



Findings from Community Conversations on Transition: A Summary

Overview

Community Conversations focused on topics of transition of youth with disabilities to adulthood were conducted in five Minnesota cities in Fall of 2024 and Winter of 2025. A total of 64 people participated in discussions across Minneapolis, Hutchinson, St. Cloud, Moorhead, and Shakopee, Minnesota. These conversations explored how young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are included in their community in areas such as employment, education, and everyday life. Participants discussed what the community is doing to be inclusive of young adults with IDD, barriers and solutions to inclusion, and how schools can better collaborate with service providers, employers, and families to support successful transition and community inclusion.

Who Participated

Participants included self-advocates, parents, educators, employers, support staff, and service providers across the five areas of Minnesota.

What We Learned

Participants shared common themes about the transition of young adults with IDD. These insights reflect both strengths of communities and areas where greater support and resources are still needed:

- **Inclusive Communities:** Overall, local communities are becoming more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive of young adults with IDD. Members from rural communities highlighted that schools and community organizations can play an important role in providing opportunities that foster belonging (e.g., community events, social clubs, volunteering). Members of urban and suburban communities noted the availability of recreational activities.
- **Stigma and Expectations:** Stigma around disability does remain a significant barrier. Young adults with IDD are often met with low expectations, which limits opportunities for paid employment, higher education, and independent living.
- **Disability Awareness and Inclusion:** Progress is being made, but there is a strong need for greater disability awareness and education across communities, particularly among employers who do not have experience hiring people with disabilities.

- **Employment Preparation and Opportunities:** Community members consistently emphasized employment. Members of urban and suburban communities expressed local employers as becoming more inclusive. In rural communities, transition programs focus on job readiness, but earlier conversations about career exploration and more community-based employment opportunities are needed.
- **Transition Resources and Information Sharing:** Parents and educators called for regular and accessible sharing of information about transition resources and services. Parents and educators also called for a stronger collaboration between families, transition specialists, and other service providers, such as vocational rehabilitation.
- **Transition Services:** Available and accessible services are valued but limited. Transportation and job coaching services were two common areas of concern across communities. Housing options were seen as limited in more rural communities.
- **Staffing Needs:** Attendees also raised concerns about staffing shortages. There is a need for more well-trained, adequately compensated staff to support young adults during the transition years and to ensure consistent, high-quality services.
- **Family Involvement:** Access to services and opportunities for education, employment, and community living of young adults with IDD relies heavily on the initiation, involvement, and expectations of parents or other guardians.

Overall, the conversations in each community reinforced that although communities are making progress in supporting young adults with IDD, systemic gaps remain around expectations, awareness, employment, transition services, and staffing. Strengthening these areas will be essential for ensuring that all young adults with IDD are able to thrive in adulthood.

Recommendations

- **Raise Expectations and Reduce Stigma:** Actively promote a culture in schools and communities that sees young adults with IDD as capable, with the potential to live, work, and contribute meaningfully.
- **Continue Expanding Inclusive Opportunities:** Create more accessible, inclusive activities in schools, recreation, and community life that foster belonging and natural friendships.
- **Improve Transition Services and Information Sharing Across Communities:** Provide clear, coordinated guidance to families and ensure regular communication between schools and community agencies. This includes using a streamlined

system for both educators and families to access information about resources. One way to do this is through accessible websites, newsletters, or podcasts.

- **Strengthen Employment Preparation and Pathways:** Integrate early transition-planning, real-world work experiences, and partnerships with local employers to build inclusive job opportunities toward competitive, integrated employment.
- **Provide more information and resources to community employment partners:** This information includes common issues, basic accommodations and accessibility needs, and other supports needed for success of young adults with IDD. Sharing such information may help reduce stigma.
- **Invest in the Transition Workforce:** Recruit and retain well-trained transition staff and support their professional development.

Questions?

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