



A Quarterly Newsletter Produced by the Rural Institute Transition Projects

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Montana Transition Training, Information and Resource Center (MT-TIRC)

By Ellen Condon and Kim Brown

The University of Montana's Rural Institute Transition Projects was recently awarded a three-year grant by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities to develop a statewide transition training, information and resource center for youth with developmental disabilities. The project began on November 1, 2007.

MT-TIRC expands the current resources and services of the Transition Projects in response to needs identified by young people with developmental disabilities, their families, schools, and providers such as the Montana Developmental Disabilities Program; the Montana Advocacy Program; Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK); and the Office of Public Instruction. These key stakeholders have repeatedly stated they need information about how to best prepare youth for adult life while they are still in school; guidance about what adult agencies do and how to access their services; help navigating the adult system; and information, innovative ideas, and technical assistance to create unique, individualized, and inclusive adult lives for young people with developmental disabilities.

Our partners in year one of MT-TIRC will be the Child Development Center

(CDC) in Kalispell and PLUK. The Kalispell CDC office serves several youth with developmental disabilities whose families have been asking for assistance with transition planning. This grant will enable us to provide this assistance for approximately eight youth and their families, while concurrently building capacity of CDC staff in transition planning, the process of Discovery, and Customized Employment. We now also have the ability to respond to additional requests for technical assistance and support from around the state.

We will be working with PLUK for all three years of this project. Grant resources have allowed PLUK to designate a Transition Coordinator, Bobbie Thurston, who will work closely with the Rural Institute Transition Projects staff to develop materials and disseminate information and resources to families statewide. One of Bobbie's primary responsibilities will be to help all of the PLUK Family Support Consultants increase their expertise in the areas of transition planning and networking with adult agencies, and to build transition-related resources available to families through PLUK.

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Resources

University of Montana's Rural Institute Transition Projects
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/>

Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK)
<http://www.pluk.org/>

Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities
<http://www.mtcdd.org/>

National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (sign up to receive the Center's bi-monthly newsletter)
<http://www.nsttac.org>

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
<http://www.ncset.org/>

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MT-TIRC...., cont.

The addition of MT-TIRC to the existing Transition Projects enables us to double the amount of training and dissemination we will offer this year. We will host eight Web-based training sessions on various transition topics. With our new training system, an unlimited number of sites can participate. Trainees simply need access to a telephone (to call the toll-free number and hear the audio portion) and the Internet (to download any handouts and view the slide shows). We expect turnout to increase significantly from last year's 282 people (which we considered to be great participation!).

We will also be producing eight Transition E-News newsletters this year, and at least six Rural Resource sheets. Generally these will follow the Web conference topics - we believe using a variety of dissemination mediums affords more people the chance to benefit from the information. All materials will be available both on our Web site (<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition>) and on PLUK's site (<http://www.pluk.org>). PLUK will also archive the training session recordings to their site.

Connecting youth with developmental disabilities with successful adults is another new component that we will explore through MT-TIRC. One of the MT-TIRC staff members, a person with a disability herself, is surveying our state's 17 People First chapters to gather information about the involvement of youth who are still in school in their organization. She will be taking the lead on developing materials for youth, schools, and families and working with self-advocacy and leadership

organizations to encourage more student involvement. In addition, she will identify and facilitate opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities ages 18-30 ("emerging leaders") to share their perspectives, information, and experiences with transition-age youth.

These emerging leaders will serve as positive role models to young people and their families. They will share their daily activities through "virtual life shadows," which students and their families can view to help them conceptualize a vast vision of all the possibilities for life after high school. They will also participate in a moderated online forum, a "virtual community" for emerging leaders and students. Not only does this address the isolation that can occur in a rural state as geographically vast as Montana, it also recognizes that many young people are more comfortable sharing on the Internet than they are face-to-face. With the permission of forum participants, discussion threads can be posted to or hot-linked on the Transition Web site.

While the Transition Projects Web site is already operating and has received national publicity and recognition, an advanced feature will be developed and added as an activity of MT-TIRC. Youth and emerging leaders and MT-TIRC Project Liaisons will help design a user-friendly, inviting area of the Web site that will essentially be a transition roadmap for young people. It will include information about various services and agencies, how to access them, and when during transition planning referrals can be made.

MT-TIRC brings together transition expertise from around Montana and establishes a format for sharing this expertise. We are honored by this award and excited to play a part in creating what we hope will become a permanent resource for young people with disabilities, their families, teachers, and service providers across the state.

Resources

Mississippi Model Youth Transition Innovation
<http://www.myti.org/>

National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition
<http://www.nasetalliance.org/>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
<http://www.nichcy.org/resources/transition101.asp>

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/promising_Practices/

Youthhood.org
<http://www.youthhood.org/index.asp>

The Forum for Youth Investment
<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/>

MIG-RATS
<http://www.migrats.org/Topics.aspx?ID=6>

Save the Date

A statewide transition conference will be held September 15-18, 2008.

Details will be provided as the conference takes shape. Be sure to mark your calendars now and save the date!



Rural Institute Transition Projects

Building Capacity to Improve Post-School Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

The Rural Institute is currently home to three distinct but interrelated projects developed, implemented, and overseen by the Transition Projects Director and staff. Highlights of each project follow:

Youth Corps

- ☐ Volunteerism and employment for youth with disabilities
- ☐ Hamilton was the initial site; expanding to Missoula in 2007/2008
- ☐ Administered through Denver Options, Inc.; funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service
- ☐ Seven Hamilton Middle School students currently enrolled
- ☐ Any disability qualifies a student to participate
- ☐ Sites: The Commod; Bitterroot Public Library, Humane Society, and Community Garden
- ☐ Students receive class credit
- ☐ Staffed by teacher, paraeducator, Mental Health case manager, and physical therapist
- ☐ Each student completes volunteer and/or work experiences, which include: job descriptions, student learning goals, log notes, student journals and time logs, and work experience summaries for each site
- ☐ Each student is assisted to create a Portfolio – a document consisting of text and photographs that depict the young person at his or her best, including descriptions and pictures of supports that are the most effective for him or her

Partnerships for Transition

- ☐ Partnership with the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) and Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK); funded by MCDD
- ☐ Mentor PLUK and local teams in quality transition planning for ten middle school students with developmental disabilities
- ☐ Sites include Miles City, Butte, Billings, Helena, Missoula, and Kalispell
- ☐ Engage in "Discovery" activities; capture the Discovery information using the Transition Assessment and Planning Guide; create Transition Portfolios; use the Portfolios to develop/negotiate individualized volunteer/work experiences and/or paid jobs

- ☐ Assist local teams to identify and connect students and their families to appropriate resources
- ☐ Share information through teleconference trainings, newsletters, and other publications

MT-TIRC (Montana Transition Training, Information and Resource Center)

- ☐ Statewide; funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities
- ☐ Implementation began November 1, 2007
- ☐ Developed to provide information, technical assistance, training, and resources to families, youth, emerging leaders, schools, and agencies
- ☐ Partnership with MCDD, PLUK, Child Development Center, ADAPT (a national advocacy organization), and MonTECH (Montana's Technology-related Assistance Program)
- ☐ PLUK will have a designated Transition Coordinator
- ☐ Will also work directly with ten young people with developmental disabilities per year to create and demonstrate a strengths-based, self-directed approach to planning for transition to adult life

Resources available through the Rural Institute Transition Projects include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Transition Projects Web site
<http://ruralinstitute.umn.edu/transition>
- ☐ Electronic transition newsletters
- ☐ Transition listserv
- ☐ Fact Sheets and RURAL Resource sheets addressing transition-related topics
- ☐ Annual awareness publication featuring successful emerging leaders and youth
- ☐ Information and technical assistance (provided via toll-free phone line, email, Web site, and some on-site)
- ☐ Eight no-cost Web-based teleconference trainings per year



NEWSFLASH – RURAL INSTITUTE TRANSITION PROJECTS LINKS WITH NEW WEB CONFERENCING SERVICE

Many of you have participated in our teleconference training sessions over the past four years. You've scrambled to arrange a gathering site in your community...ideally before the allotted 10 or 15 Montana sites were already scheduled. You've gathered around a small speakerphone with 10-30 members of your town or city who share your interest in quality transition...only to find you've had to strain to hear the presenters through the tiny speaker on your phone. You've panicked as teleconference time drew near and you were still waiting for the CD with the PowerPoint on it to arrive in your mailbox.

We are pleased to announce that those days are **OVER!** With our new Web conferencing service, you can participate from the comfort of your own office or home and we can accommodate an unlimited number of sites. All you need is a telephone (so you can call the toll-free number and listen to the audio portion of the conference) and Internet access (in order to download any handouts and view the slideshow presentation). Thanks to funding through the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, we are able to continue to offer these training sessions at no cost to you.

Registration for the Web conferences is simple. If you are a member of our Transition Listserv, you will automatically receive a flier and registration form prior to each session. If you are not a listserv member, please consider joining by sending your email address to Kim Brown at brown@ruralinstitute.umt.edu. Registration forms may also be downloaded from the Transition Projects Web site at <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/>. Once you have registered, you will receive an email confirmation with the toll-free number and conference code. After the training sessions, we will send participants an email with a Web link to an online training evaluation. The feedback attendees provide allows us to continue offering high-quality training on topics of interest to Montanans.

If you are in Montana and have transition-related information you want to share with a wide audience, we encourage you to consider taking advantage of our Web conferencing system. We can schedule the Web conference for you, download your materials, and assist you with gathering comments from participants afterwards. Please contact Kim Brown (brown@ruralinstitute.umt.edu or 243-4852) or Ellen Condon (condon@ruralinstitute.umt.edu or 243-4134) for more information or to schedule a Web conference.

We Need Your Input

The Rural Institute Transition Projects staff is committed to basing our training, product development, technical assistance, and other resources on what information Montanans with disabilities and those who live and work with them say they most need. This means your input is critical! Please share your suggestions for newsletter, Web conference and/or fact sheet topics. Also, let us know if there are certain templates, tool kits, or other products you would find helpful in navigating the complex world of transition. Ideas can be submitted to Kim Brown (brown@ruralinstitute.umt.edu; 243-4852) or Ellen Condon (condon@ruralinstitute.umt.edu; 243-4134). The mailing address for both Ellen and Kim is: Rural Institute, UM, 634 Eddy, Missoula, MT 59812; the fax number for both is 243-4730. **THANK YOU!**

Put On Your Thinking Caps

Are you or do you know someone between the ages of 18 and 30 who has a developmental disability and who is living, working, and playing successfully in your/his/her community? Might you or that "emerging leader" be interested in "leading by example" through sharing your/his/her story with transition-age youth? In the near future, we will be asking for nominations of young people who can serve as virtual mentors to students with developmental disabilities. We will provide additional details and an estimated time commitment when we call for nominations. Be thinking of whose name you might submit (with that person's permission, of course)!

We will also be asking for names of energetic, dynamic young people (ages 13-30) with developmental disabilities who can serve on our MT-TIRC Advisory Board. This will involve quarterly meetings, in addition to possible board-related work assignments between meetings. We will provide more information when we issue the request for nominations.

Transition TIP

As you are introducing the concepts of transition and post-school outcomes to an IEP team, encourage them to think of filling a day-timer page for the day after graduation. The activities in which the person will participate as an adult determine which skills and experiences will be functional and relevant for them to acquire in their course of study or curriculum while they are in school. Having a vision of where this young person is headed helps guide what we teach them and how we provide supports.

M O N D A Y	7 ^{am}	Get up, shower, and have breakfast 7:50—Leave home and walk to work
	8 ^{am}	Work at Farmers State Bank
	9 ^{am}	
	10 ^{am}	
	11 ^{am}	
J U N E	12 ^{pm}	Walk home, prepare and eat lunch
	1 ^{pm}	Walk to gym Work out at gym
	2 ^{pm}	Do errands (grocery store, post office, bank)
	3 ^{pm}	
	4 ^{pm}	Head home, do chores around the house, make dinner
	5 ^{pm}	Eat, clean up the kitchen, make lunch for the next work day
	6 ^{pm}	Call friends, take a walk, play computer games, listen to music
	7 ^{pm} - 12 ^{pm}	8:30—Watch TV 10pm — Go to bed

RI Transitions' Training Calendar

The Transition Projects has eight Web-based conferences scheduled for 2007/2008. The audio portion of the Web conferences can be accessed from any telephone and the video portion from a computer with Internet access. Interested individuals may participate from their own offices or homes, and there is no cost for any of the sessions.

"Alternatives to Guardianship"	12/3 from 1-2:30
"Accessing Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Transition-Age Youth"	1/7 from 1-2:30
"Montana Youth Leadership Forum"	2/4 from 1-2:30
"Using Assistive Technology in Transition Planning"	3/3 from 1-2:30
"Montana's Disability Navigators"	4/7 from 1-2:30
"Mental Health Services and Youth Transition to the Adult World"	5/5 from 1-2:30
Topic to be announced	6/2 from 1-2:30
Topic to be announced	8/4 from 1-2:30

Individual session fliers and registration forms will be sent to Montana Transition Listserv members. To join the Montana Transition Listserv, send your email address to Kim Brown at brown@ruralinstitute.umt.edu. Registration forms may also be downloaded from the Transition Projects Web site at <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/>



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