# Blueprint for Effective Transition

Adulthood

Adulthood

Community & Inclusion Self-Determination

Relationships, Intimacy, & Love

Wraparound Supports

Family & Friends

Community & Belonging

Special & Continuing Education Lifelong Learning

Planning for Aging

Culture, Values, & Beliefs

Communication

Collaboration

Person With ID/DD

Integration

Quality of Life

Transportation

Financial Management & Planning

Lifelong Personal Growth & Skill Building

Natural Supports

Healthcare & Wellness

Dignity of Choice

Dignity of Risk

Housing

Employment

Adulthood

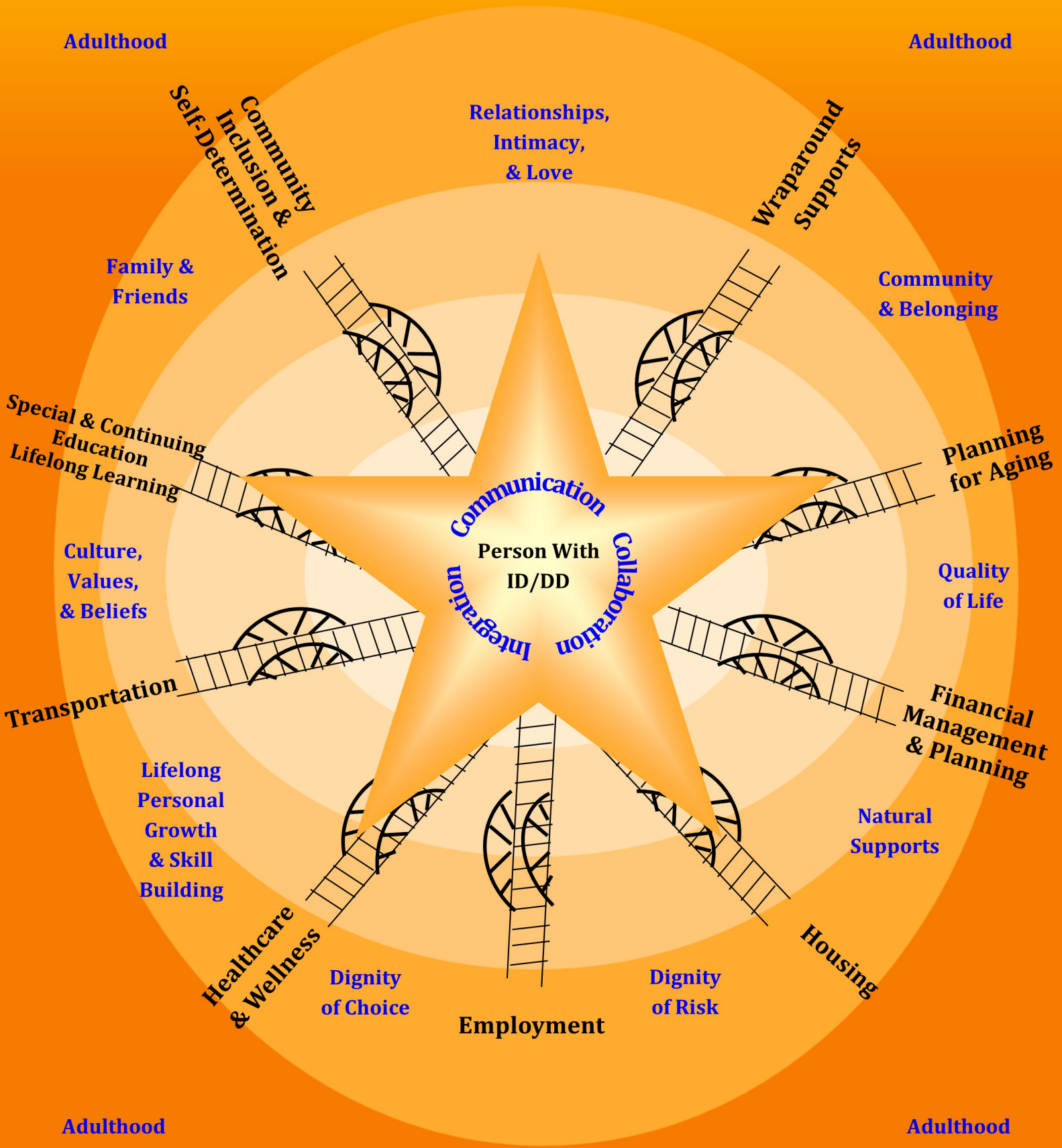Adulthood

# Maine Coalition for Housing and Quality Services
# Blueprint for Effective Transition

## Narrative

All human beings have value, natural abilities, dignity, and potential.  By dignity, we mean:  Self-respect, nobility, worthiness, and honoring choice.  Through this, we set the tone for all achievement and personal growth.  Transition is the movement that incorporates these inherent characteristics, creating opportunities for a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Transition is a process, not a destination or event, and leads to quality outcomes for each individual.  Transition is lifelong, with milestones along the way.  It is both a foundation and a springboard to a fulfilling and meaningful life that must be facilitated by the individual, family, supports, and services across all environments.  Transition involves collaboration, creativity, and community, and envisions a path through which an individual figures out what he or she wants to do and how to live his or her life.

Successful transition is a journey.  This journey takes the individual through many transition planning areas and promotes development of the essential elements of a fulfilling life.

## Transition Planning Areas

The transition planning areas (see diagram) describe various transitions for the individual throughout his or her lifetime.  The blueprint presumes that the person begins as a child under parental care, transitions to adulthood, and thrives in a world with continued transitions.  Family and community supports are present as part of a responsive natural support network.  Successful transition planning involves an individual, family, community, and government partnership.  Supports for any individual should be closest to "typical" for anyone.

**Community inclusion** is based on the assumption that an individual with disabilities should not be isolated but instead should be a part of and connected within the community.  It means a person is engaged socially, recreationally, and culturally.  It also means that the person becomes a productive community member, pursuing talents and giving back to others.  As the person differentiates from his or her parents he or she begins to exercise greater **self-determination**, makes more choices, and with the necessary support takes a more active role in setting and pursuing his or her own goals.  As a member of the community a person is treated with dignity and respect.  A person belongs.

Quality flexible **wraparound supports** are based on need, not on what is available.  These involve varying supports as needed (from minimal to maximum, and adapting to life's circumstances) to promote appropriate development, safety, stability, and inclusion.

The rest of the transition planning areas are self-explanatory:  **Planning for aging, financial management and planning,** stable **housing** and home**, employment** and vocation**, healthcare and wellness, transportation,** and **special and continuing education/lifelong learning**; all enhancing community inclusion and self-determination – central to the person's life.

## Essential Elements of a Fulfilling Life

The interwoven essential elements of a fulfilling life (see diagram, blue font) include:

- Family and Friends
- Relationships, Intimacy, & Love
- Community & Belonging
- Quality of Life
- Natural Supports
- Dignity of Risk
- Dignity of Choice
- Culture, Values, & Beliefs
- Lifelong Personal Growth & Skill Building

These elements are achievable by way of a successful journey through the transition planning areas.

Transition is about excellence and equity.  It is about investing in human potential and individual dignity.

Central to the diagram, transition involves communication, collaboration, and integration.  Integration requires transcending boundaries and braiding resources to create a comprehensive whole.

# Blueprint for Effective Transition

**Goals and Objectives**

1. Collaboration, integration, and communication
   a. Comprehensive whole, not silos
      i. Have everyone at the table
         1. Have first High School IEP meeting include all players: Every service sector, and every system partner involved with the person as a child and as a future adult.
         2. Ensure High School IEP meetings have an evolving membership reflecting changes in the person's life.
         3. Have all children's case managers working with transition-age youth become familiar with and fluent in their understanding of the adult service system and local service providers.
         4. Ensure transition-age youth have overlapping children's case management and adult case management for a period of at least nine months to facilitate a warm handoff.
         5. Encourage all individuals to fully transition to an adult case manager at least nine months before exiting High School.
      ii. Have all parties fully participate
         1. Establish annual global participation permission by parents, or individual where appropriate, so all can easily be present at IEP meetings.
         2. Establish required participation by every service provider and every system partner involved with the individual.
         3. Ensure schools and departments will hold meetings at times that work for parents/families.
         4. Document all unmet needs and collaborate to meet each need.
         5. Ensure, that for individuals eligible for PCP's, IEP meetings inform and overlap PCP meetings after the age of 18.
   b. Relationship building and information sharing
      i. Establish an annual statewide joint adult and children's case managers meeting, which includes representation from school-based case managers.
      ii. Re-establish a Children's Cabinet to improve or increase collaboration between State departments.
      iii. Convene, at least quarterly, client-specific transition meetings to include school personnel, VR counselors, children's case managers, adult case managers, parents/guardians, any other important players, and the individual.
   c. Training
      i. Focus on quality, not compliance.
      ii. Have the State develop a statewide training for school-based and children's case managers to learn about the adult system.
         1. Have an online training be developed and maintained, for easy access.
      iii. Have the State develop a general transition guide, which will include a checklist of things to consider when facing any transition as well as associated timelines.
      iv. Ensure adequate training for parents/guardians so they receive all available information.
      v. Educate parents regarding what is ahead (as soon as possible, ideally upon diagnosis) so they can plan for the entire public schooling career.
   d. Allow room for creativity
      i. Build on strengths
         1. Prioritize people's strengths so they are not lost.
            a. Don't just focus on needs.
         2. Ensure strengths are documented as part of the plan and shared with the team.

3. Have the system fund strengths, as well as needs.
4. Consider strengths related to familiarity with environment, as well as strengths portable to any environment. (You have to have the skill and consideration of the environment in which one thrives).
   a. Ensure goodness of fit between environment and skill; everything has to be a good fit.
   b. Have ongoing assessment of continued good fit.

   ii. Gear plans so people experience a sense of purpose in their lives.
   iii. Do what works for each individual
   1. Remember that every person is different and their needs are different – transition is not one-size-fits-all.
   2. Discern what will make a person happy and fulfilled, and build on that with all plans.
   3. Allow for appropriate risk-taking
      a. Push the envelope; provide opportunities for further growth.
      b. Build on success and failures.
   4. Don't limit plans to what is currently available; special orders must be ok.
   5. Don't let a person's current capacity limit plans for future opportunities and possibilities.

   iv. Build communities that allow and support people with disabilities to do anything and everything.
   1. Support teams should encourage each person to be an active participant in the community.
   2. Tap into existing community resources and create new ones as needed.

2. Individual Support, Family System Support, Natural Support
   *Individual Support*
   a. Ensure the individual is an active participant in all aspects of planning for his or her life.
   b. Provide adequate equipment, technology, and resources to individuals.
   c. Ensure individuals have access to appropriate mental health counseling.
   *Family System Support*
   a. Establish reasonable schedules for informal meetings with all players on transition. (Informal can mean phone check-in or other means of communication).
      i. Have all schools in Maine recognize that planning for transition should start no later than the first year of high school.
      ii. Allow parents to determine frequency of meetings.
      iii. Aim for quarterly meetings in second to last year of high school.
      iv. Aim for monthly meetings in last year of high school.
      v. Have all schools in Maine allow extended participation until an age out year of 22.
   b. Awareness of all options
      i. Maintain consideration of all options throughout the planning process. Explain these to every family.
      ii. Ensure that parents' knowledge and access to resources is on par with transition participants.
   c. Address caregiver strain
      i. Provide adequate information and support to the caregiver.
      ii. Provide adequate training to caregivers when needed/requested.
      1. Help families learn how to let go and encourage increasing independence.
      iii. Recognize and respect that families know the individual best.
      iv. Provide adequate equipment, technology, and resources to caregivers.

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*Natural Support*
- a. Individual natural supports
    - i. Create and maintain an individualized natural support network for each person that is adequate for success.
- b. Family natural supports
    - i. Create and maintain a natural support network for each family that is adequate for success.
- c. Community natural supports
    - i. Promote awareness and understanding in the community about individual differences and needs so community members know what they can do to be natural supports.
- d. Societal natural supports
    - i. Promote awareness and understanding in the greater community about individual differences and needs so that each of us knows what we can do to be a natural support.

3. Self-Determination
    - a. Self-advocacy skills
        - i. Teach meeting skills, such as following agendas, rehearsing, and planning so one can be an active participant in his or her own meetings.
        - ii. Establish concrete opportunities for self-advocacy at home, school, community, etc., throughout each day.
        - iii. Learn how to actively access the community in a way that incorporates one's own preferences and goals.
        - iv. Ensure individuals have information about guardianship alternatives.
        - v. Ensure individuals are aware of all options and opportunities for self-advocacy throughout transition planning.
    - b. Dignity of risk, dignity of choice
        - i. Teach understanding of what constitutes dignity and risk.
        - ii. Establish and practice safe behaviors at home and in the community.
        - iii. Teach practical and functional skills to ensure one's safety at home and in the community.
        - iv. Understand fixed rules vs. flexible guidelines for success in negotiating the world.
        - v. Facilitate parents and caregivers letting go and allowing for appropriate risk taking and decision making by the individual.
        - vi. Establish proactive neighborhood planning so people surrounding the individual are empowered to take an active supporting role as needed.
        - vii. Help the individual and support network plan for emergencies, including recognizing what constitutes an emergency, and when it is appropriate to ask for/access help.
        - viii. Teach strategies for decision making and the understanding of consequences.
        - ix. Learn how to be a good customer, including how to assert one's self to meet one's own needs and how to achieve one's own preferences in the context of others.
        - x. Ensure individuals have information about all housing/residential options.
    - c. Opportunity to learn from mistakes
        - i. Ensure opportunities for the individual to debrief experiences, positive and negative, and understand them as aides to personal growth.

4. Employment and Career
    - a. Focus on employment first, and other community supports second.
        - i. Start early and often developing employment skills and good employee practices.
        - ii. Provide school-based exposure, jobs at home, pre- and post-secondary training, job experiences, internships, career preparation, pursuit of career, and volunteer opportunities.
        - iii. Ensure individuals have communication support, and have developed social skills/pragmatics adequate for success in employment and career endeavors.
        - iv. Build employment experiences around individual's interests.
        - v. Have each individual leave high school with resume.

b.  Be a good employee
    i.  Learn how to be a good employee, including how to follow rules and norms of employment setting.
    ii.  Ensure both employer and employee learn how to build skills, knowledge base, and aspirations, to allow for further growth and career opportunities.
    iii.  Learn how to adapt to changes in job descriptions.

5.  Quality of life
    a.  Ensure each person is happy, healthy, and satisfied with his or her life
        i.  Achieve or make continued progress towards the essential elements of a fulfilling life as defined by each individual in terms of:
            1.  Family and Friends
            2.  Relationships, Intimacy, and Love
            3.  Community and Belonging
            4.  Quality of Life
            5.  Natural Supports
            6.  Dignity of Risk
            7.  Dignity of Choice
            8.  Culture, Values, and Beliefs
            9.  Lifelong Personal Growth & Skill Building
    b.  Ensure stable housing and sense of home.
        i.  Ensure affordability.
        ii.  Ensure there is an adequate plan for maintenance and upkeep.
    c.  Ensure access to resources adequate for housing, employment, transportation, health, community participation, and fun.
        i.  Have resources include financial, personal support, and help with system navigation.
        ii.  Have ongoing skilled case management services.
    d.  Ensure mechanism for monitoring quality of life and changing priorities and choices.
    e.  Ensure community inclusion.
        i.  Ensure individuals have communication support and have developed social skills/pragmatics for successful community inclusion.
    f.  Ensure community participation.
    g.  Ensure each person's identity, culture, values, and beliefs are respected and allowed to grow, evolve, and flourish.