

# Transition Checklist: The Necessary Steps to Independence

When developing an IEP for a student, the team needs to consider whether the student is prepared for independent living. Use this form to discuss the student's skill levels and help the team incorporate necessary goals and interventions.

## Using the Transition Checklist

The transition checklist—the necessary steps to independence—is a guide to assist schools, parents, and students to understand what steps are necessary to successfully leave home. The checklist can help identify skills to be included in a transition plan for students with neurological disorders. Students with Executive Dysfunction are particularly likely to need planning and instruction in some or many of these skills.

The first column in the checklist lists the transition strategy skills and the next four columns are the degree to which these have been accomplished. “Ready to Start” is used when the student has not started the process on the particular skill. “Beginning Skill” means that the student has started developing the skill but has not gotten very far. “Developing Skill” is used when the student is progressing, and “Mastered Skill” means that the student can execute the skill at the level of an independent adult.

The checklist begins by assessing the student's **awareness of his disorder(s)** and the impact they have on his functioning. For some students, you may need more than four rows. In this row, “Mastered Skill” would be checked if the student is able to politely self-advocate to get the necessary accommodations when appropriate.

**Medication management** involves taking medicine responsibly, knowing how to get more in a timely manner, and being able to and knowing when to contact the doctor.

Students do not always realize that the difficulties in school often relate to difficulties that will affect them in the adult world, e.g., writing a report in business or the tax forms that are due once a year (a

long-term project). Having appropriate strategies to overcome these **academic deficits** is important.

Many people are surprised to find out that even gifted students with neurological impairments cannot handle some of the **requirements of daily living**. In the same way that some people need specialized reading strategies to learn to read, many of our students need specialized strategies to become independent in their daily living skills.

One of the daily skills that we decided to include as a separate item is the ability to **travel independently**, e.g., in the community, on business trips. Many of our students do not want to get a driver's license or need to wait until they are older before getting one due to the impact of their neurology on being able to drive safely. Because of this, many students have limited ability to get around independently. They need instruction in public transportation and they need to have a job close to home or near a transportation line. Once they understand that, then many need to learn how to best use the transportation options available in their community. If they need to travel outside of their community, then they may need additional direct instruction, e.g., how long before their flight to arrive at the airport.

As an adult, it is very important to learn to manage use of one's **electronics**. This includes learning to turn off your electronics at inappropriate times, being pleasant when approached while using electronics, and not limiting your social life to only online friends.

Being able to **wake up independently** is also crucial. So many times, students go to post-secondary placements and find that they are unable to wake up independently. All along, they have relied on their parents for this. This inability to wake up independently is one of the leading causes of failure at post-secondary schools and jobs.

Most of the students who have **organizational skill deficits** know it, but awareness of these deficits without specialized strategies is useless. Once the

strategies are taught, the next hurdle is to make use of these organizational skills an ironclad rule and eventually a habit.

Many students do not hold onto the present needs beyond “now” and do not see the future. This leads them to not understand the need to manage money until it is too late. Direct instruction of **money management skills** with practice, review, and revision is crucial.

For students with working memory deficits and Executive Dysfunction, there is an inability to hold onto past learning and **remember future plans** while operating in the present. The “now” is all there is. Teaching such students how to **manage time** is a crucial life skill. Poor time management is another area that predicts job loss.

There are two sets of social skills that adults need: those they use to **interact with adult figures**, and those they use to **interact with peers**. Both are important for adult success and happiness. Remember that social skills affect an adult having a family, having friends, and getting and maintaining a job.

Not knowing how to **problem solve** can make life quite difficult. Once students are taught strategies, the strategies must be mastered and put into everyday use.

Some people ask for help too much, but more often than not, students with neurological disorders may ask too little. These students need to be taught when and how to **ask for help** and then make sure they ask for help when it is needed.

Many students grow up and get into trouble because they never learned to have a **respectful attitude toward important adults and others** in their life. They do not get that there are times they should act as if they have respect for someone even if they do not. Many do not even understand why they should have a respectful attitude in the first place. Explaining the impact of disrespectful behavior on themselves and others may be the necessary first step. This needs to be followed by direct instruction in how to act respectfully, modeling respectful behavior, reinforcing respectful behavior, and expecting respectful behavior.

Even when a student grows up and is respectful, having a **positive attitude toward adults and others** has a tremendous impact that the student may not understand. We tend to be friends with, hire, and promote pleasant people. Many neurological disorders influence students to be in a bad mood. Mood and anxiety disorders have a particularly unpleasant impact on a person feeling posi-

tive. The medical information that is taught to these students may allow the student to understand why they are not acting in a positive manner. They then need to be taught and cued to become more positive in their attitude.

Parents and teachers usually understand that students need love and limits. The area that is overlooked more now than in the past is the need for students to learn to **work hard at boring tasks**. The majority of our day as an adult is spent on incredibly unexciting tasks. To be successful, this area is crucial. This is another big impact area on job loss, e.g., not doing the “boring” parts of the job such as paperwork.

There is nothing that grates on human relationships like people who refuse to **take responsibility for their actions, attitudes, and decisions**. This is another big factor when it comes to getting and keeping a job. Parents, unfortunately, tend to put up with this over a long period of time. Husbands and wives may put up with this for a limited time period, but bosses will not! Our students have been wrong so often that they have decided that they cannot be wrong anymore or they truly do not understand that they are wrong. Often, they honestly do not remember that they did what they are being accused of and wind up feeling hurt and defensive because no one believes them.

# Transition Checklist

TRANSITION STRATEGIES		Ready to Start	Beginning Skill	Developing Skill	Mastered Skill
Has an awareness of disorders (list each)					
Manages medicine(s)					
Uses appropriate strategies to overcome academic deficits					
Uses sufficient strategies to take care of daily living skills					
Is able to travel independently					
Manages use of electronics					
Wakes up independently					
Uses organizational skills					
Uses money management skills					
Pays attention to the future					
Uses time management skills					
Uses social skills with adults					
Uses social skills with peers					
Uses problem-solving strategies					
Asks for help when needed					
Has a respectful attitude towards adults*					
Has a respectful attitude towards others*					
Has a positive attitude towards adults*					
Has a positive attitude towards others*					
Works hard at boring tasks					
Takes responsibility for actions, attitudes, and decisions					

\* If the student has deficits in these areas, goals and objectives should be developed that incorporate specifically defined and observable behaviors. © 2002 L. G. Priddy, S. K. Priddy, revised 2007.