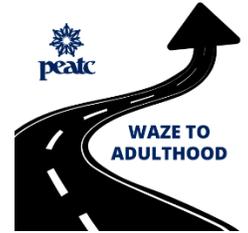


# Being Involved in Person-Centered Planning for Students and Young Adults with Disabilities in Foster, Kinship, or Adoptive Families



## A WAZE to Adulthood Fact Sheet

Thank you to **Formed Families Forward** for their partnership in this resource

**Creating a vision for the future** helps provide a plan for youth with disabilities who are unclear and/or anxious about becoming an adult. **Person-centered planning (PCP)** is directed by the youth to help them plan their life and supports. A person-centered planning process starts with *what* the student wants to do after high school and into adulthood—and is especially helpful to youth with disabilities who face the challenging circumstances that foster, kinship care, and adoption may bring. **People who can help support the planning** may include family members, school staff, vocational rehabilitation counselors, independent living coordinators, therapists, transition specialists, case managers, and other trusted adults.

### Challenges in Transition Planning for Some Youth

#### Basic Needs

If an individual is living with the uncertainty of having basic needs met (e.g., housing, food, medical care, transportation, etc.) they may struggle with planning for the future because of having to worry about meeting immediate needs.

#### Access to Programs and Services

Uncoordinated disability and foster/kinship care service systems and funding streams make it hard to find resources. Often adoptive families may not be aware of help that is available, making it more difficult for youth to receive supports and access programs.

#### Others in Charge

There are many people involved in decision-making for youth in foster or kinship care. Case workers, school staff, state and local agency staff, all play a role in guiding the youths' future. This can be overwhelming and make it harder for youth to self-advocate and make their own decisions.

#### Transient Lifestyle

The opportunity to make long term connections with trusted adults can be difficult for youth who have had multiple residential and family placements.

#### Natural Support Team/Relationships

Having consistent key relationships and the natural support of trusted adults, neighbors, and peers may be limited and existing supports may not be representative of the youth's culture, ethnicity, and belief systems. Sometimes support team may not know the youth well enough to effectively participate in person-centered planning or encourage of self-determination. Foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers are critical members of the support team.

### Did You Know?

It is important for young people to learn how to **build trusting relationships with adults** and how to handle relationship challenges and changes. Adults working with youth with disabilities in foster care, kinship care, or who are adopted should promote, teach, and reinforce:

- **self-advocacy,**
- **self-determination and,**
- **independent living skills.**

These skills **build confidence** in youth and help them to express their dreams, plans and hopes for the future!

## Your Role in Supporting Person-Centered Planning

As a member of the person-centered planning team, focusing on the youth and their vision of what they want for their future is vital. Understanding that team members have different roles and responsibilities, the team should focus on:

- ✓ Ensuring that the youth's **basic needs are met** so they can focus on the future without feeling insecure about food, housing, etc.
- ✓ Understanding the **youth's disability and how it impacts** their education, employment, housing, and community inclusion options and **gaining knowledge about the disability services, programs, and accommodations** that can eliminate or reduce barriers.
- ✓ Having **high expectations** based on the youth's strengths, interests, and needs and empowering youth to make their own choices and achieve maximum independence.
- ✓ Understanding **person-centered planning** and being able to use PCP tools that will make the transition process youth-driven, realistic, and reachable.
- ✓ Taking an active role in transition planning and making a **commitment to remain in the youth's life** on a consistent basis before, during, and after transition to adulthood.
- ✓ **Making connections with and having up to date information** on employment and education options, community resources, housing and independent living options, medical/mental health care, financial and social service supports, peer supports and foster/adoption specific programs, services, and funding streams.
- ✓ Helping youth understand their **legal and civil rights** under federal and state disability laws.
- ✓ Understanding and being trained on supporting youth in dealing with any possible **social and emotional trauma of having been abused, neglected and/or abandoned**.

*List adapted from National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability/NCWD*

### Virginia Resources

#### Formed Families Forward

<https://formedfamiliesforward.org/>

#### Foster Care and Adoption – VA Department of Social Services

<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/adoption/>

#### Great Expectations at Virginia Community Colleges

<http://greatexpectations.vccs.edu/>

#### Project LIFE

<https://www.vaprojectlife.org/>

#### Education and Training Vouchers

<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/etv.cgi>



**PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools, and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.**



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