

# delAware – Summer 2010 – Transition

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## A Person-centered Approach Eases Life Transitions

Life transitions don't have to be difficult for teens and young adults with disabilities – or for their families. The Center for Disabilities Studies has developed several programs that provide positive transition experiences and successful outcomes. These programs use a person-centered approach to assist the person in making plans for the future. Person-centered planning is a flexible and creative process that assists students – with or without disabilities – to chart a course for the future using their own strengths, hopes, and dreams as a starting point.

Many of the Center's transition programs are part of the Transition Education Employment Model (TEEM) unit. This model offers individuals with disabilities a comprehensive set of services, supports, and opportunities that will enable them to develop the skills needed to increase their independence, lead productive lives, and participate in the community as adults. They focus on the person's needs and are built upon the idea of self-determination – putting the individual in charge of defining the direction for his/her life.

TEEM provides opportunities for persons with disabilities to increase self-esteem, acquire life skills, develop effective communication, obtain vocational and job skills, enhance interpersonal relationships, enjoy social leisure activities, practice money management, and strengthen problem-solving abilities. TEEM currently has three active components: Community-based Education Alliance (CBEA), Employment Services, and Pathways for Life. This edition of *delAware* includes an article about each of these components.

## Healthy Transitions

The CDS Health and Wellness unit is helping families make smoother transitions from pediatric health care to adult health care. Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities and Delaware Family Voices Family to Family Health Information Center have partnered with the Transition of Care program at the Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children to develop a series of “Healthy Transitions” workshops (see page 4).

In its work with families of children with special health care needs, Family to Family recommends the use of care notebooks for the documentation of information about a child's health history. Having this information is particularly valuable when it is time to develop a health transition plan for teens (see page 4).

## Research

In addition to offering model transition programs, CDS is involved in research about issues relating to transition. Laura Eisenman, Ph.D., associate professor in the School of Education and advisor for the Disabilities Studies Minor, is studying the experiences of young adults and teachers in an inclusive technical high school. Her interests include understanding how schools can foster students' self-determination, learning about the social and community experiences of young adults with significant disabilities, and exploring the meaning of disability identity in educational contexts. Along with Karen Mancini, director of the Office of Disabilities Support Services, Dr. Eisenman wrote “College Perspectives and Issues,” a chapter for *Think College: Post-secondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. This book was published in November 2009 by Brookes.

Sarah Celestin is the project director for the Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment and a doctoral student in the university's Educational Leadership program. Her research interests include instruction/assessment for students with moderate to severe disabilities and transition planning. Sarah collaborated with Laura Eisenman to

write “Facilitating New Social Relationships: Social Skills, Supports, and Networks for Adolescent Transitions.” This chapter will be included in the *Handbook on Transition for Youth with Disabilities*, which will be published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

With programs that focus on the needs of each individual, ongoing evaluation of these programs, and research about the transition from youth to adulthood, the Center for Disabilities Studies is addressing a critical period in the lives of young adults with disabilities – and making life transitions smoother for youths and their families.