may limit clients’ right to self-determination when, in the social workers’ professional judgment, clients’ actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others” (Ethical Responsibilities to Clients, 2013). This is where individuals with developmental disabilities often get overlooked and their right to self-determination is not always on the forefront of their services, due to safety concerns regarding the clients’ ability to self-govern. RCRC also envisions “all people being empowered to communicate with their own minds and hearts to determine their supports and services,”
regardless of the disability (Vision). Individuals with a developmental disability, if determined to have severe cognitive impairment, may be conserved as well as have a payee to manage their money and therefore may feel like they have little to none decision-making capabilities in their own lives (Stancliffe, Aber, Springborg, & Elkin, 2000). Service coordinators that operate from the self-determination model of practice understand that their clients’ voice and opinion is still very important to their service plan.

At RCRC Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are designed by the service coordinators and their clients when they meet to discuss the goals the client has in mind and the support services in place that are there to assist them in reaching those goals (Lanterman Act, 2013). Teachers are also expected to design Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special learning disabilities (California Department of Education, 2013). Self-determination is more than a theory for this community project as it is a right and an ethical responsibility that service providers have to their client populations (Ethical Responsibilities to Clients, 2013). The hope for this handbook is to serve as a means of providing information and resources to individuals and their families so that they can make their own informed decisions regarding their future.
DISCUSSION

After conducting ten interviews with various service providers, it was clear that many professionals in the community were on the same page as to the need for the transition handbook. They were all in agreement that the handbook would be a valuable and useful tool for them when working with clients’ families as they approach the transition out of school and into adulthood. Each interview brought about different topics from multiple perspectives, with each interviewee addressing concerns specific to their scope and level of practice.

The handbook that has been created as a result of the findings from the interview process covers topics such as: an overview of the regional center system, educational laws, a transition time line, adult responsibilities, safety awareness, puberty/sexual health, independent living skills, supported employment, Social Security Income, Medi-Cal, In-Home Support Services, conservatorship as well as alternatives to conservatorship, resources/websites, and also addresses the grief also known as constant sorrow experienced by parents of children with special needs. Each of these topics was brought up and their importance to the target families was discussed in depth throughout the interviews. Certain service providers addressed some things as more important than others, and ideas varied as to what was the most important. Conservatorship was an important topic that came up repeatedly as something that needed to be addressed as well as having a time line for transitioning or graduating out of school.
When asked if there was anything that the participants felt should be specifically exclude from the handbook, only one participant responded by suggesting that sexual health and the concept of constant sorrow or grief should be delicately brought up so as to not overwhelm certain parents. They also mentioned that it can be difficult for some parents to look at and discuss options that are not realistically available for their child. Another topic that was suggested to be avoided in a handbook was addressing planning for what happens if the parents or main care givers pass away. This was thought to be a topic that is too emotionally driven to be appropriately discussed though a handbook.

**Limitations**

The handbook is limited by the amount of in-depth information that is appropriate to provide for this type of resource. As the handbook is expected to be used by a variety of individuals with very specific needs, it is important that general information is covered in an effective and informative way, while not being too overwhelming for parents to look at. There are some resources that address the transition steps for clients and their families but are too dense and all the information can be overwhelming to look at (Social Security Administration, 2013) (Blackmon, 2007). The handbook needs to be user-friendly and accessible if it is going to be helpful in meeting the diverse needs of the target population.

This project was also limited by the specific time constraints of the academic program from which it was started and therefore only a draft of the handbook could be completed in time. As an agency, RCRC operates on different time constraints when it comes to having the final draft approved by the Board of Directors, and to have the final
printed copy to be disseminated to the clients’ families. This community project was also limited by the few professionals that were able to participate in the interviews given the time constraints and their ability to meet to discuss the possible topics within the allotted time frame. However, as this is an on-going community project, feedback from the community will be welcomed by the agency and multiple revisions may be made of the initial draft created through this project. In this way a living document has been created to adapt to the ever changing laws and regulations which affect transition services.

**Suggestions for Future Projects**

The discussions with the research participants not only provided useful information as to the topics to cover in the handbook, but also identified ways in which agencies can collaborate in more effective ways during this time in the clients’ lives. One suggestion for the future that came up frequently was an inter-agency collaboration or responsibilities map. This could be resource for agencies to use to collaborate more effectively, and may also be helpful for the families navigating these resources.

Another idea that was brainstormed in discussion was for each client and/or their family to have their own binder of services and providers. The binder could have the client’s more personal information and would be tailored to their more specific needs. The transition binder could also be a place for them to keep copies of their individual program plans and questions they may have throughout the transition process. This project may require additional funding and increased one-on-one support for implementation, for the clients and families who would chose to use it.
The prospect of having a Resource or Job Fair event also came up as an option as an opportunity for service providers to get together under one roof and show off their services to prospective clients looking to see what is out in the community. This could prove to be an excellent event and would require more community collaboration efforts and resources. The barrier to this idea in a smaller rural community is that our resources may be scarce, and there are waiting lists for receiving some services. However, a community resource fair could be done and may be helpful for soon to be graduating students.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

This community project follows the National Association of Social Workers’ Ethical Responsibilities to Clients by acknowledging the client’s right to self-determination in service planning (Ethical Responsibilities to Clients, 2013). Since RCRC services are voluntary and their program plans are individually driven, the handbook is a continuation of this theory into practice. Service Coordinators at RCRC will be able to use the handbook as a resource to provide their clients with information and options when discussing future planning. The handbook can serve as a self-determination tool or guide for service providers and families navigating the available resources during their transition.

**Conclusion**

The transition planning handbook that has been created as a result of this community project has been given to RCRC as a draft for the initial handbook that is to go into print throughout the agency. Due to time constraints the handbook was not up to
printing standards when handed over to the agency, but RCRC has a draft that can begin revision checks within the agency itself. The regional center may alter, update, and distribute the handbook as their own resource for parents and other family members of clients between the ages of fourteen to twenty-three. The handbook may eventually be added to their website so that it is more accessible to clients’ families. After the handbook gets distributed to various families and across agencies that serve this population, RCRC may receive feedback about the handbook and alter it to better serve the community as they see fit. The content and resources included in the handbook may be updated as needed to provide current information to families. Even though only an initial draft of the handbook was able to be completed prior to handing the document over to the agency, a living document and needed resource has been created as a result of this community project.
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http://www.hdnselpa.org
What should I expect next? How do I plan ahead?

The Redwood Coast Regional Center’s Transition Planning Handbook for Parents

Things you should know when preparing your child/teenager with a developmental disability for the transition from school-aged to adulthood.
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Introduction

This handbook is intended for the Redwood Coast Regional Center’s clients’ families or families with a child with a disabling condition similar to a developmental disability. This handbook was created by Savannah Gouvea in partnership with the Humboldt State University’s Social Work graduate degree program but may be updated by the Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) at any time. The purpose for this handbook is to be used as a guide and may be revised or changed to fit the needs of RCRC families.

This handbook may seem overwhelming the first time you look at it. Please keep in mind that these changes happen over time and that you may always come back to certain sections when they are appropriate for you. The information that is provided in this handbook is meant to guide you in the right direction. Because each RCRC client is unique and requires individualized care, not everything will fit for your specific situation. You may need more information than what is provided which is why contact information and other resources have been provided throughout the handbook.

Transitioning to adulthood may take many years to achieve, each person doing so in their own time. Adulthood can also look different for each person. You will have lots of help along the way with the process of transitioning services and supports, and you can always talk to your Service Coordinator if you have further questions or concerns regarding your plan.

The Regional Centers

The Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) is just one of twenty-one regional centers in California. Each regional center is designed to meet the needs of the specific geographical community. The regional centers operate as private, nonprofit corporations that contract with the States Department of Developmental Services (DDS) (California Department of Developmental Services, 2007), to provide persons with developmental disabilities and their families’ services and supports to lead health, independent as possible, and productive lives as active members of their communities (Vision, 1998).

Regional centers serve individuals with a developmental disability which is attributed to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or other disabling condition that closely related to an intellectual disability, and is likely to continue indefinitely. The developmental disability shall originate before age eighteen and constitute a substantial disability that significantly limits functioning in three or more of the following areas: (1) receptive and expressive language, (2) learning, self-care, mobility, self-direction, ad (3) capacity for independent living, and/or economic self-sufficiency.
Important Law: California’s regional centers were established in 1969 by the Lanterman Act, which states that individuals with developmental disabilities are entitled to services to help them lead healthy, productive, and rewarding lives. The guidelines for providing these services are outlined in the Welfare and Institution Codes and in the Title 17 regulations. In the field of human services, the regional centers are unique to the state of California (Lanterman Act, 2013).

Once determined eligible for regional center services, each family will be assigned a Service Coordinator. This person will work with the family to help provide information, support, and referrals to resources. The Service Coordinator, client, and the family are to meet at least once a year, usually in the child’s birth month, to go over their Individualized Program Plan (IPP). The IPP is an important document that outlines the goals, strengths, objectives, and plans that the individual and their family would like to address over specified time lines.

The Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) works with families who live in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino and Lake Counties. If you have any questions about the regional center services, please call our nearest office or visit our website: http://www.redwoodcoastrc.org

**Del Norte**
1301 A Northcrest Drive  
Crescent City, CA. 95531  
(707) 464-7488  
Fax: (707) 465-4230

**Humboldt**
525 2nd Street, Suite 300  
Eureka, CA. 95501  
(707) 445-0893  
Fax to 3rd floor: (707) 444-3409  
Fax to 4th floor: (707) 444-2563  
Toll Free: 1-888-584-9473

**Lake**
180 3rd Street  
Lakeport, CA. 95453  
(707) 262-0470  
Fax: (707) 262-0475  
Toll Free: 1-888-909-0470

**Mendocino**
1116 Airport Park Boulevard  
Ukiah, CA. 95482  
(707) 462-3832  
Fax: (707) 462-3314  
Toll Free: 1-800-281-3832

270 Chestnut Street, Suite A  
Fort Bragg, CA. 95437  
(707) 964-6387  
Fax: (707) 964-0226  
Toll Free: 1-866-515-6387
The RCRC Vision Statement

The RCRC vision statement was adopted in March of 1998 by the RSDSC Board of Directors and is a projection of the ideal future. At RCRC, we understand that this may not be the way things are, but we believe that with work it is possible. The in-depth vision took a whole team time, dedication, and firm values to create and is appreciated by all RCRC employees (Vision, 1998).

It is the vision of the Redwood Coast Regional Center that all people in our community, including individuals with developmental disabilities, will live, learn, work, travel, and play in the best most inclusive environments.

We envision strong, healthy individuals and families whose emotional resources are renewed and supported by community and regional center. We envision full access to a complete array of health services throughout life.

We envision a system of services and supports that is determined by the individuals served. We envision a process that is complementary to the individual’s own life, and which does not intrude upon the person’s chosen lifestyle. We envision people residing in the living arrangement of their choice. We recognize that life is made meaningful by loving, being loved, and having friends and relationships. We acknowledge that life is enhanced by contribution, responsibility and the opportunity to learn new ideas and to engage in new experiences, including educational opportunities, social interactions, and work activities. We envision a system of services and supports which acknowledge the person’s age, lifestyle preferences and culture, and which is fluid and ever changing.

We envision all people being empowered to communicate with their own minds and hearts to determine their supports and services.

We also subscribe to a vision which represents the highest commitment to excellence. We envision a commitment to honesty, compassion, trustworthiness, flexibility, responsiveness, accountability, accessibility, creativity and a passion for community service.

We envision a joyful and supportive environment in which trust is the cornerstone of all interactions, humor is appreciated and everyone participates fully in teamwork. We envision one community. We value diversity and honor individuals.

We strive to be accessible, to be knowledgeable, to be accountable, to accomplish tasks in a timely and effective manner, and to offer and receive feedback formally and informally on how we are doing in fulfilling our mission and realizing our vision.

We envision all members of the support community having access to adequate resources, including funding, in order to provide desired services and supports. We envision a collaboration between members of the community which creates a whole of services and supports which is greater than the sum of its component contributors. We
acknowledge that shared learning, communication and planning activities will provide the greatest benefit for those individuals we mutually serve, as well as for our respective members. We envision a culture in which all members of the community are respected, supported, honored, and recognized for their diverse contributions and valued services.

We envision educational efforts which focus on teaching relationships rather than care giving; which teach support rather than control; which teach communication rather than regulation. We promote informed exploration and risk taking, with opportunities for feedback. We envision individual and community satisfaction as the standard by which all services are measured.
Leaving School

The idea of your child/student leaving school can be a scary and intimidating concept, but careful preparation can be the gateway to a less stressful transition over all. There are services and supports in place through the school that can help plan for smoother transitions into adulthood.

Please review the educational laws that outline the students’ right to a free and appropriate public education. Knowing these laws is the first step in advocating for needed services. While the information provided in this handbook is a brief overview, there are resources which outline more of the specifics of these laws. Ask school administration or your service coordinator for more information.

Educational Laws

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is legislature relating to special education and includes transition planning services. Special education programs throughout California are governed by a combination of state and federal laws. Under these laws, school systems must provide each student with a free and appropriate education, in the least restrictive environment as possible, until the student’s 22nd birthday (California Department of Education, 2013).

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a plan that each public school child who receives a special education and/or related services must have for the school. Every plan should be individually designed to outline the services and supports that are in place to meet the student’s learning needs. The IEP meetings create an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related service personnel, students (when appropriate) and other invited support members that are important to the student to work together. These meetings provide a place for the support/planning team to discuss services to improve educational results for the student and plan for their future.

The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is the section of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines transition goals and services for the student between the ages of 14 to 22 years old. The ITP is the template for mapping out long-term goals into adulthood from the annual target goals and objectives as they are defined in the IEP. The law requires that transition services and plans address the following areas: instruction, employment and other post-school adult living objectives, community experiences, daily living skills if appropriate, and functional vocational evaluation (Blackmon, 2007).

The GED test is a four-subject high school equivalency test that measures skills required by high schools and requested by colleges and employers. The four subjects are science, social studies, mathematical reasoning, and reasoning through language arts. After
passing the GED® test, a credential will be issued by the state and you will receive a GED® transcript to apply to college, start training, or apply for jobs. The test is part of the only high school equivalency program built to help adults qualify for college, training, or a good job with good wages. For more information visit the GED Testing Service website: https://ged.com/

**504 plan (useful for post high school education):** A 504 plan spells out the modifications and accommodations that will be needed for these students to have an opportunity perform at the same level as their peers. The "504" in "504 plan" refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which specifies that no one with a disability can be excluded from participating in federally funded programs or activities, including elementary, secondary or postsecondary schooling Phone number # 1-800-872-5327

**College of the Redwoods** often has living skills classes for people with disabilities and are offered at little or no cost. For more information contact Disabled Student Program Support at College of the Redwoods at (707) 476-4280.

7351 Tompkins Hill Rd., Eureka, CA 95501
www.redwoods.edu
http://www.redwoods.edu/District/dsps/index.asp

- Financial aid link- Phone # (1-800-433-3243) / https://fafsa.ed.gov/
- California colleges - https://secure.californiacolleges.edu/

**Focusing on Employment Skills**

The school can assist students in obtaining needed skills for employment in the future. The following are skills that are required for today’s workforce and are skills that should be addressed in the student’s ITP (Blackmon, 2007).

- The ability to read at a basic level
- The ability to perform basic mathematics operations
- The ability to work in groups with persons of various backgrounds
- The ability to communicate both orally and in writing
- The ability to use personal computers to carry out simple tasks, such as word processing.

**The Difference Between School and Day Programs**
There is a difference between schools and day programs when it comes to the expectations placed on the individual. It is important to be aware of these differences so that you can plan to join a program that best fits your individually tailored needs.

- Day programs serve more people than students in a classroom.
- The physical environment is larger.
- Day programs have a broader age range in one setting.
- There is a greater expectation for self-reliance and independence for work programs.
Questions to Ask in Transition Planning

It is a good idea to start reviewing possible day programs early. After you and your child have decided what your interests are, check out the programs that provide the services. Take notes and review them with your child, make sure that their voice and opinion get heard. Chances are if your child is not interested in what they are doing, it will be harder for them to transition out of their previous environment. Listed below are possible questions to ask when developing your transition plan.

Information About the Agency

Don’t forget to note the location, phone number, name of the contact person, and the date of your visit.

1. How do you determine who is appropriate for your services?
2. Do you use person centered planning to develop a program for the person? If you use person centered planning, show me an example.
3. What is your staffing ratio?
4. What kinds of training does your staff receive?
5. How do you measure successes for the person?
6. What work activities are available for the person?
7. What fun activities do you provide?
8. How much time is spent in the community?
9. If this is for a residential home, can you show me a menu?
10. How do you provide transportation?
11. Describe a day at your residence or program.
12. What makes your program unique?

Other Things To Consider When Searching For The Right Match

- Start visiting programs early! The program you want could have a waiting list.
- The size of the program
- Location, accessibility: transportation to/from the program
- Physical structure
- Environment
- Focus of the Program
- The individual should have an opportunity to communicate their choice
- What would make your adult child feel best?
Transition Planning Timeline

The below timeline is a suggested check list of possible things to address in your transition plan. Remember you are not alone in preparing for this transition, and it can take time and practice to complete it all. It is important to empower young adults while remaining realistic about the adult world we currently live in. As you prepare for these shifts and transitions remember that change is the nature of things.

Between 14 to 17 Years of Age:

- Identify and begin learning and practicing skills necessary for independent living.
- Teach your child how to use public transportation to get to/from place to place and/or how to make arrangements.
- Consider the Type of High School Program Your Child Will Pursue: Degree or Certificate/Post-Secondary Program
- Begin Formal Transition Planning at School
- The student and their family need to decide which direction will best suit them
- Identify interests, strengths, and preferences
- Identify accommodations or requirements related to reaching your goals
- Identify community support services and programs such as Centers for Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation, County Services, etc.
  - Visit adult day programs early!! It can take time finding the right match and there may be a waiting list.

At 18 Years of Age:

“Age of the Majority” – the age when a person acquires all the rights and responsibilities of being an adult. The school should notify the parent of this legal transition by age 17. (See Adult Responsibilities)

- Obtain a State issued Identification Card through your local DMV (drivers licenses not required). The ID card can be used to prove your identity, age, and residence in a variety of situations.
  - California DMV Website: [http://www.dmv.com/ca/california/apply-id-card](http://www.dmv.com/ca/california/apply-id-card)
- Apply for SSI and disability income
  - Understand eligibility criterion as it relates to work options, not all income qualifies for deductions.
- Know how to manage money and/or discuss payee services.
  - Open a bank account, if they don’t have one already.
- Be aware of any health insurance plan or coverage changes if a part of a group family plan
  - Apply for Medi-Cal
o Pediatric medical care changes to a Primary Care Physician, time to check out
other doctors in the area.
✓ Apply for In-Home Support Services (IHSS) - respite hours/eligibility based on need
✓ Think about other housing options
  o Apply for Section 8 list (if desired independent living or SLS)
  o Option for group home or other living situations explored if requested.
✓ Continue to work on Independent Living Skills at home

**Between 19 to 20 Years of Age:**

✓ Check CCS needs, final chance for funding.
  o California Children's Services (CCS) is a state program for children with certain
diseases or health problems. Through this program, children up to 21 years old
can get the health care and services they need. CCS will connect you with
doctors and trained health care people who know how to care for your child with
special health care needs. Phone# (916) 445-4171
✓ Learn and practice appropriate communication and social skills for different settings:
employment, school, recreation, etc.
✓ Plan community activities, practice social participation
✓ Visit programs
✓ Practice independent living skills such as budgeting, shopping, cooking, and general
housekeeping
✓ Begin developing a resume and update it as needed

**At Age 21:** Get ready!

✓ Check insurance coverage
✓ CCS is no longer available.
✓ Try jobs or visit programs
✓ Select and apply for programs and/or jobs

**At Age 22:**

✓ Have a place to live
✓ Be involved in a job or day program
✓ Create friendships, find pleasures
✓ Develop support team
✓ Private medical insurance will often expire
Adult Responsibilities

At age eighteen, whether they have a disability or not, a person’s rights and responsibilities increase considerably. This includes the transfer of legal rights from parent to child, unless the court limits those rights. The IDEA requires local school districts to notify parents one year prior to the transfer of decision making from parent to child. Listed below are some things to consider as your child enters adulthood.

- Adults can vote.
- Adults can be called for jury duty.
- Parents are not legally required to support adults.
- Men are required to register for the military once they turn eighteen.
- Adults are required to pay state and federal taxes.
- Adults may receive credit card applications.
- At age 18, a person can marry without consent of their parents, open their own bank account, and enter into contracts (like leases).
- At age 18, a person is allowed to purchase cigarettes and gamble.
- Adults are liable for their own traffic violations. Legal issues are no longer handled in the juvenile court system.
- At age 21, a person is allowed to buy and drink alcohol, and is allowed to purchase a firearm (shotgun, rifle, or handgun).
Transportation

Getting from point A to point B safely is important because throughout our lives we are often commuting from place to place. There are many ways of traveling, car bus, bicycle, or even walking.

**Bicycle:**
Address safe riding practices and obtain proper safety gear for the road such as a helmet, reflective material, and lights.

**School option:** (for students enrolled in college level courses only)
The disability resource centers at College of the Redwoods 707-476-4280 and Humboldt State University have a service that will transport you back and forth anywhere on the campus. Phone # 707-826-4678. Students also have the ability to ride the public bus system for free.

**Public Transportation or Bus:**
Look at the bus schedule where you live and get to know your personalized route. When looking at future housing options, colleges, and/or work sites or day programs, you can also check out the bus routes nearby before deciding if it will work for you.

**Dial-ride option:**
Dial-a-Ride/Lift is a specialized door-to-door transit system which operates within the City and surrounding areas. The service is provided to those individuals who are unable to use the regular bus system. Proof of disability is required to be eligible for this service. You may obtain certification through your local County Transit Authority.

For Humboldt County: (707) 443-0826 or [http://www.redwoodtransit.org/](http://www.redwoodtransit.org/)
For Del Note County: (707) 464-6400 or [http://www.redwoodcoasttransit.org/](http://www.redwoodcoasttransit.org/)
For Mendocino County: 1 (800) 696-4MTA or [http://www.mendocinotransit.org/](http://www.mendocinotransit.org/)
For Lake County: (707) 263-3334 or (707) 994-3334 or [http://laketransit.org/](http://laketransit.org/)

**Independently Owned Vehicle/Car:**
Go to the local DMV to find out what accommodations are needed to obtain a driver’s license, and apply for a disabled parking permit if applicable. Visit the *California Department of Motor Vehicles* website for more information: [http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/home/dmv.htm](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/home/dmv.htm)
Safety Awareness

Having a child with a developmental disability might heighten your concern around safety awareness, which is understandable. It is important to discuss safety awareness with your planning team around preventing abuse to and from the child. Teaching your child how to advocate and speak for themselves is important, and there may be trainings nearby (ask your Service Coordinator). There are many factors that go into creating a safety plan and some of the ones to consider are listed below.

Adult Protective Services

If you suspect abuse is occurring or that the adult is getting taken advantage of, advocate! Call your Service Coordinator at RCRC or your nearest Adult Protection Service agency. If it is an emergency, call 911 or your local police department.

For residents in Del-Norte County:
Department of Health & Human Services
880 Northcrest Drive, Crescent City, CA. 95531
24 Hour Abuse Hotline: (707) 464-3191

For residents in Humboldt County:
Department of Health & Human Services
808 E Street, Eureka, CA. 95501
(707) 476-2100 or (866) 527-8614
24 Hour Abuse Hotline: (707) 445-7715

For residents in Mendocino County:
Health and Human Services
737 South State Street, P.O. Box 839, Ukiah, CA. 95482
Ukiah: (707) 463-7900 or (877) 327-1799
Fort Brag: (707) 962-1102 or (877) 327-1677
Willet: (707) 456-3740 or (800) 575-4357

For residents in Lake County:
Department of Social Services
15975 Anderson Ranch Parkway, P.O. Box 9000, Lower Lake, CA. 95457
(707) 995-4680
24 Hour Abuse Hotline: (800) 386-4090
**Americans with Disability Act (ADA):** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It also mandates the establishment of TDD/telephone relay services.

Phone # 800 - 514 - 0301 (voice) / 800 - 514 - 0383 (TTY)

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**Preparing For Natural Disasters in Our Area**

Preparing for natural disasters is something that each of us should consider. Throughout Del-Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, and Lake Counties in California we may experience earthquakes, tsunami, forest fires, drought, and floods among other natural disasters. Teaching your child how to be prepared for an emergency as much as possible, in multiple settings, could be the difference between life and death.

**Tips for your safety:**

- Know your escape route: have a plan, know where to meet, review it and practice it.
- Be prepared! Natural disasters can happen at any time without warning. It is important to always be prepared with a bag of essentials or emergency kit, possibly stored near an exit route (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, AARP, American Red Cross, National Organization on Disability, FEMA, 2014). Some examples of items to consider are the following:
  - Extra Medications
  - Water
  - Food
  - Blanket
  - Flash Light
  - Batteries

**Other Resources that Address Safety**

- To keep track of the most recent earthquakes around the world and locally check out the *Map of Earthquakes Today* website: [http://earthquaketrack.com/](http://earthquaketrack.com/)
- For more information about preparing for natural disasters visit the *National Disasters Ready* website: [http://www.ready.gov/natural-disasters](http://www.ready.gov/natural-disasters)

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**Puberty and Sexual Health**

Going through puberty and dealing with the changing hormones in one's body is something that happens to all of us, regardless of a personal developmental delay. It is important to start having discussions about the appropriate ways of dealing with these hormones as soon as they come up. Each family has their own cultural standards and norms, but it is strongly encouraged...
to engage in communication around the normal changes that happen and how to address them in a socially appropriate way.

The regional center has resources that can help prepare for these discussions. Contact your service coordinator to see about how you can access more information.
Independent Living Skills

Each child has their own unique set of skills in regards to Independent Living Skills. Regardless of future placement plans, it is important to address basic living skills such as self-care, cooking, employment, housing, money management, etc. Behavior services may be put in place to help families teach these skills in the home and community settings. Some living skills may also be addressed through the IEP with the school as a part of their transition plan. It is important to work on these goals consistently to develop the needed skills necessary for adult living.

Supported Employment

The school system can help address this during the student IEP process. Work skills may be addressed in the curriculum and practiced in the classroom. Transition planning goals in the schools may include resume building and job training. It is important to remember that once a student is 18 years of age they will be the decision-maker/signer in the meetings. Discuss with your teen what they plan for the future.

Some Questions to Think About When Discussing Employment:

- Does my adult child have behaviors that could limit their employment opportunities?
- If my adult child cannot read is that a real barrier?
- What is it that they like to do?
- What is it about their ideal job (if they have one) that they like?

**Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR):**
Is a federal/state program designed to obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities. For more information visit [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/), or call (707) 445-6300.

**SSI Ticket to Work Program:**
You became eligible to participate in the Ticket to Work program when you started receiving SSDI or SSI benefits based on disability. Participation in the Ticket program is free and voluntary; if you decide to participate, you can contact any authorized employment service provider in your area to see if the services they offer are right for you. These providers, called Employment Networks (ENs), offer specialized services such as career counseling, vocational rehabilitation, and job placement and training. You may also receive services from your local vocational rehabilitation agency and then receive ongoing services from an EN. To learn more about the Ticket to Work program visit: [http://www.yourtickettowork.com](http://www.yourtickettowork.com), or call 1-855-835-0010

**Important to know:**
• The government does not count the first $65 of earned income plus one-half of the amount over $65. Therefore, SSI benefits will be reduced by only $1 for every $2 you earn over $65.
• STUDENT EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION - If you are a student under age 22, they may exclude up to $1,750 of gross earnings in a month (but not more than $7,060 in calendar year 2014) in figuring your countable income.

Living Arrangement Options

As your adult child grows up the thought of them leaving the family home may come up in your transition planning discussions. This can bring up some fears and doubts but it is something that with the right preparation doesn’t have to be so bad. The most important issue of deciding where to live is safety. It is important to address your concerns with your service coordinator when discussing the right placement for your child and developing a safety plan.

Important things to keep in mind when looking for housing:
  ▪ Safety
  ▪ Affordability
  ▪ Social environment
  ▪ Transportation

There are multiple living arrangement options in the community which are tailored to fit the individuals’ needs depending on their required level of care. Given that each individual has their own unique set of living skills and daily habits or routines, it is important to interview multiple placements to find the right match.

**Foster homes:** are licensed family settings for adults who are unable to live alone due to physical, emotional, or developmental impairments. The home provides 24 hour care for no more than 5 functionally impaired residents. Residents receive meals, support, supervision and assistance with personal cares and living skills, as needed. The foster home needs to be licensed.

**Supported living Services (SLS):** consists of a broad range of services to adults with developmental disabilities who choose to live in homes they own or rent/lease in the community. SLS may include:

  ▪ Assistance with selecting and moving into a home;
  ▪ Choosing personal attendants and housemates;
  ▪ Acquiring household furnishings;
- Common daily living activities and emergencies;
- Becoming a participating member in community life; and,
- Managing personal financial affairs, as well as other supports

Low-income housing: refers to residences for individuals or families with low annual household income. There are many such housing programs that are privately, state, or federally operated and funded. The purpose of is to provide places for people to live at a reasonable cost for them to afford. For more information visit the California Department of Housing and Community Development website: [http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/affordable-housing.html](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/affordable-housing.html)

Section 8: to get more information and/or apply for Section 8 Housing visit the Go Section 8 website ([http://www.gosection8.com/](http://www.gosection8.com/)) or call (866) 466-7328.
Social Security Income, Medi-Cal and In-Home Support Services

Social Security Income (SSI)

At age 18, persons with a developmental disability are eligible for monthly payments from the federal government called SSI. As an adult, these payments are based on their own personal income only, and their spouse if married. For more detailed information check out the Social Security website (http://www.socialsecurity.gov/).

To qualify for SSI a person must live in the United States, have a disability, submit an application, and their resources or income must not exceed $2000 a month (not including home and car).

To apply some of the documents to may need may include ones social security card, birth certificate, work history, a physician’s report, medical records, and proof of condition.

SSI money may be deducted from wages if earned, however if income earned through an educational program it can be waived and not count against SSI earnings. To make an appointment at your local office, call this toll free phone number 1-800-772-1213.

Payee services: When a person needs assistance in managing their money, the Social Security Administration may appoint a close contact or another interested party (like the regional center) to serve as a representative payee. The person’s SSI benefits and other sources of income are then paid to the representative payee on the beneficiary’s behalf. The payee can then budget the account as appropriate.

Special needs trust: A Special Needs Trust allows the parent or caregiver to set aside money for the future care of their loved one living with a disability while protecting their U.S. government benefits such as Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid. In order to qualify for these benefits, the individual can have no more than $2,000 in cash assets. A monetary gift, settlement, or inheritance will cancel these benefits, leaving the individual with both the need to manage the money themselves and, most likely, not have enough money to support their lifetime needs. A special needs trust allows for money to be saved for the individual without affecting their needed monthly benefits.

Medi-Cal Insurance

Medi-Cal (or Medicaid as it is often called in other states) is a state and federal program that helps with medical costs for some people with low income and limited resources. Some families may have Medi-Cal in addition to their private insurance, and this program can vary
from state to state. If someone receives SSI payments, medical assistance (Medi-Cal) is automatic; a separate application is not necessary.

The toll free phone number for Medi-Cal is 1-800-633-4227 or you may visit their website at http://www.medi-cal.ca.gov/ for more information and to apply.

In-Home Support Services (IHSS)

IHSS is a program out of the Department of Social Services that provides aid to individuals who are unable to remain safely in their own home without the aid of a care provider.

Check out this website for more information: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/agedblinddisabled/pg1785.htm
Conservatorship

Conservatorship may be something that gets brought up when discussing adult responsibilities and limited personal capabilities. A conservatorship is a legal proceeding involving a judge who may appoint a conservator to manage the affairs of a conservatee if there is strong evidence that the conservatee is incapable of providing his/her own basic needs (Conservatorship, 2013). To get conservatorship started first there must be a filing of a petition and other required forms with the Superior Court. A court hearing will follow approximately four weeks after filing the petition.

There are different types of conservatorship based on the physical and mental condition of the conservatee. If the conservatee cannot manage their own financial affairs there may be a conservator of the estate. However there can be a conservator of just the person, the estate, or both. Generally a conservator has no control over the wages of the conservatee and there are a variety of transactions that require specific court approval based on necessity.

For individuals with developmental disabilities a limited conservatorship would apply. A limited conservatorship allows the conservatee to retain rights that he/she is able to exercise while giving the conservator only certain specified powers. For this kind of conservatorship the regional center will receive notice of the filed petition and will file an advisory report with the court on the appropriateness of the conservatorship.

Depending on the type of conservatorship the conservator may have specific powers. These powers may include but are not limited to: determining the residence of the conservatee, access to confidential records, to contract, consenting or withholding consent to medical treatment on behalf of the conservatee, and investing the funds of the conservatee.

Generally the law prefers that a family member be appointed conservator but additionally the court can appoint non-relatives, professional conservators, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. The California State Association of Public Administrators, Public Guardians and Public Conservators website has more information regarding each county (http://www.capapgpc.org/).

Conservatorships can last for different amounts of time depending on the specific type but generally can last up to the death of the conservatee, conservator, or upon a court order. They may also be terminated yearly, again depending on the type of conservatorship appointed by the court.

A proposed conservatee will be notified of a petition to the court and has a right to attend the hearing and oppose the conservatorship. They also have the automatic right to an attorney and
in limited conservatorships they may have the county pay for an attorney if the person cannot afford to pay.

The conservator has certain responsibilities to the conservatee and must take actions only in the best interest and with the utmost loyalty and concern for the conservatee. They must take into account the personal wishes of the conservatee and attempt to place them in the least restrictive environment as possible. A conservator must appropriately exercise their powers granted by the court.

There are still certain things that a conservator does not have the right to do unless there is a specific court order stating such powers. This includes the consent to sterilization, involuntary placement in a locked mental health facility or state development center, and the consent to the use of experimental drugs or therapies with some exceptions.

For more information about conservatorship you can visit the California Registry website: http://www.calregistry.com/resources/conservatorship.htm

Alternatives to Conservatorship

This might include payee services and exploring different banking options. At RCRC we encourage imagining the least restrictive environment and supporting individual choice and independence as much as possible but understand the need for conservatorship given certain situations. Please contact your service coordinator for more information
Addressing Feelings of Grief and Loss

Having a child with a developmental disability is tough and there can be a certain level of feeling loss associated with having a child with special needs. Welcome to Holland is a poem written by a parent and describes her own unique journey of what it is like. The poem addresses the grief and loss that can be experienced by parents but frames the experience in an overall positive light.

Welcome To Holland

Emily Perl Kingsley writes I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability — to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip — to Italy. You buy a bunch of guidebooks and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum, the Michelangelo David, the gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bag and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland." "Holland?!!" you say. "What do you mean, Holland?" I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy. But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to some horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy a new guidebook. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around, and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips, Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

The pain of that will never, ever, go away, because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.
But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

Written by Emily Perl Kingsley (2011)
Resources and Websites

There are additional resources and more detailed information on the websites listed throughout the handbook which you may find helpful. You may access these websites at your local county library if limited by internet access within the home. The following resources are formatted following the American Psychological Association (APA) standards. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s transition plan you may contact your RCRC Service Coordinator.


What is a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELP A)? (n.d.). Retrieved from Humboldt-Del Norte SELPA Special Education Local Plan Area: http://www.hdnselpa.org