Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment

Transition to Adulthood

SECOND EDITION

GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

This publication is a result of the recommendations of the Ohio Autism Taskforce and the support of the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence Transition to Community Task Force. Funding for the Transition to Adulthood Guidelines for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders has been made possible through the support of the Ohio Department of Education.

Written and edited by:

Chris Filler
Madeline Rosenshein

Special thanks to the following individuals for their time, effort and support in the development of these guidelines:

Bob Baer
Kay Brown
Pat Cloppert
Lawrence Dennis
Reena Fish
Tom Fish
Peter Gerhardt
Earnestine Hargett
Margo Izzo
Michael Kinney
Pat Luchkowsky
Joh nMagee
Colleen Miller
Terri Moore
Donna Owens
Leslie Paull
Representative Jon M. Peterson
Lauren Phelps
Michael Schroeder
Debbie Smith
Deb Stroud
Kay Treanor
Ellen Williams
Barb Yavorcik

These guidelines may be reproduced and distributed for non-commerical educational purposes. Credit must be given to OCALI. Copyright © 2012 Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. All rights reserved.

What Is Transition to Adulthood?

"Transition to adulthood" is a complex and ongoing process that starts as soon as a child is born and continues as the child becomes an adolescent, to early adult life and then through the stages of adulthood. While this process is complicated at best for any person, the individual with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) faces unique challenges that require specialized considerations. This set of guides will help the user understand these challenges and raise awareness of these important considerations

A critical time for transition planning is in the early years of middle school through the first few years following graduation from high school. This time period is the focal point of the *Transition to Adulthood* guides and will assist the individual with ASD and his or her team in reviewing the issues of adulthood related to employment, postsecondary education and adult living during these years. Implications for the individual with ASD to consider are highlighted throughout. Identification of resources and many active links to important information are provided. Use this set of guides as a reference and resource and to help frame a way to think about the issues related to adulthood.

Introduction to Age-Appropriate Transition Planning

In this volume, *Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment*, the user will take a close look at the intention of Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment (AATA) and the implications to students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Accurate and meaningful AATA is critical to the development of a plan that both fits the student's interests and strengths and meets the student's needs.

Application of this process for students with ASD requires special consideration. The goal of this guide is to assist the team in understanding these issues and to provide assistance with the development of an AATA plan. The resulting plan should provide useful, accurate and individualized information that leads to critical skill development for the future based on the student's preferences interests, needs and strengths.

Introduction

What is Age-Appropriate Transition Planning?
page 6

A Closer Look at Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment
page 8

Implications and Strategies

Sensory Processing
page 12

Social Communication
page 12

Executive Function/Organization
page 16

Ritualistic or Repetitive Behavior
page 18

Global
page 20

Next Steps

Adult Agencies to Assist in AATA
page 22

Self-Determination Is a Key Factor
page 26

Summary

Introduction

What Is Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment?

"The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) of the Council for Exceptional Children defines transition assessment as an "...ongoing process of collecting data on the individual's needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future working, educational, living, and personal and social environments. Assessment data serve as the common thread in the transition process and form the basis for defining goals and services to be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP)"

(Sitlington, Neubert, & LeConte, 1997; p. 70-71)

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment Process

Age Appropriate Transition Assessment (AATA) starts with determining the questions that need to be answered by the AATA process. This requires meaningful participation from the student and family in order to ensure that the right questions are asked based on the needs and interests of a particular student. Together, the IEP team determines what information is needed to create an effective transition plan for the student.

Once the issues are identified, a set of tools can be selected to collect data to answer these important questions and issues. These tools may include formal or informal tests or a series of job tryouts or situational assessments for independent living. The entire team (including family and student) may then use the results to help develop a student's course of study, refine measurable postsecondary goals and identify needed transition services.

AATA is not:

- A scored test
- The same for all students
- One evaluation tool or test
- Designed to direct a student's adult goals

AATA is:

- A dynamic, ongoing process
- Designed to assist a student in developing and refining adult goals
- Meant to describe what types of skills and knowledge the student needs to develop in order to achieve the targeted adult goals

Designing Char's AATA Plan

Char, a 15-year-old youth served through an IEP, is in the process of transition planning and goal setting. The team is creating the Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment (AATA) plans, which begin with looking at her interests and preferences. Char and the IEP team recognize that she enjoys animals more than any other topic or activity. Her vision and future planning state that she would like to pursue a career with animals, perhaps a pet-sitting business or working in a pet store that also provides services such as dog training and animal grooming.

Char's AATA plans include:

- *A review of her educational history related to interest, motivation and skill with animals.*
- *Multiple opportunities to volunteer and job shadow work sites that involve animals. During these experiences, the teacher and job coaches are able to assess Char's strengths, interests and needs related to the potential work and career. This includes noting types of adaptations to the environment and needed communication supports.*
- *Employability skills assessments. Several informal assessment activities that focus on her ability in key employability skills, such as hygiene, social competency and communication skills are critical to evaluate.*
- *Applied academic skills assessment. Core academic skills are assessed in a traditional testing situation and also evaluated in functional settings. The team wants to determine Char's ability to apply or use math and reading skills in the community for future work and living environments.*
- *Functional living skills assessment. These skills will be necessary for Char to reach her adult goals. Char will be observed in multiple environments both in and out of the school setting to determine areas of strengths and areas that require intervention.*

Based on this combination of formal and informal assessments, a transition plan can be developed. Ongoing assessment (AATA) is necessary in order to determine if the identified services are successfully moving Char towards her targeted skill development and also to ensure that she continues to show motivation and interest in a future career with animals. AATA is the thread that allows the team to assess, implement needed strategies and educational programming, evaluate, make modifications to the transition plan and continue implementation.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

Sitlington, P. L., Neubert, D. A., & Leconte, P. J. (1997). Transition assessment: The position of the division on career development and transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 20,* 69-79.

A Closer Look at Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment

While some assessment tools may be beneficial and appropriate for many students, transition assessment is an individualized and unique process. AATA is the ongoing process of developing questions related to the student's adult outcomes, selecting the right tools to answer the questions, and interpreting the answers or data to determine the next steps.

Designing the AATA Plan

The Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment (AATA) process is individualized to each student. The results of this ongoing process assist students and their teams in identifying strengths and preferences, refine goals, and identify needs *in relation to the vision of adult life.* This means that each student's AATA plan is designed to answer a unique set of questions that are meaningful for that student's future life.

Example of AATA Development

Below are examples of questions for which a team might want to have answers by AATA:

- What are the student's preferred ways of learning?
- What interests does this student have that can be used to build a career or gain employment?
- What set of skills is needed for this student to be successful in the job of choice?
- What types of adult residential assistance will this student be able to access?
- Will this student be able to live safely in his/her residential situation of choice?
- What type of assistance will be required for the student be successful in the desired employment or living environment?

Many more questions could be added to this list based on the specific student's needs.

Discovering the answers to the identified AATA questions is also an individualized process. Consider the variety of ways one could find the answer to some of the previous questions.

Questions to Ask

What types of adult residential assistance will this student be able to access?

- Contact adult agencies to assess student for eligibility.
- Survey providers in the community to determine available services.
- Circulate a compiled list of available services to knowledgeable team members to review and expand.

What set of skills is needed for this student to be successful in the job of choice? How competent is the student in those skills?

- Observe the job, do a task analysis of skills. Include the skills associated with the "hidden curriculum" or other "soft skills". Discuss and/or observe the student's skills in these areas.
- Use the Employability Life Skills Assessment (ELSA) or a similar tool to determine the types of skills that successful adults will need to work and live in the community.
- Use the ELSA or some other list of targeted skills to observe the student in multiple environments. Record where the student is successful and where he/she needs assistance. Identify the supports provided to assist the student to be successful.

What interests does this student have that can be used to build a career or gain employment?

- Administer interest inventory.
- Interview the student, family members, teachers.
- Expose the student to a variety of careers, jobs or environments and observe what the student is drawn to or is motivated to do.
- Make a list of the student's interests. Brainstorm all the possible jobs or careers that might be connected to that interest.

What are the student's preferred ways of learning?

- Review the student's educational history to determine what types of learning environments have been most successful.
- Place the student in several learning situations to determine where and when the student is most engaged.
- Interview the student. "What helps you learn?"

Of course, teams may discover they can use some of the same assessments and experiences for multiple students' AATA. The individualization comes when the team uses these experiences and tools to answer the specific questions that align with a student's future plans.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

An Ongoing Process

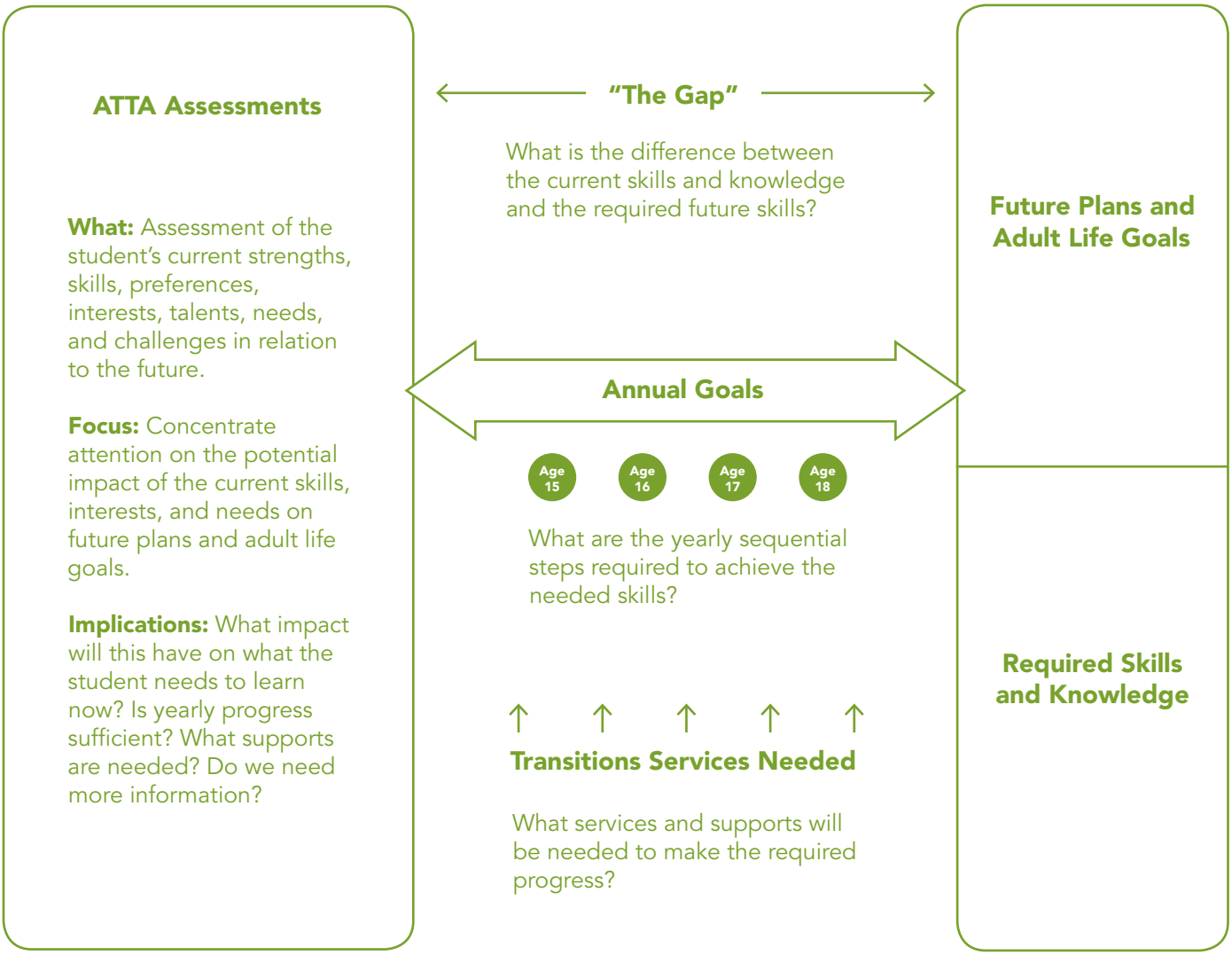
Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment (AATA) is an ongoing process. This means that AATA information:

- Helps craft the future planning statement on the IEP at age 14
- Continues to help develop postsecondary goals by age 16
- Becomes an ongoing assistance for teams to determine the types of services and supports that will be necessary for the student in high school and as an adult

The Connector

AATA is an important and ongoing part of transition planning. The intention of AATA is to help the student and team connect current strengths and needs to future success while identifying the impact this will have on the focus of the current educational program and services. Data collection on a regular basis will assist in determining if student progress is sufficient and likely to prepare the student for adult life or if revisions to the educational program, service, supports or possibly the goals are necessary.

The graphic on the opposing page demonstrates how Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment fits into the overall transition process.


ATTA Assessments
What: Assessment of the student's current strengths, skills, preferences, interests, talents, needs, and challenges in relation to the future.
Focus: Concentrate attention on the potential impact of the current skills, interests, and needs on future plans and adult life goals.
Implications: What impact will this have on what the student needs to learn now? Is yearly progress sufficient? What supports are needed? Do we need more information?
"The Gap"
What is the difference between the current skills and knowledge and the required future skills?
Future Plans and Adult Life Goals
Annual Goals
Age 15
Age 16
Age 17
Age 18
What are the yearly sequential steps required to achieve the needed skills?
Required Skills and Knowledge
Transitions Services Needed
What services and supports will be needed to make the required progress?

Characteristics of ASD – Sensory Processing Challenges

People with ASD often have strong sensory sensitivities or preferences that can cause unusual actions or reactions. A person may have a strong need to move or pace, or may adamantly avoid the touch of another person. When encountering sensory challenges, the person may find he is only able to focus, sit or listen for short periods of time. He might become very active, or may shut down and be unable to respond. The individual with ASD may not be able to explain these difficulties to others. Sensory challenges can intensify during the assessment process, especially if it is a new situation, new environment, or unfamiliar people or materials.

Considerations

Environment Assessment

The assessment team should proactively review and identify the sensory challenges that may adversely affect or interfere with the assessment process. Examples may include:

- Noises or specific types of sounds
- Bright lights, dim lights or direct lighting
- Smells/odors of foods, cleaning products, lotions, air fresheners or other sources
- Visual clutter in the area designated for work
- Lack of personal space when attempting to concentrate or work

Identification of these and other sensory difficulties will lead the team to select and use the following strategies to assist the person during assessment.

Assess for Formal Sensory Assessment

Some students may have such significant sensory processing issues that a sensory assessment may be needed. This type of assessment should be guided by a trained professional (occupational therapist). It can provide detailed information about how the individual processes information, what types of interventions/accommodations may be helpful and how the individual may respond to future environments.

Strategies

Auditory Sensitivity

- Provide headphones that muffle/ reduce sounds or that provide music
- Arrange for quieter location, away from the noisiest areas

Smell Sensitivity or Preferences

- Remove or reduce of foods, perfumes, air fresheners, printing inks, markers/ pens with strong odors, etc.
- Note that some individuals become more alert with the addition of certain smells such as natural scents

Visual Organization Needs

- Remove clutter or visual distractions in the area of assessment.
- Create an Organized workspace.

Visual-Light Sensitivity

- Provide sunglasses and hats/caps
- Provide alternate types of lighting, such as indirect lighting, low lighting, or natural lighting. Some desire lamps instead of overhead lighting.

Touch Sensitivity/Personal Space

- Provide adequate personal space during assessment activities. Assess ability to work in shared space vs. private area.
- Consider the use of a variety of physical boundaries (dividers/walls).
- Use visual cues to designate work area (example: signs).

What Works

Review how sensory issues are handled at home or school. Consider using or adjusting these strategies/interventions for assessment.

Predictability

Stress can occur due to the unknown or new situations. This stress may escalate sensory challenges. Use strategies that create predictability such as pictures, videos, social scripts to help explain what to expect during the assessment process.

Multiple Assessment Modalities

Allow the individual multiple opportunities to demonstrate ability and aptitude. A single assessment tool is often misleading and does not offer a complete understanding of the student's talents. Increasing the familiarity of the location and individuals involved with the assessment may reduce the stress (and the intensity of the sensory responses) that may develop during the unfamiliar situations of the assessment situation.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

Characteristics of ASD – Social/Communication Challenges

Individuals with ASD typically struggle to respond to and understand the social aspects of a situation. Social skill instruction may be a critical element for an individual with ASD to obtain or maintain a job, to successfully engage in and complete postsecondary education and to develop satisfying leisure activities. Needed competencies may range from very basic social skills to the complex aspects of reading social cues and accurately interpreting another's perspective or point of view.

Considerations

Social Competency and Planning for AATA

Social competency will impact AATA planning in several aspects:

- Social challenges can interfere with obtaining accurate assessment information.
- Social competency should be considered when identifying the range and types of age-appropriate assessments that are necessary.

Questions to Facilitate Strategy Development

Use the following questions to begin to identify where to focus the assessment of social-communication competency and the impact on the student's future:

- What barriers to successful postsecondary outcomes may be created by the student's challenges with social skills and social understanding?
- Where and how does the student socially interact most successfully?
- Is the student able to understand and follow verbal directions? Visual directions? What is the student's most successful mode of communicating and receiving information?
- Does the student need directions/information provided in alternate formats? Would additional visual supports (ex: words, pictures, photographs or objects) be helpful?

Strategies

Words May Not be Enough

Do not assume comprehension just because a student has received instruction/direction, is able to repeat instructions or is verbal. The student may hear the directions but not understand the intent of what others are saying. It may be necessary to demonstrate what is being required or requested of the student or to add other visual information as a support. Consider providing a preview or "priming" of what will occur during the assessment.

Assessment Recommendations to Support Generalization

Studies indicate that individuals with ASD have difficulty generalizing social instruction that occurs in a classroom or therapeutic environment to the situation where the skills are to be used (the workplace, cafeteria, community, home, etc.). The most effective practices include instruction and/or reinforcement in the actual environments or situations where the skills must be used. Therefore, recommendations resulting from assessments should consider not only the need for social skills instruction but also the methods and environments that will be used.

Clarify Expectations

Use strategies such as direct instruction, social narratives, Power Cards, video modeling, checklists, priming, visual reminders, role models and rehearsal to ensure that the student understands what to expect and what is expected during the assessment process. (Refer to the OCALI website for information on strategies.)

Deliver Important Messages Efficiently

Ensure that the student has an effective way to ask for help, request clarification or signal that the assessment situation is too stressful. Determine these communication tools proactively, teach the process to the student and, if necessary, prompt the student to use the signal/tools to ask for assistance, clarification or a break before the situation intensifies.

Informal Assessment

Consider the use of informal/observational assessment when evaluating the social communication and social emotional competencies of an individual.

Characteristics of ASD – Executive Function/Organization

Individuals with ASD may have great difficult with organization, attention and mental planning. This challenge can affect the results of the assessment process as the student's knowledge and skill may not be recognized due to difficulty initiating, maintaining focus or solving problems.

Considerations

Environmental Considerations

Organizational and environmental strategies may be necessary during assessment, as well as in daily living and learning situations in order for the person to demonstrate and function at her full potential. Assessment teams should ask:

- Can the student initiate tasks independently?
- Does she know how to start and end a task?
- Does she work systematically?
- Does she attempt, organize and complete tasks in the way that is expected?
- Is the assessment environment conducive to attention and concentration?
- Does the student require additional environmental assistance in order to independently complete tasks and activities?

Accommodations

Based on the answers to the previous questions, determine:

- How will assessment activities have to be structured or accommodated in order that the assessment information is accurate and meaningful?
- What are the implications for the next environment (employment, residential or postsecondary education) and creating the "Right Fit".

Strategies

Use Environmental Supports

Use organizational supports such as checklists, visual schedules, templates, outlines, visual examples, written directions, timers, labeled bins or shelves, etc. These supports should assist the person in clearly understanding:

- What work is to be completed
- Where it is to be completed
- How much is to be completed
- Where to begin and end tasks
- The time allotted for completing tasks
- What to do when the work is finished

Address Environmental Distractions

Assess the environmental stimulation and the potential for distraction during assessment activities. This may include noise levels as well as visual distractions. (Review "Sensory Processing Challenges").

Remember That Unfamiliar Situations Require Support

Organizational and environmental supports may be especially important to the student with ASD during an assessment process that is be new, short-term and stressful. In addition, such assessment activities may provide limited opportunity for the student to internalize the task or activity and, therefore, require external support.

Effective Supports as Part of Assessment Data

Review and document the organizational supports that were effective during the assessment process. The assessment team should include these as a necessary portion of the ongoing support plan. If possible, student goals should include instruction in how to independently create these supports rather than depending on others to develop them.

- Example: A student who needs a checklist to complete several tasks in a workplace may be able to learn to create the checklist and then use the list to ensure that all tasks are completed during the work day.
- Example: A student who has multiple assignments in college classes can be taught a process to record assignment due dates as well as create a schedule to work systemically towards the completion of each assignment.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

Characteristics of ASD – Ritualistic or Repetitive Behavior

Students with ASD may demonstrate a number of ritualistic or repetitive behaviors. These may range from physical routines, to verbal repetition, to topical restrictions. Some routines or rituals may be described by the casual observer as "obsessive" if they continue for extended time periods. However, often these behaviors are of little concern as they do not interfere with daily functioning. In the situations where the routines do interfere with the assessment process, intervention and supports may be helpful.

Considerations

Initial Observations

If a student is known to have many routines or ritualistic behaviors, consider informal observation in several settings in order to better understand how he functions and if the rituals are interfering or are being used functionally to move through the day. Observations will also provide opportunity to discovery the types of supports that might help the individual in other aspects of assessment.

Functional Routines

During observation or interview, attempt to identify a functional aspect to the routines . For example, someone who repeats words and phrases may be using this as a way to process information. Someone who insists items be placed in specific locations may have difficulty locating objects unless they are consistently in the same places. With this kind of knowledge, functional routines can then be incorporated to assist the individual through the assessment process.

Strategies

Avoid Creating an Issue

If the rituals (such as ordering all items on a desk) are minor and do not interfere with productivity or continued work, allow the student to continue with the behavior and document the intensity. Note how the behavior may change as the student becomes more comfortable with the situation.

Identify Potential Future Careers

Document ritualistic behaviors in the assessment process so that these behaviors can be accommodated as part of the job or career. For example, an individual who needs to pace frequently might fit well in a job that requires delivering mail or packages throughout a company. Or an individual who reads manuals and guides could utilize this "obsession" as a proofreader.

Use Special Interests

If possible, include the routine behavior as part of the assessment process. For example, if the student needs to discuss a favorite topic prior to beginning the assessment, place "Talk Time" as the first activity instead of struggling to avoid the situation.

Identify Triggers

As part of the assessment, determine what, if any, triggers cause or escalate the ritualistic or repetitive behaviors. Analyze these situations and triggers and determine if the triggers might be addressed by the use of environmental or visual supports such as Power Cards or social narratives.

Characteristics of ASD – Global

ASD is complex and varies greatly among individuals on the spectrum. Therefore, even the most thorough transition assessment may not yield all the information that would be important. Sources such as historical data about successful strategies and supports developed for the student by the family and school may be forgotten or not transferred to new settings. Assessment activities can include a review of this type of information.

Considerations

Identify Supports Across Environments

Assessment data must not only reflect plans for the student while in class or working, but also assess the skills, abilities and corresponding supports that will be necessary when not in school or on the job. Use the following questions to begin to discuss the types of supports needed in multiple community environments.

General Focus of Questions for Future

Will the individual:

- Be employed part-time or attending college part-time? Is so, what will the remainder of the day include?
- Have a safe, supervised setting outside of school and work or will the individual need supports for independence?
- Be capable of responding to emergency situations?
- Have the necessary independent living skills to prepare for school, work or other activities?
- Know how to travel safely to school, work or other locations?
- Know how to fill his/her leisure or "down-time" productively?
- Know how to create nutritional meals?

Strategies

Build on Success

Document successful strategies from other environments. Review with staff and adjust for the new settings. Consider using a transition tool to document and communicate successful strategies and supports to new environments. One tool to consider is the Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS) developed by Shawn Henry and Brenda Smith Myles. (Refer to OCALI library for more resources on CAPS).

Identify Needed Adult Agencies

Ensure assessment results reflect potential adult/transitional agency involvement. Early planning for agency eligibility and waiting lists may be necessary.

Assess Independent Living Skills

Include independent living assessment as an important part of AATA. Assessments related to adaptive behavior or independent living are NOT reserved for students who seem less capable. High-functioning students with ASD or Asperger Syndrome require assessment of independent living and adaptive behavior skills related to what they will need to be able to do in the targeted post school environments. The assessment process should not only identify the need for instruction and skill development in these "functional" areas, but should also provide suggestions for how these skills may be developed while a student is engaging in an academic curriculum. This process is very individualized and should begin as early as possible (no later than age 14) in order to prevent a crisis situation from developing.

Adult Agencies to Assist in AATA

Agencies such as Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) and Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) may be invited to meetings where transition assessments are discussed, especially if the student is likely to be served by these agencies in the future. Mental health agencies may also be helpful during the assessment process for students who have a co-occurring mental health challenge.

Collaboration Is Vital

Offering Direction

Agency or adult providers may be able to offer guidance and advice based on assessment results. Many of these agency personnel may not be able to "officially" open a case or follow the student early in the transition process; however, the assessment process is a natural time to introduce the student, family and other team members to potential adult service providers. The assessment planning process should include a discussion of the multiple types of agencies that are available and which agencies should be approached to officially or unofficially participate.

Funding for Assessment

Agencies such as RSC may be able to assist in funding for certain assessments. Other agencies such as DODD may provide certain assessments, such as assessment of travel or mobility. For students who qualify, Medicaid may be another possible resource for assessments related to medical needs.

The Importance of "Connecting"

Tyrone is a talented young man who has been identified with high-functioning autism and bipolar disorder. Tyrone plans to graduate high school at 22. At age 17, with the family's permission, DODD, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, mental health and an adult advocacy organization were invited to participate in Tyrone's IEP meeting. An initial meeting with these agencies was scheduled to allow agencies to "get to know" Tyrone. At this meeting, agencies were given information about Tyrone, his strengths, his interest, his vision for his adult life and his potential areas of need.

The agencies shared ideas and advice to help guide the transition plan development. This included information about applications, assessments, resources and general agency information. This activity was considered part of AATA as the information collected helped better understand the adult supports that Tyrone might be eligible to receive and the necessary steps in the process.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

Self-Determination Is a Key Factor

Early opportunities for self-determination activities, such as choice making, goal setting and decision-making, will provide a foundation for a student's active participation in transition assessment. Self-determination skills should be included in early educational programming and should also be assessed as part of AATA.

Assessing Self-Determination Strengths and Needs

Work Experiences as Part of AATA

Ongoing career development activities at school and home, such as job shadowing, community experiences and volunteering, contribute to a more meaningful transition assessment. These begin early in a student's educational career within the classroom or school building, but should quickly be moved to authentic community settings. These activities and resulting information are documented as part of AATA planning to identify what a student can do, what the student is interested in doing and where the student requires more skill development.

Family and Student Participation

Transition assessment is a student-centered process that promotes family involvement. Critical areas of adult living, such as residential living, can only be individually assessed when families are included as part of the team. Planning for the future and structure of the AATA must involve input from families. Families and students must also play a role in the assessment process by:

- articulating their vision for the future
- providing information relevant to the future plans
- helping define the current level of the skills that are necessary in order to reach the desired adult goals

Supporting-Self Determination

Caryn was given the responsibility to independently select her lunch with a goal of a healthy selection and maintaining a healthy weight. To assist her in making nutritious selections, she was given instruction on healthy foods and the nutritional value of the foods on the menu. Initially, her choices were not directed or corrected, but Caryn was assisted to monitor her weight regularly. During the semester Caryn's weight began to increase. At this time, she was assisted to review her lunch choices where she determined she would replace the high-calorie/low-food-value desserts with fruits and limited her breads to one serving. This was a self-determined experience for Caryn and was part of AATA as the activity provided the team with valuable information about Caryn's ability to make decisions that benefit her health and well-being.

MORE EXAMPLES ▶

Summary

Age-Appropriate Assessment

"Age appropriate" means chronological age rather than developmental age (Wehmeyer, 2002).

IDEA Requirements

Age-appropriate transition assessments are required by the law (IDEA 2004).

Agency Partners

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment for a student includes gathering information about potential agency partners that may be helpful in assisting the student to achieve his or her desired adult goals. Team members, including parents and students, may download and use these forms to assist in interviews with community agency representatives. These forms guide the user to identify and document information on services, contact information, procedures and helpful tips.

Assessment Focus

Assessment areas include skills related to future education/training, employment and independent living.

Student and Family Participation

Student participation in age-appropriate transition assessment ensures that students' interests and preferences are reflected in the results and in the postsecondary goals. Families contribute important information concerning students' preferences, talents, needs, medical history and other areas. They also provide continuity regarding background information that may otherwise be overlooked by school or agency personnel. A report that summarizes and describes the implication of the AATA results should be given to the family and team members during a review meeting. Transition assessment results should assist the student and family in further participation in the transition process and in making informed decisions about life choices.

Data-Driven Transition Planning

Transition assessment data drive the transition planning and the development of IEP goals. Accurate and meaningful transition assessment data support the development and achievement of appropriate and measurable postsecondary goals for employment, postsecondary education and independent living.

Not a Single Test

There is no one "correct" transition assessment format or set of tests. Multiple assessment tools, methods and schedules are used. These methods are individualized to collect data on a particular student's needs, aptitudes, interests and abilities.

Multiple Assessments

Transition assessments can include formal testing (achievement, aptitude and interest), informal testing (interviews, observations, questionnaires) and situational work assessments. Behavioral, self-determination and independent living assessments should be considered, and often are necessary for future planning. Specific assessments often target one area, so it is important to use a variety of tools and methods. Review the resources suggested by the Center on Community Living and Careers at Indiana University, NSTTAC Transition Assessment Toolkit, the Colorado Department of Education, and the QuickBook of Transition Assessment.

Ongoing Assessment

Transition assessments do not take place at one point in time. They are ongoing throughout the high school years and should reflect data from more than one person. Assessment results are used to refine and revise current educational programs and services to better prepare students to meet the adult goals.

Documentation

The assessment results should also be reflected in the Present Levels of Performance of the IEP and the Summary of Performance, a document given to the student upon exiting the school system.

Tools & Resources

This list of helpful resources is included to assist the user in accessing additional information.

Employability and Life Skills Assessment (ELSA) developed by the Ohio Department of Education

This simple-to-use assessment includes a parent and school version to capture information from both home and school environments. A summary chart provides an overview of the identified areas of strength as well as areas that can be improved with instruction and activities.

Standardized Tests and Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

This article describes the difficulties students with ASD face when taking standardized tests because of social, communication or sensory issues, or ritualistic behaviors. Included is a list of accommodations for taking tests.

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Transition Assessment Guide

Describes how to conduct and select instruments for a transition assessment. Gives examples of sample instruments for both informal and formal assessments and includes links to pod casts and articles on transition assessment.

DCDT Age-Appropriate Transition Assessment Fact Sheet

Consists of sample questions for transition planning and assessment in areas such as employment, postsecondary education, community activities and personal/social.

Questions for Transition Assessment from the Transition Coalition

Sample questions for transition planning and assessment in areas such as employment, postsecondary education, community activities and personal/social are listed along with methods for collecting information in each of these areas. The Transition Coalition also offers a free online training module on Transition Assessment at http://www.transitioncoalition.org.

Career Planning Begins with Assessment from the National Collaborative on Work Force and Disability

This extensive guide includes chapters on understanding assessment and selecting and using assessments.

A Guide for Transition to Adulthood from the Organization for Autism Research

This free guide includes a section on transition assessment (pp. 9-14) and a form in Appendix D for summarizing interests and skills.

OCALI Guidelines for Transition Assessment

This site provides links to a variety of transition assessment tools and information to assist in designing and implementing AATA for the students with ASD.

Transition Assessment for Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities

This is an archived PowerPoint presentation by Jim Martin and Lorrie Sylvester of the Zarrow Center at University of Oklahoma.

2012 EDITION

Lifespan Transitions Center