

Person Centered Planning

Person-Centered Planning for Students with Disabilities

What is Person-Centered Planning?

Person-Centered Planning is a process used to help families, friends and others assist students with disabilities in preparing for their future. This process can help students share their own interests and dreams and develop a plan to turn them into reality.

Why is Person-Centered Planning Important for Students with Disabilities?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a student's Individual Education Program (IEP) include transition planning by age 16 or earlier, if appropriate. In Georgia, the Transition Plan is completed no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student enters the ninth grade, is sixteen years old, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team. The Plan is then updated annually. Person-centered planning helps to identify information needed to develop the Transition Plan and reflects the student's interests and preferences, accomplishments and skills, what they still need to learn and what they want to do when they leave school.

What is the First Step in Creating a Person-Centered Plan?

The first step is to have a pre-meeting to design the planning process. The pre-meeting can include key participants such as the student, the parents and a teacher. Decisions made during this pre-meeting will include:

- Who do we invite to be part of the team?
- Where and when will the meeting take place?
- What does the student need in order to fully participate in the meeting?
- Which person-centered process will be used?
- Who will be the facilitator?

What are the Different Types of Person-Centered Planning?

There are many different ways to do person-centered planning, but the two most common methods are MAPS and PATHs.

MAPS (McGill Action Planning)

The MAPS process uses a creative approach that focuses on inclusion, relationships, and the individual gifts of the student. Working together, the team answers questions relating to the student's past experiences, future dreams and fears, the student's current situation and preferences, and the student's community and home life. The team then uses this information to come up with actions that will help the student move toward his or her dreams. A step-by-step plan is developed that includes team responsibilities and completion dates.

PATH Model (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)

The PATH process uses graphic illustration or drawing to help plan a future for the student. It identifies long term and short term goals and helps to identify specific steps for reaching these goals using a backwards planning method. The PATH starts with the Dream (called the North Star) and a goal for the next year. Then, a six step plan is developed to get the student to the desired goal.

How do I Choose a Facilitator?

A facilitator can be a family member or friend, a school staff person, or another professional. A facilitator needs to be a good listener and to be able to work creatively to discover the dreams and wishes of the student.

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He or she must be able to encourage all team members to be involved in the person centered planning process. The facilitator does not have to be trained in person-centered planning, but it is helpful. Ask your school district if there is a staff member with experience or call Parent to Parent of Georgia for a list of trained person-centered facilitators in your area.

Key Points You Should Know about Person-Centered Planning:

- It is a process that takes place over time. It is not a one-time event.
- It is based on the values of community involvement and inclusion.
- It focuses on the individual's strengths and not his or her deficits.
- It challenges participants to think creatively and outside of the box.
- It works in collaboration with traditional service providers.
- It focuses on the goals and desires of the student and not what others think he or she should do.
- It involves all aspects of the student's life and not just school.
- It is intended to create new opportunities for the future

Tips for Families:

- Individuals with all types of disabilities, regardless of the severity, can benefit from and should be involved in person-centered planning.
- Allow your child to be involved in whatever way possible. For example, if your child is hesitant about speaking in groups, have him or her meet team members individually before the meeting.
- Include siblings and other family members in the process.
- Invite your child's friends and classmates to be involved.
- Include adult service providers (i.e., vocational rehabilitation, day service providers, health care professionals, etc.)
- Meetings should occur periodically to review the plan and update the status of the goals.

Where to go for more information:

Parent to Parent of Georgia
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038
www.p2pga.org

Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports
404 656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx

Georgia Department of Education Transition Manual
<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/A-Framework-for-the-Local-District---Revised-2008,-Updated-2011-.aspx>

Georgia Interagency Transition Council
www.gatransition.org

Additional resources: Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.