



# Open Doors Services & Support

## Presented by

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# Supporting Successful Transitions for Children and Youth



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# Support Successful Transitions

- Transitioning is an ongoing process
- Key transition points throughout a young person's life- transitions are best seen as developmental and temporal processes which cross social, academic, and procedural issues
- Planning for transition
- Consider research findings

*Research indicates that there are specific essential components for supporting successful transitions.*



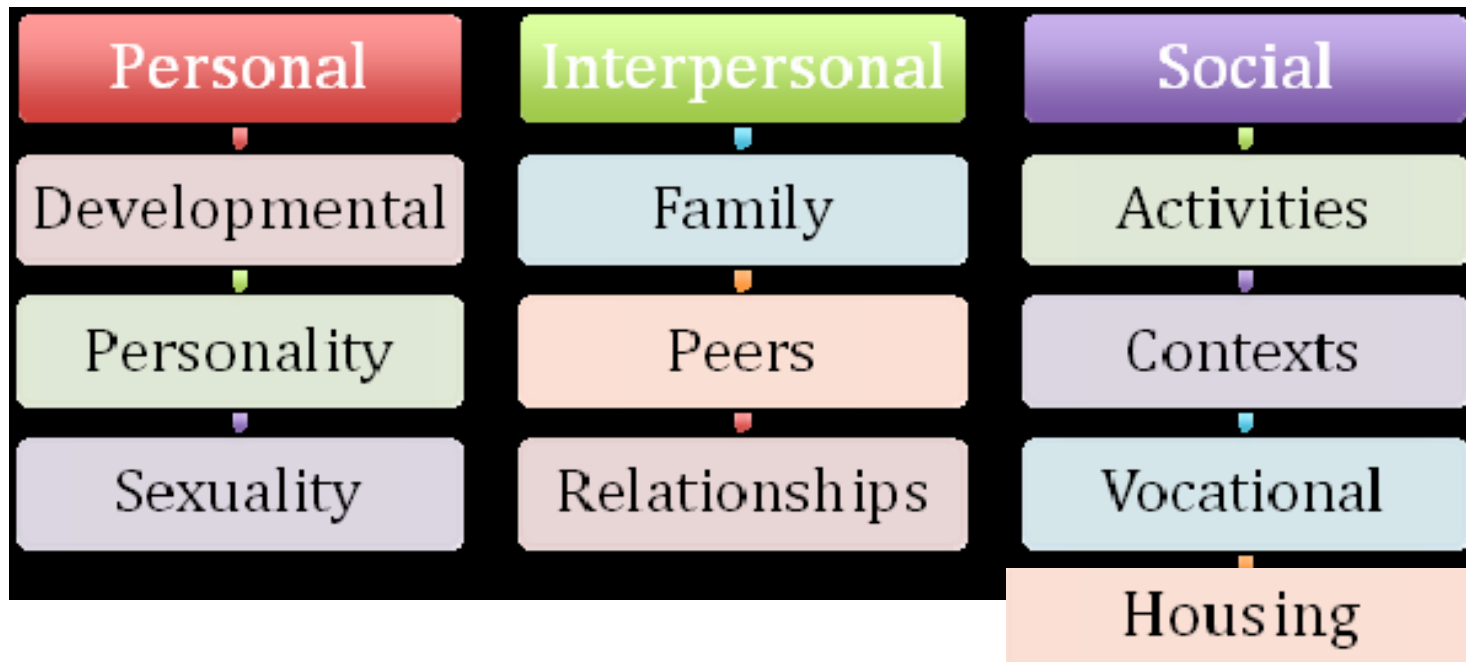
# The Student Perspective

- Researchers have most often used **survey methods** to measure student perceptions of the transition.
- **Student's perceptions** of the transition are **both positive and negative**.
  - Academic concerns such as homework, pressure to do well, and potential drops in achievement are paramount for both students and parents (Akos, 2004; Kvaslund, 2000).
- **Social concerns** such as getting lost, bullying, and making friends (Schumacher, 1998; Kvaslund, 2000) **are the most prevalent perceived risks**.
- **Being separated from friends was "dreaded"** for male and female students in all types of schools (Kvaslund, 2000).
- **Structural problems**
  - the size and layout of secondary schools, the time table, and complicated schedules, getting picked on, not knowing anyone, potentially getting lost, having multiple teachers, and remembering where to go (Graham & Hill, 2001)
- The aspect **most troubling** in relation to school work was **the increase in homework** (Graham and Hill, 2001).



# Transitions for youth with mental health concerns

For a young person with mental health concerns, the challenge of negotiating the transition is compounded by a series of transitions that take place in concert with the mental health service transition.



# Summary of Risks Factors

**Refer to the document called**

[Summary of Risk Factors-Transitions from Elementary to  
Secondary School: A Literature Review](#)



# Essential Components for Supporting Successful Transitions

Refer to handout called: [Research based framework to support successful transitions](#)

1. Ensure basic needs are met.
2. Maintain and encourage positive relationships.
3. Provide support and resources to children and youth in their new environment and modify or adapt routines, as appropriate.
4. Provide choices and involve the child and youth in the transition process to promote and support self-advocacy.
5. Support the need for increased independence and help children and youth create their own identity.
6. Ensure that all transition plans are coordinated, and integrated and information is shared with parents and across sectors.
7. Prepare for the transition and ensure consistency within and between environments.



# Tips for Enhancing the Transition from Middle School to High School

- **Provide social and emotional support from both adults and peers.**
  - Research indicates that youth are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours if their sense of connectedness to the school is fostered by positive relationships with peers and teachers.
- **Ensure awareness (early on,) of the school requirements for different career paths through career and program education and planning.**
  - Guidance counsellors, career counsellors, mentor and/or the Career and Life Management (course are important resources in obtaining this information.
  - Aid youth in recognizing the connection between their goals and dreams and learning how to prepare for them.
- **Create an environment in which youth can maximize their learning through an atmosphere that enhances problem-solving and stress management skills.**
  - Research indicates that structured programs build resiliency, place an emphasis on the positive attributes of a new environment or situation, and provide clarity and reliable information.
- **Provide youth with a comprehensive education, including life skills and basic education material.**
  - Schools prepare youth for the adult roles they will take on, in addition to providing youth with a basic education.
- **Promote important skills and experiences for youth during high school, including:**
  - focus on work experiences (apprenticeships, job shadowing);
  - opportunities to get involved in the community (volunteering);
  - career information and counselling; and
  - continued special education and skills training for youth with special needs.





# Transition Milestones

- 1. Transitioning from Elementary School to Middle School**
- 2. Transitioning from Middle School to High School**
- 3. Transitioning into Adulthood**
- 4. Social Transitioning of Children and Youth**
- 5. Transitions for Children and Youth with Disabilities or Health Needs**
- 6. Children and Youth with High-risk Factors**



# 1. Transitioning from Elementary to Middle School

- **the most problematic transition for most students** – as proven by research- as the focus on grades, relative ability and competition is more prevalent.
- **both girls and boys experience a decreased sense of well-being-** girls tend to maintain their academic performance, while boys tend to experience a decrease in academic performance.



# Tips for Enhancing the Transition from Elementary to Middle School

- **Provide opportunities for students & parents to become familiar with procedures/routines/ rules/ social expectations early on in the transition.**
- **Encourage parents and children to attend any scheduled open houses/orientations days**
  - help the child figure out the layout of the new school (where to find classes, the library, the gym, and the cafeteria as it will look different when there are hundreds of kids crowding the halls.
  - see if your student can meet some of her teachers or the guidance counselor, knowing what a few teachers look like can make the child feel more comfortable.
- **Be conscious that children and youth may need some guidance** to work through specific issues.
  - getting to class on time, finding lockers, keeping up with materials, finding lunchrooms/bathrooms, finding the right bus, getting through crowded hallways, remembering which class to go to and personal safety are their chief worries.
- **Be aware of the changing classroom dynamic in new setting-** which involves changing classrooms and classmates frequently, resulting in less individualized attention for each student.
- **Find ways to help youth be connected to their school and community** - arts, sports, clubs , volunteer opportunities
  - research indicates that youth are less likely to engage in behaviours that threaten their health if their sense of connectedness to the school is fostered by positive relationships with peers & teachers.
- **Encourage matching older students with new transitioning students** - to allow peer mentoring and support, especially for more vulnerable students.
- **Listen more than you talk**
  - children and youth have spent the majority of their lives listening in a variety of situations. Now they want and need to share their feelings to help cope and become more aware of their changing identity.
- **Help children identify which aspects of their lives they have control over, and which they do not.**
  - this can help reduce stress.
- **Allow children and youth to express their negative feelings and suggest coping strategies.**
  - follow up in a few days to see how things are going. Help children and youth anticipate possible challenges and come up with coping strategies if these challenges are faced.
- **Demonstrate the relevance of preparedness and decision-making regarding the child's future**
  - by framing issues in a relevant and child or youth-friendly manner.



# Tips for Enhancing the Transition from Elementary to Middle School

**When kids enter a new environment with some sense of what to expect, they are more likely to be successful and less likely to be overwhelmed.**

## Tips for Parents

1. **Clothes. Yes, clothes.** For a middle schooler, the idea of going to school looking decidedly uncool is terrifying.
  - Help your child think about how he wants to present himself that first day. That doesn't mean that you need to spend a lot of money on new clothes. It does mean looking together at what your child has and what he needs to feel self-confident.
2. **Mornings. Ugh!**
  - Two weeks before school starts, get everyone used to going to bed and getting up earlier. It's a huge adjustment for some children. But a tired kid isn't going to do well in school. Set up a healthy sleep routine from the start.



## 2. Transition from Middle School to High School

- High schools have a broader mission than preparing students for post-secondary education
- Research indicates that approximately 28% of all grade 12 students enter a post-secondary institution in the fall of their high school graduation year
- **At this time**, parents, schools, employers, peers and community personnel must ensure that **youth learn the skills to become successful adults.**



# 3. Transitioning to Adulthood

Although transitioning to adulthood is often characterized by heightened independence in youth, they still require support during this transition to ensure success.

- **Engage youth in discussions about their long-term goals and ambitions.**
  - Having a goal to work towards helps focus and motivate youth.
  - Ensure that youth are aware that certain services will discontinue when they turn 18, as well as the rights and responsibilities they will obtain at age 18.
  - Help youth with accessing alternative services and planning for financial independence.
- **Assist youth in gaining access to scholarships and financial assistance**
  - To aid them in undertaking their educational, training, and/or career plans.
  - Research show that the highest unemployment rates occur among those with the least education and training(education and training integral to future job success).
- **Assist youth in developing a personal portfolio, including a resume, by using a career planner**
- **Link youth with a supportive adult or mentor**
  - Ensure a reliable source of emotional and social support during their transition (parents, coaches, student advisors, or guidance counsellors)
  - Encourage youth to prepare for the changing nature of the modern workforce by assisting them in developing a variety of skills, education and interests. Research has proven that employment trends are shifting to demand a more highly skilled labour force.
- **Create opportunities for youth to become involved in their community.**
  - This will help youth develop skills, feel empowered, and gain access to new networks.
- **Help youth to become aware of the future opportunities**
  - Attending career fairs, career days and post-secondary institution open houses.



# 4. Social Transitioning of Children and Youth

*This transition encompasses changes in status, roles and relationships; these types of transitions often present challenges to children and youth in a variety of settings, including in school, in the community, with peer groups and in the family.*

- **Research shows that Self-Esteem decreases during adolescence, particularly among girls.**
  - Emphasize the positive and recognize a child or youth's strengths. This will give him or her confidence and help him or her feel that he or she has lots to offer.
  - Avoid comparing one child or youth to another, as it hampers individuality, and hurts self-esteem.
- **Stress that children and youth are not alone in their social challenges such as peer pressure and making new friends.**
  - Encourage children and youth to resolve their own conflicts as much as possible. This will help in the development of their problem-solving skills, help them to understand social boundaries and help them to learn to be sensitive to others.
  - Help children and youth rehearse social situations they sometimes find difficult or uncomfortable to build skills and confidence.
  - Encourage children and youth to participate in a variety of social situations in their school, community and neighbourhood to assist in the varied development of their social skills.
- **Connect children and youth with mentoring programs, which enhance social relationships**
- **Encourage children and youth to express their ideas, feelings, thoughts and views.**
  - Listen intently – this will encourage communication, as well as develop their own listening
- **Support children and youth in taking pride in their culture, ethnicity or religion.**
  - By taking pride in these important aspects of their identity, children and youth strengthen their identities and develop relationships with other children and youth who share common values.
  - Lack of understanding of their culture has been shown to lead youth to feel isolated and have difficulties with identity.



# **Facilitators to successful transitions for youth with mental health concerns**

**Table 1: Facilitators to successful transitions for youth with mental health concerns**

- 1. An active, future-focused process**
- 2. Young-person-centered**
- 3. Inclusive of parents/care-givers**
- 4. Starts early**
- 5. Resilience framework**
- 6. Multidisciplinary, inter-agency**
- 7. Involves pediatric and adult services in addition to primary care**
- 8. Provision of coordinated, uninterrupted health care age and developmentally appropriate culturally appropriate comprehensive, flexible, responsive holistic – medical, psychosocial and educational/vocational aspects**
- 9. Skills training for the young person in communication, decision-making, assertiveness, self-care and self-management**
- 10. Enhance sense of control and interdependence in health care**
- 11. To maximize life-long functioning and potential**

Reference: Ontario Centre of Excellence, May 2011: We've got growing up to do, [http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/policy\\_growing\\_up\\_to\\_do.pdf](http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/policy_growing_up_to_do.pdf)





# 5. Transitions for Children and Youth With Disabilities or Health Needs

*Transitions for children and youth with disabilities or health conditions must occur in the context of their health conditions or disabilities.*

- **Create multidisciplinary transition planning team by bringing together all stakeholders, with one person appointed to coordinate and collaborate the transition planning process.**
- **Plan for transitions early, whenever possible.**
- **Children/youth with disabilities and/or health needs require more opportunities for a smoother transition. Such opportunities may include special education, enhanced skills training, and a system of advocacy within their educational settings.**
- **Promote self-advocacy by ensuring that children/youth are aware of their unique needs. Where children and youth cannot adequately self-advocate, provide advocacy on their behalf.**
  - Help children and youth, early on, to learn to communicate with health care providers and education professionals to express their needs. Involve the child/youth and the family in having some control and responsibility over health care and education.
  - Help youth make their own medical appointments, obtain their own supplies and create a record of their medical history.
- **Apply developmentally appropriate expectations for children and youth with disabilities and health needs.**
  - Children and youth with disabilities are often subject to lowered performance expectations, resulting in lowered achievement.
- **Learn about work site modifications that may be needed to accommodate a disability.**
  - Ensure youth with disabilities or health needs learn how to follow direction, be on time, work with a team and problem solve within the context of their special needs.
  - During a move, facilitate transitioning by getting in touch with the child/youth's future school, health care provider or day care in advance, and prepare the child/youth for the change by introducing these changes prior to the move.
- **Consider the following key issues, as youth with disabilities or health needs transition into adulthood and become independent:**
  - Transportation, financial management, housing options, relationships, education, employment, personal care and decision-making skills.



# 6. Transitions for Children and Youth with At-Risk Factors

*Overall, a formal transition plan should include and address the following areas:*

- **Child/youth's dreams, goals and ambitions**
- **Educational and employment development**
- **Life skills development** (dealing with peer pressure, addictions, cultural identity, self-care, emotional health and relationships)
- **Placement objective**
- **Connections**
- **Service supports and referrals**



# Transitions for Children and Youth with At-Risk Factors

*Children or youth with at-risk factors often have experienced a history of family breakdown, addictions, violence or abuse, a lack of stable housing, school dropout, a lack of appropriate adult role models and/or mental health concerns. These children and youth frequently have had legal or child welfare involvement.*

- **Ensure adequate food, stable housing, clothing, transportation and other basic needs are being met in order that at-risk young people may have a healthy foundation to move forward.**
- **Arrange for annual medical check ups and ensure that medical reports are reviewed.**
  - For most children or youth in care or in custody, a psychological and developmental assessment should be completed shortly after coming into care. Ensure any recommended follow-up is attended to.
- **Involve positive, supportive family or extended family members as much as possible in all aspects of the child or youth's life.**
  - Where placement outside of the family is required, seriously consider extended family or someone known to the child or youth. A caseworker's involvement in helping to reconnect a child with his or her family is essential and sometimes a youth worker or therapist may be required.
  - Encourage parental involvement in school activities and meetings, as well as foster parent, youth worker or caseworker involvement. Demonstrate to the child or youth that there are interested and caring people involved in his/her life.
- **Provide opportunities, wherever possible, for the child or youth to make choices in order to feel empowered, respected and heard.**
  - Reassure children and youth that transitions are normal and involve varying degrees of stress, especially for youth.
  - Reassure children and youth dealing with a family separation or divorce that it is normal for them to have many different feelings and emotions about all of the changes that are taking place.
  - Some of the emotions that children and youth may express include anxiety, stress, sadness, relief or confusion. Any change in behaviour in a child or youth can indicate the presence of any one of these emotions.
- **Arrange to have the child or youth matched with a mentor, when there is a reasonable level of confidence**
  - Important factors in matching a child or youth with at-risk factors with an appropriate mentor include continuity of mentorship over time, common expectations and understanding, and a sense of trust within the match.
- **Encourage and facilitate child and youth participation in community recreational or other activities that are of interest to them in order to help foster inter-personal skills and relationships as well as to develop a sense of belonging to the community.**
  - Research has shown that children and youth with strong social connections were less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours later in life.
- **Involve youth in every step of the transition planning process and attempt to build a strong and close support team for the youth.**
  - Establish a knowledge base of available education and training programs in the community
  - Consider continuum of programs, including basic education, vocational programs, trade or technical programs, and university programs. For each program type, learn what, if any, special supports may be available to prospective students with high-risk factors, such as peer support, mentoring or tutoring. If available, help link the child or youth with available program supports.
- **Arrange to have tutoring provided, as children or youth with at-risk factors sometimes require the one-on-one attention .**





Q & A

You have Questions We have Answers



# Resources

- To be completed

