



**COLORADO**  
Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

Department of Health Care Policy and Financing  
1570 Grant Street  
Denver, CO 80203

January 2, 2019

The Honorable Dominick Moreno, Chair  
Joint Budget Committee  
200 East 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Third Floor  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Senator Moreno:

Enclosed please find a legislative report to the Joint Budget Committee from the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing on the task force for transition planning established by Senate Bill 18-231.

Section 25.5-10-102, C.R.S. requires the Department to submit a report to the Joint Budget Committee of the General Assembly, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Senate, and the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the House of Representatives of the recommendations from the task force for transition planning.

The task force for transition planning was created to make recommendations on improvements for the transition of individuals with disabilities who are receiving services and supports in an educational setting to receiving services and supports through home- and community-based services under Title 25.5.

If you require further information or have additional questions, please contact the Department's Legislative Liaison, David DeNovellis, at [David.Denovellis@state.co.us](mailto:David.Denovellis@state.co.us) or 303-866-6912.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Bimestefer".

Kim Bimestefer  
Executive Director

KB/JB

Enclosure(s): Health Care Policy and Financing 2019 Task Force for Transition Planning Report



Cc: Representative Daneya Esgar, Vice-chair, Joint Budget Committee  
Representative Chris Hansen, Joint Budget Committee  
Representative Bob Rankin, Joint Budget Committee  
Senator Dennis Hisey, Joint Budget Committee  
Senator Rachel Zenzinger, Joint Budget Committee  
John Ziegler, Staff Director, JBC  
Eric Kurtz, JBC Analyst  
Lauren Larson, Director, Office of State Planning and Budgeting  
Kathleen Quinn, Budget Analyst, Office of State Planning and Budgeting  
Legislative Council Library  
State Library  
John Bartholomew, Finance Office Director, HCPF  
Laurel Karabatsos, Interim Health Programs Office Director & Medicaid Director, HCPF  
Tom Massey, Policy, Communications, and Administration Office Director, HCPF  
Bonnie Silva, Interim Community Living Office Director, HCPF  
Chris Underwood, Health Information Office Director, HCPF  
Stephanie Ziegler, Cost Control and Quality Improvement Office Director, HCPF  
Rachel Reiter, External Relations Division Director, HCPF  
David DeNovellis, Legislative Liaison, HCPF





**COLORADO**  
Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

Department of Health Care Policy and Financing  
1570 Grant Street  
Denver, CO 80203

January 2, 2019

The Honorable Jonathan Singer, Chair  
Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
200 E. Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Representative Singer:

Enclosed please find a legislative report to the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee from the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing on the task force for transition planning established by Senate Bill 18-231.

Section 25.5-10-102, C.R.S. requires the Department to submit a report to the Joint Budget Committee of the General Assembly, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Senate, and the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the House of Representatives of the recommendations from the task force for transition planning.

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Kim Bimestefer  
Executive Director

KB/JB

Enclosure(s): Health Care Policy and Financing 2019 Task Force for Transition Planning Report



Cc: Representative Dafna Michaelson Jenet, Vice-Chair, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Yadira Caraveo, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Lisa Cutter, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Serena Gonzales-Guitierrez, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Sonya Jaquez Lewis, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Lois Landgraf, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Colin Larson, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Larry Liston, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Kyle Mullica, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
Representative Rod Pelton, Public Health Care and Human Services Committee  
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**COLORADO**  
Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

Department of Health Care Policy and Financing  
1570 Grant Street  
Denver, CO 80203

January 1, 2019

The Honorable Rhonda Fields, Chair  
Health and Human Services Committee  
200 E. Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Senator Fields:

Enclosed please find a legislative report to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee from the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing on the task force for transition planning established by Senate Bill 18-231.

Section 25.5-10-102, C.R.S. requires the Department to submit a report to the Joint Budget Committee of the General Assembly, the Health and Human Services Committee of the Senate, and the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the House of Representatives of the recommendations from the task force for transition planning.

The task force for transition planning was created to make recommendations on improvements for the transition of individuals with disabilities who are receiving services and supports in an educational setting to receiving services and supports through home- and community-based services under Title 25.5.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Bimestefer".

Kim Bimestefer  
Executive Director

KB/JB

Enclosure(s): Health Care Policy and Financing 2019 Task Force for Transition Planning Report



Cc: Senator Brittany Pettersen, Vice-Chair, Health and Human Services Committee  
Senator Larry Crowder, Health and Human Services Committee  
Senator Jim Smallwood, Health and Human Services Committee  
Senator Faith Winter, Health and Human Services Committee  
Legislative Council Library  
State Library  
John Bartholomew, Finance Office Director, HCPF  
Laurel Karabatsos, Interim Health Programs Office Director & Medicaid Director, HCPF  
Tom Massey, Policy, Communications, and Administration Office Director, HCPF  
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Rachel Reiter, External Relations Division Director, HCPF  
David DeNovellis, Legislative Liaison, HCPF



# Colorado Senate Bill 18-231 Transition Planning Task Force Recommendations

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*Transition of Young Adults with Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities from Educational Services  
to Home- and Community-Based Services*

January 2019



**COLORADO**

Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

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## Introduction:

Young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) often struggle during the transition process from high school to adulthood. After age 21, young adults with disabilities “age out” of the myriad services and supports required by law through the school system and transition into the state agency responsible for providing services and supports to adults with I/DD. This transition is an abrupt change that many parents and youth characterize as akin to “dropping off a cliff.” This drop-off causes dramatic decreases in productivity, independence, adaptive skills, and increased difficulty maintaining mental and physical health, as well as employability and functional living.

The transition experience varies greatly across Colorado, including access to services and supports through the adult service system. The students who are accessing transition services through the age of 21 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are increasingly removed from the typical I/DD services.

The services currently available can vary depending on whether they are state-funded or Home and Community Based Services waivers. This variability causes frustration and confusion for families as the application process and communication options change frequently. Inconsistencies in the process create many opportunities for misinformation and delays for families. Without the right supports through this transition, parents of and young adults with I/DD may experience new problems, or exacerbations of existing problems.

In order to improve the experience for youth transitioning, and their families and/or caregivers, the Colorado General Assembly established a task force “composed of interested parties to determine what can be done to ease the transition from the educational setting and inform the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing of the number of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who may be in need of services in any year.” The task force is charged with submitting a report by January 2, 2019, of its findings and recommendations to the Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado Senate, the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives, and the Colorado Joint Budget Committee, or any successor committees.

### Task force members:

Rhonda Berry, The Arc of Pueblo

David Bolin, Accent on Independence

Jon Paul Burden, Consortium of Special Education Directors

Matt Cook, Colorado Association of School Boards

Joan LaBelle, Disabled Resource Services

Colin Laughlin, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

Gail Lott, Colorado Department of Education

Jennifer Martinez, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing  
Abigail Negley, The Arc of Colorado  
Rachel Tomlin, The Resource Exchange  
Kelly Wilson, Parent of a child with I/DD

In addition to these members, we received input from Jennifer Scilacci and Cheryl Carver from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Several youth that transitioned, and parents of transitioning and transitioned youth presented to the task force and informed the following recommendations. Information and materials from the task force can be found [here](#).<sup>1</sup>

### Task Force Recommendations:

- **Support staff for transitions:** The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) should seek funding to establish dedicated case management agency staff to serve as transition liaisons with new, appropriate funding for support staff to focus solely on transitioning students with I/DD.

Responsibilities typically would include:

- ✓ Serving as transition counselors tasked with understanding the waivers and assisting families in assessing what might be best to meet their needs;
- ✓ Connecting and establishing relationships with schools during the transition period to better understand what is in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and help families align those needs with services provided to (1) determine what services Medicaid and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) can supply that are not currently addressed in the IEP up to age 21 and (2) when transitioning to adult services, help families understand and access services through adult programs like waivers and DVR job supports. This includes support for collecting information, filling out needed forms related to eligibility for waiver services, understanding and planning for waiting periods such as eligibility determination and wait-times associated with finding direct-service providers and other activities that assist youth and parents to better understand the logistics and reality of what the transition looks like, and be well-versed in the best practices of [Employment First](#)<sup>2</sup>. It is important to develop engagement opportunities and planned activities

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/hcpf/senate-bill-18-231-transition-planning-task-force>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/AppendixL\\_Employment\\_First\\_Advisory\\_Partnership\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/AppendixL_Employment_First_Advisory_Partnership_Strategic_Plan.pdf)

that connect to early intervention to set people on the right trajectory and build relationships and partnerships with families that foster a place to learn and grow from an early age.

- **Youth involvement:** The voice of the transitioning student should be central to the planning process. All agencies and organizations involved in transitions should create planned and scheduled opportunities that promote and encourage youth participation in the transition process. Promoting the self-determination of adolescents with disabilities has become the best practice in transition services.
  - ✓ A student-involvement curriculum should be developed and implemented to prepare students for transition planning. This curriculum should emphasize person-centered techniques and directly teach choice-making, problem-solving, and decision-making strategies.
  - ✓ Youth should have an opportunity to participate in leadership and self-advocacy programs including implementing student-led IEP meetings that build advocacy and leadership skills.
  
- **Mentoring:** Parent-peer and student-peer mentoring programs related to the transition period are needed. Peer support provides the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with others who are facing similar situations. Parents and youth need frank conversations and peer support/mentor relationships with parents and youth who have been through similar processes. It is important to connect and network a family with other families and/or youth with other youth for mutual support.
  - ✓ Current peer programs that are successful in school should be extended, as appropriate, to include peer mentoring as youth move into adult services.
  - ✓ College programs and other secondary education opportunities are recommended to be part of this network, including roles for peer job mentors who could be incorporated into college programs and opportunities for individuals to attend college programs with support.
  - ✓ Successful models from other states should be explored and utilized as appropriate for our state.
  
- **Planning guide and tools:** Students and families need accurate information about the range of opportunities and supports available to them. New funds should be made available through HCPF to contract with an entity not providing services

to develop a planning guide and a website for youth and families that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), intuitive, and contains a centralized clearinghouse of information that is easy to navigate and kept up-to-date. This planning guide/toolkit should be separate from state agency websites and will assist with the development of a “future plan” and will help with understanding decisions that lie ahead in transitions. The tool should assist youth and families with such topics as legal and financial planning, guardianships and guardianship alternatives, public benefits, living independently, housing resources, special-needs trusts, waiver coverage and the tool should include a glossary of terms. Additionally, the tool should contain information, education, and training on best practices and accessing and coordinating community supports. It is recommended that ongoing funding be provided for continual maintenance and the upkeep of information.

- **Early transition conversations and engagement:** Transition conversations and information sharing needs to start early in the schools, as early as elementary school. Many stakeholders recommend an inclusive, integrated, life-span approach that addresses the developmental needs of children while communicating clear and consistent messages about the value and opportunities for youth with I/DD. This does not mean pulling children out of schools and inclusive learning environments for vocational work sites, but rather building relationships that foster partnership.
  
- **Academics and future opportunities:** Schools and transition staff should set the right expectations with regards to academic rigor with an eye toward future opportunity. Expectations should be raised to create a system that includes teaching children how to dream and advocate for what they want.
  - ✓ Schools and transition staff should engage in practices that reflect a presumption that all people with disabilities are capable of full participation in competitive integrated employment, secondary education, and community life. This vision and culture should be promoted throughout the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), schools/districts, Community Centered Boards (CCBs), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), DVR and Medicaid to cultivate best practices that result in the desired outcomes of individual competitive employment, enrollment in post-secondary options, and/or other social inclusion goals. CDE should continue to focus on training related to these goals and their responsibilities under IDEA, such as an extended school year.

- ✓ Schools should integrate transition assessment activities including career exploration and development, and postsecondary education options into the core curriculum. This can include identifying specific academic classes that correspond with the student's postsecondary goals and utilizing a framework for instruction that is inclusive and effective for all learners.
- ✓ CDE should continue to measure progress toward improved graduation and engagement rates.
- **Team-based approach to transition:** Transition planning teams need to include all disciplines and agencies that will impact the life of the person with a disability. Schools should actively partner with Medicaid, DVR providers, and others from the community such as CILs, disability groups, and advocacy organizations to build person-centered systems of services and supports for people with I/DD and their families. All should be appropriately staffed with clearly defined roles to ensure youth are supported during their transition. This design reduces silos and brings the student, providers, and other community members to the table early in the transition process and helps with information sharing and bridging the transition from school to competitive employment, higher education opportunities, or other desired goals. The team-based approach also ensures a gradual transition by fostering relationships between school district employees, case managers, and parents and guardians prior to the transition. In addition, it is recommended that this process involve developing and/or creating more common, consistent language between schools, Medicaid and other agencies that support people with I/DD.
  - ✓ Families should be given resources at meetings that connect similar language such as IEP, SP, etc. to the actual service plan. These connections need to be made during any meetings and provided as a handout when necessary.
  - ✓ Information should be shared with families regarding various agencies' timelines (ex. when to contact DVR, waiver services, the supplemental security income [SSI] program, etc.), the length of enrollment and eligibility process (ex. wait-time from enrollment to services), and how the agencies support the individual.
- **Team-based approach to transition Higher Education access:** Providing access to college provides life-changing results for individuals with I/DD. Colorado should continue the Inclusive Higher Education Pilot Program to ensure opportunities for higher employment and greater independence for students with

I/DD. Information about this program needs to be distributed and dispersed to schools and districts across the state.

- **Technology:** Implement a process to evaluate the current state of technology practices within the K-12 setting, identify best practices, and make recommendations to improve access to technology for all students with disabilities who are transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.
- **Interagency collaboration and coordination:** Interagency collaboration is essential to effective transition and interagency coordination is a critical element of transition planning. Agencies should work to better align and eliminate unnecessary, inefficient, or conflicting rules and regulations, and develop solutions for more cross-systems alignment.

## Conclusion:

Achieving improvements in transition services must build upon interagency and interdisciplinary approaches. Greater consistency across programs in standards and practices is needed. Achievement of needed improvements in transition services will require a broad-based commitment to providing person-centered information and services and promoting meaningful collaboration at all levels. These recommendations, while currently specific to I/DD populations, can and should be extended to include all persons with disabilities in order to build a system of support that works for all people who experience disabilities.

Project management provided by:



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