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POINT OF TRANSITION SERVICE INTEGRATION PROJECT:  
A MULTIPLE -CASE STUDY OF A SYSTEMS CHANGE INTERVENTION

by

David A. Noyes

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of San Diego

March 2002

Dissertation Committee

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Fred McFarlane, Ph.D.

Caren Sax, Ed.D.

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## ABSTRACT

The Point of Transition Service Integration Project (POTSIP) was initiated in 1997 in California as a three-year model demonstration grant funded by the Department of Education. The goal of the project was to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration among public schools, the State Department of Rehabilitation, and the State Department of Developmental Services related to efforts assisting students with severe disabilities who are transitioning from school to adult life.

This qualitative study examined a stakeholder-centered perspective on the transition process within the POTSIP model. The purpose of this study was to identify the critical incidents and factors that impact the transition experience as perceived by four students, their family members, transition teachers, and other service providers. These multiple case studies give voice to the participants directly engaged in transition activities in an effort to enhance future practice.

The following research questions were investigated:

1. How do students with severe disabilities, their families, transition teachers, and adult agency staff perceive the transition process at least 12 –24 months after exiting school for adult life?
2. How does interagency collaboration and early intervention impact the transition service delivery system according to students, families, teachers, and adult agency representatives?

Stakeholder interviews, observations, and document review were utilized to provide data for the study. Interview data were analyzed following multiple reviews of the data and emerging themes were identified. Observation and document review data were also analyzed and summarized. This study identified stakeholder perceptions indicating both positive and negative elements related to the implementation of the POTSIP model.

Findings included indications of improved interagency collaboration in terms of overlapping of services the final year of school, continuity of services and relationships, improved employment outcomes, and early and shared funding arrangements. Indications of stakeholder dissatisfaction or poor collaboration were demonstrated by themes of failure to address long-term goals, lack of inter-stakeholder communication, and various policy and procedural barriers to providing successful transition outcomes. Based on these findings, implications were offered for the various stakeholder groups and recommendations were developed in an effort to inform and improve practice by the various adult service systems.

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I was asked to participate in the implementation of the Point of Transition Service Integration Project (POTSIP) in San Diego four years ago, I jumped at the opportunity. The concept of helping three bureaucracies learn to work together more effectively for the benefit of students with severe disabilities by overlapping services made so much sense (a rare event indeed considering I was working for one of the bureaucracies at the time). The results to date have justified this impression and the effort continues.

Many positive interagency relationships have been established over the last several years, and I am both proud of and amazed by the level of cooperation and commitment exhibited by all of our POTSIP partners (public schools, Regional Center, adult agencies, Department of Rehabilitation, SDSU, SFSU). The Project provided a context for this study, and the relationships established through POTSIP played an integral part in its successful completion.

A dissertation, itself, is an exercise in collaboration. Many people deserve thanks and recognition. The members of my dissertation committee, Drs. Dan Miller, Robert Donmoyer, Fred McFarlane, and Caren Sax modeled the essence of leadership and inter-university collaboration, and provided invaluable support and mentoring throughout this process. Specifically, I'd like to thank Dr. Miller for serving as my Chair and especially for making himself unconditionally available at "crunch time." Dr. Donmoyer for

providing valuable insight regarding qualitative research design; Dr. McFarlane for 18 years of mentoring, content expertise, and his legendary loyalty to his students long after graduation; and last but certainly not least, Dr. Sax, my friend, colleague, and mentor who provided just the right amount of encouragement and prodding to keep me moving. There were many meetings at Starbucks, and Caren has provided assistance with everything from the original concept to final editing and formatting. Caren, I couldn't have done it without you, you truly went above and beyond.

I also want to acknowledge the students and families who invited me into their homes and shared their "transition stories" in the hopes of improving practice for students and families who follow. My thanks also go out to the school and adult agency staff who participated in the interviews and assisted with gathering relevant documents. A special thanks also to Jerry Wechsler, Point of Transition coordinator for City Schools, for all of his logistical support and encouragement in implementing this study.

There are several people who have exhibited extraordinary leadership during the implementation of POTSIP. First, Drs. Ian Pumpian (SDSU) and Nick Certo (SFSU) need to be acknowledged for writing the original grant proposal five years ago. Nick is also our partner in expanding the model to other sites in California. Bob Morris of San Diego City Schools demonstrated the courage to divert funding for teacher salaries to adult agency subcontracts. Carolyn Muldoon and later Chaz Compton (District Administrators of San Diego DR) agreed to break new ground by allowing supported

employment dollars to be utilized during a student's last year in school. Dr. Catherine Campisi, state Director of DR, has recently indicated she will push to make this a statewide practice, another example of leadership that has the potential to impact thousands of students who are transitioning from school to adult life. Chaz and Judy Wallace Patton and Dan Clark from the Regional Center have also begun negotiations to expand shared funding options for students and eliminate agency disincentives once the budget crisis lifts.

Finally, my sincere gratitude is extended to my wife, Angelina, for her unconditional support and encouragement during this trying time. With the addition of our two new children to our family last December, Ariel 7 and Conner 3, the past several months have been more than challenging, but somehow we made it! Much of the responsibility for taking care of the kids rested on her as I came down the homestretch with this project. Angie, I couldn't have done this without your love and support (and your willingness to run to the store for computer paper and printer cartridges, and to take the kids to the park for the day so I could work!) I still miss adult food, but the kids have been an extraordinary blessing. After many weekends in the library, Dad can come out and play once more.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Despite increasing efforts and legislation to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to access the labor market (ADA, 1990), unemployment among this population remains alarmingly high. Recent data indicate that approximately seventy percent of individuals with severe disabilities who desire to work are still searching for employment opportunities (President's Committee, 1999; Harris, 1998). In the past five years, a national effort, the School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA, 1994), has attempted to help high school students acquire the necessary skills to successfully enter the job market. The crucial transition from school to work is especially difficult for students who have significant disabilities (Wagner & DeStefano, 1993). Brown et al. (1983) captured the essence of the challenges presented to these students as they transition from school to adult life:

Envision someone who can learn, but who cannot learn as much as 99% of his or her age peers; who needs more time and trials to learn and relearn than almost all other persons; who has difficulty transferring that learned in one environment to



another; and who rarely synthesizes skills acquired from several different experiences so as to function effectively in a novel situation. (p.74)

Compounding the difficulty inherent to the transition process for this population of students is a lack of interagency cooperation and collaboration. Katsiyannis, de Fur, & Conderman (1998) have documented that "the fragmented system of services within high schools and adult services are contributing to the failure of special education to prepare youths for the future" (p. 1). Dr. Fred Schroeder, former Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for the Clinton administration, echoes this sentiment:

In my view the real barrier to good transition work has been parochial interests, especially around money. I think VR agencies view transition as something that is extra. I don't think they conceive of transition as rehabilitation, as just a standard part of what we do as a system (personal communication, March 8, 2001).

Recently, federal demonstration projects have been funded to address these system deficits. One in particular, the Point of Transition System Integration Project (POTSIP) (Certo, Pumpian, Fisher, Storey, & Smalley, 1997), initiated in the state of California, provided the context for this study.

#### Statement of the Problem

POTSIP is the result of a joint proposal by the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University (SDSU) and the Vocational Special Educational Program within the

Department of Special Education at San Francisco State University (SFSU). The Project received federal funding to address concerns about high unemployment for individuals with severe disabilities who transition from high school. The proposal addressed the current fragmentation of services among the Department of Rehabilitation (DR), Developmental Disability Services (DDS), and public school service delivery systems. The goal of the project was to effect a systems change by increasing the level of collaboration and cooperation among the three agencies prior to the student's "aging out" or exiting the public school system.

For clarity, a composite character representing typical student experiences is utilized to help illustrate the traditional transition process. Steven, age 22, has moderate mental retardation and has been participating in his school's transition class since he was 18. This class includes ten students with significant disabilities who are all 18-22 years old. Steven is scheduled to exit from the public school system in July and has worked in several school-based employment sites over the past three years. Steven does well at his current job at a fast food restaurant and likes it very much, but the job does not belong to him. The job is designated as a training site used by many of the students in this class.

The transition teacher has arranged for a planning meeting in April and has invited Steven's family, the case service coordinator from DDS, and a representative from DR. Assuming that all of the parties involved agree that supported employment is an appropriate goal for Steven once he leaves school, an application will be made for

vocational rehabilitation services. The application process and eligibility determination for rehabilitation services can take up to 60 days. Steven and his family are encouraged to visit adult agencies in their area to discuss supported employment options and to decide who would provide the best services for Steven to find and maintain employment.

By June, rehabilitation services are authorized for Steven and an adult agency begins to provide job development and identify an appropriate employment match. Steven exits school and stays at home while a job is identified. After two months of waiting, Steven is offered a job at a sheltered workshop until a community placement is found. Steven and his family refuse this option, feeling that this is a step backward, as he was already working successfully in the community while he was in school. Two more months pass, leaving Steven bored and his family frustrated. Momentum and motivation are lost.

Steven's story helps to illustrate a critical issue in transition planning. Due to delayed interagency collaboration and planning, too many students experience this "black hole" at the end of their school career. Much of the progress many students make during their school based work experiences in the community is interrupted at the time of transition. Traditionally, students age out of school transition programs at age 22 and are referred to an appropriate adult "receiving agency" (a program providing services in the community). In general, students like Steven must usually leave current employment because it is part of the school-training program used by all classmates. The exiting

student typically has to start over with new program staff (usually strangers), start a new job with a new job coach (once a job is identified), and begin to establish relationships with new co-workers. Any natural supports that had been developed at the job site are lost.

The POTSIP model recommends that the three systems work collaboratively with the student during the year prior to graduation, typically at age 21, to develop vocational, social, and recreational activities that can "go with" students when they leave public schools. The services are tailored to the individual. Currently, many students age out of the system and are referred to a "packaged" program that may meet some of the individual's needs, but not all. For example, a student may have vocational needs addressed, but not community access needs. These referrals may be based mostly on available slots that are open in nearby programs. This current approach is designed for what some believe is a good fit at a low cost. However, individual needs are often ignored.

Supporters of the POTSIP approach proposed that the three systems could save money by pooling their resources in the last year of a student's participation in a transition program, or the "point of transition", by avoiding duplication of services and building on the efforts of the other partners. Further, more successful and satisfactory outcomes would reduce service costs after the transition, and more cooperation in blended funding arrangements (i.e., shared funding of program hours focused on finding

employment) would reduce the financial disincentives for receiving agencies. Thus, a larger pool of agencies might provide more creative and individualized services. In times of budgetary constraints, these are significant considerations for all three service delivery systems.

One way to implement this approach is for DR and DDS to fund the receiving agency in working with the student during the last year of transition. This ensures continuity, that is, any job or social/recreation activity the agency was able to establish could "go with" the student. The year is also used to build natural supports for these activities in the environment that the students will be accessing as an adult. The school staff, who know the student best, would still be on hand that year to assist in these activities.

#### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the process and outcomes of the transition experience from a person-centered perspective, that is, primarily from the viewpoints of four students and their families who participated in the POTSIP model. Teachers and adult agency staff were also interviewed to gain their perceptions of the students' transition experiences. The intent of this research was to give voice to the students and families, and to supplement the existing outcome data emerging from the POTSIP Project.

For example, the employment outcome data appear encouraging, and POTSIP documents indicate that indeed some of the systems involved, including public schools, DDS, DR, and adult agency service providers, have made significant changes in the way they are doing business (POTSIP cross-agency document, 2000). These changes include the early use of DR supported employment dollars while the student is still in the last year of school and shared funding arrangements between DDS and DR, with the consent of the adult service vendors.

Still, at the heart of the matter, what does this mean to students and families? In this study, every effort has been made to enable the students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff to tell their “transition stories” and to report these stories accurately and in a rich, descriptive manner. These data help to identify how the current approach toward transition may or may not be meeting student and family needs. These perspectives provide experiential feedback that can inform future practice and policy development.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were considered:

1. How do students with severe disabilities, their families, transition teachers, and adult agency staff perceive the transition process 12 –24 months after exiting school for adult life?

- a. How do students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff characterize the transition planning that occurred? To what extent was the plan addressed?
  - b. How do the students, parents, teachers, and adult agency staff feel about the quality and range of established daily activities for the transitioned student 12 – 24 months after exiting school? What supports and accommodations are being used? What, if any, needs have not been met?
2. Does interagency collaboration and early intervention impact the transition service delivery system from the perspectives of the students, families, teachers, and adult agency representatives?
- a. What are the emerging themes, if any, that seem to indicate improved levels of interagency collaboration? What themes, if any, indicate failure to collaborate or poor collaboration?
  - b. What are the emerging themes, if any, which indicate that policies and procedures presented barriers or increased opportunities for transition planning?

### Methodology

Case study methodology has been utilized and data was collected through observations, interviews, and review of documents. Four students were the primary

informants, along with their families, transition teacher, and their adult agency representatives. All of the students were selected from one of the original school districts in the Project, the San Diego City School District, and had exited the public school system. Each student met the criteria for having made a “seamless transition” to adult life as measured by the POTSIP Project. A seamless transition is said to occur when a student is accepted into an adult agency program while still in school, performing either paid or voluntary employment, and the funding is in place through DR or DDS to continue in that same program once leaving school. This purposive sampling has allowed for examining congruence between perceptions of outcomes.

Data analysis has been conducted through identification of emerging themes after interview data were transcribed and coded. Work site and/or community observations were conducted and documented, and relevant interagency planning documents were reviewed. Chapter Three provides a more complete discussion of the research methodology.

### Significance of the Study

Although early data from POTSIP indicate a significant improvement in employment outcomes for participating students (Pumpian, Certo & Sax, 1999), employment statistics alone are not adequate to assess the transition experience. In order for practitioners of the future to learn from these demonstration projects and continue to improve the quality of transition outcomes, it is necessary to investigate additional



aspects of the process. For example, agencies may appear to be working more cooperatively, but were these efforts focused on the student in a person-centered approach? What was the experience like for the students and their families? Did the process feel organized and did the systems seem to work well together from their perspectives? The review of the literature reveals that success includes more than employment status and that quality of life issues include access to continuing education, relationships, and community integration.

Often practitioners utilize quantitative data such as employment outcomes and agency statistics when evaluating new practices and systems change. While the focus of POTSIP is directed toward systems integration and interagency collaboration, the focus of this study is on the student experience. In early discussions, the focus of this study was going to be directed toward the systems and agencies. How did the interagency service providers and bureaucrats feel about the level of interagency collaboration as a result of the POTSIP effort? How did the various funding strategies affect the way the Project was implemented in different areas of the state? What, if any, were the critical incidents that led to improved interagency collaboration? These are all interesting questions, but after much reflection, a decision was made to focus this study on gaining an understanding of the student and family perceptions of the transition experience because of their critical importance to any systems change effort on their behalf.

The information about the developmental process involved in the design of this study is shared because of how easy it is to lose sight of “the person” in the midst of our well-intentioned efforts. POTSIP was initiated to attempt to change the transition paradigm, to have the student needs direct the system, not the system needs directing the students’ experiences. This practitioner, admittedly, came too close to falling into the old way of thinking. In my current role as a counselor in the field of vocational rehabilitation, and an active agent in the implementation of the POTSIP project, I had been leaning toward studying the system itself and interagency dynamics, not the individual students. Realizing this was a humbling experience. If the student needs are supposed to direct the service delivery systems, the student needs must direct the research as well.

#### Limitations of the Study

Using one’s self as an instrument to collect data in a qualitative research project presents possible opportunities for bias. Every effort has been made to report the data accurately and to triangulate the data with project stakeholders, documentation, and member checks. Targeting four students is a limited sample, but can provide the basis for a larger study and results may be transferable to other students in similar settings. Individual differences unique to each student were anticipated, yet discoveries regarding the stakeholder perceptions of the service systems involved may inform practice and thus be useful for other regions attempting to improve interagency collaboration regarding school to adult life transition.

The study was directed toward students who have exited from one school district, San Diego City Schools, which played an instrumental role in the implementation of the POTSIP model in San Diego County. San Diego City Schools is also unique in that they are the only district in the county that has directly sub-contracted with adult agencies to provide a community program for transition students during their final year in public school, under the supervision of the transition teacher. All data emerging from this study should be considered accordingly.

#### Definitions of Terms

**Community based program:** Individuals participating generally spend a minimum of 80% of their time in the community, accessing goods and services and performing either paid or volunteer work.

**Department of Developmental Services (DDS):** State agency responsible for providing life long case management services to individuals with developmental disabilities. DDS subcontracts with local **Regional Centers** to actually provide these services to consumers.

**Department of Rehabilitation (DR):** State agency responsible for assisting eligible individuals who have disability related impairments to employment enter or reenter the workforce.

**Fading:** In individual placements, a job coach often starts working with student/client 100 per cent of the time at a new job, and support gradually fades away over a period of several months.

**Goods and services:** In element of community based training, funded by DDS/Regional Centers, that supports individuals with severe disabilities to access community resources, including stores, banks, libraries, and recreation facilities.

**Group placement:** A group of at least 3 individuals are engaged in paid work in an integrated employment site, supported fully by a job coach, and support does not fade.

**Individual placement:** A single student or client is placed at a community job site and fading of support services is expected.

**Integrated work:** Community based employment, paid or unpaid, involving interactions with non-disabled workers.

**Job coach:** An individual employed by an adult service agency who provides students/clients support at their job site. Support includes helping to organize and learn job tasks and to develop natural supports including establishing relationships with co-workers.

**Mobility training:** Professional assistance provided to help individuals with disabilities learn to ride the public transportation system safely and independently.

**Seamless transition:** Moving from school to adult life without an interruption in services. Adult agencies begin providing services (supported employment and/or

community access) while students are still in school, and funding is in place through DR or DDS to continue same services upon exit from school. First day out of school should not be significantly different than last day in school.

**Shared funding:** A student or client is supported by an adult agency under two different funding streams. DR pays for the hours a student is involved in supported employment during the day, and DDS/Regional Center pays for the other portion of the day involving community access.

**Sheltered workshop:** Site based facility. Generally all participants are individuals with disabilities, except for agency staff, and perform contract piecework, including packaging and light assembly. Pay is based on production.

**Supported employment:** Competitive work in an integrated work setting with on-going support services for individuals with the most severe disabilities. Funded and administered by the Department of Rehabilitation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature pertinent to policy, empirical research, and reports consistent with the topic of transition service integration. First, recent legislation related to the purpose and process of transition services for students with severe disabilities is examined. This inspection presented the reader with an understanding of what should occur in transition planning from a legal standpoint, providing a context for comparison once the student and family stories of their own transition experiences are presented.

Second, recent literature related to current employment and community integration outcomes for the same population of students following their school to adult life transition process is discussed. Employment outcome data for participants in the POTSIP model in academic year 1998-1999 are also discussed.

Third, relevant citations regarding the historical and current state of fragmentation of service delivery among the three systems are offered. Studies regarding promising approaches toward inter-organizational relationships and collaboration are

outlined, beginning an effort to identify a desired state for any service integration effort.

A sample of boundary spanning and systems change literature is reviewed in an effort to establish a context for the examination of the specific transition project under review.

Finally, literature regarding person-centered planning, customer driven services, and quality of life indicators is discussed, setting the stage for the current study. A review of a similar research project which examined student perceptions of quality of life following transition from high school to adult life that did not include an early interagency intervention model is also offered as a point of reference for this study.

#### Transition Legislation

Although school-to-work transition services have been offered for several decades, only recently has the process been formalized and mandated by legislation. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990 (IDEA) requires that an individual transition plan (ITP) be developed as part of any individualized education planning (IEP) for special education students. IDEA defines transition as follows: a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed with an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests [IDEA, 602(a)(20)].

The law is also very specific about the requirement for interagency cooperation and collaboration. IDEA requires that, by age 16, the ITP must include a statement that outlines the projected services the student will require to transition successfully to adult life, and a statement of interagency responsibilities or linkages. Further, the amendments specify that “if an adult partner agency [e.g., Department of Rehabilitation (DR)] does not fulfill the agreed upon services, the educational agency must reconvene the IEP team and develop alternative methods to meet the transition objectives” [IDEA, 602(a)(20)]. This requirement is aimed at preventing cross-agency finger-pointing and blaming which occurs when transition services are not provided and plans fail, leaving families and students unsure of who to hold accountable. The educational agency is ultimately responsible for arranging transition services.

In 1994, the School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) was approved by Congress and signed by President Clinton in an effort to improve the transition from school to work for all students. Federal dollars were authorized to establish statewide school to work transition systems. The objective of these systems was to provide a seamless transition for students from secondary education to meaningful, quality employment or post-secondary education. The term “seamless transition” has been adopted for specific use in the Point of Transition System Integration Project (POTSIP).

Although STWOA is intended to serve all students, recent studies indicate that youth with disabilities are underrepresented in STWOA initiatives (Hershey, Hudis,



Silverberg, & Haimson, 1997; Miller, Hazelkorn, & Lombard, 1997; Silverberg, 1997).

Unger & Luecking (1998) suggest that one possible explanation for this underrepresentation could be that because special education has its own system for providing transition services, some professionals may not feel it is necessary to provide school-to work services to this population of students. POTSIP was initiated in 1997 through funding by the Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) transitions systems change project to address these concerns.

IDEA also specifically mentions supported employment as a transition service.

The supported employment program was established in 1986 through amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Supported employment is an important transition service for students with severe disabilities. Wehman and Revell (1996) indicate that between 1986 and 1995, the supported employment program expanded from 9,000 to 140,000 individuals with severe disabilities. Supported employment is defined by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities as follows: "Supported employment facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with the most severe disabilities (i.e. psychiatric, mental retardation, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services to perform their job" (Presidents's Commission, 1999, p.1).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, P.L. 101-336) of 1990, or civil rights legislation for persons with disabilities, has contributed to the movement toward a more inclusive society and attempted to assist the effort to employ individuals with the most severe disabilities. The recent implementation of the Work Investment Act of 1998 (WIA, P.L. 105-220) encourages still a higher level of interagency cooperation through the establishment of one stop career centers and mandatory agency partnerships. The Ticket to Work and Workforce Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWIIA, P.L. 106-170) recently signed by President Clinton, addresses many of the concerns individuals have had regarding the fear of losing medical coverage if an attempt was made to return to work. The fear of losing benefits (which may have been difficult to obtain in the first place) has been a vocational barrier for many individuals wishing to return to the work force.

#### National Transition Outcomes

Although the impact of WIA and TWIIA is yet to be determined, results from STWOA, ADA, IDEA as amended in 1990 and 1997, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1986 and 1992 (and older legislation including the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1983 and the Lanterman Act of 1976) are disappointing in terms of employment outcomes. La Plante, Kennedy, Kaye, & Wenger (1996) estimate that 92% of adults with profound disabilities and 75% of adults with significant disabilities remain unemployed.

Outcomes for students with disabilities within five years of leaving school were examined and indications are that there is still much room for improvement. The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS), initiated by SRI International in 1987 under contract to the Office of Special Education Programs, helps to illuminate a pattern of transition outcomes for students.

The NLTS survey included a nationally representative sample of more than 8000 youths with disabilities from more than 300 school districts, and all members were special education students between the ages of 15 and 21 in the 1985-1986 school year (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Data were collected first in 1987 and again in 1990, including school records, telephone interviews with students and families, and surveys of principals and teachers. The NLTS reports its findings in percentages that are weighted to represent youth nationally, not percentages of the sample population.

Blackorby and Wagner (1996) reported that for youths with disabilities out of high school for 3-5 years, only 17% of students with multiple disabilities were employed, 22% of students with orthopedic impairments, 29% with visual impairments, 37% with mental retardation, 39% other health impaired, 42% hard of hearing, 43% deaf, 47% emotionally disturbed, 65% with speech impairments, and 70% with learning disabilities. Further, the research indicated that males with disabilities were employed 3-5 years after school at 64% rate compared to 40% for females ( $p < 0.001$ ); nearly twice as many males with disabilities were earning \$6.00 an hour than females ( $p < 0.05$ ); and more than three

times as many white working youths as African American youths were earning \$6.00 an hour (46% versus 14%;  $p < 0.001$ ).

What does this mean in terms of the students involved in this study? As indicated, along with diversity and gender considerations, type of disability was a significant factor affecting employment outcomes. Transition classes (ages 18-22) generally only work with the schools' students who have the most severe disabilities, students listed by the NLTS survey as having the poorest employment outcomes. Thus, from another perspective on the previous findings, transition classes are typically working with students who have multiple disabilities, an 83% unemployment rate; students with orthopedic and other health related impairments, a 78% and 61% unemployment rate respectively; and students with mental retardation, a 63% unemployment rate. Additional research has corroborated the findings of the NLTS survey and indicated that the post school outcomes for individuals with the most severe disabilities for employment and community living are poor (Kregel & Wehman, 1989; Mank, 1994; Schafer, Wehman, Kregel, & West, 1990; Wehman, Kregel, & Schafer, 1989; U.S. Bureau of Census, 1992).

The importance of a quality transition to employment for students with severe disabilities is apparent. Other studies that have examined employment outcomes for adults with similar disabilities indicate employment rates do not improve with age (Mank, Buckley & Rhodes, 1990; McGaughey, Kiernan, McNally & Gilmore, 1995). According to Wehman and Revell (1996), although 140,000 individuals were

participating in supported employment as of 1996, individuals with the most severe disabilities still went unserved. Pumpian, Fisher, Certo, and Smalley (1997) acknowledge that the development of careers for individuals with the most severe disabilities is labor-intensive. Labor intensive efforts, shared by three systems working together earlier and more cooperatively, may be the best chance many of these students have of obtaining satisfactory employment outcomes.

As indicated earlier, outcome data from POTSIP is encouraging. Sax (2000) reports that out of 54 students who participated in the POTSIP model throughout the state in school year 1998-1999, 39 (72%) were employed when they left the public school system, and 44 (81%) students were categorized as making a seamless transition to adult life. In San Diego City Schools, Sax (2000) reports that 15 (65%) of 23 students were employed upon exit from school and 15 (65%) of 23 were categorized as making a seamless transition to adult life. During the 1998-1999 academic year, San Diego City Schools had sub-contracted with only one adult agency to serve 23 students. As of the 2001-2002 academic year, the school district has now added five additional agencies to serve a total of 40 students who are aging out of public school in an effort to further improve transition outcomes.

#### Interagency Collaboration

Defur and Taymans (1995) examined the competencies needed for individuals working with students in transition and indicate that the top three include “skills related

to coordination, communication, and collaboration” (p. 42). Gray (1989) defines collaboration as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that are beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p .5).

Gray (1989) suggests that there are six issues to be addressed in the first phase of collaboration: (a) a common definition of the problem, stemming from interdependence; (b) a commitment to collaborate, based on both the interests of the organization and conditions relating to trusting the other potential participants; (c) identification of other stakeholders with which to collaborate; (d) acceptance of the legitimacy of the stakeholders; (e) the presence of a convener to bring the parties together; and (f) identification of which resources are available and which are needed for the collaboration to proceed.

Interdependence in human services is defined by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978): “In social systems, and social interactions, interdependence exists whenever one actor does not entirely control all of the conditions necessary for the achievement of an action or for obtaining the outcome desired for the action”(p.40). The authors add this important caveat: “Interdependence characterizes the relationship between the agents creating the outcome, not the outcome itself” (p.40). Clearly interdependence is evident in the transition planning process.

Perception is critical. Logsdon (1991) summarizes her beliefs regarding the foundation necessary for successful collaboration:

The two most important components that must be in place before an organization will make a commitment to cross-sectional social collaboration are (a) the interests or stakes the organization has in resolving the social problem and (b) the degree of interdependence the organization perceives that it has with other stakeholders in dealing with the problem. (p. 23)

Logsdon (1991), postulates that the levels of collaboration will vary as levels of perceived interest and interdependence fluctuate. Using a four box illustration (Figure 1), Logsdon offers a visual aid for understanding the dynamics of a collaborative relationship.

Figure 1: Levels of collaboration

		<b>Interdependence</b>	
		Low	High
<b>Interest</b>	Low	Low interest Low interdependence	Low interest High interdependence
	High	High interest Low interdependence	High interest High interdependence

Box one is labeled low interest - low interdependence, indicating the party neither views the issue as very serious or one that requires collaboration. Box two is labeled high interest - low interdependence, characterized by a problem that is viewed as very important by the party but one which can be solved on their own. Box three is low interest - high interdependence, also characterized by the author as the “free ride” box when the problem is perceived as not severe and the organization allows the others to do the work and stays on the sidelines. Finally, box four is labeled high interest - high interdependence when the problem is perceived as very important to the organization and can only be resolved through collaboration.

Some additional concepts from inter-organizational theory will assist in understanding organizational perception. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) characterize the perception an organization has in relation to its environment as “resource dependence” and define the term as follows: “(resource dependence) measures the potency of the external organizations or groups in the given organization’s environment”(p.52). The authors suggest that contrary to the notion that organizations are closed systems and generally self-directed, “ the concept of dependence suggests that organizations are partly directed by elements in their environment. Organizations formulate their own actions in response to the demands placed upon them by other organizations” (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p.54).



The concept of interagency collaboration involving public education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation is not new. Szymanski, Hanley-Maxwell, and Asselin (1992) give a detailed history of the attempts made to coordinate services for students with disabilities and is summarized by their following chronology:

- 1938 –1950 Early vocational rehabilitation-special education collaboration in services to students with deafness
- 1943 - 1954 Separation of Vocational Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery Systems
- 1960- 1975 The rise of the early work-study programs. Recognition of special populations in vocational education legislation
- 1976 Introduction of the 10% of vocational education fund to be set aside for persons with disabilities
- 1978 - 1980 The fall of the early work-study programs
- 1980-1986 Continued collaborative efforts
- 1984 OSERS Transition Initiative; Introduction of Supported Employment
- 1990 Special education legislation includes rehabilitation counseling as a related service; requires that Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for students 16 and older include a statement regarding

needed transition services. Vocational education legislation removes set-aside funds for persons with disabilities (p.168).

Although earlier legislation had encouraged collaboration and required cooperative agreements among agencies (Rehabilitation Act as Amended 1986, Section 101 [a] [11]), IDEA (1990) established the first legislative requirement to document the different systems' responsibilities in student Individual Transition Plans (ITP's).

The three primary systems involved with students with disabilities in this study at the time of transition to adult life are public education, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and the Department of Rehabilitation (DR). Each of the systems has its own set of regulations, policies, and procedures. Both DDS and DR have regulations requiring that if services requested are available through another resource, these services should not be authorized or funded for budgetary reasons. DDS uses the term "generic resources," and DR uses the term "similar benefits."

Theoretically, both systems could argue that the public education system has primary responsibility for the student while enrolled in school, and no dollars should be authorized until the student exits. Szymanski et al. (1992) demonstrated the rise and fall of financial cooperation between public schools and vocational rehabilitation in the chronology. In times of budget shortfalls, the systems can use the "similar benefits" and "generic resources" clause as justification to retreat from financial collaboration.

Recently DR in California was forced to respond to a budgetary crisis in this manner. In 1996 the Department entered into an “Order of Selection” mode of operation because there were not enough funds available to serve all individuals applying for services. Many of the community partners who had cooperative agreements with DR were unable to serve their clients as they had before. Vocational rehabilitation counselors were instructed to exhaust all possible similar benefits before authorizing any services. In fact, for a period of 7 months between 1998 and 1999, all new applicants were placed on a waiting list and no services were available regardless of the level of severity of disability.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the DR financial crisis any further. Services have resumed for individuals determined to be at least “severely disabled” by the agency’s Order of Selection Level of Severity of Disability rating scale. Suffice it to say that in times of budgetary crisis, interagency collaboration suffers dramatically.

Certo et al. (1997) propose that the three systems could actually save money by leveraging their funding dollars to serve students with the most severe disabilities:

The major part of the solution to improving the outcome of the transition process lies in eliminating the artificial dichotomy maintained between public schools and adult rehabilitation or developmental disability service delivery systems . . .

public schools do not have enough funds to adequately staff placement services.

Rehabilitation’s scarce funds lead to time limitations and a tendency to serve

individuals who are seen as less challenging or easier to place. Developmental disabilities has flexibility to provide adequate staffing and long-term support, however limited funds are available to vendorize or convert enough agencies to meet the need for integrated work and living supports. Yet, collectively, it could be argued that enough funds are available if this dichotomy could be replaced and resources could be coordinated differently. (p. 75)

Destafano and Wermuth (1992) concur with the need for more proactive interagency involvement and offer the following in response to the intent of IDEA legislation:

If the purpose of transition planning is to minimize the number of students who fail to access adult services, some overlap of education and adult service responsibility is warranted. Under current federal regulations, because educational eligibility ends when the student ages out of school and financial and legal responsibilities of other agencies are not age-determined, this period of shared responsibility is often brief or nonexistent, resulting in a poorly articulated hand-off attitude among agencies and corresponding increased risk for an unsuccessful transition. (p. 546)

Studies have indicated that interagency collaboration is a primary factor leading to successful transition outcomes for students with severe disabilities (Everson & McNulty, 1992; Wehman, 1996; Gajar, Goodman, & McAfee, 1993; Benz, Johnson,

Mikkelson, & Lindstrom, 1995; Elliot, Alberto, Arnold, Taber, & Bryar, 1996). Nisbet, Covent, and Schuh (1992) strongly encourage family involvement in the collaboration efforts and echo the sentiments of other colleagues regarding shared funding at the point of transition: “Families should advocate for collaboration rather than traditional models of senders and receivers. The educational experience from age 18-21 should closely resemble the student’s desired adult life. It should not be building-based, and should be jointly funded by Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Developmental Services” (p. 422). Snauwauert (1992) proposes that interagency collaboration is essential. “There seems to be a national consensus that interagency coordination and/or capacity building is the most viable approach to transition policy, coupled in some cases with legal mandate” (p.516).

Large bureaucracies, such as the three involved in transition collaboration, offer their own unique complications. In general, bureaucracies are often viewed as ineffective, cumbersome, and slow to adapt to change. Mutual adjustment is an additional important inter-organizational concept that addresses some of the concerns in bureaucratic settings. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) offer the following explanation of the concept of mutual adjustment:

The key to a potential bureaucratic intelligence of democracy lies in whether the division of labor is set up in such a way that bureaucrats have a need to adjust toward each other and toward other political participants. The more that

bureaucrats reach out to adjust to each other, the livelier can be the competition of ideas bearing on problem definition, agenda setting, option specification, and final judgement . . . When such decentralized and interactive adjustment predominates as a means of coordinating among bureaucratic units, no formal action by any one agency can be said to establish policy. Instead, policy evolves through complex and reciprocal relations among all the bureaucrats, elected functionaries, representatives of interest groups, and other participants. The outcome may be unpredictable, not fully intended by any one of the individuals who participated. It nevertheless may be a great deal more intelligent and even more democratic than normally achieved through hierarchical coordination efforts, in the sense that a greater diversity of considerations are brought to bear, and in the sense that no one set of participants can readily dominate others. (p. 67)

Gardner (1992) also strongly believes that effective collaboration and service integration can only be accomplished through shared decision making: “Effective planning must include discussion of implementation details and is possible only if a policy-minded team of coequals works toward the same goals. No one agency should own the process” (p. 85). Snauwaert (1992) echoes this sentiment: “Among other requirements, organizational structures must be created that allow for free and extensive communication between agencies; procedures for conflict resolution must be specified; collective decision-making forums must be established” (p. 516).

According to Wilkof, Brown, and Selsky (1995), interorganizational relationships (IORs) are often impacted by discrepancies between organizational cultures. Wilkof et al. used an action research model to examine dysfunctional aspects in the working relationship between two organizations. Findings from the study suggest that culture analyses should be conducted prior to formation of IORs to identify potential differences in approaches to tasks and acculturation. Organizations that have improved cultural awareness of their partners can factor in this information when building cooperative approaches to completing mutual tasks. Further, organizations involved in IORs without the benefit of prior culture analyses, which develop problems, can benefit through a strategic intervention called "cultural consciousness raising" (p. 386). Additional strategies listed by the authors include joint training, team building, and structural changes. Their study suggests that one key to successful IORs is maximizing the ability of each partner to view existing or proposed structures and systems from each other's cultural lenses.

In addition to understanding cultural aspects of partner agencies, Gardner (1992) also emphasizes the need for cross training and an environment open to learning: "Cross training means, in part, learning the 'glossary function.' This training decodes each agency's alphabet soup – IEP, 99-457, JTPA, Chapter I, WIC, ADA, DRG – and carefully explains to the whole team. A spirit of 'no questions are dumb questions' has to pervade the process" (p. 87).

According to Katsiyannis, deFur, and Conderman (1998), cross-disciplinary training was the most chosen method by their respondents for implementing systemic change within transition services. The authors surveyed state education transition program specialists from all fifty states regarding their efforts to improve transition services. Forty-nine states participated and all of the states indicated they used some form of cross-disciplinary training. A majority of the states viewed this as the most effective method of establishing quality transition services. "Cross disciplinary training, in which parents, educators, and adult service providers meet together, breaks down barriers and creates synergy that surpasses what can be established by policy or mandates" (p. 56).

Additional results indicated that the second method most utilized was technical assistance targeted to local needs. Thirty-seven states indicated that technical assistance was one of the most effective ways to develop successful transition services. Examples listed included on-going mentoring, development of materials, establishment of transition teams and coordinators, and the provision of consultants.

One example of a cross agency training effort that addressed both of the areas previously mentioned is the GET-SET model in OHIO. Fish, Izzo, Karoulis, and Growick (1997) indicate that by 1997 over 160 members of 25 local cross agency supported employment teams and cohorts had been trained together in a nine unit training program affiliated with Ohio State University. Teams consisted of consumers and their families, agency staff from local school districts, DDS staff, and mental health and rehabilitation



counselors. In addition to core training, team members worked collaboratively on collective projects in each quarter to address a local problem affecting supported employment outcomes. Members not only learned each other's "alphabet soups" but also gained a working knowledge of multiple agencies and established personal relationships that continued long after the program ended.

Mank and Buckley (1996) interviewed former directors of systems change projects involving supported employment. The ten participants were selected from a pool of 27 directors from 27 states who were the first to receive federal systems change grants in 1985 and 1986. The purpose of the projects was to "fundamentally change the systems of day and employment services for people with severe disabilities" (Mank & Buckley, 1996, p. 244). The telephone interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The directors were not randomly selected but were chosen to represent 3 eastern states, 3 mid-western states, and 4 western states. They were also chosen because each had been involved in the project for over 3 years, the grants in their states had ended, and a retrospective assessment could occur. The authors noted that the sample selection was a limitation of the study.

The data that emerged from this study indicated some clear recommendations for future systems change efforts. According to Mank and Buckley (1996), the most frequent recommendations given by the respondents were "(a) to replace a focus on rules and regulations with a focus on quality training and technical assistance and (b) to emphasize

values. Additional recommendations focused on responsiveness to consumers and building ownership" (p.251).

Implementing and sustaining systems change efforts is no easy matter. Much of the organizational change literature indicates a time period of 5-7 years is necessary to establish any significant change in an organization (Bolman & Deal 1991; Fullan, 1993). Schrag (1996) offers this perspective: "Rarely is systems change linear; often it is messy because of the involvement of diverse players with differing agency responsibilities, priorities and perspectives, many of whom have not worked together meaningfully in the past" (p. 495). Alberto, Taber, Brozovic, & Elliot (1997) concur: "Many interagency (transition) committees acknowledge the need to work together over several years in order to bring about change for students with disabilities and to allow for continuing collaboration" (p. 202).

Leadership also plays a vital role in these systems change, collaborative efforts. Fox and Wandry (1998) advocate for a formalized delineation of roles school counselors can play in developing and maintaining interagency relationships. Much can be accomplished if individuals are designated by their agencies to take a lead role in cross boundary efforts. Sarason and Lorentz (1998) indicate, however, that very few organizations allow for such a role in their organizational charts. Sarason and Lorentz introduce the concept of network coordinator and describe their role as having three full time informal tasks. These tasks include constantly scanning the organization to

determine where and with whom resource exchange would be fruitful; taking steps to forge a network of individuals whose self interests would be furthered by participating in forums devoted to possibilities of resource exchange; and recognizing the fact that an organization has commerce with others external to its borders and regarding external contacts no differently than they would parts of their internal organization.

Cordeiro and Kolek (1996) borrowed the concept of “Comprador” from Nien Cheng to describe the characteristics of boundary-crossing individuals. Cheng (1986) indicates that compradors were local Chinese people “who acted as liaisons between foreign firms and Chinese officials” (p. 281). Cordeiro and Kolek (1996) explained that the word “comprador” means “buyer” and that “compradors were needed because of the bureaucracies and hierarchies pervasive throughout imperial China” (p.13).

Clearly a designated role for “network coordinators” or “compradors” would be useful in coordinating the transition process for students with severe disabilities. Cordeiro and Kolek (1996) challenge educational leadership to develop boundary-crossing strategies:

The task for school leaders is to identify compradors within their organization and give them permission and a reason to travel. Armed with a purpose, with permission to seek out others with whom to form linkages, with the authority to act as leaders, and with the imperative to interact across levels and organizations,

these emissaries will offer our schools the hope of conducting business in a not-so-usual way that benefits all students and their families. (p. 13)

One can easily argue that this is a task also for administrators in DR and DDS as well. Service providers must be vigilant and proactive in their efforts to meet the individualized needs of their consumers in a manner that is consumer driven.

Student needs know no boundaries. Therefore, the services provided for them must cross and merge boundaries if they are to seamlessly fill those needs.

Delivering educational services that meet this standard requires a paradigm shift away from an organizational focus (we deliver what we do) to a customer focus (we deliver what you need). (Cordeiro & Kolek, 1996, p.14)

#### Person-Centered Planning /Quality of Life Issues

As indicated, interagency cooperation, collaboration, and boundary crossing efforts are essential components in providing quality services to students in transition. Yet, if these services are not customer driven and based on person-centered planning, how successful can they be? The essence of person-centered planning is described by three of the authors involved in the origination of the concept: "It was motivated by a sense of wonder at the eloquence and clarity of so many people with disabilities, so many families, and so many direct service workers . . . if only someone took the time to listen carefully and imaginatively." (O'Brien, O'Brien, & Mount, 1997, p.480)

Traditionally, representatives from the various adult service systems would gather at student planning meetings and view the process from their own organizational lens. These providers often would attempt to discern which services might be offered in the context of existing policies, procedures, methods, and processes rather than trying to understand the students and their unique individual needs. O'Brien et al. (1997) offer the following quote from a parent that differentiates the approach from the family perspective:

All my son's life professionals have come with little boxes to fill him into. What has been different about this is that we started with a blank piece of paper and a question, 'Who is your son and what does he need to have a good future?' That has made a big positive difference, even though we haven't come close to figuring everything out yet. (p. 482)

Examples of person-centered planning approaches include Personal Futures Planning (Mount & Zwernik, 1988), MAPS (Vandercook, York, & Forest, 1989), Essential Life Style Planning (Smull & Harrison, 1991), Group Action Planning (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1992), Lifestyle Development Planning (Malette, et. al., 1992), and PATH (Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, & Rosenberg, 1994). Everson (1996) describes the common thread that runs through all of these approaches: "All person-centered planning approaches begin with the belief that all individuals, regardless of the type or severity of their disabilities, not only benefit from services provided by their

communities, but also offer their communities many gifts and capacities” (p.8). Everson notes that in person-centered planning, people’s needs are either matched to existing services, existing services are changed, or new services are created.

Everson’s proposal that services must either change or be created to match the student’s needs is critical. The status quo is just not adequate to serve this population of students. O’Brien et al. (1997) agree, and note that the best success in implementing this model has occurred when administrators and leaders have demonstrated a willingness to take the risk to change business as usual. “Where there was sufficient administrative courage to create real flexibility, patterns of service shifted as increasing numbers of people found their way to inclusive classrooms, supported jobs, and supported living places. Usually, significant changes were linked to equally important organizational changes” (p. 482).

Several studies have examined the impact of person-centered planning, or the lack of person-centered planning, on student outcomes. Lichtenstein and Michaelides (1993) conducted a multiple case study to examine the last year of high school and post-school experiences for four students, two boys and two girls, who had a mean IQ score of 63. The students were selected using a purposeful sampling technique based on age, gender, and geographic distribution throughout the state. Students and their parents participated initially in structured in-depth interviews upon exit from school. Informal interviews were also conducted with other family members, employers, educators, and adult agency

staff. School records were reviewed including report cards, transcripts, course descriptions, policy statements, assessments, and IEPs.

Following the initial data collection, the four students and their parents were informally interviewed every four months over an 18-month period regarding (a) “the ‘goings on in their life’; (b) how they were doing at their work; (c) reflect on their school experiences; and (d) questioned about their involvement with adult agencies” (Lichtenstein & Michaelides, 1993, p.188). The four case study narratives describe the outcomes and stakeholder perceptions of the transition process from school to adult life. Unfortunately, in all four cases, the IEP process appeared to exclude involvement by the students and their families. In three of the case studies, the student had not even been present at the IEP meeting. One parent specifically expressed disappointment with the process.

Two of the students achieved successful employment outcomes. Both of the students were female and their success was mostly attributed to (a) parent involvement and advocacy, and (b) employer and co-worker support. All of the individuals indicated some degree of social isolation. The researchers attributed this finding to the fact that all of the students had attended classes in segregated settings, thus limiting the students’ abilities to develop friendships. Three of the students had no friends their own age, one student had one close friend her own age who also had a disability.

Lichtenstein and Michaelides (1993) concluded that although two of the students appeared to achieve successful employment, there was little evidence of empowerment for any of the students. The authors link the lack of empowerment to the lack of involvement by students and their families in the planning process and believe that if the system is to be responsive to its audience, it must develop strategies early on that will help them to act on their own behalf. This study underscores the importance of true person-centered planning and the danger that exists for students with disabilities when espoused theory does not match practice. Lichtenstein and Michaelides quote Bogdon and Taylor (1990) to illustrate this point: “Dark shadows always fall between policy and practice, between intentions and reality” (p. 184).

Malette et al. (1992) utilized four data-based case studies that examined the efficacy of the Lifestyle Development Process (LDP) for persons with severe disabilities. Two adults, ages 34 and 53, and two children, ages 7 and 8, with severe intellectual disabilities and behavioral challenges were included in the study. All four of the participants had been referred for LDP services by either family members, care providers, or other service professionals.

The LDP process consists of five steps: (1) vision planning; (2) assessing and remediating barriers to participation; (3) assembling meaningful routines and schedules; (4) developing specific intervention strategies; and (5) evaluating effectiveness and developing a monitoring system. Services were provided to the participants by two teams



of consultants, one for the adults and one for the children. The adult team included three behavior consultants, a speech-language pathologist, and one instructional consultant. The children's team was composed of two education/behavior consultants.

Pre-intervention data, mid-intervention data, and post-intervention data were collected from the participants and at least two individuals who had daily contact with the subjects during the intervention and for at least six months prior to the intervention. Data were collected using three empirically validated measures. First, the Residential Lifestyle Inventory (RLI) (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1987) was utilized to provide information on 144 different leisure and personal management issues. The RLI is a 17-page interview form that takes approximately 45 minutes to administer, according to the researchers. The second instrument used was the Social Network Analysis Form (SNAF) (Kennedy, Horner, Newton, & Kanda, 1990) a three page form completed in a 15-30 minute interview that is used to obtain information regarding the social networks of people with disabilities. The third instrument utilized to collect data was the Program Quality Indicators (PQI) checklist (Meyer, Eichinger, & Park-Lee, 1987). The checklist includes 123 items that represent the "most promising practices" in educational programs for persons with severe disabilities, as gleaned from a literature review and survey of nationally recognized experts in the field" (Malette et al., 1993, p.183). The PQI can be used to evaluate the content of individualized education plans (IEPs) and individualized personal plans (IPPs).

As a result of the comprehensive individualized assessments and interventions, Malette et al. (1993) reported that three of the four participants experienced gains of more than 200% in the number of preferred, integrated activities they performed at the end of the intervention period. The researchers also indicated that the two adults in the study were engaged in the first integrated work opportunities of their lives and the two children participated to various degrees in mainstream activities in their neighborhood schools. All four participants experienced at least slight increases in their unpaid social networks.

Everson and Zhang (2000) used a focus group to examine the perspectives of nine participants involved in another specific person-centered planning model - personal futures planning (Mount & Zwernik, 1988). Everson and Zhang explored the following areas: “(a) the inhibitors and supports to initiating person-centered planning activities; (b) family and community member roles and involvement in the person-centered planning process; and (c) longitudinal satisfaction with person-centered planning activities and outcomes” (p.36).

Prior to the study, Everson conducted a two-day training on personal futures planning for 37 participants who would eventually form eight circles of support for eight focus individuals with disabilities. During the 12 months following the training, support was provided to assist the development and growth of the circles by a trained personal futures planning facilitator. After one year, a focus group was convened consisting of nine members from five of the circles who were identified by circle members as having

primary roles in their groups. The five circles were selected purposefully to represent both more successful and less successful circles. Each of the five circles was invited to send two representatives; one representative was absent when the focus group was held. Only one “focus person” was involved in the focus group, the rest of the group consisted of four parents, one friend, one case manager, and two care providers - a licensed practical nurse and a personal care attendant.

All of the participants in the focus group indicated that engaging in person-centered planning appeared to be a positive process for everyone involved, including the focus persons, families, care providers, and other service professionals. The focus group also identified the following challenges common to all of the circle of support groups: (a) difficulty obtaining participation and contribution from the focus person; (b) inadequate commitment and participation of extended family members and community members; (c) difficulty listening to and understanding the wants and needs of focus persons and difficulty allowing them to drive the process; (d) falling back into old ways of thinking and planning; and (e) negative attitudes and questioning of the focus person’s abilities.

On the positive side, the data derived from the focus group indicated that each circle appeared to have the skills and energy within it to problem-solve and develop action plans. Everson and Zhang (2000) offered two conclusions: “First, and most importantly, all participants expressed positive change in the life of the focus persons. Second, while acknowledging significant challenges, all of the focus group participants

were satisfied with the person-centered process and were willing to continue it and/or do it again” (p.8).

Assuming that planning for students is done in a person-centered manner, regardless of the model used, evaluation of the plan after implementation is critical to ensure needs have been met. Much has been written about the term “quality of life” as a basis for evaluating the quality of services for persons with severe disabilities (Brown, 1995; Goode, 1994; Schalock, 1994). Weisgerber (1991) reports that Madeline Will, former head of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, was once questioned regarding her views on the “very poor” quality of life of persons with severe disabilities. Will (1984) responded by sharing a letter she received from a person with a severe disability, a letter that can offer each of us a rare look at quality of life issues from a consumer’s perspective:

Who stops to figure out why being disabled is such a horrible fate? Most disabled people (we can assume we are experts in this) will tell you that despite what everyone thinks, the disability itself is not what makes everything difficult. What causes the difficulty are the attitudes society has about being disabled, attitudes that make a disabled person embarrassed, insecure, uncomfortable, dependent. Of course, disabled people rarely talk of quality of life. But it has precious little to do with deformity, and a great deal to do with society’s own defects. The public talks about that kind of life as though it is simply inevitable for deformed infants. What

they should be asking is: Why is it inevitable? The real issues of this debate have not surfaced yet. The debaters have spent no energy trying to find out just how decent a disabled life could be, if it were allowed to be decent. (p. 5)

Since 1984, there have indeed been many debates about the best way to evaluate quality of life (QOL) issues. Hatton (1998) strongly cautions readers about the subjective nature of QOL assessments and is concerned that: “One can argue that this approach, which claims to liberate people with mental retardation from a medical model, may paradoxically serve to extend the license of services to exert control over all facets of a person’s life” (p. 104-105).

Schalock (1994) asserts that QOL evaluations are a natural extension of the recent movement toward total quality management and defines QOL “as a concept that reflects a person’s desired conditions of living related to home and community living, employment, and health functioning... a subjective phenomena based on a person’s perception of various aspects of life experiences” (p.121). Many QOL assessment instruments have been developed (Allen, Shea, & Associates, 1992; Schalock, 1994). The California Department of Developmental Services (DDS), working with an advisory committee consisting of consumers, families, advocates, and service providers, has developed an instrument to evaluate quality of life entitled “Looking at Life Quality” (California DDS, 1996).

The DDS instrument is a comprehensive handbook that addresses 25 outcomes in six core areas: choice, relationships, lifestyle, health and well being, rights, and satisfaction. The handbook is to be utilized by trained volunteers and provides step by

step instructions on how to perform the interviews, including sample questions, alternative inquiry methods, and confidentiality guidelines. The instrument is targeted primarily for consumers who live in out of home placements.

Prior to entering the discussion concerning methodology, it may be helpful to review one final study that specifically examined the area this research has explored, student and family perceptions of the transition process. In doing so, the reader may be provided with a reference point for comparison in terms of student/family perceptions regarding the transition process following the Point of Transition Model intervention.

Gallivan-Fenlon (1994) utilized qualitative methods to gather data on eleven students in the process of transition from school to adult life in order to understand how the students, families, and service providers experienced and perceived the transition process. Semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document examination were applied to conduct the study over a 16- month period, from 10 months during the last year of school to 6 months after exit. All eleven students had been labeled as having either moderate or severe disabilities and were projected to receive supported employment services following graduation.

The author also attempted to assess the level of interagency collaboration that existed in the transition process and included parents, teachers, transition program coordinators, and service coordinators as participants. Structured interviews were tape

recorded, transcribed, and coded for emerging themes. Some disturbing themes emerged from the data. Gallivan- Fenlon (1994) reports:

1. Differing expectations and aspirations for young adult life. Most adult providers, school personnel, and families held more restrictive expectations for employment, community living, and community participation than the young adults did for themselves.
2. Discrepant/limiting expectations for young adults and prevalent beliefs in the continuum of services model. Services seemed to drive the planning, not student needs.
3. Lack of family and student participation in the transition planning process. 'It's mostly professionals sharing information and deciding what to do.'
4. Lack of collaboration and knowledge among transition teams.
5. Late transition planning. 'We're running out of time.'
6. Lack of inclusive education practices. Segregated classrooms limiting ability to develop friendships with non-disabled peers.

During the first 6 months following graduation, "the most common outcome (for five of the students) was 'sitting home', either receiving no services or waiting for another employment opportunity to be developed by a particular adult agency after a previous job had fallen through" (Gallivan-Fenlon, 1994, p.18). Two students were involved in supported employment at 20 hours a week or less, three students were in a

sheltered workshop, and one student was in a day treatment program. Gallivan-Fenlon (1994) provides a summary of her research findings: “The findings have revealed that transition, at least at the time of this study (1990) was not being experienced or managed the way policy makers, researchers, and authors propose that it should be” (p.20). The author notes that her study was initiated prior to the implementation of IDEA (1990), that contains substantial provisions regarding the availability and design of transition services and that transition practices and outcomes for young adults with disabilities may differ substantially today. Gallivan-Fenlon’s statement provided a challenge to examine if perceptions regarding transition have really changed during the last ten years.

#### Summary

The review of the literature indicates that there continues to be an unacceptably high unemployment rate for persons with disabilities, and an even higher rate for individuals with severe disabilities. Despite many federal legislative initiatives, the literature reveals that the service delivery system for students with disabilities who are transitioning from school to adult life remains fragmented. Former RSA Commissioner Dr. Fred Schroeder, in an interview as recent as March 2001, acknowledges the current partition between service delivery systems:

I still think the general mindset is that VR thinks we step in when special education is done, and special education thinks when they (students) graduate or



certificate out then 'we're done with them,' then they go to Rehab and there is a total disconnect. (personal communication, March 8, 2001)

The POTSIP project has attempted to remove this artificial partition between service providers, utilizing the concepts of collaboration, interorganizational relationships, systems change, and boundary crossing, as discussed in this chapter. Cooperative, interagency planning to implement person-centered planning efforts for students with severe disabilities was the primary purpose of the project. Strategies such as early intervention, shared funding, and regular interagency committee meetings have been utilized. Now the question, has it made a difference?

This study has asked students, their families, teaches, and adult agency personnel, what, if any, these efforts have had on the quality of life issues as they relate to the transition process. Gallivan-Fenlon (1994) indicated among other things, that most often students sat at home waiting for programs to develop jobs once they left school; that many students and families had a feeling of 'we're running out time;' that there was a lack of student and family participation in the transition planning process; and that a lack of inclusive education practices appeared to limit the ability of students to develop friendships with non-disabled peers. This study has examined if similar themes arose when transition occurred in the context of the POTSIP model. Chapter Three describes the methodology utilized in this investigation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three outlines the methodology used for this study. A discussion of the principles and parameters of qualitative research and case study methodology is provided, as well as the rationale for using this approach. The research questions are restated. Participant selection procedures, data gathering methods, and the data analysis process are delineated. Human Subjects considerations are discussed.

#### Research Design

Qualitative research is generally used to describe phenomena when survey and statistical data are not enough to adequately capture the essence of the event under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Janesick, 1994; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Yin, 1994). Qualitative research methods were selected in keeping with the “person-centered” emphasis of this study. Patton (1990) offers a list of core principles attributed to qualitative inquiry that resonates strongly with the goals of this study. For example, Patton indicates that qualitative research is useful in these situations because each person or community is unique and deserves respect; that equity, fairness, and mutual respect

should be foundations of human interactions; and that change processes (and research) should be negotiated and agreed to, not imposed or required.

Patton (1990) specifically mentions the need for a person-centered approach toward research, which is consistent with the efforts described in Chapter Two advocating the development of person-centered planning for students with severe disabilities: “Change processes should be person-centered, attentive to the effects on real people as individuals with their unique needs and interests” (p.125).

There are several methodologies utilized in qualitative research including, but not limited to, grounded theory, ethnography, life history, and case study. The case study methodology was selected for this study. Yin (1994) indicates that the “case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (p.8). Yin notes that case study relies on many of the same techniques used by historians, but also includes direct observation and systematic interviewing. Merriam (1988) reports that case study methodology is particularly appropriate for improving practice in applied fields of study such as education and play an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base. The purpose of this study was to inform practice related to transition planning for students with severe disabilities.

### Research Questions

The following questions were considered:

1. How do students with severe disabilities, their families, transition teachers, and adult agency staff perceive the transition process 12 – 24 months after exiting school for adult life?
  - a. How do students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff characterize the transition planning that occurred? To what extent was the plan addressed?
  - b. How do the students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff feel about the quality and range of established daily activities 12 – 24 months after exiting school? What supports and accommodations are being used? What, if any, needs have not been met?
2. Does interagency collaboration and early intervention impact the transition service delivery system from the perspectives of the students, families, teachers, and adult agency representatives?
  - a. What are the emerging themes, if any, that seem to indicate improved levels of interagency collaboration? What themes, if any, indicate failure to collaborate or poor collaboration?
  - b. What are the emerging themes, if any, which indicate that policies and procedures presented barriers or increased opportunities for transition planning?

### Participants

All four of the students/graduates were 23-25 years old and had participated in the Point of Transition Service Integration Project (POTSIP). For the purpose of this study, the term “student” has continued to be used although technically participants have exited from the public school system. Each of these students was identified as having a severe disability, had received some form of supported employment services, and had been categorized by the POTSIP model as having made a seamless transition from school to adult life. The research focused on stakeholder perceptions of the transition process 12-24 months after graduation.

The lead transition teacher from the San Diego City School District was consulted to assist in identifying appropriate participants for the study from a group of students that transitioned out of public school between July 1997 and July 2000. Criteria for selection included a student’s and family’s perceived willingness and ability to share their transition story.

All students and families were English speaking. An attempt was made to select students who moved along varied transition paths, either toward individual or group supported employment or toward a shared funding work/day program. This purposeful selection was used to insure that a cross-section of individuals was represented; such a cross section should provide maximum learning from the project.

Participation was voluntary. Letters were issued to a pool of students and their families meeting the above listed criteria (Appendix E). The letters invited participation and were issued through the student's primary transition teacher to assist in building rapport and establishing credibility through this primary relationship. Individuals who indicated a willingness to participate were provided informed consent information regarding potential benefits or harm to participants (per Human Subjects review), confidentiality, and intended use of information gathered (see Appendices B1-2). Participants' signature on the informed consent form indicated receipt of this information.

Once the students were selected, and appropriate consent forms were obtained, additional stakeholders were identified for interview including the following for each student: the parent(s) and/or other significant family member, the primary transition teacher, and the adult agency representative familiar with the student's transition experience. Samples of the interview guidelines are included in Appendices A1-4.

All of the informants in this study were familiar with appropriately handling confidential information. Students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff routinely participate in team planning meetings to discuss student needs, goals, and objectives. These stakeholders also routinely share the written information that was utilized to collect data in the document review procedure in this investigation.

### Data Collection

This study had three data gathering techniques: observations, interviews, and review of documents. The students who were interviewed and observed in this study are considered to be in an "at risk" population. Special consideration was given to ensure that all participants were protected from harm, and a full human subjects review was conducted and approved prior to any data being gathered. The data collection methods are described more fully below.

#### Observations

Observations were conducted at the student's job sites if the student was still working. If not, observations were conducted in the environment where the student spends the most significant portion of the day. For example, two students were participating in volunteer work activities through a community based day program. One student was not involved in any program or regularly scheduled activity at the time of the study, and observations were not conducted with that particular student. A total of six observations were conducted: two at the same job site for one student, one at a paid job site and another at a volunteer site for a second student, and one at a volunteer job and another at a stamp making class for the third student.

The researcher conducted the observations at least 30 days apart, with each observation lasting approximately 1 hour. Data collected during the observations was dictated immediately afterward based on the observation check list and field notes form

included in Appendix D. The recording form outlines the general guidelines that were utilized to extract data from the observations.

A primary focus during the observation was on the student's interactions with others in the environment, including disabled and non-disabled co-workers and adult agency staff, and observed indicators of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current activities. Descriptions of observed vocational, recreational, or social activities were also recorded.

The purpose of an observation activity is to learn about the culture of an informant. The shadowing activity allows the observer to experience first hand the informant's native language in context (Spradley, 1979). Culture and language, in this case, refer to the experience of students with severe disabilities and how they communicate their perception of the transition process and resulting satisfaction with quality of life in daily activities.

### Interviews

The interviews were conducted with the focus on the students and the most proximate stakeholders living and working directly with the students. A qualitative research interview requires that an informant is encouraged "to speak in the same way they would talk to others in their cultural scene" (Spradley, 1979, p.59). The interview questions focused on the ways in which these students completed their transition from school to adult life and the supports that were provided across environments. The



interviews also focused on quality of life issues as perceived by the stakeholders 12 – 24 months after exit from public schools. The interviews were open-ended yet structured by interview guides, differentiated by the relationship to the student (Appendix A).

Patton (1990) describes this interview method as the general interview guide approach and offers the following explanation:

The general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The issues in the outline need not be taken in any particular order and the actual wording of questions to elicit responses about those issues is not determined in advance. The interviewer is thus required to adapt both the wording and sequence of questions to specific respondents in the context of the actual interview (p.280).

The flexibility to adapt wording and sequencing of questions was critical, as the students had varying abilities to verbalize their perceptions and feelings about their transition experiences. Interviews ranged from 20-60 minutes, and varied among participants. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure authenticity of data. Sixteen interviews were conducted and included four students, three family members and one primary care-provider, the transition teacher responsible for all four students (four separate interviews), and three adult agency representatives (one coach worked with two of the students).

If students indicated a preference to have families present during the general

interview or had difficulty communicating their point of view without family support, student and family interviews were conducted simultaneously. This investigator conducted all the interviews to provide consistency in data collection. Informal conversational interviews were also conducted during the observations with the student and adult agency staff, and data were recorded in field notes. For example, the students were asked to give the observer a tour of the work/volunteer site and explain tasks and procedures. The adult agency staff were also asked for their perceptions of the student's involvement at the job/program site. Patton (1990) describes the nature of informal conversational interviews as follows:

The informal conversational interview relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction, typically an interview that occurs as part of ongoing participant fieldwork. During an informal conversational interview, the persons being talked with may not even realize they are being interviewed (p.280).

### Document Review

The document review consisted of obtaining specific files for each of the selected students. The file documents included the Individualized Education Plans (IEP), Individualized Transition Plan (ITP), and school collateral information including vocational assessments; Individual Program Plans (IPP) and collateral information from Regional Center; Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and assessment information

from the Department of Rehabilitation; and assessments, placement information, and progress reports from the receiving adult agency. .

Records were reviewed to determine who was present at the planning meetings; what were the goals, objectives and timelines; were the goals and objectives met; were responsibilities for actions delineated; and were the plans focused around the wishes and desires of the student and family? The documents from the various agencies were also reviewed for consistency to determine if different plans were moving in the same direction or if there were apparent discrepancies. These findings were also recorded.

Appendix C displays a sample document review form.

#### Field Notes / Data Journal / Audit Trail

A journal was kept recording the progress of the study, beginning when participants were initially invited to participate in the study and concluded once data were analyzed and findings were reported. Field notes were taken at each stage of the data gathering process, including during (if not disruptive or intrusive) or immediately after observations and interviews, and during document review.

Yin (1994) notes that rarely do case studies proceed exactly as planned and that “the skilled investigator must remember the original purpose of the investigation but then must be willing to change procedures or plans if unanticipated events occur” (p. 57). The journal and field notes will be utilized as an audit trail for the research study and will

document any adjustments to procedures and methodology if barriers toward data collection are encountered or additional data sources or leads are identified.

For the most part, data collection occurred according to plan. There were no significant deviations from the methodology, only one student was not in a program viable for collecting observation data, and that contingency was anticipated in the study proposal.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in several steps. The researcher personally conducted all interviews, and reviewed all transcriptions of the interviews in order to become very familiar with the data. Data was analyzed for themes (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher categorized the data into broad areas and highlighted quotes and examples that supported each category. Initial coding categories were adapted from the study by Gallivan-Fenlon (1994), as described in the summary of Chapter Two, along with general coding categories as they related to the initial research questions proposed in this study. The preliminary coding categories are listed in Appendix F. Additional categories and themes emerged from the data.

The transcripts were utilized to describe each individual case study and for a cross study analysis to explore common themes. The researcher conducted all observation and document review activities to maintain a consistent approach toward data collection.

Four case studies are presented utilizing pseudonyms. Employer and agency names have been also changed to protect confidentiality. A summary of student characteristics, stakeholder interviews, observation activities, and document review has been presented for each student. A cross study analysis was then conducted and a summary presented in an effort to identify common themes related to transition planning in general.

Implications for action and "tuning up" the POTSIP project have emerged during this process of data analysis and are described in Chapter Five. Most notable are the supports and level of interagency cooperation necessary to improve quality of life outcomes for students with disabilities as they transition from school to work and adult life.

#### Personal Role in the Project

This researcher is employed with the State of California Department of Rehabilitation as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. In this role, I have had the opportunity to personally work with students who have participated in the POTSIP model, performing intake interviews, writing vocational plans, and authorizing funding for supported employment services during their final year of school. To avoid dual relationships, however, no student that I had case responsibility for as a rehabilitation counselor was targeted or selected for this study. As a practitioner, I am familiar with the need for interagency collaboration in terms of transition planning, but saw very little of this prior to the POTSIP project.

Also, for the past three years I have been working part-time as a Program Specialist for the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University, with some release time from the Department of Rehabilitation, to help implement the POTSIP model in San Diego County. For this reason, I have chosen to primarily focus on student and family perceptions of the transition process itself as opposed to a POTSIP program evaluation. The student, family, and other stakeholder perceptions that were obtained in this study may provide helpful information to practitioners responsible for school to work transition regardless of the model used in their particular school district.

#### Ethical and Human Subjects Considerations

The students involved in the study have been identified as individuals with severe disabilities. Many of the students have significant cognitive and/or physical impairments, raising the issue of informed consent for participation in the study to the forefront. The primary transition teacher, based on his personal knowledge of the students and families, was consulted to identify appropriate participants, eliminating any students or families he felt might be uncomfortable with the data gathering process. The teacher was asked to only recommend students and families he felt would be willing and capable of telling their “transition stories” and issued a letter to potential students and their families outlining the parameters of the study, emphasizing that participation was voluntary.

As indicated earlier, all of the stakeholders who participated in this study are familiar with handling confidential information and have routinely participated in school

and adult agency planning meetings and interviews with agency staff. Pseudonyms were utilized to maintain general confidentiality. Participants will have access to this report upon completion and it is understood that although pseudonyms have been used, the stakeholders involved with each of the four students will be able to identify each other's comments if they are attributed to one particular stakeholder (parent, teacher, adult agency staff).

It was not anticipated that any comments or observations would be reported that might cause harm to the relationships among the participants. However, participants were allowed to review the transcripts of their interviews, and given the opportunity to exclude any specific comments from the report they did not want included because of their relationships to other participants. None of the participants chose to make any omissions or corrections to their transcripts. When possible, relevant comments of this nature were paraphrased and reported in the context of aggregate case reporting to protect inter-stakeholder confidentiality.

The investigator is an experienced human services professional and is bound by a professional code of ethics as both a licensed marriage family therapist and a certified rehabilitation counselor to "do no harm" in either practice or research activities. Further, a full Human Subjects Committee review of this proposed study was conducted by the University of San Diego School of Education prior to any participant selection or data collection activities and their recommendations were incorporated into the methodology.

Although the students were no longer active with the public school system, a letter of support was obtained from the lead teacher and program director for the Point of Transition program at San Diego City Schools (Appendix G). This letter indicates approval of the proposed follow up study and an opinion that no harm was anticipated to come to the students as a result of participation in the study.

All data gathered has been stored in a locked file cabinet, including interview audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes, journal, and confidential documents when not being utilized by the researcher. The transcriber was made aware of the confidential nature of the materials and asked to sign a statement agreeing to maintain confidentiality and securely store materials while in her possession. The transcriber was also asked to destroy all copies of the data once the investigator received and approved the transcripts. All confidential data will be destroyed twelve months following the completion of the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

This chapter will present a summary of the data collected according to the methodology outlined in Chapter Three. Data collection included interviews with four students, their family member (s) or primary care provider, their transition teacher, and their adult agency representative.

Data were also collected through six observations at work or program sites, two each for three of the students. Observations were not conducted on the fourth student as she was laid off from her job site and not attending any regularly scheduled program at the time. A document review was also conducted on each of the students to review transitional planning objectives, interagency involvement, levels of interagency collaboration, and to clarify dates of service provision by the various agencies.

All data were collected between September 1, 2001 and Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Interview transcripts were mailed to all of the participants for their review, giving them an opportunity to change or omit any comments. None of the participants elected to submit

any changes. The data are presented below as four case studies. Student and other participant names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

General information regarding each student, based on document review, is presented first followed by a summary of interview data from the student, his/her family or care provider, his/her teacher, his/her adult agency representative. A summary of observation data for each student is also provided when applicable.

The purpose of this study was to attempt to give voice to the various stakeholders who were involved in transition and transition services. Thus, although some paraphrasing is offered, an extensive use of direct excerpts from the transcripts is utilized to give the reader a more authentic experience of the participant's comments. Excerpts have been chosen that are most relevant to the research questions. Further, although there is some redundancy and repetition in terms of the information presented, for example the schedules of activities for each student, it is felt this is necessary to illustrate consistency or inconsistency in terms of the recollections and various perspectives of the participants.

### Case Study One: Sally

#### Background information

Sally is 24 years old and currently lives with her parents. Both of Sally's parents are working professionals, and Sally also has three siblings and nieces and nephews living in the area with whom she has extensive contact. Record review indicates Sally is diagnosed with moderate mental retardation and has a history of self-abusive behavior.

Sally exited from the public school system in June of 1999 and was one of the first participants in the Point of Transition Model.

The school system subcontracted with ABC adult agency to provide a full day program for her during the final school year. ABC is a local adult agency that provides supported employment services, supported living services, and community based integrated work programs. Sally participated in volunteer work and community enrichment activities with two other students and a job coach until paid employment was obtained in March 1999 at a local document shredding facility. A supported employment group site was established at the facility, and Sally worked three hours a day with her two peers and job coach, then spent the other three hours of the day in the community participating in social and recreational activities.

The Department of Rehabilitation opened a file on Sally in May 1999, and began immediately funding the job coaching through ABC, and continued after graduation in June. The local Regional Center (Department of Developmental Services) began funding the other three hours of the day covering community access upon graduation, after public school dollars were discontinued. Through this shared funding mechanism, Sally's first day in adult programs appeared to have been no different than her last day in the public school system. In other words, she experienced a "seamless transition."

Sally continued in this program, and according to ABC progress reports, did very well until the job site was closed in January 2000. Sally, her peers, and her job coach

began a new work site soon after at a local restaurant, performing cleaning activities.

After several weeks, it was determined that Sally could not keep up with the pace of the expected tasks, and Sally was transferred to another group operated by ABC. The new group participated fully in the community five days a week, six hours a day, but involved only volunteer work, not paid employment. According to the job coach, ABC has been working throughout this time to establish a paid work site. Sally was still involved in this group at the time of her interview in September 2001.

The interview was conducted in Sally's home on a Tuesday evening on the outside patio, mother remained close by cooking dinner in the kitchen. Mother would offer her assistance from the kitchen when Sally had difficulty staying focused or needed help clarifying a response. Sally displayed some child-like behaviors during the interview, asking if the interviewer was "going bye-bye" several times or "you go shopping?" and had to be redirected to focus on her own responses. Sally did ask the interviewer to stay for dinner.

### Student Perspective

Sally has limited verbal skills and would often jump to other topics during the interview. She responded mostly with one or two word answers, but was able to go over a printed copy of her current program schedule. Sally pointed out, via her schedule, that she is currently working as a volunteer with her group (and coach) at three different sites, twice a week at a food share program making food packages, three times a week at an

animal shelter, and twice a week at a thrift store. Sally also attends the YMCA three times a week and a stamp making class twice a week. Other activities include shopping and job development with her coach and other group members.

Sally indicated that her favorite activities included going to exercise at the YMCA and going out for Mexican and Chinese food with her peers. She also indicated that she didn't really miss her job but would like to get paid so she can go shopping. Sally stated that the hardest thing about leaving school was missing some of her friends, and had no response when asked if there was any advice she would give to teachers or others trying to help students transition from school to adult life. When asked if there was anything she would like to change about her current schedule, she replied "more Chinese".

#### Family Perspective

Both of Sally's parents participated in the interview. Although records indicated that Sally, in fact, was working prior to her exit from the public school system (March 1999), both parents' recollection was that the job did not start until the following fall, several months after her graduation. Regardless, her mother felt services took awhile to get going, but shared her insight regarding the difficulty of developing group work sites:

In the beginning there was a lot of just evaluation, I suppose, finding out what she could do, and getting to know her. Early on, like I told you, I think ABC was going through a little bit of staffing problems, so there was a little effort just getting it off the ground early on. But once we got going, she was pretty much

doing community items, not anything job wise or anything like that. That came a little later when the Jones Company job came along. They were looking but I think it's kind of hard, especially with a group. It's not like it's an individual thing where you can find a job for one. If there is an integrated work group, they all have to be able to work in that same environment. That was an effort. And not finding that many employers out there, really, that are willing to take on this population, and especially taking them in as a group.

Both parents indicated a desire for Sally to become more independent in the community and increase her skills to become more self-sufficient. Her mother agreed, however, that a group placement was probably the best setting for her daughter, and seemed generally satisfied with the job site. Sally's mother had this to say about the planning process. For example, in describing the meetings held to design the plan, she offered the following comments:

When I decided to go with this particular agency, we had gatherings that we would sit and try to come up with a plan, and we knew what we wanted for our child. We wanted her to be able to do some kind of job, and do it independently, but that hasn't really transpired. Well, you know, looking at it realistically we were hoping, but realistically, we found that wasn't going to be the case with her. Because she is very dependent, and so, I mean this job at Jones Company turned out to be pretty good for her because she was able to work in an environment

where it was more like a little repetitious type of work, and she was able to do that. And the job coach was there, but not necessarily there to give her hands on with everything. So she was able to work independent without somebody being right on top. But there were times, I think that it went along pretty well, but there were times she had some issues, behavioral issues. And they were pretty intense at times, and I have to say the job went along with that for awhile. There were days they would have to send her home. But overall I thought that was a pretty good job placement.

Although records indicate the Department of Rehabilitation (DR) began funding Sally's supported employment group placement in May of 1999, prior to her graduation, neither parent recalled any involvement at the time by DR. Their understanding was that Sally went directly from the school district to ABC with Regional Center funding.

The following excerpt details some of the events following Sally's eventual job loss and the parent's perception regarding her transition to her current program. Overall, the parents appear to be satisfied, but would like Sally to have another opportunity for paid employment. Sally's mother was asked about any difficulty that Sally might have had changing groups and her impression of how Sally feels about the current program:

Hmm . . . actually I would have to say, actually that one went pretty well.

Because the job coach that she has right now, she likes the lady. And usually it's hard for her to adjust, but this one came out remarkably well, better than she's

done in the past. I think Sally is fine. She knows, just getting out everyday and doing things is fine for her.

Sally's mother offered the following advice and feedback for teachers and other families facing transition:

Well, Joe (the teacher - pseudonym) was good. He was instrumental, he took me around to a few sites, agencies rather, so I could get an idea, because parents coming from school to adult services, unless you just really, really know what's going on, you just don't know. You don't know what to expect or what to look for. And parents would have to be really prepared for this kind of thing, talking about transition. And I think if you know the agencies, but if you haven't been involved in it you're not going to know, but Joe was good in showing me some different options to look at. And I think that is a good tool in this process for parents, making them aware, and then I think it has to be a little proactive on the parent's side too. Just so they'll be better educated and have an understanding, that way you can gear up and kind of push your expectations along for what you want for your child. But I think, I don't know for certain, but once you're turned over to the agency, I just kind of think that you're just with them now. You just have to deal with them now because the school system has turned us loose.

Sally's mom also offered the following advice to service providers:



Right now, I'd really like to see them cover more job development. I don't know if they expect the clients to come in already prepared, if that's not part of their responsibility. I would tell them maybe to coach the parents along or even or just to even let parents know a little more in-depth about their services and what success they've had. And that way, I think parents can make a better decision of where to go.

### Teacher Perspective

Sally's teacher offered his perspective on her transition from school to adult services:

I think Sally was one of our, I won't say more successful students, but I think she had a real good year with us. Partly because the job she had anchored the schedule really nice. And Sally had, before she came to us even during the year, a couple of I'd say behavioral issues, she was kind of squirrely, kind of active, kind of hard to, sometimes in the past before point of transition, get focused, and so she had a good year with us.

The transition teacher continues by describing Sally's job and schedule of activities that were in place at the time she exited the public school system.

The main job when she graduated was the job at Jones Company, the recycling place, the placement was just a wonderful place to be because it was a very atypical job for our students...great job... The employers were very happy with

her work. She was there if I recall about half the day...and placed around that I believe she did some volunteer work for community integration, community skills, things like that.

The teacher goes on to explain that in his view Sally probably wasn't going to handle working much more than that, the job was very physical and the students were standing most of the time. To the best of his recollection, he believed the job placement actually started in January or February of 1999. When asked if there was anything else that he would have liked to see happen for Sally prior to graduation, the teacher responded: "I think work wise, she was doing really well. We probably would have liked to see her do a little more in the community." He added that he always likes to see the students do a little more in terms of fitness and leisure, and that some occupational skills would have been beneficial.

Sally's teacher reported that he felt the group was a very good match for her, and that the job coach who was working with the group was excellent, which in his view, is often the key to student success. When asked about Sally's strengths and challenges that were considered during transition planning, he responded:

Sally has a real personality, she is a real character, fun to be with, full of energy, as long as she can keep that energy focused, which she really did a good job most all the time at work. When she got this job at Jones, it was her first real significant paid job ever, besides some volunteer work and some workability work back in

school days . . . and I think everybody was really kind of surprised how she did . . . she could let out a little energy sometimes and that was real appropriate, not so much appropriate, but the job environment would tolerate that at as opposed to working in a library where you would have to be quiet all the time. The Jones Company was a place where you could let a little steam and still get your work done.

The teacher offered his perspective on Sally's transition to a new group of peers when the Jones Company job site was lost:

Well, knowing Sally I'm sure she didn't like it because she likes to work, but even when students don't do well at jobs, we're hoping that they're learning something from that, sometimes failures can be learning experiences. We don't want to see it happen that way. Sometimes you take 3 students and move them to another job site as a group, as in this case, and not all 3 students are necessarily going to match that kind of work. So to find 2 students who want that job, keep that job and be successful and 1 student needs to move on, there is nothing necessarily wrong with that. You can't just present a job and say here, everybody is going to want it. It could have been that it just wasn't a good match for her.

The teacher was asked to give some examples of some of the issues the team worked on that last year with Sally and some of the supports they used:

The main thing again that kind of stands out was her behavior, her activity level, appropriate social skills. I remember we would be working with the job coach and the coordinator from ABC, to make sure that we were all on the same wave link, be consistent on how we dealt with her, lots of praise for good work, redirecting, modeling appropriate behavior, just basic positive behavior skills.

The interview turned to the discussion of interagency cooperation. The teacher did not recall any conflict between adult agencies or any funding issues at the time of transition. When asked if he identified any systems barriers in terms of Sally's transition to adult life, the response was as follows:

With Sally I don't recall barriers, not in the transition year, in fact the systems meshed together really well . . . The employer, the schools, the adult agencies all working together to get the job going. The funding part was in place, Rehab came in early with ABC which is a great benefit, that went really well. Transportation was not an issue for Sally, because ABC's model is such where the job coach picks up the students at their house. So transportation was never an issue. There weren't really too many barriers during the point of transition year. Afterwards when she lost the job, trying and get another job for her has been difficult I know, with the shared funding and the 60 day limit, there was some issue going on with that too. That probably hindered progress.

The following excerpt relates to implications for future practice and lessons learned as a result of the transition teacher's experience not only with Sally, but also with the Point of Transition model in general. The teacher explains the need for the school program to model the adult agency programs:

We need to continue to keep up with what's happening in the adult world, what transportation systems are in place for after graduation, what adult agencies and systems are in place, what kind of community based programs, what kind of supported employment programs. I kind of equate it to a menu, if we see what is out there, then we know how we can match the students up, we know their needs, we know their interests, we also know in their part of town what kind of services exist. We also need to look at transportation issues and setup transportation systems while they're in the point of transition that can easily be assumed by the adult agency. Some people use MTS, some people will be picked up by the job coach or by the agency. Some you have to get creative, particularly if you're a student using a wheelchair. Right now, again, we're dealing with what do you do with the issue of getting students across city borderlines, from San Diego to National City, Chula Vista, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, the out lying areas? We don't want the adult world to necessarily copy the schools, we want the schools to simulate and look as much as possible like the adult world so there is that seamless transition. We can also be, as we have been, agents of change.

The teacher reported the following as the biggest challenge he sees for future transition planning for students with severe disabilities, and was also asked about his perception of the Point of Transition Model so far:

The toughest part, and it's one thing that we're looking at really closely at school, are the students with higher needs. People, who happen to be lower functioning and thus need more support, people who might use wheelchairs, and need adaptive devices. A lot of the agencies are doing some really good things out there, but that's something that we need to address. I think that's going to be the future push, the folks that need a little more assistance and don't want to be left behind. Still want to be integrated into the community, have as much work experience and volunteer experience as possible, that's going to be the big challenge. (On the model) I'm really encouraged, I'll tell you. I think we have evolved to the point of really being in control of this thing called point of transition and just being involved with adult services. We're raising the bar higher and higher and we're challenging the students to do their best, but also all of the professionals.

Finally, the transition teacher was asked about his view on the school district's decision to subcontract out services to adult agencies that final school year, but continue to have the teacher maintain responsibility for supervising the individual educational and transition plans:

That's something that we have to give credit to the people at the school district.

The concept of contracting has been a God-send because it gives us the

opportunity to set the stage and by giving agencies the money they need to do the

job, we've really become true partners. The band aid approach we talked about

before was when you have schools on one side, and the agencies over here. And a

big Grand Canyon, if you will, between them. What we've done is overlap the

agencies by allowing them to join us, actually I should say, by them allowing us

to join them, because that's what we're doing, so the contract is a major key.

When I talk to all the agencies we work with and the agencies talk to each other,

you can see there is really a connection there. There is really an overlap, not just

in transition for students, but in staff. When you see some of my support staff at

an agency, you can't tell a school support person from the staff support person

and that's what's nice. The agency sometimes kid that when my staff are there,

they are really their staff, and again that ability for us to kind of blend to the

agency, like a chameleon, to kind of sneak in there is really critical.

#### Adult Agency Representative Perspective

Sally's job coach recalled that Sally's job started in March 1999 and ended in January 2000. The coach described the following schedule of activities at the time of graduation:

She was working three hours a day, Monday through Friday. And then after that, she was attending the YMCA two days a week. And then one day was the bus program, twice a week, the bus program, and then she had an art class the other day, and the other she had a ceramic class.

The coach explained that the bus program was an effort to help Sally become independent riding public transportation. However, because Sally had a tendency to be overly friendly with strangers, it was decided she was not safe enough to travel on her own. The coach was asked about some of the other challenges she was working on with Sally:

She had a little bit of behavior issues . . . and little by little she learned to communicate, because the problem with her was she couldn't really communicate when she was sick, when she was not feeling well, or when it was just the time of the month for her. She couldn't really express herself, so every time when she felt sick, rather than just say "I don't feel good", that "I just don't want to work" or "I just want to sit for five minutes," she would pick a fight with the rest of the students or anybody else. Even if it were a stranger who was at the store, she would pinch them or pull their sweaters. And when I'd tell her no you can't do that, then she would get upset and then she would start hitting her chest, pulling her hair out. Literally just pull out her hair. She would scratch herself, be self-abusive. So little by little she stopped. The supervisor she had at work was really



good. I think anybody else would just say, we don't need this, but they were really good, really understanding. Right away, when she would say she's not feeling well, I'd say, Sally lets go outside, lets just go for a walk. So we'd keep on walking, and little by little, by keeping on doing this everyday, she learned that it was okay to feel sick, and it was okay to say I don't feel well, I want to stay home or I want to sit down and take sometime off.

Although Sally's behaviors gradually improved over time, the job coach recalled one incident at the job site where Sally was nearly fired, and explains the procedure she and the family followed whenever Sally's behavior became unmanageable at the work site:

At one time she went into the manager's office and she ripped up a picture of her (the manager's) son. She was pretty upset, I really thought that she was going to fire her. But she just said, "oh my God I can't believe this" and Sally just kind of shook and stood back. And then I said, Sally, we need to go outside. Anyway, she got really bad, and it's really not a base program, it's a community program.

Whenever she would get really, really bad, and really out of control, because I have two other students, I couldn't really totally leave them out there on their own and be with Sally. And Sally did really need me at that time, so we worked it out with her parents to pick her up. When I knew that her behavior was not going to decrease in 20 minutes or that I knew or she really was not wanting to do anything

for the rest of the day, and it was just going to interfere and bother the students that I had, then I would call her Mom. Her Mom or Dad would come and pick her up and they would take her home.

The coach indicated that of the three students in her group, Sally did take up most of her time at the job site and in the community. However, the job coach did feel like the group was a good match for Sally, and went on to describe the tasks the group was performing at the job site.

She was separating papers, it was a recycling company, so they would recycle all kinds of different papers, some boxes with discs inside, and another box would be different kinds of papers, and they would separate the whites with the whites, and the colors with the colors, the cardboard with the cardboard, and if the cardboard had color they would put it in a different bin. And then the discs they would put somewhere separate.

The job coach explained that the pay at the first job site was at a sub-minimum wage based on production and measured by regular time studies. When the job at Jones Company ended and Sally moved to a new site, the job coach struggled to help her be successful:

We got another job site at the Smith Restaurant. She didn't like it. She didn't have behaviors or anything like that, and I really felt bad for her, because she really, she really tried. She really tried to work, to work on what the job consisted

of, which was janitorial. It was cleaning, wiping the tables, cleaning restrooms, sweeping, mopping, putting the liners in the trashcans, and doing the windows. Sally was not used to doing this. She had never done any cleaning at home or with the program. I could see it on her face that she really didn't want to do it. She was not enjoying doing it. But yet, she wanted to because she was in the group, and that was her group. You know, and that's where she belonged, with us. I felt so bad.

The coach explained that unlike the previous position, the new job was not based on production, but was in fact a regular minimum wage job, so the expectations were higher, and there was more pressure on Sally to complete certain tasks in a timely manner. The job was not a good match for Sally, and the job coach had enough empathy for her to know she wasn't happy. Sally, her parents, and agency staff met and decided the new site was not appropriate, and Sally was transferred to another group, the group she remains with to this date. The coach was asked about her overall perception of Sally's transition from school to the adult program and the Point of Transition model.

I think it's great. I think that it really prepares them for the adult program. Now that we work with the kids in public schools, we have the whole year to just work with them. And to find out what they're like, what's going to work out for them. Be teaching and be training them, even from starting with street safety. We have a lot of students that don't even know the difference between crossing the street

from red to green, and it was just probably because they didn't pay attention when they went out with a group. So I think it's really good.

She was also asked, looking back, if there was anything different she might have done to help Sally:

Working with Sally? I can't think of anything. Actually, I'm really proud of her. She really has worked a long, long way from when she came into our program. We really didn't think she was going to stay with us, ABC, because of behavior issues . . . Mom at one point was kind of looking for other places because she didn't think that it was going to work out. She was kind of thinking more about a base program because of the behavior issues that she had, but I said no, all that was back in the past. I talk to her job coach once in a while and see how she's doing, and she said, yea she's doing great, she has little low days, no behaviors, just low days. She's worked herself a long way.

The job coach was asked about her recollection of the planning process, if she felt it was student centered, if the adult service agencies seemed to be working together or coming from different directions, and if there were any funding issues that she could recall.

We worked together at all of the meetings for Sally, I was there. We were all working together. The Regional center, ourselves, and the parents working toward Sally's needs or concerns, we worked together as a team. The funding issues that

we had, the problems that we had, were when Sally graduated from school. There were certain students that were getting split funding, and split funding is that rehab would pay 3 hours for the time that they were working, and then regional center would pay for the other 3 hours of community. We would promise that once someone would get laid off, we would find him or her another job. And that took time, because whatever job they find has to be suitable for them, and sometimes the job might not work out... So at that time, they (Regional Center) said they were going to stop the funding. They were only going to fund 3 hours, Regional Center was only going to pay for community and half the day was not going to be paid anymore because she wasn't working. We didn't have, at least from what I recall, Sally stayed, and we never had any problems with her case. Sally's case, like I said, from what I recall, her case actually went pretty smoothly.

A follow up conversation with the Director of the supported employment programs at ABC indicated that, in fact, ABC did lose several months of funding for half days of Sally's program, but allowed her to continue to attend a full schedule, thinking Regional Center would eventually pay for full days beyond the 60 day agreement. According to the Director, ABC lost several thousand dollars, and funding was only provided when ABC informed the parents that Sally may have to stay home half a day, and the family put pressure on the Regional Center. The Director reported that she has

been told not to enter into anymore shared or split funding arrangements until the 60-day limit is resolved. The job coach was asked if she had any advice for other professionals in terms of improving the Point of Transition model:

I can't think of anything . . . what they have done so far, we haven't had any problems, so everything has run pretty smooth. I can't think of anything else that they could do differently that they're not doing. When I call the case managers for anything, if they're not there and I leave a message, they always call me right back, so I have not found any problems from their corner, so I can't think of anything.

#### Summary of Observation Data

First observation, October 2001, animal shelter. Observed activities included interaction with group members at the animal shelter in the play area for the animals. The group's task is to exercise the animals, and interact with the animals to help get them ready for prospective adoptive homes and families. The activities observed for Sally included petting and playing with the animals with rubber toys, feeding the animals biscuits, brushing the animals. Sally was learning to have the animals sit down and be able to control the animals from licking and jumping inappropriately. Sally appeared content with her work. There were interactions with the public during this observation period, three individuals from the community came in and asked to see some dogs in the play area that they were considering for adoption. Thus, there were three occasions

during this 70-minute period for interaction with the public. Sally did not initiate a lot of contact, there were some smiles and she would say hello. She was not very vocal. Sally would also go with the job coach into the kennel area and pick out a dog that she wanted to take to the play area, so she was able to initiate some of that activity.

Interactions with peers and the other members of the group seemed to be positive. Although there wasn't a lot of verbal interaction, they seemed to share their duties fairly well. Sally would often make comments like, "oh this dog is cute" or "aaaaah" when watching the puppies. She seemed to have a likeness for the puppies especially. She responded well to her job coach. Sally is the newest member of this particular group, one of the members has been with the job coach for 4 years, the other for 8 years.

The job coach indicated that they are looking for paid work opportunities again. The job coach also indicated that one of the other group members is able to help Sally at some of the other volunteer sites learn some basic vocational skills, for example, folding clothes at the thrift store and opening packages. Apparently Sally often will ask for help to do things that she can in fact do herself, and the coach seems to be focusing on that.

Second observation, November 2001, stamp program. Sally, her group, and the job coach were participating in a stamp making class. Activities observed including cutting out plastic molds which had already been engraved upon using negatives of pictures and drawings. They were cutting out the plastic molding to make some stamps. Sally, with the support of the job coach, was able to do some of the large item cutting,

while the coach did some of the fine trimming. Sally participated in dusting the stamps with baby powder so they wouldn't be sticky, and then tried out the stamps once they were prepared, stamping each one on a piece of paper to see what the image was. Sally seemed very pleased with the activities, a lot of smiles and comments, and was polite with the other workers and classmates. Sally also indicated a strong interest in getting to the computer so she could practice her typing. Several times she hinted to the job coach that "I love the typing Teacher, I love typing."

At the end of the observation period Sally, indeed, did go to the computer and began practicing names and addresses off a master list provided by the facility. Sally was typing with one hand, using mostly her left hand, one letter at a time, but appeared very engrossed in the activity. Sally appeared to have a very good relationship with her job coach. The mood at the site was friendly and people seemed to be enjoying themselves.

### Case Study Two – Victor

#### Background information

Victor is 24 years old and currently lives with his parents. He has siblings and extended family close by. Mother reported the family is very close and united. Father works and mother takes care of the home, she has been involved in most of Victor's planning meetings. Mother apologized that her "English isn't very good", English is her second language but she had little difficulty expressing herself in the interview.



Record review indicated Victor is diagnosed with moderate mental retardation and has a communication disorder. Victor exited from the public school system in June of 1999 and also was one of the first participants in the Point of Transition Model. The school system subcontracted with ABC adult agency to provide support for employment and assistance with community access during the final school year. Victor was working at Albert's Grocery through school training funds during that last year, and records indicated ABC developed a permanent supported employment position for Victor at that same site in May 1999.

Victor was also enrolled in a computer class at a local community college, and participated in activities at a local YMCA several times a week with other students and school staff. Victor's IEP indicated that he and his family participated in the planning process, along with his teacher and Regional Center service coordinator. Besides competitive employment, the IEP documented that Victor's other objectives were to attend an ROP class in computer repair and to obtain his driver's license.

The Department of Rehabilitation opened a file on Victor in February 1999, and began funding the job coaching for the job site at Albert's in May through ABC, and continued after graduation in June. Since Victor's daily activities remained the same from the last day of school to the first day of adult programs, he met the criteria of making a "seamless transition" to adult life. Victor still works at Albert's Grocery, nearly 30 hours a week and is earning \$7.35 an hour. However, his two other major objectives, obtaining

training in computer repair and obtaining his driver's license have not been realized, and he is not currently involved in any regular recreation or social programs. Victor had been involved with a Special Olympics sports team, but his work schedule interfered with ongoing participation in that activity.

The interview was held on a Saturday morning in Victor's home, Victor was still asleep when the interviewer arrived but joined in soon after. The discussion was held at the dining room table, several extended family members were in and out of the home during the interview, warmly greeting both Victor and his mother.

#### Student Perspective/Family Perspective

Due to Victor's communication difficulties, mother and Victor were interviewed together, so their responses in the following excerpts often alternate, the student and family perspective are intertwined. Mother initially reported on her son's work experience since leaving school, stating Victor has remained at the same job at Albert's. When asked if Victor is involved in other activities, such as recreation or hobbies, mother responded:

Not really. That's what I've been asking, for places to take him like a group to join, like hockey, any games that he can do. The only things we do is with the family like going to movie's, shopping, and things like that, but he doesn't have any hobbies at all. He has two friends around here. He really doesn't have a lot of friends.

Mother and Victor both indicated they would like to find additional activities that could fit around his work schedule. When asked if there were other goals they were still working on, mother responded:

Trying hard and asking for help for him to get his license. He wants to get his license. And I've been asking everybody that has come over here, please can you help us so he can get his license.. They say, oh yea, we'll look around, but not yet. And the last time we were talking, I think it's frustrating. He says "I want to drive", and I say you can not drive without a license. He just wants to have his license. I feel really bad too. I said you know, and you heard, that I've been asking for help or what to do, or where to go. They say we'll find out and let you know.

Mother and Victor acknowledged that ABC tried to help him study his book, but Victor does not read very well. Mother was hoping for some specialized training and both she and Victor feel the issue was never resolved one way or the other. Mother explained that she has tried to help Victor herself:

I read the questions and I ask him, and like the signs . . . what does this mean?

Because I don't know and I ask him, and he says well this means this . . .

Sometimes some of them he knows very well. But the other ones, sometimes it's hard for him to learn, he can see the ones that have figures, like the man walking, he knows those, but the ones with letters, writing, that's what he has trouble with.

Victor was asked if he received benefits at his job, and he and his mom both indicated that Victor receives health benefits and is a member of the union. Victor indicated that his job tasks include stocking, bagging, getting the carts from the parking lot, and doing “go backs.” Victor remembered having one planning meeting before he left school. When asked if they felt their thoughts and wishes were listened to in the planning meeting, mom said yes, Victor said no, then clarified:

Victor: No . . . some of my ideas were heard and some were not.

Mom (asked Victor): The group ABC or regional center, which one? We don't need to know the names, but which groups? Regional Center?

Victor: Yes.

Mom: The Regional Center because they always promise and they don't do anything.

Victor: Driving.

Mom: At that time he also asked for training classes and they said, oh yea we'll find you a place, and they never called or mentioned about that. He loves to work on electric things, like fix them. He can, from this he can make a big thing, I don't know, he likes to put together little things to make big ones. Things that get broke here, he fixes for me. And that time, we asked if they could find a school, like a vocational school, so he can go and learn something more. And they said oh yea go here. I know he remembers that, that's why he's saying that.

Victor: And they say they're going to call me, and they forget.

Mom: They say they'll call him and don't.

Mother and Victor were asked about the IPP process and if they ever expressed their unhappiness with not meeting goals and objectives within specified time frames.

Victor had a quick response: "No more meetings." When Victor was asked if he could express his frustration at his next annual meeting with Regional Center, he indicated "I'm not going." Mother was asked if she was aware that she could also complain, and request a change of service coordinators if she wanted to. Mother responded:

I'm afraid to . . . you know what, I notice that they don't call or send a letter or nothing during the whole year. The only thing they do is when they review the program, that's when a week before they call. During the whole year I don't hear from them. I don't hear anything from them, from the Regional Center. As for ABC I hear things, but not from the Regional Center. They call just before letting me know that they're coming. They came that day and no more.

The interviewer clarified for the mother that Regional Center would not stop services for her son if she asked for a change in coordinator and she admitted that this is what she was afraid would happen. It was suggested she ask her case manager at ABC to help her address her concerns. Mother and Victor were asked about their feelings at the time of transition, if they were nervous, did the agencies seem to be working together,

what was the transition like for them? Mother reported that it seemed like the agencies were working well together and their options were presented clearly.

Victor: I was nervous. The first week I didn't know anybody.

Mom: I was real nervous because I didn't know what, he finished his school and I didn't know what else he was going to be able to do. After this, and now what?

He had never worked before, so I said, now what is he going to do? I mean, in another way, I know people that have disabled kids and they kept them in the

house all the time, they don't want them to work or do anything. And I don't

think that is fair, I think they should be around people like everybody else. I

mean, have their own space and everything. So I was afraid of that, I didn't want

him all day in the house, not because he bothers me, he doesn't bother me, but he

likes to do things. So what is he going to do now? So I was really afraid of that?

Not to know what he was going to do at that time.

Mother and Victor recalled that the paid permanent position didn't start until two months after school, although records indicate, in fact, the job was in place in May, one month prior to graduation. Still both expressed feeling some anxiety as graduation approached. Both acknowledged that there has never been a time between leaving school and now that Victor wasn't working at Albert's, there was just some confusion as to when the job site changed from a training position to a permanent job. Mother reported that she has had occasion to advocate for Victor in terms of his work schedule:

I noticed that they always make him work on weekends. Always. I said maybe they have enough people now, but I noticed that every weekend he was working, Saturday, Sunday every weekend. And I said well, at least one weekend they can give him free you know? So that's when I called his job coach and asked her if she could do anything because we want to do things, with our family – we are a united family, and we do things together with kids. And at that time, I felt like we're leaving him outside of our things, because he was always working on Sundays. She (the coach) called and now they give him a least 2 weekends off a month.

Victor: I was working a long time on weekends.

Mother also was concerned that Victor wasn't being included in any of the social activities at the work site. When she tried to facilitate more inclusion, she discovered that it was Victor's choice not to participate:

I called his coach, I told her that I notice they don't invite him to like the Christmas party, all those things they have on their job places. She said she'd call and see what is going on but, I found out he doesn't want to go to anything like that.

Victor: I wasn't interested in going.

Victor and his mom were asked what advice they might give other students and families as they prepare for transition, or any advice they might give teachers, or Regional Center, or DR to be of more assistance to students.

Victor: I don't know, I was worried. More attention.

Mom: Well I think the best thing was for us, as parents, first not to be afraid, because we know that there are people behind us, helping our kids. So I think the best thing for us to do, if you have any questions or any concerns, call the workers. It is true that the first week I was scared because I didn't know what was going to happen to Victor, like I was telling you, I didn't want him to stay at home always, doing nothing. I know it's not healthy for him in anyway, then all the persons from this group came to help us. The people from ABC, I'm very happy with this group ABC, very happy. I'm not really happy with Regional Center, I don't feel like I have all the support with that group. I really don't.

Mother was asked if there was anything else she would like to say about the transition process:

Not really. During that time he was in school, he really got help from the school and everybody there, then after that he went to ABC he also got a lot of help from there, and I'm very happy with this group..



### Teacher Perspective

The teacher presented his overall impression of Victor's transition from school to adult services:

As memory serves me correctly, he came to us and already had an individual placement. So he was probably the easiest student I had that year. He made some connections, we of course passed that on to ABC. He was supported by Amy, the job coach, who supported about 4-5 students max. They made periodic visits with him, when he graduated that school year, he was still at Albert's Grocery. He was pretty much working full time, I want to say 30+ hours a week. We talked with Victor about again kind of the social coaching issues. We never really had the time or direction to really concentrate on that 3 years ago. Wish we had, Victor is a pretty capable young man. But he's a guy who came with a job and left with the same job, and is maintaining that job today.

The teacher explained that he would have liked, looking back, to have worked on some more self-advocacy skills with Victor, and to have helped him get more connected with community activities, but working 30 hours a week made that difficult. When asked about Victor's communication difficulties and their impact on his ability to socially interact in the community, the teacher responded:

Our speech person met up with him and talked about some things. There wasn't a lot that she could do in terms of really clearing up his speech or doing some

strategies that would really help a lot. But I think it's going to be a barrier to him at work if people can't understand him. Social situations, yea...

The teacher was queried on his recollection of the level of interagency cooperation at the time of transition in terms of the planning for Victor or if there were any funding problems that came up with Victor's program.

No I don't believe that there were any funding problems. Amy at ABC obviously set up a rehab intake meeting, but his, again, was very seamless and very smooth because he was able to maintain a job, and he was really a part of the Albert's Grocery team. So he came in and never really needed a lot of job coaching intensive, it was pretty moderate to begin with and tailed off to a very light after that. Absolutely a seamless transition going to the adult agency, having the funding in place, he was riding buses by himself, no problem. Again if he were my student today, I wouldn't really accept that as being totally seamless, I'd like to see a little more non-work things worked on. That was really our goal at the time, it was just getting them to the agencies seamlessly. And he did do that.

The teacher explained that the biggest focus of the model in the beginning was to avoid any down time, making sure the student had a program to go to at the time they left public schools, so they weren't just sitting home waiting for programs to be developed.

The teacher was asked if he remembered any systems barriers interfering with implementing Victor's transition plan:

Well, not so much a barrier as much as we hadn't evolved to the point of recognizing non-work activities as being as important. It went very smooth. Partly because we didn't have to worry about Regional Center funding. Rehab came in early with the money, set it up, and continued on without any hassle or problem. And with Rehab, their partnering with ABC, and with us, it just continued right on.

#### Adult Agency Representative Perspective

Victor's job coach offered the following recollection his transition experience and the challenges she addressed while working with him that final school year:

Victor had been placed at Albert's Grocery for several months even before I met him. So he came to us with a job from the schools. And when we first started working with him, he was hardly receiving any job coaching at all. So we wanted to go back and establish some kind of relationship with Albert's Grocery. And he was doing well on the job, but when I did meet with the manager, there were a few things they wanted to work on, coming back on time from breaks, and he would often pretend that he didn't understand somebody when he was working with certain people. When he was working with certain cashiers, he wouldn't speak with them, while others he would, so he'd turn it on and off. So we were doing more social coaching than kind of work skills, greeting customers, giving a smile, being on time, that kind of thing. But then as the year progressed, he would

get better and he'd get a coach that knew him well, and knew what to tell new employees or new managers who would come in. But then his transition right from the grant was seamless, because nothing changed for him, he still saw the same job coach and still had the same hours, and the only thing that changed was the paperwork.

The coach went on to explain that she facilitated the meeting with Department of Rehabilitation (DR) and the application process, and was not surprised to hear that three of the four families interviewed for this study did not recall meeting with DR, although records indicated DR funding was used at one time or another for each student. The coach explained she would often process the paperwork with just the student and the rehabilitation counselor, the family was not required to attend, an effort to keep them from having to attend one more meeting:

Right, and I think that's because they didn't know (or never met) a contact person. They would get calls from their job coach or a call from me about setting up a meeting, where Department of Rehab wouldn't have to contact them directly, that might be some of the reason.

The coach was asked about her feelings regarding the quality of Victor's social schedule and other non-work activities, if there were other things she had wanted to accomplish with Victor, and specifically asked about driver training:

There were things that we were working on, I know that we used to get the monthly schedule of the City of San Diego Rec. activities and we would pass those on to all of our, specifically our Department of Rehab clients because they were more independent. (On driver training) Yea, he was studying was his Dad, actually the job coach had taken him to the DMV and got him a booklet to study, to take his written test, and would quiz him during breaks or when they would meet with him off work hours. And I don't, I think the Dad was going to be the one to take him to do the test, but we gave him some support in that area.

The coach was asked if she remembered any interagency planning meetings concerning Victor and if there were any difficulties in getting the funding in place for his ongoing support:

I think we had a meeting with his family at his house, the teacher, the rehab counselor, the family. No (funding issues), I don't think we were getting any money from Regional Center.

The coach was asked about any systems barriers that might have gotten in the way of implementing Victor's transition plan:

Actually there was some problem, I'm trying to remember since you asked about giving him support outside of work. There was some trouble on how we were going to pay for that position, to provide that extra help and give him the support for DMV, those extra kind of recreational hours. Because all of our individuals

need some of the extra social support and some of them don't have families that are involved or homes that are willing to take them places or get them involved in the community, or whatever their interest might be. And I remember that being one of the problems that I thought needed some attention, how are we going to support that in that way.

The coach discussed the fact that individuals who transition strictly to a supported employment program, such as an individual placement, do not currently have access to Regional Center funding for community access. Although Victor had a need for "social coaching" to help him get connected with recreational activities and other social activities, there is currently no system mechanism to fund an agency to provide that support. The coach was asked to give her overall impression of the implementation of the Point of Transition model in City Schools and ABC?

I thought it was handled very well, particularly for students like Victor who came, who already had a job and that was the whole idea of it. The toughest part is finding jobs and getting those placements set for this population, that is a big problem. But the point of transition grant was, I thought, a great way to introduce them to the adult agency model, but in a slower, kind of more coddling manner. And then that transition was seamless for many of our students.

One area of frustration the coach expressed was that she often felt that it was more the short-term goal of immediate employment being looked at, and she couldn't

necessarily focus on steps toward careers for these students. The main focus, in her mind, was a paid position, part time work right now.

That was frustrating, because you want to talk about long term goals and you want to be able to support them there, even the child development courses. I remember looking into getting some people signed up for those, and that was difficult to facilitate or to provide any support because, actually, that's another lack of support area, socially and educationally. Where these students might need somebody to go in and take notes and really teach them one on one, and they might be able to gain an understanding and the knowledge that they need to pass that course. That support is not available.

The coach was asked if she attempted to get that support for her students from the community college system or adult education:

They want to help people with some learning disabilities but not anybody with more severe. They just don't. Yea, there was another student actually in another area who wanted to go back to school and trying to find the funding to support her, somebody who would take notes and help her stay focused and study was real difficult. (On Disabled Student Services) It's not just the note taking that they need, I think, was the problem.

The coach referred back to the concept of social coaching and felt if that had been an option, there might have been a way that she could design a plan to help students

engage in the community college and then fade away like job coaching. The coach was asked if there was anything else she would want to say about the point of transition model or her experience with Victor:

You know it definitely got better as we went on. You know the first year was rougher than the second, but I think that we all were learning our different roles. I think the Department of Rehab did a great job in continuing to add services. As we went along they were working to fill in the gaps when we needed it, and to provide extra money and support for students. I thought the model idea was great, but as always, it just seemed like we needed to expand it to include more students and agencies, and more financial support to make sure that we're giving the quality that we should be. And I'd love to see something in place that looked at those long-term career goals or lets these individuals think of their life as such, "I can be something more than what I'm doing right now," it's not just to have a job (on Victor). I think that he liked it (the job), I think he wanted something more. I was looking in the notes and he did say something about wanting a more electronic type position. And being able to drive, it would be great to see him do that. I think that he was working and he was at a job that was supportive of him and his ability and disability, so I thought it was a good position for him.

Finally, the job coach was asked if there were any advice she would give to other practitioners that are working with students in transition based on her experience:



Long term planning, don't underestimate ability. Another thing that is so great about the Department of Rehab is that there isn't just one structure that is set up, you don't have to reduce your hours always, there is some flexibility or there was when I was there. Some flexibility in providing more support if they need it for a longer period of time. Think of how you'd want a job to go, you'd want to work in a position for a while, but then you always look for trying something new, maybe in another department in a store, or working up in that kind of way.

#### Summary of Observation Data

Observation #1, November 2001, Albert's Grocery Store. Types of activities observed - Victor was collecting the shopping baskets from around the store and putting them back in a designated area for customer use, collecting them from around the courtesy counters and check out lines. Victor was observed talking with customers and giving them direction to where items might be. Victor was also observed doing go backs, a term meaning returning items to the shelves. The majority of Victor's time was spent outside in the parking lot retrieving shopping carts, and I observed some interaction with customers out there as they would come up to him with their cart, trying to save him some time and work. His work pace appeared quick and steady.

Observation, December 2001, Albert's Grocery Store. Activities observed today included much more customer interaction and interaction with co-workers. Student was involved with bagging groceries, going back for price checks, helping co-workers. At one

point he went to get a drink for a co-worker who was stuck at the cash register. He did not spend any time in the parking lot today retrieving carts, those duties seemed to be shared with other courtesy clerks. Victor appeared to have even more involvement with customers and co-workers than during prior observation. He was bagging groceries most of the time. At one point he did buy a drink and a snack and took a 15-minute break in the back room. Nothing else of significance observed during this visit.

### Case Study Three – Emily

#### Background information

Emily is 24 years old and currently lives in a board and care facility. She has been in this home with the same care provider since 1996. There are five other individuals who live in the home and the care provider referred to everyone as “our family”. Emily does have some natural relatives in the area she visits on occasion, but was not specific as to the nature of the relationships. Record review indicated Emily is diagnosed with moderate mental retardation with deficits in adaptive behavior. Emily exited from the public school system in June of 1999 and also was one of the first participants in the Point of Transition Model. The school system subcontracted with ABC adult agency to provide support for employment and assistance with community access during the final school year. Emily worked as a volunteer at an elementary school as a teacher’s aide during her final year of school. ABC tried to develop that job into a paid position, as an opening became available, but Emily did not have the required child development

coursework. Emily was also enrolled in a computer class at a local community college, and participated in activities at a local YMCA several times a week with other students and school staff during that final school year.

Records indicated that ABC developed a permanent supported employment position for Emily in September 1999 at a local fast food restaurant, two –three months after graduation. Emily's IEP indicated that she, her care provider, school staff, and her Regional Center service coordinator participated in the planning process. Besides competitive employment, the IEP documented that Emily's other objectives were to ride public transportation independently, participate in weekly social and recreational activities with peers, and learn self-advocacy skills.

The Department of Rehabilitation (DR) opened a file on Emily in February 1999, and began funding the job coaching through ABC at the fast food establishment in early September. Emily lost that job the following Spring, and was subsequently placed in a janitorial position in May 2000. Consumer did well for quite some time, and her file was closed successfully by DR in December 2000. Several months later, Emily was terminated from this position and reapplied to DR for services through ABC in May 2001.

Emily was hired as a dining room attendant at a local amusement park in June 2001, but was laid off in October due to a decline in park attendance, and was not currently working at the time of the interview. Emily did not technically meet the criteria

of making a “seamless transition” to adult life because her permanent paid position was not in place until two months after graduation, however school and ABC staff continued to support her throughout the summer at her volunteer site during job development.

The interview was held at Emily’s board and care home on a Friday morning and Emily was also sleeping when the interviewer arrived, but quickly got dressed and participated (apparently) happily, she smiled often and seemed to do her best to answer questions. Emily’s care-provider remained in the room during Emily’s interview, and Emily also remained in the room when the care-provider was interviewed. The two appeared to have a very close relationship, alternating in complimenting each other throughout the morning and offering support to each other.

#### Student Perspective

In discussing Emily’s activities at the time of transition, both she and the care provider thought the permanent job was already in place upon graduation, even though the placement at the restaurant wasn’t actually obtained until September. Emily did remember working at the pre-school but had difficulty recalling the time frames involved with her different positions. Since Emily was no longer working, she described her current activities as going to the library, going to the gym, shopping and going out to lunch, and helping her care provider around the house and with grocery shopping.

Emily indicated she would like to return to work and wanted to be able to buy some things for Christmas. Both she and the care provider indicated they want ABC to

find a new job, even though it is possible Emily will be called back to work at the amusement park in the spring. Apparently the last job caused her to be stranded on several occasions downtown late at night due to the bus schedules. Emily gave the following reasons for losing her first job at the restaurant:

They fired me because of my work. Not quick or doing the right things...

Because the supervisor treated me unkind, so that's why she fired me and that's why I stopped working there, cause I wasn't doing well. Cause she was complaining about me, about my braids, I don't know why she did it. And they said I was slow so that's why they fired me.

Emily also explained why she was terminated from her janitorial position:

They tell me it was going to be my last day. They said I couldn't, I was kind of slow I couldn't remember what...I couldn't remember what time they have their break, or what time was lunch break and break time. Sometimes I came late so that's why they fired me.

Care Provider (offers clarification): Like especially on the weekend, they want her to be on time, but the problem is the route of the bus is different, you know. And then plus they are telling me about the lunch break and her not knowing the time or something. But we worked on it before, but still it needs to be.

Emily: I never knew to tell time then. And sometimes I'd miss the bus and I'm not on time, so that's kind of why.

Emily was able to describe her duties at her last job as a food court attendant at the amusement park. She indicated that she liked the job except for the hours and getting stuck without a ride late at night:

Like sweeping the tables and picking trash. Housekeeping, like doing trays, the food courts, serving food.

Emily was asked about her feelings as she prepared to leave school and if she felt people were listening to her and helping her make the change. Emily indicated that she felt the staff listened to her in meetings.

Well I didn't rush it but yea, I was happy. I felt good with how they were helping me, how they, you know, teaching me how to make it, helping me out, teaching me how to get ready and stuff.

Emily and her care provider recalled that ABC staff, school staff, and the Regional Center worker were present at her transition planning meetings, but did not recall a meeting with DR. Emily was asked what advice she would give other students as they prepare to leave school:

Like saying good-bye, thank you. I was sad to leave. It wasn't that bad, I just wanted to say, you know bye, saying good-bye them and thanks for everything. I would say be brave, you know, I told my friends they could do it, and I told them that you can make it.

Finally, Emily was asked if she had any advice for the teachers, or Regional Center workers, or ABC staff, or rehab counselors regarding helping students prepare to leave school:

I really like it, they're nice people, you know, I enjoyed them, because they listen to me and I listen to them and they pay attention to me, you know, like, I kind of listen to what they ask, and I have to answer their questions usually. But I listen to them, I don't know.

### Family Perspective

The care provider was asked about her perception of the transition process and how she felt about the quality of activities and jobs that Emily had obtained through ABC.

The ABC members, we appreciate what they've done, every time I have a question or I have concerns, I call them about it and they give us an option of something. That's what I like, and then Brad (pseudonym) used to work with us before, and every time I had a question or something, or that she lost the job, I called them and they help me, they help me a lot.

The care provider indicated that she continues to work on helping Emily learn to tell time and is working on other goals for her in the home while she awaits another placement:

Uniforms, she needs to take care of the uniforms, like iron, you know, her uniform because she needs to take care of them. She's not working right now, so we stopped it. What's she's doing is learning cooking right now for the mean time, and then the taking care of her clothes, like folding, washing her clothes. She's a good kid, never, never a problem, she's always decent to me and every time I say something it's for a solution. I told her every time something happens she needs to tell me.

The care provider reported that Emily is very independent on public transportation. When asked about the planning meetings prior to leaving school, the care provider indicated that she felt her feedback was listened to, and felt like all the different agencies were working together. She did not recall that Emily was a client of the Department of Rehabilitation, although DR funded job coaching for all three of the placements that Emily had since leaving school.

The care provider did not see any barriers presented by the adult systems and stated that "everything was perfect" when asked about the transition process in general. She did not have any advice for other families preparing to go through the process or any recommendations for professionals.

### Teacher Perspective

The teacher was asked about how he felt about the quality of activities Emily was involved in when she left his program?



She was doing well, she was working I can't remember where, part-time, it may have been at the fast food restaurant. She was in a group home and one thing that we really weren't focusing on then, and I wish we kind of had, was kind of a social coaching concept, things around work, around not just going to work and going home. Because she is so independent with the bus, we could have just dropped her off a lot, we weren't really ready for that, at that time, that has been three years ago. She was real capable, she was a real low maintenance student, and we didn't have to do a lot of follow-up with her. Occasionally a job coach would show up make sure things were fine, and she was real happy.

The teacher was asked if he remembered some of the behaviors or challenges that he was working on with Emily:

Well we were trying to get her more independent, a lot of the advocacy type situations, to make better decisions, to speak out more for herself, things like that. She would pretty much just go with the flow. And we wanted her to be able to tell us more of what she wanted, whether it was a job site or again something outside of the program, outside of the work hours.

When asked about the planning meetings for Emily that last year, the teacher recalled:

I remember one meeting, one home visit. I was there, the Regional Center case manager was there, ABC staff, towards the end of the year to determine whether Emily wanted to stay with ABC at the time, or whether she wanted to look at

other options. And it was decided, everybody was happy where she was, she was very, very happy with the types of support she was getting, she was working so she wanted to continue with them.

The teacher was asked if he remembered any difficulties around funding, on the level of interagency cooperation and Regional Center and DR working together:

I don't think so. There were no problems, at the time the coordinator over at ABC was opening most of the cases with rehab so she would have called somebody at rehab to set it up. As I recall Emily graduated with no funding problems at all. A very smooth transition.

The teacher was then asked if the outcome for Emily at the time of transition, in his mind, was satisfactory or would he have liked to see something else developed for her:

Well at the time, I thought it was real satisfactory. She was hooked up with an agency that she liked, she was working, she was getting support, and she liked where she was living so on that level I think things went really well. Now that we have advanced beyond that, if I had Emily this year, I would concentrate a lot of time on those extra social coaching opportunities, clubs, organizations, hobbies, things like that.

The teacher was asked if there were any system barriers like policies and procedures that seemed to get in the way of her transition process?

I don't recall any. The funding kicked in through rehab so we didn't have to deal with the issue with Regional Center. Transportation was funded by Regional Center, which is pretty standard. So that wasn't a problem. She was active with regional center when she came to us, so we didn't have to worry about getting that set up. Hers' was a pretty seamless transition, one of the more simple cases in terms of support needed.

Since the teacher had mentioned social coaching on several occasions, he was asked if the fact that no dollars were available for such a service for Emily, did he see that as a systems barrier:

Oh yea, certainly. In fact one thing that ABC (remember this was our first real year working together) kept saying "we can't do social, we can't do leisure", and of course we were funding them to support the students. And pretty much that first year for us to all kind of figure out what ABC's role was, and yes, they could do a bit of social coaching if they weren't providing the job coaching. And we kind of grew that first year, so we didn't do a lot of that, that I wish we had done. That was in fact a barrier because again, it was kind of learning experience, and I think that between our side and ABC staff, we might have provided a little extra support where she needed it outside of work.

The teacher has had experience helping students both before the Point of Transition model was implemented and after. He was asked to explain the differences, in his view, in his experiences pre-model and post-model:

Big difference. Cause I was the first teacher in (community transition class) in 1990, we had about 10 students and we really didn't have anything in place. And I guess I foresaw the Point of Transition coming, a little bit, because I just found it very frustrating to have my students leave without something setup. So I went out and learned about a couple of adult agencies ... and then with the parents, we'd all pick an agency, with student involvement as much as possible, and I would do, what I call the Band-Aid approach. I would say okay, the parents decided to go, let's say to DEF Agency. I would ask the agency if I could have that student, with one of my staff, spend one full day with them, maybe once a week for the last month or two. And they would just kind of hang out with the DEF Agency group, and the advantage was that the student got to know some of the staff... It was very much a Band-Aid approach, it was putting it together, it was better than nothing, but it was clearly not what is happening here. But I know as a group, other teachers weren't doing this, so the typical way, some of my students and some of the other students in the program, was you're here and you're gone. There was not a lot of planning, unfortunately, or overlap with the agencies, not a lot of providing information to the families. And what we're able to do now is the

complete 180 degree view in terms of giving that information, and really preparing parents and having the time to do it, it's a process. A month or two is kind of a Band-Aid. A year gives you a lot of time to really try things out, and I find when I talk to families now, that the decisions they're making, they're more confident in making those decisions.

The teacher was asked, based on his experience, what advice he might offer to other professionals in order to improve transition services, for example other teachers, adult agency staff, Regional Center or DR staff:

The one thing we need right now, is more options, a lot of the programs are filling up, particularly for students in wheelchairs or have more support needs. One thing we're seeing is if you are in a wheelchair, if you have hygiene needs like diapers, or need to be assisted in eating, the menu of choice of programs is much less. Not much to choose from and most often or many times, they're not community-based programs. It's more like an ADC or AC program, and that's not necessarily bad for some students, but when they're coming from a program like ours, which is 80% in the community, now they're going back to maybe getting out once a week. It's a step backwards in terms of community integration and inclusion. This is what we need to look at. I'm not sure we have students, all students, who need 100% out in the community. But I'm looking for maybe a middle road, where instead of going out once or twice a week, or on the other end

80-100%, maybe there is some kind of model they can come up with where those individuals who have more needs or medical issues might be out half the time. Kind of an in between kind of program, that to me is the number one priority, instead of an all or nothing community program.

The teacher was asked if there are any opportunities to provide this feedback to the Regional Center or the systems that provide, develop and design these programs:

Well, we've got one source though the POTSIP meetings we have quarterly, which involves not only a lot of the school districts and adult agencies, but also rehab and regional center, to try and bring it up, because we're talking systems change, and obviously that's going to rely on budgets. That's one way, and the other way is direct contact with people like John Smith at the Regional Center, people who are interested in program development. Most of the agencies are good, but again, they're filling up and we have to make it easy for agencies to expand if they want, ...or maybe open another agencies. But between the sheer numbers and the quality of the programs, the people that get left out the most are the ones with the most needs. And that has always been the case, ... folks like Emily, who have a lot of capabilities, they're pretty easy to support out there, we know how to do that and I think we're doing a pretty good job. But we're not doing a great job with the lower functioning folks, and I think we need to set up a structure in the budget and the proper amount of staff to be able to facilitate more.

Based on his last response, the teacher was asked if he felt there is a financial disincentive for agencies to work with students or adults with more significant needs:

Well I don't know, there might be, my understanding is that the agencies in integrated work are funded the same per person, per consumer, so if you have someone with higher needs, you're getting paid the same in terms of an agency buying staff for the students. The people with higher needs might have a differential funding system, if that's a possibility. One thing to look at, and I've never thought of that until right now. Maybe we've come up with something here, just some incentive.

The teacher went on to discuss the need to provide more adaptive equipment for individuals with severe needs, such as communication devices to help with community integration. He was asked if the devices of this type the school purchases for students are they able to go with the students when they graduate?

That's a good question. Typically I don't think they go with the students, I think if the school is some how buying the equipment, when you leave it's the schools' equipment. We need to come up with system so the equipment is the student's and not the school's. And when they leave the equipment goes with them, just like we try to get volunteer sites and the paid jobs. Not our jobs, the jobs go with the students. And so we, perhaps, have to look at how maybe Regional Center or Rehab, or someone would purchase the equipment for the student at this kind of

price, which I've heard talk of before. Again, I think we need to get very creative in how we can get the equipment to the students.

The teacher was asked if there was anything else that he would like to say in general about the transition process for students with severe disabilities that might be helpful for other practitioners:

Well, one thing that I'm thinking about lately is we need to look at other school districts and adult agencies that aren't in (our area). I'm hearing around town from parents and case managers at Regional Center that the things that we're doing aren't being done in other districts in the county. And that's okay if they aren't doing it quite like we are, it took us several years to get where we are. But we've learned a lot, and unless we can share with other people, and they can adapt it anyway they want, whether they want to contract with agencies or not. At least minimally people shouldn't be doing the band aid approach like I discussed before. I know what's happening and not happening in San Diego County. I imagine other cities are much the same, there is not a lot of overlap in transition. To make transition occur, it's got to be an overlapping process, who funds it doesn't matter. And so some how we have to figure out, how can we overlap, who's going to be the coordinator for that. If you have each individual teacher doing it in a district, it's going to be very scattered because you're asking a lot of teachers to know a lot of information and make a lot of contacts. I don't think it



will be efficient. If you have one teacher specialized, or even a person like I am, a point of transition coordinator, do it, it's so much more efficient because you don't have lots of people trying to get the same information, it can be just one or two.

The teacher was asked how significant he thought it was that the Department of Rehabilitation, at least in San Diego County, agreed to come in early with their supported employment dollars the final year of school.

I think it's really huge. Really was, and I'm not just saying that because more money is in the pool, but in reality, we know that money tends to make programs roll. And when we contract, just from a financial standpoint first, we're paying at a rate that is lower than what Regional Center would pay after they graduate. And the reason is, we have about 187 school days a year and adult programs run about, something around 220, so we're taking our school days and spreading the money per day out to more days, less money per day. Plus we still have to pay for two teacher spots and two other staff spots. So by Rehab kicking in money early, number one, there is a definite incentive for agencies to really get people jobs, because when they get the job, the extra funding kicks in... But also besides just the money, we're looking at the support that Rehab and Regional Center is able to give. By Rehab coming in and talking to the families and students, while they're still a student and before they graduate, I just see the families gaining information

earlier, which is important, and the students and the families gain the idea that work is important NOW, not just waiting until after they graduate. So now they're talking to agency people, they're talking to Regional Center people, and they're talking in many cases to Rehab people, and that kind of puts a different flavor on the students and makes them think differently of their future outcomes, which we didn't see before.

The teacher stated that another positive aspect of early DR funding was that other school districts who weren't able to immediately find a way to redirect funding for adult agency service subcontracts could at least access the DR dollars and provide early transition for any student targeted for supported employment. The teacher was asked if would be surprised to learn that in the four different interviews with students and families, in three instances no one remembered any involvement of the Department of Rehabilitation, even though they had all been clients of DR and received some job coach funding. DR seemed be a bit of a silent partner.

No... I'm not really surprised. A couple of reasons, one thing parents get sometimes real confused because so much has happened in the last year, and they're meeting a lot of people. The agency, a job coach, a rehab person, and they might forget who's who. It can almost be an advantage that Rehab is coming in so quietly and seamlessly, it's not creating a lot of waves, putting this big memory in their brain, but I would think it would be nice for them to realize that Rehab is

part of their student's life. And I like the way you say that Rehab is kind of a silent partner. Because that's the way it is, Rehab's kicking in money and parents don't even know it sometimes. When I talk to parents now that we have evolved, I talk about Rehab dollars or Regional Center funding or shared funding of some type, possibly, and I tell the parents they really don't have to worry about that. That's our job to make sure the funding is in place. If there is a problem with funding, then maybe the parents will have to get more active to support and justify what they're asking for, and it's usually with Regional Center, not with Rehab. It's never happened with Rehab, so the parents just kind of hear about funding, but that's kind of the behind the scenes work. So Rehab has come in very silently but very effectively to get the students out there to work.

Finally, the teacher was asked if there was anything else he wanted to mention about Emily's transition process:

In summary, Emily was probably one of the most successful early seamless transitions that we had. Got her a job, things went very smoothly, we faded out, no problem, with ABC. She's been through one or two jobs, as many people of her age are. With the economy kind of being up and down lately, seasonal jobs like the amusement park will come and go. But the nice thing is that she stayed with the agency, and she knows if she loses the job the agency pops right back in with support to get her a new job, get her rolling before they fade out again.

### Adult Agency Representative Perspective

The coach was asked to describe her experience working with Emily during the last year of school:

Emily had come to us without a job but she had a full resume, I remember she had several places that she had been working at through work ability, I don't remember any direct pay positions. I remember there was a pet store and a hospital, and then some food services that she was interested in. She was already doing volunteer work at a pre-school for students with developmental disabilities and severe disabilities, physical. She was working with a fantastic teacher who really took a liking to Emily, and Emily would help feed some of the students, she would help play games, interact, and keep an eye on them, read books to or kind of look at pictures, I don't recall her reading really well. But kind of giving lines for pictures and stuff. And Emily was real quiet so that was a good opportunity for her to be more verbal and interact in a not so pressured environment. And so we did a lot more social interventions with her while we were looking for jobs for her.

The coach indicated that she began job development for Emily in the fall of 1998, met with her and took down some ideas of where she might want to work. She recalled taking out her many days doing job development at a video store, some grocery stores, and other sites near her home. She recalled that Emily had several interviews that last

year without success. Still, she reported, Emily chose to remain with ABC once she left school:

She remained with ABC, yes, and we had set her up to go to the YMCA to do some workouts there. There was another integrated work group that was going there, so she'd kind of meet with them to do some socialization with some other students that she knew, and then also to do some exercise. And she would just take the bus there, so she'd go from her volunteer spot where she worked, like three hours a day. She was volunteering quite a bit, and then actually she also took a class at the ECC. She was involved in an art class on Fridays, so I think on Fridays she didn't do volunteer work, she just went there and did a ceramics class and was pretty independent while she was there.

The coach was asked if she was making some effort to try to turn that volunteer job into a paid position:

Yea, it was through the schools, and I'd called a couple times, spoke with the teacher and spoke with the administrator regarding an employment position because I did hear that they were looking to hire another aide for her classroom, a paid position. And I thought, Emily had been working there for so long that she already had the experience and such to be able to do that job. But unfortunately, they were looking for somebody who had child development course experience, some education in that area not just experience. And Emily had not taken those

courses. She expressed an interest in working with children, she liked working with kids, and I did some research into finding some child development classes. I know that they did offer a couple of them at the Adult Ed Center, but Emily really needed somebody in there with her taking that class. At the time, we were really treating her as a supported employment person, where she was just being checked in on, I mean nobody was with her the whole time, the whole day. So we just didn't have the money or the bodies to help with her class.

The coach was asked, if looking back, did she think that perhaps Emily should have gone into a integrated workgroup, if she would have been better served, or was it just a matter of finding the right job she was capable of performing:

Yea, I think she was certainly capable of doing work on her own. She is a very routine type of person, she had set things that she had to do everyday. With a supervisor, who was willing to point her in the right direction, I think she would be fine. And she really wanted to work and showed interest in that.

The coach indicted that Emily would have benefited from a resource like a social coach that might have helped her with her long term goals and support her in some child development classes. The coach had approached the Adult Ed Center to see if support was available for her:

They did a screening, they did some testing and there was a really long waiting list in order to complete all of the testing. I'm trying to remember the exact

details of it, but it was something where you had to wait a really long time, and typically they didn't provide somebody to just be in class.

The coach was asked about interagency cooperation and if it felt like DR, Regional Center, schools, and the adult agency were working together for Emily:

I don't recall Regional Center monies coming into play, nor Rehab at the time, there was no paid position. I think we were the ones picking up the time that we spent with her.

The coach reported that Emily continued with her volunteer job when she left school and was going to the YMCA, so she had a schedule of sorts. She remained with ABC and ABC did place her within two months. The coach was asked if there was anything else, in her view, that might have helped Emily improve her transition process:

I think she might have really blossomed from a vocational training type of program where she gets specific skills in an area where she wants to work, like an XYZ program, but I think the location was just was really too far for her, but I think that type of program she could really benefit from. She'd get the training, get paid while she was doing it and then they usually do some help with placement. I think that type of situation she would have benefited from had there been something closer to her house. But it's hard because I didn't want to see her go to a workshop either to get that kind of training. It would have to be something that is available to anybody in the general population that I would like

to see, but then again the child development was kind of her area that she wanted to go in to. So I don't know.

The coach was asked if there was anything else about Emily that she would want to add in retrospect.

She really struck me as somebody who really could have done some more complex tasks than simply a custodian job, or stocking shelves, or such. And I think it was somewhat frustrating to me that we couldn't also provide her with some education and reading and basic math skills. I think that, for her, could have really strengthened her resume and her ability to do different jobs. Now, being a teacher, I know that there are some students who I see that do have such severe disabilities, cognitively, that keep them from learning to read as easily as other students with disabilities, but she really struck me as somebody who had we been able to use some of that the last year of the transition, to give her some extra reading support or extra basic math or money skills, she could have picked up doing some other types of jobs.

The coach was asked how that might have happened given the current configuration of services:

I don't know, I don't think it could have been in the current configuration. That might be something from the school's part of it, to provide some specific instruction for those students who weren't placed, or who are like Emily.



Kind of on the cusp of, you know, being able to take those jobs and having the work ethic and the capability, but not the ability.

The coach was then asked if wouldn't the school system respond that they've already tried that type of training for many years, what would one more year do, and how would she respond:

We've done that for all the years. Right, it's hard to judge what anybody has ever done. I don't know any of the other teachers that she's seen, but knowing what I know now, since being in the schools, there are reading programs out there that I'm convinced would work for her. I don't know how much they have been tried, but they are very intensive programs, and they're very expensive, and there is other red tape to go through, but it was still something that I did think about with her. And that was somewhat sad for me.

Finally, the coach was asked if she had any other thoughts about the POTSIP model in general, or advice based on her experience with Emily to improve the model or provide feedback to the model.

I think again the long-term goals, about really setting those. I know that Rehab and Hab do ask those questions, what do you want to do, and I've heard those questions asked before, but I feel like there is no connecting them to what are the steps to get there. So again, really thinking about their true goals or what they want to do.

## Case Study Four – Frank

### Background information

Frank is 23 years old and currently lives with his mother and nephew. Mother indicated that she works two jobs to make ends meet and has essentially raised Frank alone. Mother indicated that Frank's brother had gotten into some trouble from hanging out with the wrong crowd in the neighborhood, and she is very protective of Frank. Record review indicated Frank is diagnosed with moderate mental retardation.

Frank exited from the public school system in June of 2000 and participated in the Point of Transition Model. The school system subcontracted with ABC adult agency to provide a full day program for him during the final school year. Frank was placed in a community group with ABC early in the fall, and was caught stealing at his work site. Another group site was not immediately available through ABC, and Frank and his mother, with the support of the school, chose to join DEF agency for services that final year. The school developed another subcontract to meet Frank's needs. DEF is another adult agency that offers essentially the same services as ABC.

Frank participated in various volunteer work and community enrichment activities with two other students and a job coach until paid employment was obtained. At the time of graduation, Frank was employed at a local bookstore in a 2:1 ratio integrated work group. The Department of Rehabilitation opened a file on Frank in June 2000, and began immediately funding the job coaching through DEF, which continued after graduation.

The local Regional Center began funding the other three hours of the day covering community access upon graduation, after public school dollars were discontinued.

Through this shared funding mechanism, Frank's first day in adult programs appeared to have been no different than his last day in the public school system. In other words, he experienced a "seamless transition " according to Point of Transition criteria.

Frank continued in this program until August, when he was terminated once again for stealing. DEF placed Frank in another integrated work group, this time funded fully by Regional Center. Frank remains in this group today. Frank's current schedule consists of approximately six hours of paid work per week at a local discount store, volunteer work at a construction materials recycling store, and community access activities.

The interview was conducted in Frank's home on a Sunday afternoon at the dining room table while mother was cooking nearby in the kitchen. Mother was able to offer clarification for Frank when he had difficulty answering questions, but Frank was very friendly and polite throughout the interview, and seemed to give it his best effort. Frank left the room to watch a football game when it was time for his mother to be interviewed. Before leaving, however, Frank showed the interviewer his prom picture that was displayed proudly on a shelf in the living room.

### Student Perspective

Frank was asked about his current activities:

I play basketball, Special Olympics...hmm, right now I'm working at a discount store ... I wash cups, I sweep the floor, I do everything. I sweep and dust. I work Tuesday and Thursday. We go and have lunch and go shopping around.

Frank was asked about Monday, Wednesday, and Friday:

On Mondays I'm off of work, and I go out in the community like to the beach.. Seaport village...I do volunteer work...I work at GHI. I do this thing, like I worked last week, I sweep, we check the tools and we do everything. We help out customers when they need help. We do some things in back.

Frank reported that he gets paid minimum wage at the job he has at the discount store and he receives a free lunch at his volunteer site. Frank was asked what it was like for him to leave school, if he was nervous, or happy to graduate:

I was happy, I was happy.

Frank was asked if there were other goals or things that he wanted to do, or was he satisfied with his schedule right now:

Yes I am, yes.

Frank then was asked if he remembered any of the planning meetings before he left school. He remembered he was at meetings with his mother. Mother recalled that the Regional Center coordinator came, but not anyone from the Department of Rehabilitation. She did not recall that Kevin was a client of DR. Mother reported that "all of his associates always came, his nurse and program staff came to almost all of his

meetings. And the staff where he was going, they always attended the IEP meeting as well.” Frank was asked what advice he would give other students as they get ready to leave school and if he had any advice for teachers or other professionals:

My advice would be to tell them, to do the right things through school. Get your education first. Graduate. That’s about it. I have no idea about the teachers.

Frank answered “yes” when asked if he felt he was treated well and the teachers did a good job to prepare him for leaving and “no” when asked if there was anything else he’d want to tell me about his transition from school.

#### Family Perspective

Frank’s mother was asked about how she felt about the quality of activities that Frank is involved in at this point and if she was satisfied:

I’m really satisfied with the DEF Agency program, I think they have a great staff. All of them do a great job down there. I did go down and observe, I always do, for Frank, I’m just one of those kind of parents that I want to know what’s going on before Frank participates, so I went down there before he started, sat in , talked to them, observed to see if I thought it would be the right placement for Frank. I have not always felt through the years that was the case, but, and I was a little skeptical at first, because he was going to be on his own a lot more, a lot less supervision. I just had any normal parent jitters, I guess, so I wanted to make sure that I felt comfortable with it, and they were very gracious. They run a very good

program down there so I'm really happy with the program and the kind of progress Frank has made so far.

Frank's mother was asked to discuss some of the events that led to the change from ABC to DEF Agency:

Frank had some problems with ABC, I don't know if it was Frank, he didn't really get along that well with some of the people in the program. Frank has had some previous problems in the past, taking things that don't belong to him and things like that. So I was a little skeptical about him making changes, I usually am about any kind of change that involves Frank but it worked out well. I was just hoping Frank was up to the challenge on being more on his own and that kind of thing. But he's matured a lot over the past couple of years. He seems to be getting better as time goes on. Because he knows Mom's not real happy when she gets phone calls about him being bad, so... As far as his social skills, he's in a place now where some of those things have disappeared so that's good.

Mother reported that the school supervised Frank's plan during that last year of services, and she felt her feelings and feedback were listened to, she had no difficulty advocating for Frank:

Yea, they (the school) had a lot of input into that, of course as a parent, I had the final say. And yet they had a lot to do with the therapy and all of that while he was in school. But he's had IEPs throughout, so I was part of it, I always knew

what they had in mind for him. And if I didn't feel real comfortable with it, I always let them know, or if I didn't think the placement was proper for him, I let them know that as well. I've never been one to mince words.

Mother was asked if she felt the school did a good job of pulling the adult systems together to make it a smooth hand off or if it was unorganized:

Sometimes I felt that Frank was in the wrong program, but this was not the adult system, this was coming up through the ranks. But overall, Frank's had a pretty easy go of it, I'd say. Not a whole lot of major problems, not really. It's been a pretty easy transition for him. To go to the adult program, and Frank being the type of kid that he is, he wants to be treated has an adult anyway, so that was right up his alley. He likes to be able to do things on his own, he feels because of his age, he is an adult and he should be able to have those adult privileges. So I try to let him do that, if possible. Without treating him so much like a baby, parents can do that, we tend to be a little over protective. Unfortunately, I go through that as well. I just think, I've raised Frank all his life all by myself so I tend to be a little over protective where he is concerned.

Mother was asked what advice she would you give to the system in terms of making this a little bit easier on parents:

Just realize I know the parents probably come off strong sometimes, but they're just really concerned about their children. Just let the parents be informed about

what's going on and what it is they are trying to accomplish with the child. And just let the parent have some intake in to all of that. I think if they will do that, it will make it a lot smoother. In other words, don't just say these are things that are going to happen, just let them be involved with some of those choices for their children, because it will make them feel a lot more at ease, and transition to go smooth.

Mother went on to report that she felt that had happened to her earlier in Frank's education, where she had to slow things down, but not in the adult programs.

Early on before the main streaming thing started going on, they put Frank in some classes that weren't suitable for him. I know that one class that Frank was in, he was the only ambulatory and speaking child in that program, and that wasn't good for Frank. And I didn't want Frank in there, so I took him out... So I had the right to do that, so I did it. I've had a few issues from time to time on transportation when he was smaller. Crossing busy streets, things like that, or being told that he couldn't ride on the bus for transportation, he had to walk quite a distance, and I didn't think that was good for Frank, I thought it was too much freedom at that time. So I opted not to let him do that.

Mother explained that Frank continues to have difficulty using public transportation independently. She was asked how Frank gets back and forth to his current program:



He's picked up, door to door... and that works better for Frank. Frank is a very social child. He talks to everyone, he's very out going and friendly and so to me that might lead Frank to get himself into certain situations that he couldn't readily handle. Frank got lost before.... And the radius wasn't that great from here, but because he did not know his surroundings, he was totally helpless and lost. And that really scared me!! That scared me really bad, so I prefer him to be picked up and dropped off. He rides in a cab with some of the other kids that live in the area that are in the same program. And they pick up all of the children and transport them down to the site, and then they leave the site to go to the various programs. Finally, mother was asked if there was anything she'd like to say or have people consider in terms of transition?

No, just that it's been a very challenging 24 years for me. But I love Frank very much and I just want him to always be able to reach his full potential, whatever that may be. And to all the parents with special kids, you have to be able to allow them to do that. And there's going to be difficulty along the way, and you still have to deal with it (the fear).

### Teacher Perspective

The teacher was asked to describe his view of the quality of activities that Frank was involved in upon graduation or his transition in general.

It went pretty smooth. We worked with DEF Agency a lot during that year, to try to make sure, number one, that it was the right agency for him, the right level of support so when he graduated it was a good match in terms of his abilities and building a schedule for him.

The teacher was asked if there anything else that he wanted to see happen with Frank, that didn't:

The one thing that we like to see done, with all students, is paid jobs, more paid opportunities when he graduated. He was working part-time at one/two jobs, and he was getting paid a little bit but I think Frank was capable of working more hours than he was at the time.

The teacher was then asked if there were any other goals that weren't met at the time of transition:

No, I think overall, he wasn't there (DEF) the whole year, so we were just kind of getting rolling with them. But one issue that was important for Frank that certainly was job related was he was stealing items from stores, which of course cost him jobs in the past, so that was something that we we're monitoring. It wouldn't just be when he was working, it would be just sometimes when he was out in the community, and that was something that was really addressed with the family and Mom and DEF Agency and the school staff. From what I hear, he's

been much better now. So it was kind of an unresolved issue but it was definitely worked on. So overall I think we did okay in terms of addressing the needs.

The teacher was then asked about the planning process for Frank that last year of school, if the meetings appeared student centered, and who was involved in the meetings:

Yea, I think so. Frank is fairly vocal about what he wants to do. When we made the switch from ABC to DEF Agency, Frank was involved, as was his Mom, and they're pretty active in things, they'd let you know if something wasn't sitting well with them. Cause we talked about other agencies and other options and it went real smooth I thought.

When asked about the way the DR and the Regional Center came together, if there were concerns or issues, the teacher responded:

I don't remember specifically any problems in terms of funding and getting the transition in place. We had to get a little creative with transportation at the time, because to get from his house to Lemon Grove, we had to use a para-transit company because MTS wouldn't cross the border, and of course DEF Agency doesn't pick him up like ABC had, so the contract money from ABC to DEF Agency paid for the transportation privately. In other words, ABC took money and gave it to DEF Agency to pay for para-transit.

The teacher indicated that once Frank left school, the Regional Center picked up the cost of the para-transit service. The teacher was asked his view, as a whole, of the transition process for Frank.

This was our first big year doing this so we learned a lot. We started with ABC and realized that wasn't going to match all of the student's needs, so everybody pulled together a team to subcontract ABC's idea - which gave us the opportunity to keep Frank closer to home, to find an agency to give him the proper support, and spread the load a little for ABC, so it was something of a systems change. I think it actually pulled together really well for Frank. He ended up in a place he liked, he's still there almost 2 years later. So that's saying something, if it wasn't a good match he wouldn't have lasted there.

The teacher was asked what system barriers, if any, such as policies or procedures seemed to get in the way of Frank's progress:

Transportation was the number one thing. And we were able to iron that out. MTS is basically San Diego city limits, and to get from his house in San Diego to DEF Agency in (another city), you can't cross the border line there. I mean transportation will cross the border line, but you have to take MTS, transfer somewhere near the border and take another system like CTS, and so at the time Regional Center was hiring the transit company, a private agency rather than using ADA or the MTS services. And that's how a lot of people went to DEF

Agency, and again, we wanted to match the system he'd use when he graduated.

And that's what we did by putting him on para-transit.

The teacher was asked his view of and experiences with the Point of Transition Model and how it has impacted transition services:

It's a lot different. The point of transition, we really work closely with agencies, not just adult service providers, but Rehab, Regional Center, again transportation like MTS, for a year. We've had a lot of people kind of networking to at least recognize the problems and iron out as many as you can. This year we have five agencies at least to choose from, five that we contract with... There used to be some overlap and it was better than nothing, but again it really indicated the need for more overlap and point of transition type procedures. Kind of like the seed of it all.

The teacher reported that there was no early funding for supported employment prior to the POTSIP model, and said, "we were just kind of winging really." He was asked, based on his experience, if students used to have to sit at home sometimes after graduation waiting for a program to be developed under the old approach:

Yea, I think some students were actually sitting at home. Or some students went to an agency that probably served their needs, but wasn't necessarily the best. And I think a lot of the people that went to those agencies years ago are probably still there, unless somebody at the regional center picked it up. I think the whole

system has evolved. Regional Center has gotten more efficient in the last six/eight years. Everybody has, trying to pick up the dropped parts.

The teacher was asked what advice he would give to other professionals that might improve transition services?

I would make sure that they understand the need for transition. I think that we really need, as school people, to project three to five years at least. Where are the student's going to be after they graduate? I think you really need to connect the school world with the adult world. And that's not just the service providers, but that's the system that assists the students and consumers in any way, Rehab and Regional Center, MTS. I think we've shown that in San Diego that the systems work together really well and again when you have a problem, you know who to talk to. Problems are solved easier that way, I think people really need to look outside their box and their own shell and see what's out there.

Finally, the teacher was asked if there was anything else he wanted to share about the transition process in general or the model:

There are still a lot of factors you have to look at, and if one or two things don't pull together smoothly, the whole thing could fall apart. That hasn't happened often, but I think we learned over the last 3-4 years what components have to be in place. We're looking at making a handbook this year. My big job this year, my big goal for myself, is to put all that we've learned in like a little useable book.

Not necessarily a how to, because everybody is going to do it differently, but just things we've learned. Not even a lot of details, but kind of bullets, like big reminders, like things you have to think about as you go along... I think there is going to be transportation sections in there, ID cards, what do you need? I want it to be a growing document where we can have everything we've used put in one place, all those forms and strategies and the things to look out for, lessons we've learned. The things that we didn't think about before, but now we've learned, so people don't have to reinvent the wheel, and so people can take some ideas and run with it (in other areas). I think that it's going to kind of pull all things together, this really is our 4<sup>th</sup> big year of doing point of transition and it's taken us this long to kind of get things under some kind of system. If people ask us these kinds of questions, we can share information and get ideas from others. So that would be good.

#### Adult Agency Representative Perspective

Frank's coach from DEF Agency was asked if she remembered what kinds of behaviors or challenges she was working on with Frank when he first came to her.

Yes, there was an issue with honesty and that was carried over from the school, And then we continued to have issues here, (stealing) from consumers, coaches, but that we didn't catch him at, but we did consumers several times. His job, he got fired from his job over this, his first job that he had with us.

The coach reported that Frank came to DEF Agency in November, started working at the bookstore in November, and was fired in August for stealing:

It was the third incident there and actually we had him let go because it was their employees that he was stealing from, their backpacks and stuff, they were left out in the office. Now he's working with me at GHF two days a week, and we're trying to get him a job at the (hotel). He knows, he's very well aware that there will be consequences of stealing things. I'm not saying he wouldn't do it, if he thought he had the opportunity, a clear cut opportunity with nobody observing. But it cost him that job, he was working five days a week at the time because we had just gotten the GHF job, so he was working hard five days a week. Lost him a lot of income.

The coach explained that Frank was involved in a group placement, where a job coach was on site at all times, but still could not stop the stealing. The coach did not recall that Frank was placed in a shared funding arrangement with DR and Regional Center at that time. She stated that he is fully funded by Regional Center at this time, which is in agreement with the record review. The coach feels Frank is ready for another paid position. The coach was informed that Frank asked to borrow money from this interviewer during one of his observations:

That is another issue, yes. Oh we've had coaches, we have to tell them "do not give him money," he has all of his paycheck going into his budget now here. At



first he had some real issues with that, I mean he just wanted to spend everything that he had, then he's around asking people for money. Well now he's doing really well, he's buying shirts and buying CD's and he buys lunch once a week and then I give him \$10.00 out of it every week to take home for spending money. But it still wouldn't stop him from telling his coach that he didn't have money or something. He had an extra job and unfortunately, with the economy, particularly after September 11<sup>th</sup> a lot of people that weren't doing well before, we had another job site at Sixth Avenue Bistro. We were downtown, and we were handing out menus around the area. And he borrowed money from the owner's husband a couple times telling him he didn't have any money, with the understanding that it would be deducted from his check. However, I don't think he thought they'd really deduct it, and they did and so his checks were short.

The coach was asked to describe some of the job tasks Frank is involved in now at his job with GHI:

Right now we're putting out the over stock, we've been doing the Christmas displays and doing the over stock. Pulling it down and putting it out so it's all out by the time Christmas is over. We do the glasses, we sweep, we dust, everything except the register just about.

When the coach was asked if there was there anything about his transition in terms of working with his school, Regional Center, and DR that she thought could have gone smoother, she responded:

The teacher was over here several times, I didn't really get that involved in that portion of it, Frank was with me a lot but I didn't really get involved too much with that. With his ISP and everything, his goals here, yea, that I did.

The coach was asked if there had been any difficulty with funding over the last two years since he left school and went from shared funding to Regional Center full funding:

No, no when he came here we had no problem with him. We had more problems with people transitioning in here from other sites, who were in other programs than we had with him. No, the people from the school were getting in, bam, right away, practically before some of them started, so that has been no problem at all.

The coach was asked if there were any system barriers that she thought were in the way when he left school in terms of providing the best program for him, or are still in way:

Not from Frank's standpoint. Actually he would have been coming into the program independently and going home if he could be trusted. He went through the training to do it, before it was decided, no this is not safest thing for him. He has had good job training before he came in here, at a local restaurant, so I can't

see any problems there. He's got a good work ethic, he's a good worker. Listen, he'd goof off if we'd let him, a little bit, but he wants to earn that paycheck. So I really can't see any problem. I think it was pretty smooth coming in. He and actually the other person that was with him, both of them, was a very smooth transition I think for them.

The coach was asked if there was anything else about Frank's transition process that she would like to add in terms of giving feedback to the teacher or other involved personnel:

No, you know we got some really good records from the school, which is great to have because you do not get that when you have adults coming into this program. All of that has (usually) gone by the wayside long ago, and of course if there is anything bad, they're not going to send it to you anyway, most of the time they don't want you to know, so this was really nice because we got all the background and everything on him. We knew the person he was working with before in the school district, and the teacher did a lot of follow up on Frank. He went to work right away. It was really nice that we had the opening back then. Now we're having a little more of a problem finding new job sites with the way the economy is.

The coach was asked what she thought about the POTSIP model in general and if she had worked with other students from the program:

I like it, we have two more now who have just come in. And they're doing real well, I wish we had the jobs right away to put them into.

The coach was then asked when DEF Agency begins to have funding discussions about the students, in terms of who will provide the money for support once the student leaves the public school system:

They always check to see if we can get the split funding, that's great to do and particularly if you can get five days a week. But we don't have that many five days a week job sites... I think it's easier to get it if we can get somebody out of a workshop into here. They're always having to fund that, but that's hard to do.

Did you know workshops are considered higher functioning (on the service continuum) than our program? .... To go to where their pay is on production, five cents or piece meal or whatever... like I said with Frank it's just a matter, he's doing real well on his goals. He's doing real well on them. Now if he'd just quit asking people for money...

#### Summary of Observation Data

Observation # 1, November 2001, construction material recycling store. The work setting is a volunteer site at a recycling center for home furnishings, construction projects, used sinks, tubs, showers, windows, frames, doors, bolts, nuts, almost anything found in construction. Frank is working here in a group of three consumers with a job coach that stays with him. The work setting is in the side area of the warehouse, marked

off for employees only. The group sits at some workbenches and their primary task is to sort through works screws, nails, bolts, nut washers and separate them into containers.

During the period of the one-hour observation, two staff came over and interacted with the group and said hello and good morning. Otherwise, the interaction was primarily with the job coach and with each other. Frank was very verbal and helpful, he talked about the work activities, talked about his activities over the weekend, sports games, the loss of the Chargers to the Kansas City Chiefs. He knew about the football game this evening between Oakland and Denver.

Frank spoke positively about the volunteer work, he did miss his job down at the Bistro where he was able to get a free meal daily with good food and some biweekly checks, but Frank apparently is satisfied with his schedule. Volunteers do get a meal at lunchtime, the staff goes out to Jack in the Box and buys everyone a sandwich and a soda for quarter. They also get free donuts in the morning. Frank stated that he works on Tuesday and Thursday at GHF for pay, and then is in the community Wednesday and Friday for social activities and community access, like Sea Port Village - he talks about shopping, those types of things. The coach and Frank indicated that on Fridays they make a schedule for what they're going to do during the week. Frank asked if he could walk me out, said he'd show me out and he thanked me for coming and then quietly asked if he could borrow \$2.00. I explained to him my wife took all my money and apologized.

Observation #2, December 2001, GHF market. The student was working with the job coach and one other consumer from the DEF Agency at GHF market. Activities observed included hanging Christmas ornaments in two aisles. Consumer participated in this activity throughout the entire period. He interacted with several customers who asked him where items might be located in the store. If Frank didn't know, he was instructed by the job coach to say, "wait a second and I'll get you some help", and refer the question to the job coach. One instance he did not do this, he just simply said "I don't know, I have no idea" to the customer. The job coach corrected him and reminded him what the procedure was supposed to be. Frank appeared happy in his work, he said he was tired and was up late watching movies last night.

When asked what job he liked better, he said he liked the other job at the construction materials site because he gets a free lunch, even though this job (GHF) is a paid position. He works here two days a week, about three hours a day at minimum wage \$6.25 an hour - which will go up January 1<sup>st</sup> to \$6.75 an hour. Frank stayed on task and seemed to pretty much stay focused. He needed some help to find locations for different ornaments, everything had to be sorted exactly, and the job coach indicated that he sometimes needs help to do that. No other significant activities noticed at this site today.

### Summary

This concludes the presentation of the individual case study data. Chapter Five will present a review of each case study for consistency among stakeholder perspectives

and case specific data, including data from observations. The final chapter will also examine and delineate some of the emerging themes gathered from the data as a result of a cross case analysis by stakeholder group, in the context of the original research questions, in an effort to develop implications for practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the process and outcomes of the transition experience from a person-centered perspective, primarily from the viewpoints of four students, their families or primary care-providers, their transition teacher, and their primary adult agency representative. The intent of the research was to give voice to these stakeholders in an effort to provide feedback to not only those individuals working with the Point of Transition Service Integration Project (POTSIP), but to any interested professional providing transition services to students with severe disabilities. The overall goal was to inform practice and enhance the quality of transition service delivery systems. Stakeholder perception of success was assessed in terms of the following: their view of the quality of activities the student was involved in at the time of exit from school; the degree to which the goals of the transition plan were addressed; and the perceived levels of interagency cooperation and collaboration that contributed to plan implementation.



Chapter Five presents a case by case summary examining the congruency of stakeholder perceptions within each case study, along with a summary of observation data and any other significant data that emerged beyond the structure of the research questions. A cross-case analysis of the data is also presented, organized by stakeholder group, as it relates to the original research questions. A summary of emerging themes and implications for each group is offered. Each stakeholder group was also examined to determine if any of the preliminary themes (Appendix F) based on the previous study by Gallivan-Fenlon (1994), as described in Chapter Two, were present. Implications for future practice are presented, recommendations for additional research in this area are offered, and finally limitations of the study are reviewed.

#### Congruency between Stakeholder Perspectives and Observation Data

The following section examines the individual case studies for consistency and variance in stakeholder perspectives based on interview and observation data. The order of the case studies has been arranged according to the level of congruency, beginning with the case that demonstrated the highest level of agreement among the stakeholders.

#### Frank

Frank's case study revealed the most consistency in terms of stakeholder perceptions. Frank, his mother, the teacher, and the job coach all felt his was a very smooth and seamless transition to adult life. No one reported any difficulties with transition planning or implementation, or in terms of interagency collaboration. The

teacher indicated he would have liked to have seen more paid hours developed for Frank, but once that occurred, Frank's own stealing behaviors were the major barrier to improving his paid employment opportunities.

Based on observations made during the interview, at a volunteer site, and at his current paid employment site, Frank appeared to be a charming and engaging young man who was enjoying his current program of activities. His attempt to borrow money from the interviewer was consistent with his history as described by the job coach, and continues to remain a concern for the adult agency staff as they move toward increasing his independence in the community.

#### Victor

Victor was the most dissatisfied with the outcome of his transition. The other stakeholders were aware of his unmet needs and admitted that policy barriers or lack of collaboration interfered with addressing his long-term goals. In this sense, the stakeholders were consistently unsatisfied with the non-work outcomes for Victor. Regarding employment, the stakeholders, including Victor, were in agreement about being satisfied with the job placement at the time of graduation. Victor just wanted more. His dream of being able to drive and to access vocational training to do a job he really enjoyed was unfulfilled.

The other stakeholders were all aware of this, but nothing happened. DR determined Victor's case was a success, based on his employment, and closed his file

without consideration of the training issue. The school system dropped out of the picture at graduation. Regional Center has not addressed the remaining goals, causing Victor to feel it is now a waste of time for him to attend any more planning meetings.

Victor's level of frustration during the interview was clearly apparent unlike the other students who participated in the study. His lack of faith in the adult systems, combined with his mother's fear of confronting the adult agency, left them in an apparent state of helplessness in terms of addressing future goals. The interviewer responded with a review of their rights as consumers of adult services, and suggestions on how to advocate for their unmet needs. Without receiving this information from the interview, the two observations at Victor's work site would have left the researcher with the picture of a young man working happily and successfully in an integrated environment.

### Sally

Sally, her teacher, and her job coach all seemed to view her transition as very successful. The family was inconsistent in their perspectives. The parents acknowledged that Sally is probably very content in her current program, but they would like her to do more. The family was very satisfied with the job Sally had upon graduation and felt it was a good match for her, but felt the job took too long to develop and was not in place until several months after graduation, creating the misperception that the transition was not so "seamless." Sally's family would like her to be more independent, but acknowledged that a group placement is probably best for her due to her behaviors.

The teacher, coach, and family were pleasantly surprised with how well Sally adjusted to the community program and how her inappropriate behaviors eventually diminished. They all expressed initial doubts as to Sally's ability to function successfully in the community. Sally may have gone to a sheltered workshop if there had not been that period of overlap between school and adult services.

During the observations, Sally seemed very content with her coach and other group members (i.e., other individuals with disabilities). She appeared to genuinely enjoy working with the animals at the shelter, was very focused and had lots of smiles while participating in the stamp class, and became very excited when she began practicing typing on the computer. Sally did not seem to have the same concern of working for money that her family did, but her family wants Sally to be challenged to reach her full potential.

### Emily

Emily's case presented an interesting incongruence of perspectives. Both Emily and her care-provider indicated they were very satisfied with the transition process and the outcomes. Their recollection was that the paid job was already in place at the time of graduation, although it actually was not developed until September. The teacher and, even more so, the job coach indicated dissatisfaction with the transition outcomes. The teacher's recollection was that the job was already in place by graduation, but he was concerned that Emily's community access needs had not been addressed sufficiently.

The job coach was the most disappointed, “it made me sad”, in terms of not being able to focus on Emily’s long-term goals or find assistance for her to attend child care classes successfully. The coach felt Emily could have “done much more” with proper support.

There were no program site observations conducted with Emily, since she was not currently in a program at the time of the interview. As indicated earlier, Emily was friendly and cooperative during the interview and had no complaints. The teacher had indicated in his transcript that he wished he had worked on some more self-advocacy issues with Emily, because she does tend to “just go along” with things.

#### Emerging Themes: Implications for Stakeholders

The following themes emerged from the individual case-study review: An apparent “seamless transition” for Frank; “lack of agency follow through” or “dropping the ball” for Emily and Victor; “success is more than a job” for Victor; and “lack of communication” among stakeholders for Sally. In Victor’s case, the adult agencies seemed to go their separate ways, with no one carrying on the effort to meet his long-term objectives. For him, clearly, successful employment did not translate into a successful transition.

Emily and her care-provider appeared to have lost sight of Emily’s “true goals” at this point, and no one seems focused on anything else but finding a new job with better hours. Sally’s family’s perception of the transition process may have been different if there had been better communication among the stakeholders involved with her transition

process, specifically helping them understand how services were actually overlapping that last year.

### Themes across Stakeholder Groups

Themes across stakeholder groups are examined in the context of the research questions. The first research question is restated and a summary of data analysis from each stakeholder group follows. The second research question is presented in the same format.

#### Research Question #1

How do students with severe disabilities, their families, transition teachers, and adult agency staff perceive the transition process 12 –24 months after exiting school for adult life?

- a. How do students, families, teachers, and adult agency staff characterize the transition planning that occurred? To what extent was the plan addressed?
- b. How do the students, parents, teachers, and adult agency staff feel about the quality and range of established daily activities for the transitioned student 12 – 24 months after exiting school? What supports and accommodations are being used? What, if any, needs have not been met?

### Overall Student Perspectives

Three of the four students indicated a general satisfaction with the transition process 12-24 months after graduation. The exception was Victor. Although he continues to work approximately 30 hours per week at the same job he had upon exit from the school system, Victor expressed dissatisfaction with his transition outcome because two of his primary goals were not achieved, getting his driver's license and obtaining vocational training in electronic assembly. In terms of the planning process, Victor felt that "some of my ideas were heard, some were not".

Victor indicated he was not pleased with the follow through by the adult service delivery systems, particularly the Regional Center, and indicated, as a result, that he was not going to attend any more of their planning meetings. Two of the remaining three students expressed general satisfaction with the quality of their current activities, Emily, however, is currently waiting for another paid job to be developed. She does indicate satisfaction with her other non-work activities at this time.

Frank and Sally are currently supported in a 3:1 consumer to job coach ratio integrated work program funded through Regional Center. Victor continues to receive long term support through his placement under Habilitation funding. Victor is not receiving any support for community access at this time.

All of the students except Victor felt that they were a part of the planning process and appeared generally pleased with the assistance they received to transition from school

to the adult programs. Three of the four students were working at the time of graduation, the fourth continued in her volunteer job and schedule of non-work activities until a paid job was developed approximately two months later.

Emerging themes. *Failure to meet long-term goals and lack of adult agency follow through* emerge as themes in reviewing student perspectives, particularly Victor's. Gallivan-Fenlon's (1994) themes of "lack of quality perceptions of daily life", "inadequate levels of community supports", and "lack of friends" also surface specifically in terms of Victor's transition. The four students interviewed had limitations in their abilities to express themselves verbally, but Victor's goals were delineated clearly in his IEP/ITP. After Victor's job was in place, little or no effort was placed on helping him to meet his other goals.

#### Overall Family Perspectives

Sally's parents indicated that she (Sally) is quite happy with her current program, but they were frustrated that significant time had passed without another paid position being developed. Both parents indicated a sense of wanting something more for their daughter, perhaps some specific vocational training to increase her work skills. Sally's father expressed concern about what will happen to her once he and her mother "are gone" but acknowledged support will be available from siblings and life long case management through Regional Center. Sally's family felt transition services took too long to get going and did not realize that a permanent job was in place prior to Sally's graduation.



Victor's mother also didn't realize his training position had been converted to a permanent job prior to his exit from school, and indicated that she was concerned that Victor had few friends and very little involvement in social and recreational activities. Victor's mother was generally pleased with the planning process, but not with the follow through for his other goals. She is pleased with Victor's employment and the support he receives from the agency selected to provide ongoing services.

Emily's care provider was generally pleased with the transition process, "everything was perfect", and expressed satisfaction with her service delivery agency. She felt listened to at planning meetings, and just wants to see another job developed for Emily soon. Frank's mother expressed a great deal of satisfaction with her son's current program and the quality of his schedule of activities, and is very happy with the support he receives from his agency. Frank's mother also indicated she felt good about the planning process, felt heard, and added that she has no difficulty expressing what she thinks is best for her son.

Sally's parents and Emily's care provider seemed comfortable advocating for their students in planning meetings. Victor's mother, however, expressed fear about confronting the Regional Center about not helping her son work toward his remaining goals. She indicated she was afraid that his services might be cut off or his case closed if she complained.

Emerging themes. Emerging themes include *inadequate communication* (especially regarding timing of job placements) and a need for *family advocacy training*. Gallivan-Fenlon's (1994) themes of "running out of time", "lack of friends," "level of community supports," and "differing expectations and aspirations for young adult life" also surfaced in reviewing family perspectives. Some of the anxiety experienced by families may have been alleviated if the adult agency had been more proactive in explaining the planning process to families. Of note, three of the four families did not realize that Department of Rehabilitation (DR) was involved in working with and providing funding for support for their students, another example of a lack of communication.

Record review indicated the schools were working to help students develop self-advocacy skills. Families may benefit from similar training. The concerns expressed about lack of friends and inadequate level of community supports may indicate a gap in services for students participating solely in supported employment. The approach the supported employment model takes, one of "place and train" as opposed to train and place, may explain the disparity between two of the families' desire for specific vocational training and the actual program.

#### Overall Teacher Perspectives

The teacher, overall, indicated that he felt fairly pleased with the transition process for all four students. Each of the students had established a relationship with an adult agency during the last year of school, three of the four students were involved in

paid employment, and the fourth had a schedule of activities until her job was developed. All four students are still supported by the same adult agency two years later and he described each of their transitions as “seamless”. The teacher added that, in terms of unmet needs, he would have liked to help out Victor and Emily more with non-work activities and that social coaching was not a major focus two years ago as the main thrust was job development.

The teacher acknowledged that there is currently no funding mechanism to support students with community access activities (leisure, social, recreational) who are involved solely in a DR supported employment program. He indicated that in the beginning of the POTSIP model, the school and one of the agencies were learning and negotiating their roles for supporting students in non-work activities while still in school under the subcontract.

The teacher indicated he would have liked to see some vocational training for Sally and more paid hours for Frank at the time of graduation. The teacher felt the planning process went smoothly for all of the students, and was not surprised families did not recall involvement by DR. He stated that DR comes in quietly and effectively with the funding, and often the adult agency facilitates the intake meeting with DR without the family, saving them from attending one more meeting.

Emerging themes. The primary theme emerging from the teacher’s perspective is consistent with Gallivan-Fenlon’s (1994) “lack of community supports,” especially for

students involved in DR supported employment programs. Even if the school negotiates for the adult agency to use some their subcontract money the last year of school, there is no funding mechanism in place to carry that on once the student ages out of the education system.

#### Overall Adult Agency Representative Perspectives

Sally's job coach felt her transition went smoothly and that the group she was in was a good match for her. She didn't recall any needs being unmet and felt the planning process went well. The coach expressed that she "was really proud" of Sally and that she had come a long way, stating most people didn't feel Sally would be successful in a community-based program. The alternative would have been a sheltered workshop if the transition from school to adult programs had not been successful. Sally's coach tuned in to Sally's discontent at the second job site and helped her transition successfully to her current group.

Victor's coach felt that Victor experienced a smooth transition, his job was in place at the time of graduation and he was working many hours. The coach reported that she had facilitated the intake with DR and there were no funding concerns, but she lamented the fact that there was confusion and a limited ability to help Victor with his non-work goals. She did indicate that the agency did offer some assistance during that last year of school to help Victor study his driver-training manual, but that was not continued after graduation.

Emily's coach indicated a sense of frustration about not being able to develop a paid position for her by the time she left school, but felt that the schedule Emily had in place at the time kept her from sitting home and kept her busy until the job was found. The coach indicated frustration with not being able to convert Emily's volunteer job at the pre-school to a paid position due to Emily's lack of coursework. Further, she expressed disappointment that there was no support available at the community college or adult education centers to assist Emily in completing the required classes, nor was there a funding mechanism in place to allow the adult agency to do so. Emily's coach felt the model at the time focused too much on just getting a paying job and did not look at the long-term goals for Emily. She felt Emily "could have done more."

Frank's coach reported a very smooth transition for him and felt the biggest barrier was Frank's behaviors. The coach indicated Frank would have been working many more paid hours if jobs weren't terminated because of stealing. She felt appropriate planning occurred with strong involvement by Frank and his mother and did not report any unmet needs. She felt that due to his behaviors and inability to travel safely and independently, Frank is receiving appropriate support in the integrated work program.

Emerging themes. Two emerging themes from the adult agency representative perspective include *lack of long term planning* and *lack of appropriate supports at adult education centers and community colleges* for individuals with developmental

disabilities. Gallivan-Fenlon's (1994) theme of "lack of community supports" also reappears. The supported employment model, with its focus on obtaining paid employment, "place and train", may be a barrier in itself to focusing on long-term goals. The Department of Rehabilitation (DR) pays an adult agency to find a job, provides gradually fading support, and then closes the file when that one job stabilizes. Long-term goals do not appear to be considered in a supported employment plan, but are considered in the general rehabilitation (DR) program. There may be a need to merge the program components for some students or consumers.

Lack of appropriate support for students with developmental disabilities in continuing education programs, or a funding mechanism to purchase such a service from a private adult agency, indicates a gap in the service delivery system that prevents students from achieving long term objectives.

### Research Question #2

Does interagency collaboration and early intervention impact the transition service delivery system from the perspectives of the students, families, teachers, and adult agency representatives?

- a. What are the emerging themes, if any, that seem to indicate improved levels of interagency collaboration? What themes, if any, indicate failure to collaborate or poor collaboration?

- b. What are the emerging themes, if any, which indicate that policies and procedures presented barriers or increased opportunities for transition planning?

### Overall Student Perspectives

Three of the four students reported overall satisfaction with their transition process, and had no suggestions in terms of improving the way the adult agencies had come together to work with them. Victor, however, asked for “more attention.” He was clearly frustrated by the way two of his primary goals were not addressed. All of the students did have a schedule of activities to follow upon exiting public schools due to early transition planning and overlap of services.

Emerging themes. Of most importance is the absence of Gallivan-Fenlon’s (1994) theme of “just sitting home.” As a result of improved interagency collaboration, the students’ last day of school was no different than their first day with the adult programs, i.e., there was no down time or loss of momentum. *Lack of collaboration* among the responsible service providers contributed to Victor’s inability to achieve his long-term goals. Although the goals were clearly specified in his IEP, neither Regional Center nor DR followed through with addressing these objectives. Victor may not be able to achieve his goal of driving a car, but he deserves an appropriate evaluation to determine this fact based on his abilities, not unmet promises, so he and his mother can put the issue to rest. Support for vocational training from the Department of Rehabilitation (DR) while he is working 30 hours per week falls under a subjective policy

interpretation, i.e., does he require additional services if he is working? One might ask, are the general DR program and the DR supported employment program mutually exclusive?

### Overall Family Perspectives

Sally's family, although frustrated that her program took some time to develop, acknowledged that Sally has never had to "sit at home" without a schedule of activities since leaving school. Sally has been participating with the same adult agency in a full thirty hour a week program consisting of either paid or volunteer work and community access since the fall of her final year of school. The overlap of services between public schools and an adult agency for nine months provided continuity for Sally and her family in terms of relationships with her primary adult staff person and other group members at the time of her graduation.

Victor's mother reported that she is pleased that her son has been working at the same job since leaving school. She felt good about the services received from his agency, both during school and since the transition, which is a positive indicator of success of early intervention and interagency collaboration as related to employment outcomes. Her main concern has been the failure of the adult service system to follow through on other goals, indicating a possible failure of interagency collaboration to address long-term goals and non-work activities.



Emily's care-provider was very satisfied with the early intervention of adult agency services and the level of interagency cooperation. She had no complaints or suggestions for improvement for any of the providers, including Regional Center and the Department of Rehabilitation (DR).

Frank's mother indicated that in terms of the early implementation and overlap of adult agency services with the school district, "Frank wants to be treated like an adult, so that was right up his alley". She felt the transition process went very smoothly for her son and remains very satisfied with his agency's program. Frank has remained with the same agency in a full thirty hour a week program consisting of either paid or volunteer work and community access since the fall of his final year of school.

Emerging themes. Having a *continuity of services and relationships* emerges as a theme indicating a positive impact of early intervention and interagency collaboration for all four of the students and families, but only in terms of employment for Victor. *Lack of collaboration* or a lack of continuity emerges from Victor's mother's perspective regarding her son's transition goals that were not addressed after exit from school. Families may need assistance to carry over student objectives from one adult system to another, or an interagency planning document may help provide more continuity in service plans.

#### Overall Teacher Perspectives

The teacher felt "the systems meshed together very well" for Sally's transition process. He reported that DR came in early with funding for supported employment, and

Regional Center funded the non-work activities after Sally graduated, a good example of shared funding. Transportation was not a concern, as the adult agency provided door-to-door transportation by the job coaches.

The teacher indicated that early intervention had a very positive impact on Victor's transition, as DR came in early with money for job coaching, eliminating that funding concern. However, he added that the lack of funding for ongoing social coaching for students still living at home who receive supported employment funding prevented students like Victor from achieving long-term community access goals. He felt Emily benefited greatly from the overlap of services between the school district and the adult agency that last year, even if the paid job was not in place.

The teacher reported seamless transitions for Sally and Frank as they both continue to receive the same full level of support two years later by the same agency that worked with them their last year of school. *Early intervention and overlap of services* was essential to their success in his view. He indicated that policy and procedure regarding transportation presented a barrier for Frank and continues to be a barrier for current students. The teacher explained that some transportation services are bound by service areas and are often not allowed to cross over certain boundaries, thus blocking access to certain programs if the student requires door to door transportation ( i.e., cannot make a transfer independently).

The teacher reported a “big difference” for transition planning with the implementation of the POTSIP model. The old way, he stated, was a “Band-Aid” approach with very little overlap with the adult agency. All of the students participating in the new model had at least a nine month overlap between school and adult agency services which helped to make the transition smoother. The students were able to develop relationships with the adult agency staff and with other group members, rather than being handed off to a group of strangers. The teacher was able to provide current information and support to the agency during those nine months, leveraging all of the assessments and personal knowledge the teacher had for each student.

According to the teacher, Gallivan-Fenlon’s (1994) theme of “just sitting home” was not uncommon for students prior to the implementation of POTSIP due to late planning and lack of overlap of services. Another undesirable outcome was that students would go to inappropriate programs, like a sheltered workshop, while waiting for a community job placement, even though the students had already demonstrated the ability to work in the community.

The teacher described the decision by the administrator of San Diego DR to allow supported employment funding to be utilized during that last year of school as “huge.” The early funding allows the sub-contracting agencies to utilize those dollars for job coaching and use contract dollars for non-work activities. Further, this decision has opened the doors for other school districts who have been unable to find the money to

directly sub-contract with adult agencies for full support of their students that final year to at least access and overlap services for their students who are targeted for supported employment. Several school districts in San Diego County have currently implemented the POTSIP model in this manner, another indication of improved interagency collaboration.

The teacher reported that his district is currently sub-contracting with five different adult agencies, allowing a wider choice of programs and locations for his students. Each agency can more effectively support fewer students exiting the schools at the same time. He credits his administrator for making the decision to establish the sub-contracts, stating that it was “a major key” to improving transition outcomes. The teacher indicated that when his staff and adult agency staff are working together for students, “you really can’t tell them apart.”

The biggest challenge the teacher sees for the future is finding programs for students who have more significant needs, e.g., assistance with feeding or using the toilet. During one of the interviews, the teacher noted that currently all students or consumers are funded in community based integrated work programs at the same rate, regardless of the severity of the person’s disability. Upon reflection, the teacher suggested that perhaps a differential rate could be established, offering an incentive for adult agencies to accept students with more significant needs in their programs and thus allowing them to hire additional staff.

The teacher praised the use of shared funding as a benefit to students in accessing services from DR and the Regional Center simultaneously. He lamented the fact that the 60 day limit to full program funding by the Regional Center (i.e. when a student loses a job) remains a disincentive for agencies to use shared funding.

The teacher reported that there are current barriers that prevent students from taking adaptive equipment (i.e., assistive technology) purchased by the school district when they exit the district. He stated that there have been discussions to negotiate purchase by DR, Regional Center, or the family, but the issue is still unresolved.

The teacher identified another problem regarding interagency collaboration related to transportation. Often, he reported, that he has a lot of difficulty working with the various transportation systems if a student needs to cross a city or regional boundary to access the most appropriate program. He has had success negotiating individual cases but feels that other alternatives need to be examined more thoroughly.

Finally, the teacher reported that one of his current goals is to develop a handbook outlining some of the lessons learned over four years of implementing the POTSIP model. He indicated that he continues to hear from teachers in other districts throughout the state that the old "Band-Aid" approach is still alive and well, and students and families are not accessing early intervention or overlap of services. The teacher is committed to helping to expand the model.

Emerging themes. Based on the teacher's perspective, the following themes emerged indicating improved interagency collaboration: *seamless transition, overlap of services, early planning* (as opposed to Gallivan-Fenlon's (1994) theme of "late planning"), *early DR funding, shared funding, agency subcontracts*, and no "just sitting home" (1994) or *no inappropriate programs* (e.g., sheltered workshop while waiting). The following themes emerged indicating failure to collaborate or poor interagency collaboration: *transportation issues; lack of portability of student adaptive equipment; 60 day limit on shared funding for job loss; lack of program opportunities for students with more significant needs; lack of agency incentives to serve those students* (e.g., a differential rate structure); and a *lack of statewide uniformity providing early transition services*.

#### Adult Agency Representative Perspective

Sally's coach felt the POTSIP model "was great", because "you have the whole year to work with them, find out what they are like and what's going to work". Sally's coach did not recall that the 60-day shared funding limit became a problem later on, but her manager did as the agency lost a substantial sum of money.

Victor's coach felt that establishing a relationship with him early on in the last school year was a big plus and stated it was "a great way to introduce students to the adult agency model, but in a slower, more coddling kind of manner". In a sign of poor collaboration, Victor's coach lamented the fact that there was a lack of focus on long term planning and the systems did not take the steps necessary to continue addressing his

goals and objectives beyond the job placement. She added that there was (is) no funding mechanism in place to help students solely in supported employment access the community, a system barrier in her mind. Emily's coach echoed this sentiment.

Emily's coach reported that the failure to focus on her long-term goals and career planning was, in her view, a failure of collaboration. She also indicated that the lack of support at adult education centers and community colleges for persons with developmental disabilities was a systems barrier to successful transition planning.

Emily's coach indicated that she felt Emily "could have done much, much more" and suggested perhaps an on-going focus on improving reading and math abilities may have been beneficial, possibly by enrolling her in an intensive reading program. Emily's coach suggested practitioners "think about their (the student's) true goals" and felt that even if those goals were discussed in planning meetings, there appeared to be no effort to identify the steps needed to achieve them through an interagency plan.

Frank's coach mentioned that one indication of improved collaboration was the quality of records the agency received from the school and the on-going support from the teacher during that last year. She reported good interagency collaboration in terms of funding, and has had positive experiences with other students using the POTSIP model. One systems barrier in terms of funding in general that Frank's coach reported was how Regional Center views the continuum of services: "Did you know (sheltered) workshops are considered higher functioning than our programs?"

Emerging themes. The following themes emerged from the adult agency representative perspective indicating benefits from early intervention and improved interagency collaboration: *a whole year to work with them, introduce services in slower, more coddling manner, establish relationships, excellent records, and extended support from teacher.* Themes indicating failure to collaborate or poor collaboration were: *lack of long-term planning; lack of community access funding for supported employment students; lack of support from adult education and community college systems for persons with developmental disabilities; lack of interagency coordination to address long term goals; failure to continue to address reading/math skills in transition; the 60 day limit on shared funding at job loss; and an incongruent view of the continuum of services.*

#### Positive Impact on Service Delivery

The following list groups the themes and describes their positive impact on transition service delivery practices.

1. *No sitting home, early planning, seamless transition, continuity of services and relationships, overlap of services, a whole year to work with them, introduce to adult programs in a slower, more coddling manner.* All of the students had a program of activities that they could continue to attend after they left school, that is, the first day with the adult program was no different than the last day of school. Planning began in the fall of the last year of school, and there was a nine-month overlap of services between public schools and the adult agency. All necessary funding was in place at



the time of graduation to continue activities. Students were able to establish relationships with their job coaches and other group members during that time to maintain a continuity of services. Students and families developed a more realistic picture of the transition to adult life that was ahead of them.

2. *Shared funding.* There were two instances among the case studies where both DR and the Regional Center were funding the students at the same time for different services, eliminating the “either/or” dilemma for choosing programs.
3. *Early funding from DR.* The decision by the local DR administrator to allow DR funding for supported employment for students during their final year of school allowed flexibility for agencies to provide more support for non-work activities during that time. It also allowed other school districts that did not have funding for sub-contracts the ability to implement the model for students targeted for supported employment and allowed the model to continue once grant funding expired.
4. *No inappropriate programs.* At least one student who might have been placed in a sheltered workshop due to behavior difficulties was able to be successful in a community-based program because of early intervention and overlapping services.
5. *Excellent records and extensive support from the teacher.* The overlap of services allowed the adult agencies to leverage information already gathered by school assessments as well as from the personal knowledge and relationship the teacher had with the student.

6. *Improved interagency collaboration.* Regular meetings occur every three months that involve transition teachers, adult agency personnel, Regional Center and DR administrators or supervisors in an effort to improve interagency cooperation and address systems barriers, such as those identified by the stakeholder groups..
7. *Improved employment outcomes.* Three of the four students were involved in paid employment at the time of graduation.

#### Recommendations for Practice

The following is a summary of the emerging themes indicating the POTSIP model has more work to do, and includes recommendations for practitioners and policy-makers.

1. *Lack of long term planning, successful transition is more than a job, dropping the ball, lack of continuity, lack of collaboration, lack of family advocacy training, lack of perception of quality in daily activities.*

The following recommendations are offered:

- a. Implement the use of an interagency, integrated personal future-planning document that addresses long-term goals and career planning, and delineates the responsibilities of the various agencies to implement the activities beyond graduation. The legally mandated ITP (Individualized Transition Plan) is an example of this type of document, but it appears to be no longer technically significant after the student exits school, leaving students and families to fend for themselves once again.

- b. Advocate that DR policy makers evaluate and amend as needed any policies that make part-time supported employment work and on-going vocational training toward longer term career goals incompatible goals by law or practice.
  - c. Implement family advocacy training programs within school transition programs.
2. *Lack of communication, running out of time.*

The following recommendation is offered:

- a. Improve the quality and frequency of communication between school, adult agency providers, and families to let them know exactly where they stand in the transition service overlap, especially regarding permanent job placement activities.
3. *Lack of community supports, lack of friends, lack of support at adult education centers or community colleges for persons with developmental disabilities.*

The following recommendations are offered:

- a. Develop a funding mechanism through the DDS/Regional Center system to provide social coaching for students/consumers still living at home who have community access needs but are currently supported solely by DR under supported employment.
- b. Convene an interagency task force to examine the current level of supports available for students with developmental disabilities at the adult education or community college settings and collaboratively develop through shared resources a support network that will allow access to appropriate vocational training.

*4. Shared funding – 60 day limit*

The following recommendation is offered:

- a. Continue to work with DR, Regional Center, and adult agency administrators to increase incentives for providing shared funding for consumers and remove the 60 day limit on full funding by Regional Center when a job loss occurs and DR funding stops.

*5. Portability of adaptive equipment*

The following recommendation is offered:

- a. Convene an interagency work group at the state level to develop a uniform policy regarding the transfer of adaptive equipment purchased by the school for use by the student upon graduation.

*6. Transportation barriers*

The following recommendation is offered:

- a. Convene an interagency work group to examine and amend any policies or procedures that create barriers for students or consumers in accessing programs due to city or regional boundary concerns.

*7. Lack of program opportunities for persons with more significant needs, Same funding rate regardless of level of disability.*

- a. Convene an interagency task force to address rate setting at the state level in terms of establishing incentives for agencies to work with students/consumers

with the most significant disabilities within the community based system.

Consider “differential funding” based on severity of disability

8. *Lack of statewide practice of early transition services*

The following recommendation is offered:

- a. Convene a meeting of DR and DDS state level administrators to discuss statewide implementation of successful practices of the POTSIP model, including early funding by DR and shared funding practices. Implement statewide dissemination of lessons learned through the POTSIP model.

#### Future Research

Future research possibilities include national and/or statewide surveys of current transition practices (e.g., the use of social coaching, shared funding, early use of supported employment dollars from other state DR systems, any overlap of services). A follow-up study in 3-5 years, similar to this inquiry, on San Diego POTSIP may be helpful to re-examine the identified areas of concerns regarding policy or procedures. Also, a follow-up study on the four students involved in this investigation in 3-5 years might provide valuable information regarding emerging long-term support needs and provide a more comprehensive review of the adult service continuum.

In addition, an action research project working with state policy makers to identify additional systems barriers to successful transition practice might have a positive impact on future policy decisions for persons with severe disabilities.

### Limitations of Study

Using one's self as an instrument to collect data in a qualitative research project presents possible opportunities for bias. Every effort has been made to report the data accurately and to triangulate the data with project stakeholders, documentation, and member checks. Targeting four students is a limited sample, but can provide the basis for a larger study and results may be generalized to other students in similar settings. Individual differences unique to each student were anticipated, yet discoveries regarding the stakeholder perceptions of the service systems involved may inform practice and thus be useful for other regions attempting to improve interagency collaboration regarding school to adult life transition.

The study was directed toward students who have exited from one school district, San Diego City Schools, which played an instrumental role in the implementation of the POTSIP model in San Diego County. San Diego City Schools is also unique in that they are the only district in the county that has directly sub-contracted with adult agencies to provide a community program for transition students during their final year in public school under the supervision of the transition teacher. All data emerging from this study should be considered accordingly.

### Conclusion

The study has revealed some "good news" and "bad news." On the positive side, the POTSIP model appears to be demonstrating a much higher level of interagency

collaboration on a local level than is happening nationally, as reported in the literature review. The use of sub-contracts and the early intervention of supported employment dollars by the local Department of Rehabilitation represents significant systems change. None of the students in this study were left “sitting at home” at the time of graduation as indicated in the majority of cases in Gallivan-Fenlon’s (1994) study. Three of the four students were working, all were connected to an adult agency nine months prior to leaving school, and all continue with the same agency two years post-graduation.

On the other hand, the study has revealed there is still much work to do. There is more to a “seamless transition” than employment. The data indicated that in at least two of the cases, long-term goals were either ignored or systems barriers prevented them from being addressed appropriately. Chapter Two presented an extensive review of person-centered planning, personal futures mapping, and many other textbook procedures utilized to help students achieve their goals. There was no indication that those methods were employed in these instances, a disparity between espoused theory and practice. The lack of an interagency planning document that incorporates all of the students dreams and goals and that holds various adult systems accountable allowed some of the students’ aspirations to fall between the (adult system) cracks. The need remains for an accountable, integrated, adult service delivery system that recognizes all students’ lifelong desire to develop as active participants in society.

Other recommendations have addressed system or policy barriers that seemed to impede the progress of the students who participated in this study, based on the perspectives of the stakeholders involved most intimately with the students, and the students themselves. It is my sincere hope that the information that has been presented as a result of this inquiry, if even in a small way, will inform and improve transition practice for the students we serve.



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## APPENDICES

Appendices A 1-4: Interview Guides

Appendices B 1-2: Consent Forms

Appendix C: Document Review checklist

Appendix D: Observation checklist and field notes form

Appendix E: Letter of invitation to participate in study

Appendix F: Preliminary data coding categories

Appendix G: Letter of support from San Diego City Schools

## Appendix A -1

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

## PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS - STUDENT

## Current Activities:

What kind of activities are you involved in now? Tell me about your daily and weekly schedule. What do you like most about your schedule? Job, volunteer work, recreation? Is there something you'd like to change? Are there some goals or activities you are still trying to accomplish? Tell me about your friends, who you spend the most time with outside of the program? What kinds of things do you do? Have you been in the same group/program you were in the last year of school? If not, what changes happened?

## Planning to Leave:

Can you tell me what you were thinking or feeling as you were getting ready to leave school that last year? Were you happy to leave, or nervous, or what? Please tell me the kinds of things you were doing that last year to get ready. Were you working or volunteering in the community? Recreation activities? Community activities?

Did you have the same schedule when you left school? What do you remember about the planning meetings before leaving school? Were you involved in the meetings? Do you feel your ideas were listened to? Do you remember who was at the meetings? (your parents, Regional Center worker, Rehab counselor, teacher, adult agency personnel) Did you understand your choices and what was expected from you? How do you feel about the way your actual transition plan really worked? Were you happy with how it went or would you have liked something else to happen?

## What we should learn:

What would you advise other students and families who are getting ready to leave school? What would you tell the professionals involved that might improve transition services? What else would you like to tell me about your transition experience?

## Appendix A -2

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

## PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS - FAMILY

**Current Activities:**

What has your son/daughter been doing since leaving school? What kind of activities is he involved in now? How do you feel about the quality of activities your child is involved in at this time? What would you like to see changed? Are there other goals or activities you are still trying to accomplish? Has your son/daughter been in the same program since leaving school, or were there changes? Was there any time since leaving school your son/daughter was without a program to go to, had to stay at home? What else would you like to tell me about your son's/daughter's current activities and community supports?

**Planning Process:**

What do you remember about the planning process before leaving school? Were you involved in the meetings? Do you feel your ideas and those of your son/daughter were listened to? Tell me what it was about the meetings that made you feel that way. Do you remember who was involved in the planning process? (Regional Center worker, Rehab counselor, teacher, adult agency personnel) How do you remember the efforts of these multiple agencies during your last year of school? Was the process confusing or did someone guide you through it? Did the agencies seem to be working as a team or working separately? Did you understand the options being offered to your son/daughter and what was expected from you? What activities were your son/daughter involved in that last year of school? Did the schedule change much when your son/daughter left school? How do you feel about the way the actual transition process really worked? Was the outcome at the time of transition satisfactory or would you have liked something else to happen?

**What we should learn:**

Did any agency or bureaucracy barriers seem to impede the process? How do you think it might work better? What needs currently still need to be addressed? What planning has occurred since? What would you advise other students and families who are getting ready to leave school? What would you tell the professionals involved that might improve transition services? What else would you like to tell me about your son's/daughter's transition experience or current activities?



## Appendix A - 3

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

## PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS - TEACHERS

## Current activities:

What kind of activities is student \_\_\_\_ involved in now? How do you feel about the quality of activities your student transitioned to and is currently involved in? Is there anything else you would have liked to see happen? Were there some goals that were not met at the time of transition?

## Planning process:

Tell me about the planning process for student \_\_\_\_\_ that last year of school. Do feel the planning meetings were person-centered, focused primarily on the desires and choices of the student and family or was the planning agency driven? Tell me why you feel this way. Do you remember who was involved in the planning process? (Regional Center worker, Rehab counselor, teacher, adult agency personnel) How do you remember the efforts of these multiple agencies during the last year of school for student \_\_\_\_? Did the agencies seem to be working as a team or working separately? How do you feel about the way the actual transition process really worked? Was the outcome at the time of transition, in your mind, satisfactory or would you have liked something else to happen? What were some of the strengths and challenges you were considering while working with student \_\_\_\_\_ in planning transition services? Can you give me examples of some of the issues you were working on that last year and supports you used?

## What we should learn:

What system barriers (policies/procedures/etc.) seemed to impede the process? How could it work better? Have you been involved in student transitions both with and without the POTSIP model? What has been your experience with POTSIP? What would you tell other professionals involved that might improve transition services? What else can you tell me about the transition process for students with severe disabilities that may be helpful for other practitioners?

## Appendix A - 4

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

## PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS – ADULT AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE

**Current activities:**

Tell me about consumer \_\_\_\_\_'s current activities. Group composition/weekly schedule; vocational or volunteer tasks; community activities.

Has consumer been in the same program of activities since leaving school? If not what changes have occurred and why? Tell me your views on consumer's current activities and supports? Good fit? Not challenged enough? What program changes would you like to see for consumer? What do you see as future goals and objectives? Tell me about your agency's involvement with the student, from time of initial intake to the present.

**Planning process:**

What do you remember about the planning process for student \_\_\_\_\_ the final year of school? How was your agency involved? Do you feel person-centered planning occurred? Tell me why you feel this way. Were you involved in the meetings? Do you feel your ideas were listened to? Do you remember who was involved in the planning process? (student, family, Regional Center worker, Rehab counselor, teacher, adult agency personnel). How do you remember the efforts of these multiple agencies during your last year of school? Did the agencies seem to be working as a team or working separately? How do you feel about the way the actual transition process really worked? Was the outcome at the time of transition satisfactory or would you have liked something else to happen?

**What we need to learn:**

What, if any, system barriers seemed to impede the process? How could it work better? What would you advise students and families who are getting ready to leave school? What would you tell the professionals involved that might improve transition services? Have you been involved in student transitions both with and without the POTSIP model?

Tell me about your experience working with the POTSIP model. What else can you tell me about the transition process for students with severe disabilities that may be helpful for other practitioners?

## Appendix B - 1

## STUDENT CONSENT FORM

You are being invited to participate in a study designed to understand your experiences and feelings as you graduated from school to adult programs. Your participation is completely voluntary, your real name will not be used in any reports, and the information you give will be kept confidential (private).

There is no money or other reward involved, and there is no cost to you to participate. We hope you can benefit by using the information you discuss for meeting future goals in your team planning meetings. We also hope students who are getting ready to leave school in the future can benefit from the information you provide.

If you agree, the following activities will occur:

1. You will be interviewed in your home and the interview will be tape-recorded. You will have a chance to listen to the tape if you like to make sure your comments are accurate.
2. You will be observed at your program site two times in the next 90 days. You will have the chance to explain to me the types of activities you perform there.
3. Your planning records regarding leaving school for adult programs will be reviewed to see how the different agencies were working together for your planning.

All activities will occur before December 2001. Your audiotape and other information will be kept locked up for privacy, and will be destroyed by December 2002. We do not believe there is any risk of harm to you by participating in the study, and you can use your copy of your interview report for future planning meetings with your case

worker.

This study will share information with the University of San Diego faculty, San Diego State University Committee members, and adult agencies responsible for transition. The study will also be published in a dissertation (research report) available for public viewing.

Before signing this consent form, you can ask questions about the study and receive answers. You can call David Noyes at 619-425-4002 or Jerry Wechsler at 619-295-2683 any time during the study if you have questions or concerns.

#### Your Permission Agreement

I understand the above statements and give permission for my voluntary participation in this study. I also give permission for the researcher to perform two observations at my work or program site and to review school, Regional Center, and Department of Rehabilitation documents related to transition planning.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of student or parent/guardian	Date	Interviewer	Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Witness

## Appendix B - 2

## CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this project is to survey individuals to determine their ideas and perceptions involving day to day experiences while working with the Point of Transition System Integration Project.

The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher and his transcriber. All interviews and findings will be kept confidential. Interviews will be held in private settings and will range from 30 -60 minutes in duration.

There is no anticipated risk or potential for discomfort for any subject involved in this project. Any benefits gained by participation in the study would be solely in the nature of personal growth in the experience of the interview itself.

Your identity will not be identified in any written or oral reports. In addition, any details that might reveal your identity will be camouflaged. All data will be gathered by December 2001. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview for accuracy. All audiotapes and data collected during the study will be kept confidential and stored in a locked file cabinet. All audiotapes and data will be destroyed by December 2002.

This study will share information with the University of San Diego faculty, San Diego State University Committee members, and Point of Transition stakeholders. The study will be published in a dissertation available for public viewing.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to stop participation at any time.

Prior to signing this consent form, you can ask questions about the study and receive answers. There will be no expense involved for you by participating in this study, nor any monetary compensation. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study at any time, you can contact David Noyes at 619-425-4002 or Jerry Wechsler at 619-295-2683.

I, the undersigned, understand these statements and I give consent to my voluntary participation in this project. I also give permission for the researcher to perform two observations at my son/daughter's /student's /consumer's work or program site and to review school, Regional Center, and Department of Rehabilitation planning and assessment documents related to transition planning.

---

Signature of participant      Date

---

Interviewer      Date

---

Witness      Date

## Appendix C

## DOCUMENT REVIEW CHECKLIST

**Student**

**Name of document - ITP – IPP -IPE**

**Date of document -**

**If Planning meeting – who attended?**

**Plan of action:**

**Goals/objectives/timelines/ responsible parties**

**Review of results of plans – Goals, objectives, timelines met?**

**Current action plan to address unresolved issues?**

**Summary of other documents - (i.e. intake meetings, DR plan documents, etc).**

## Appendix D

## OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST

Date and time of observation

Description of setting

Observed activities

Observed interactions

Co-workers –

Public/customers –

Job coach

Other observed behaviors

Apparent satisfaction or dissatisfaction with activities?

Misc. Field Notes and impressions/Informal conversational interviews



## Appendix E

## LETTER TO INVITE PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

To : ----- and family.

From: Jerry Wechsler – TRACE Transition Coordinator

Dear -----,

I am writing to invite your participation in a follow-up study that is being conducted to examine student and family perceptions of the school to adult life transition process 12-24 months after leaving the public school system. As you are aware, you were one of the first students to participate in our new Point of Transition model of coordinating services. The study is designed to listen to the stories of students and parents regarding their transition experiences in an effort to improve future practice.

The study will be conducted by a colleague of mine, David Noyes, a doctoral student at the University of San Diego, as his dissertation project. Dave has been working with us for the past three years as a Program Specialist from the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University to implement the Point of Transition Model. Dave is also employed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the Department of Rehabilitation.

Activities will include one 30 – 60 minute interview with you and one with your family (can be conducted at your home) which will be tape recorded for accuracy in reporting your feedback; interviews with myself regarding your transition process, and interviews with the job coach or other adult agency staff you are currently working with and/or working with at the time of your transition. You will have the opportunity to review your audiotape transcript for accuracy,

Dave will also, with your consent, conduct two observations of you at your work/program site, and will request permission to obtain copies of relevant transition

documents from our school system, Regional Center, and the Department of Rehabilitation to review the interagency planning process.

You will be provided copies of the interview transcripts, first to check for accuracy, and also to use for future planning meetings regarding services. All information will be kept confidential and real names will not be used in the study's final report. Data collection will be completed by December 2001. All tapes and data will be stored in a locked cabinet during the study, and will be destroyed by December, 2002.

Participation is completely voluntary. Please call me at 619-295-2683 or Dave Noyes at 619-425-4002 if you have any questions regarding the purpose of activities of this study. If you are willing to participate, please fill out the enclosed form, have your parents also sign it, and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope by \*\*/\*\*/\*\*. Thanks for your consideration to this request.

Sincerely,

Jerry Wechsler

SD City Schools

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one response:

\_\_\_\_\_ My family and I are interested in hearing more about the research study regarding transition from school to work and would like to be contacted by David A.

Noyes to discuss our possible participation in the project.

\_\_\_\_\_ My family and I are not interested in participating in a research study at this time.

\_\_\_\_\_ My family and I would like to be contacted by Jerry Wechsler to discuss this further before reaching a decision.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

## PRELIMINARY CODING CATEGORIES FOR DATA

Running out of time for planning

Sitting at home

Quality/Lack of quality perceptions of daily activities

Level of community supports

Lack of student/family participation in planning

Lack of friends

Differing expectations and aspirations for young adult life

Interagency Collaboration

Lack of Interagency Collaboration

Planning was person-centered

Planning was agency/system centered

Lack of inclusive education practices

System policy and procedure barriers to transition



# SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS

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TRACE Center City | 3773 30th Street, Suite F | San Diego, CA 92104

**Special Education Programs Division**  
**Integrated Life Skills Program**  
**Telephone: 619-295-2683**  
**Fax: 619-294-6572**

March 9, 2001

**To Whom It May Concern,**

**This letter is intended to support David Noyes and the study he plans to conduct regarding the Point Of Transition Service Integration Project. This study will involve selected students and their families who graduated from the public school system within the past 3 years. Those families who volunteer to participate will be providing valuable information which will assist in quality program development. The procedures as indicated in the proposal's methodology section, by which students and families will be interviewed, will not be harmful to anyone. We look forward to assisting with this study in any way we are able.**

**Dr. Robert Morris**  
**Program Manager**  
**Integrated Life Skills**  
**San Diego City Schools**

**Jerry Wechsler**  
**Teacher**  
**TRACE Point Of Transition**  
**San Diego City Schools**