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# The Transition to Adulthood for Young Adults with Disabilities in Manitoba: A "Winding Up-Hill Road"

Nadine Bartlett, PhD, Anne Kresta, MSc, Eefa Khan, MPH,
Rebeca Heringer, PhD,
In collaboration with The Family Advocacy Network (FAN) and sub-committee: Supporting Manitobans Toward Independent Living Equity (SMILE)



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CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE

Unit 301-583 Ellice Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7
tel 204-927-3200

email ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

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## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ASD | Autism Spectrum Disorder |
| AMA | Accessibility for Manitobans Act |
| AES | Accessible Employment Standard |
| CA | Capabilities Approach |
| CDI | Career Development Internship |
| CdS | Children's DisABILITY Services |
| CFE | Credit for Employment |
| CLdS | Community Living DisABILITY Services |
| COVID-19 | Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)/ Coronavirus disease 2019 |
| CSSIP | Community Service Student Initiated Project |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| UNDRIP | United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples |
| DSM-5 | Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders |
| EAPD | Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities |
| EIA | Employment and Income Assistance |
| FASD | Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder |
| ICF | International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| IDEIA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act |
| IEP | Individualized Education Plan |
| ITP | Individualized Transition Plan |
| QI-2 | Revised Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment Instrument-2 |
| PATH | Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope |
| PwDs | Persons with Disabilities |
| PwoDs | Persons without Disabilities |
| NHS | National Housing Strategy |
| SIS | Supports Intensity Scale |
| TFS | Transition Follow-up System |
| QOL | Quality of Life |
| WHMIS | Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System |
| WIOA | Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act |

## TABLE A Documents Consulted

**Reports**

| Document Title | Province/ Country/ Region | Year | Organization | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alberta Association for Community Living: Response to the PDD Community Conversations: Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) | Alberta | 2014 | Alberta Association for Community Living | Alberta Association for Community Living (2014) |
| A Window into the Accessibility of Education Systems: From Early Learning and Childcare, through Nursery/Kindergarten to Grade 12 and into Post-Secondary | Manitoba | 2018 | Education Solutions Manitoba | Education Solutions Manitoba et al. (2018) |
| Canada's First State of Youth Report: for Youth, with Youth, by Youth | Canada | 2021 | Heritage Canada | Canadian Heritage Canada (2021) |
| A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities | USA | 2017 | US Department of Education | United States Department of Education (2017) |
| Manitoba Department of Families Annual Report 2020–21 | Manitoba | 2021 | Manitoba Department of Families | Manitoba Department of Families (2021) |
| Pandemic and Disabilities Issue Survey Report | Manitoba | 2021 | Disability Matters Vote, Abilities Manitoba & Barrier Free Manitoba | Disability Matters Vote et al. (2021) |
| Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group: Report to Canada's Premiers | Canada | 2015 | Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group | Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group (2015) |
| Change Starts Here: Manitoba's Alternative Provincial Budget 2020 | Manitoba | 2020 | Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives | Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2020) |
| Leading Practice Guidelines | Manitoba | n.d. | Abilities Manitoba | Leading Practice Guidelines \| Abilities Manitoba (n.d.) |
| Disability Inclusive COVID-19 Response | International | 2021 | UNESCO/UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) Home \| UN PRPD (n.d.) |
| Manitoba Housing Three-Year Action Plan | Manitoba | 2020 | Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation | Manitoba Housing (2020) |
| Moving Forward Together: A Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work | Canada | 2019 | Disability and Work in Canada Steering Committee, in consultation and collaboration with partners across Canada | Farquhar et al. (2019) |
| Understanding the Assessment Informed Personal Supports Budget Framework Guide for Service Providers & Agencies | Manitoba | 2018 | Community Living disABILITY Services, Government of Manitoba | Community Living disABILITY Services (2018) |
| Quality Framework: Final Report from Abilities Manitoba | Manitoba | 2019 | Abilities Manitoba | Abilities Manitoba (2019) |

## TABLE A Documents Consulted (Continued)

**Standards/ Protocols/ Support Documents**

| Standard/ Protocol/ Support Document | Region | Year | Organization | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services | Manitoba | 2006 | Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth | Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2006) |
| Community Living DisABILITY Services Age of Majority Planning for Youth in Care Transitioning to Adult Services | Manitoba | n.d. | Community Living DisABILITY Services | Manitoba Department of Families (n.d.) |
| Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community | Manitoba | 2008 | Healthy Child Manitoba | Healthy Child Manitoba (2008) |
| Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba | Manitoba | 2022 | Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning | Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (2022) |
| Student-specific planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs). | Manitoba | 2010 | Manitoba Education | Manitoba Education. (2010) |
| Towards Inclusion: A Handbook for Modified Course Designation, Senior 1–4 | Manitoba | 1995 | Manitoba Education and Training | Manitoba Dept. of Education and Training (1995) |

**Bills/ Acts**

| Bill/ Act/ Protocol | Province/ Country/ Region | Year | Type | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accessibility for Manitobans Act | Manitoba | 2013 | Act | The Accessibility for Manitobans Act \| Province of Manitoba (2013) |
| Accessible Canada Act | Canada | 2019 | Act | Accessible Canada Act (2019) |
| Age of Majority Act | Manitoba | 1988 | Act | The Age of Majority Act (1988) |
| Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms | Canada | 1982 | Constitution Act | Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 15, Part 1 of the Constitution Act (1982) |
| The Caregiver Recognition Act | Manitoba | 2011 | Act | The Caregiver Recognition Act |
| Individuals with Disabilities Education Act | USA | 2004 | Act | Individ. with Disabil. Educ. Act (2004) |
| Manitoba Human Rights Code | Manitoba | 1987 | Code | The Human Rights Code, C.C.S.M. c. H175, (1987) |
| The Public Schools Act: Province of Manitoba | Manitoba | 1987 | Act | The Public Schools Act: Province of Manitoba. CCSM c P250. (1987) |
| Public Schools Amendment Act: Appropriate Educational Programming 155/2005 | Manitoba | 2005, Retrieved, revised 2022 | Act | The Public Schools Amendment Act: Appropriate Educational Programming. C.C.S.M.c.P250. (2005). |
| National Housing Strategy Act | Canada | 2019 | Act | National Housing Strategy Act. (2019, June 21). |

## TABLE A Documents Consulted (Continued)

**Bills/ Acts (Con't)**

| Bill/ Act/ Protocol | Province/ Country/ Region | Year | Type | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Jordan's Principle Implementation Act | Manitoba | 2008 | Act | The Jordan's Principle Implementation Act. Second Session, Thirty-Ninth Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. (2008) |
| The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act | Manitoba | 1996 | Act | Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act, CCSM c V90 (1996) |
| Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act | USA | 2014 | Act | Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act (2014) |

**International Conventions**

| Convention Title | Year | Organization | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | 2006 | United Nations | United Nations (2006) |
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child | 2005 | United Nations | United Nations (2005) |
| United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | 2007 | United Nations | United Nations (2007) |

# Executive Summary

THE TRANSITION FROM school to adult life is often a stressful period as young adults face a multitude of changes and role transitions in education, employment, independent living, and social relationships. For young adult persons with disabilities (PwDs), the transition to adult life is particularly complex because in addition to role transitions, they often face unique challenges, which include the need to access, maintain, and coordinate services and support from caregivers, community, and service providers.

Recently, the preparation of PwDs for the transition to adult life has received increased attention as there is mounting evidence that an early, formal transition process and the provision of transition education during the school years, which includes skills and experiences that foster independence, are key determinants of a successful transition and improved life outcomes. In addition to formal transition processes, timely access to needed services and support during the post-school transition is essential for PwDs to participate fully and equitably in society. Despite the importance of adherence to a formal transition process and access to person-centred support, not all PwDs are adequately prepared for the transition to adult life, and often face systemic barriers as they attempt to access the support and services they require, such as discriminatory attitudes and policies, complex service navigation, rigid eligibility criteria, inadequate resources, service decline, and limited choices.

Given the critical role that a formal transition process and access to person-centred support play in improving life outcomes for PwDs, it is

imperative to understand how the transition process is experienced in the province of Manitoba, so that the highest standards of quality transition planning may be provided, and systemic barriers removed.

To explore this issue, the current study examined the transition process from school to adult life for young adult persons with a range of self-reported disabilities in the province of Manitoba. The research employed a mixed-methods approach including an anonymous online cross-sectional survey (n=440) and semi-structured qualitative interviews (n=40) of four participant groups, which included: PwDs between the ages of 18 and 27 years, caregivers of PwDs within the same age range, educators at the secondary and post-secondary levels, and service providers who support the transition to adulthood. Data collection was conducted from September 2021 to December 2021.

Acknowledging that transition phases and processes overlap and intersect, transition experiences that primarily occur while in the K-12+ school system and the barriers experienced during the post-school period were examined. The Revised Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment Instrument-2 (QI-2) (Morningstar, 2011; Morningstar et al., 2016) was used as the framework of analysis in the examination of transition processes experienced while in the school system.

The QI-2 comprises seven domains, namely:

1. Transition planning,
2. Transition assessment,
3. Family involvement,
4. Student involvement,
5. Transition-focused curriculum or instruction,
6. Interagency collaboration and community services, and
7. System-level infrastructure (policy and funding contexts)

Key findings during the school years reveal gaps and inconsistent adherence to several of the core tenets of exemplary transition practices as outlined in the seven domains and selected indicators of the QI-2. The barriers identified during post-school transition were multi-faceted and included challenges with accessing needed services, further education or training, employment, and independent living. Participants also described the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to transition support, with many participants

emphasizing that barriers existed prior to COVID-19 but were exacerbated during this period. While participants in each group described obstacles that were specific to their experiences, there was much commonality in the gaps and unmet needs that were identified, indicating the pervasiveness of the barriers that PwDs face in the province of Manitoba as they transition to adulthood, signaling an urgent need for systemic changes. The findings in this study are similar to the findings of prior research conducted in Manitoba almost 20 years ago that explored the issues and opportunities for supporting broader participation in work, life, and community for persons with intellectual disabilities (Mactavish et al., 2004). The similarities in findings indicates that many longstanding issues, including the social devaluation of PwDs continue to persist.

Key findings related to transition processes experienced in K-12+ schools and the barriers experienced during the post-school period for PwDs are summarized in the following tables 1 to 12, and recommendations for policies and practices are made. It is important to emphasize that while the recommendations suggested reference government departments and/or service providers as responsible for specific recommendations, all recommendations in this study should be considered in consultation with PwDs, and where appropriate, with caregivers and the community.

## Transition Processes During K-12+: Key Findings and Recommendation

### TABLE 1 Transition Planning

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Eligibility –** Some educators reported discrepant criteria for determining who would receive an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP). Not all students who would benefit from transition planning and education were deemed eligible for it, with PwDs, caregivers, and service providers reporting low rates of ITP development. This varied across schools and school divisions. | 1a Ensure a common understanding of who may require an ITP. This can be achieved through public sharing of legislation changes and the rationale behind them, along with professional learning opportunities when there are implications for professional practice. This should also include providing access to previous versions of the legislation to enhance clarity and transparency. | Manitoba Education |
| | 1b Revise and clarify disparate terminology such as exceptional needs, special learning needs and abilities, students who will need government support, students who will need adult support etc. to ensure alignment and clarity across all government support documents, protocols, and legislation. | Manitoba Education |
| | 1c Provide professional development for educators and human service providers regarding who may require individualized transition planning. Incorporate case studies in such training to demonstrate the range of needs and abilities of those who may require and benefit from individualized transition planning. | Manitoba Education<br>Ministries involved in Human Services<br>School Division |
| **Efficacy –** Service providers described a high degree of variability in ITP processes across schools and divisions. Some educators reported the use of person-centred, comprehensive planning approaches such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) and Making Action Plans (MAPs) while others reported that ITPs did not always include individualized post-secondary goals. Transition planning primarily involved the completion of a checklist and referrals to outside agencies, and resource constraints prevented educators from following through on individualized transition goals because they did not have the time and resources to implement them, due to factors such as large caseloads and limited educational assistant support. | 1d Ensure that ITPs are person centred, incorporating approaches such as PATH, MAPS, and Personal Futures Planning. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 1e Ensure that ITPs include a balance of outcome-oriented academic and post-secondary education or training, employment, and independent living goals, along with strategies and timelines to achieve them, respecting that such goals reflect the priorities of students and caregivers. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| **Timing –** Disparities in timing of ITP development were reported. Some PwDs, caregivers, and service providers conveyed that ITP processes started later than the provincially recommended time of high school entry while educators reported that planning began earlier than what was observed by other participants. | 1f Revise provincial protocols and regulations to ensure that transition planning adopts a life course approach and begins in early years whenever possible, with a focus on linking short-term outcomes with long-term post-secondary goals as an expected practice. | Manitoba Education<br>Ministries involved in Human Services |
| **Case management –** A strength reported by PwDs and caregivers was that they or their adult children had access to a case manager while in school. | 1g Provide resources to ensure that caseloads for case managers are manageable to enable the provision of comprehensive transition support. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 1h Ensure case managers receive ongoing cross-disciplinary professional development about the individualized transition planning process, and their roles and responsibilities as a member of a collaborative team. PwDs and their caregivers could be included in such trainings to empower them to lead the planning process. | Manitoba Education<br>Ministries involved in Human Services |

## TABLE 2 Transition Assessment

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited use of transition assessments –** Most caregivers and PwDs reported that assessments to determine students' strengths, preferences, interests, and needs were not conducted to guide the transition to adulthood. A greater number of educators reported that transition assessments were completed, however, additional comments in surveys and interviews revealed a lack of specificity with respect to the assessments used and their frequency. | 2a Develop provincial policy and guidance documents to address the need for transition assessment, which should include the identification and provision of culturally and linguistically sensitive assessment tools. | Manitoba Education |
| | 2b Provide professional development for educators in the administration of formal and informal transition assessments, the application of assessment data in setting outcome-oriented transition goals, as well as documenting and measuring outcomes. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 2c Ensure that post-secondary transition goals are based on transition assessment results, respecting the priorities of students and caregivers. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 2d Ensure that the transition assessment process is ongoing throughout the year, and assessment results are promptly shared with students, caregivers, educators, and service providers. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 2e Provide students and/or caregivers with a summary of performance, which is a summative transition assessment that should include recommendations for meeting post-secondary goals when students leave high school. | School Divisions |
| **An emphasis on determining eligibility for services –** Some educators indicated that clinical or specialized assessments were primarily administered to determine eligibility for services, with limited direct impact on students' individualized transition planning. | 2f Reduce reliance on schools to conduct clinical or specialized assessments to determine eligibility for services in the adult service system. This requires a significant paradigm shift across all sectors regarding how needs are conceptualized and how support is allocated. | Department of Families |
| **Long wait lists –** Long waits due to limited clinical support were reported by educators. | 2g Increase clinical support in schools to ensure that clinical or specialized assessment information can be applied in meaningful ways to support individualized transition planning and to allow for direct work with students to assist in the ITP process. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 2h Develop centralized clinical assessment waitlists in school divisions as opposed to school-specific waitlists, to expedite access to clinical services. | School Divisions |

## TABLE 3 Family Involvement

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited participation and evaluation –** Some PwDs, caregivers, and service providers reported that while ITPs were in place, they were not reviewed at least twice per year with all relevant parties. More educators reported that a bi-annual review was completed. | 3ª Ensure caregivers including extended family, friends, and service providers regularly participate in transition planning meetings and ITP reviews. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 3b Elicit student and caregiver feedback through regular and accessible surveys or interviews to tailor transition support. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 3c Increase the minimum expected frequency of ITP evaluation and review with caregivers and other parties involved from annually to bi-annually. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 3d Require that the bi-annual review includes updated information from transition assessments. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 3e Provide caregiver training in ITP processes, which may include mentorship. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |

## TABLE 4 Student Involvement

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Inclusion of student voice –** This was a relative strength reported by some participants. Some caregivers and PwDs described student involvement on a continuum, ranging from high levels of involvement to no involvement. Some caregivers also described a lack of student preparation for participation in the ITP process. Some educators and service providers also indicated the inclusion of student voice in the ITP, however, there were no references to evidence-based practices being used to teach students how to participate and incorporate student voice in the process. | 4ª Provide professional development for educators in the implementation of evidence-based practices to facilitate PwDs' leadership and self-advocacy in the ITP process. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 4b Ensure that evidence-based practices are employed when teaching self-advocacy and leadership of the ITP process. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 4c Initiate a youth advisory council with the ministries of Education, Families, Advanced Education and Training, Economic Development and Trade, and Health on the transition to adulthood, to provide feedback, consultation, and recommendations on ways to strengthen the transition process, grounded in their lived expertise. | Manitoba Education<br>Ministries of Education, Families, Advanced Education and Training, Economic Development, Investment and Trade, and Health |

## TABLE 5 Transition-Focused Curriculum or Instruction

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Unmet needs in transition education –** Many PwDs and caregivers reported unmet needs in several critical areas of transition-focused curriculum or instruction, such as understanding one's school or workplace accommodations, self-advocacy, readiness for the job market, preparation for further education or training, and independent living skills. | 5a Ensure access to a balance of academic and transition-specific content as determined by transition assessments and priorities of students and caregivers. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 5b Ensure the utilization of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the provision of accommodations to address students' priority learning needs in the regular classroom, including independent living skills relevant to ITP goals. | School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 5c Provide ongoing professional development for educators or case managers in all aspects of transition education. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>Post-secondary Universities |
| | 5d Develop a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Inclusive Education with a specialization in Transition to ensure adequate training for educators. | Manitoba Education<br>Post-secondary Universities |
| **Absence of curriculum –** Some educators reported barriers to providing transition education including the absence of curriculum, or guidance or support documents. | 5e Develop a comprehensive provincial curriculum framework that incorporates evidence-based practices to address transition education and transition-related competencies. | Manitoba Education |
| **Expectations to fully timetable in core courses and limited choices of courses –** Some educators informed of the requirement to fully timetable students who were receiving modified credits in core courses, which interfered with addressing transition-related needs. Some educators also described situations where students with disabilities were given limited choices regarding the courses they could take and were placed in classrooms where they could be grouped with other students with disabilities or were required to attend part time because of limited resources, such as lack of educational assistants and large class sizes. | 5f Provide equitable access to all courses and programming options to ensure provision of appropriate education. | School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| **Lack of availability or participation in career development courses –** Most PwDs and caregivers reported that they or their adult children did not participate in career development coursework. Educators reported higher participation rates in these opportunities. Some educators indicated that career development was not offered in their schools or that students with disabilities were not included in all career development courses. | 5g Ensure equitable access to all career development curricula and provision of courses relevant to ITP goals for post-secondary life and developing independence. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| **Inequitable and limited opportunities to participate in vocational training, work experience, and volunteerism –** Some PwDs, caregivers and educators identified inequitable access to vocational training and work experience. | 5h Ensure equitable access to all programming options and all reasonable accommodations. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| **Community-based opportunities during high school –** All participant groups described difficulties in accessing community-based opportunities for PwDs, including not meeting entrance criteria for vocational programs, attitudinal barriers, and resource constraints such as educational assistant support or job coach, and transportation. | 5i Expand opportunities to participate in best and emerging practices including Project Life and Project Search that provide vocational training and employment readiness skill development. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |
| | 5j Ensure dedicated training for educational assistants in job coaching skills as a prerequisite to serving as a job coach and accompanying students to job sites. | School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 5k Provide educational assistant or job coaching when needed to support participation in vocational training and work/ volunteer/ community-based opportunities as identified in the ITP. | School Divisions<br>School Principals |
| | 5l Provide resources for transportation to support participation in vocational training, and work/ volunteer/ community-based opportunities as identified in the ITP. | School Divisions<br>School Principals |

## TABLE 5 Transition-Focused Curriculum or Instruction (Continued)

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Employers' reluctance to provide work experience –** All participant groups identified barriers associated with finding employers who were willing to include PwDs in their workplace. | 5m Increase access to designated career or community experiences teachers or liaisons to strengthen relationships with employers and enhance access for all students. | School Divisions |
| | 5n Provide or increase financial supports to employers to include students with disabilities in the workplace or work experience programs. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| | 5o Provide professional development or training to employers to increase their understanding of the needs and abilities of individuals with disabilities, the duty to accommodate, and the role and benefits of a job coach. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |

## TABLE 6 Interagency Collaboration

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited communication and information sharing, and accountability for implementation of *Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community* –** Caregivers, educators, and service providers reported barriers to collaboration including limited communication and difficulties with information sharing. Large caseloads and staff turnover were described as interfering with the provision of support. | 6a Develop a Transition Follow-up System (TFS) by merging data across systems and evaluating outcomes at various stages throughout the transition process to provide a more cohesive long-term approach to service delivery. | Ministries involved in Human Services |
| | 6b Implement a TFS to improve interagency collaboration, enhance communication, improve data sharing, reduce gaps and duplication, and reduce the reliance on caregivers and PwDs to take on the primary responsibility of service follow-up during the transition process. | Ministries involved in Human Services |

## TABLE 7 System-Level Infrastructure

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Weak legislative mandate of *Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community* –** Many PwDs and caregivers reported limited awareness of the Bridging to Adulthood protocol despite the existence of youth- and parent-friendly versions outlining the phases and key activities, and their roles and responsibilities in the process. Many service providers also reported limited awareness of this protocol and associated practices. | 7[a] Strengthen the legislative mandate of the Bridging to Adulthood protocol from a protocol or "soft law" to a legislative mandate that requires follow through and for which there are accountability mechanisms in place to ensure adherence to mandated ITP processes. This should include immediately enacting an Education Standard as a part of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act [AMA] 2013* (MB) that requires adherence to transition protocols, and the establishment of accountability mechanisms to ensure adherence. | Ministries involved in Human Services |
| | 7b Incorporate the recommendations from this report in the Bridging to Adulthood Protocol. | Ministries involved in Human Services |
| | 7c Ensure regular ongoing cross-disciplinary professional development regarding the transition to adulthood that also includes students and caregivers. | Ministries involved in |
| | 7d Implement a TFS to ensure accountability for adherence to transition practices and to measure outcomes (see 6b above). | Human Services |
| **Inflexible transition timelines based on chronological age –** Many educators and service providers described the need to remain in school until 21 years of age to receive resources and support from agencies such as Community Living Disability Services (CLdS) as problematic as it contributes to students dropping out or falling through the cracks. The reported lack of resources for the 18 to 21 years age range in terms of community-based opportunities, educational assistant or job coach support, and transportation was reported to have further exacerbated this issue. Educators also described the adverse implications of this practice on youth in care who may move to new homes when they reach the age of majority, yet still be required to attend school. | 7e Conduct a comprehensive policy review and revise policies or practices such as transition timelines based on chronological age and the Schools of Choice Legislation which contravene the provision of person-centred support during the transition to adulthood. | Ministries involved in Human Services |
| | 7f Implement flexible transition timelines for individuals who are eligible for CLdS that is based on developmental readiness, individual and caregiver choice, and personal circumstances as determined through the ITP process. | Ministries involved in Human Services |
| | 7g Ensure access to resources and supports so that individualized goals may be addressed with a focus on the 18 to 21 years age range, such as lower student-teacher ratios, access to educational assistants and job coaches, and transportation. | Manitoba Education Department of Families |
| **Variable degrees of inclusion in K-12+ –** Almost half of the PwDs and caregivers indicated that they or their adult children spent 50% or more of the school day outside of the regular classroom during their K-12+ schooling. Educators reported that a similar percentage of students with disabilities were typically in placements outside of the regular classroom for 50% or more of the school day. | 7h Determine the extent to which segregated classrooms and schools exist within Manitoba, and the number of students who are enrolled in these settings. | Manitoba Education |
| | 7i Publicly report the number of segregated educational classrooms and programs for students with disabilities. | Manitoba Education School Divisions |
| | 7j Determine the number of students with disabilities who have shortened school days, such as bus pick-up before the end of the school day and/or arrival after the start of the school day, and the rationale for reducing the length of the school day. | Manitoba Education School Divisions |
| | 7k Set targets to increase inclusivity and equity in Manitoba's schools and monitor progress toward achievement of targets. | Manitoba Education School Divisions |
| | 7l Immediately develop and implement an Accessible Education Standard. | Manitoba Education Provincial Government |

## Barriers During the Post-School Transition: Key Findings and Recommendations

**TABLE 8** Barriers in Accessing Services

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Service navigation difficulties –** The need for caregivers to advocate for support. | 8ª Create Service Navigator positions or roles to be assigned to young adults with disabilities and their caregivers for a minimum of one year prior to school leaving. This role would support identification and access to supports, services and accommodations according to the post-secondary pathway outlined in the ITP and serve as a bridge between such young adults and adult service systems. | Provincial Government – Interdepartmental |
| **Rigid eligibility criteria** | 8b Adopt a personalized rather than diagnosis-based resource allocation and reimbursement in all human services that include relevant environmental factors and the specific needs of the individual. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framed within a Capabilities Approach (CA) should be explored as it may provide a framework to support this process. | Provincial Government |
| **Challenges with the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) –** Inequities in the administration of the SIS and its use in determining categorical funding. | 8c Discontinue usage of the SIS as a method of determining categorical funding, instead providing it as an optional tool to support person-centred planning. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8d Critically examine and where necessary, take steps to ensure the questions in the SIS respect the personal dignity of the participant and their caregivers. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| **Delays and inadequacies –** Decline in services in adulthood, bureaucratic delays in accessing services, inadequate access to person-centred support, and a lack of access to support for Indigenous young adults. | 8e Provide sufficient resources to enable access to quality needs-based supports throughout PwDs' lives, with a focus on culturally relevant supports for Indigenous young adults. | Provincial Government – Interdepartmental |
| | 8f Monitor the receipt of services and support for PwDs and establish metrics for tracking and improving outcomes at the individual, service provider, and provincial levels, with support from a TFS (see 6ª above). | Provincial Government – Interdepartmental |
| | 8g Provide sufficient resources to increase access to and choice of quality day programming for PwDs. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8h Develop *Leading Practice Guidelines* (Abilities Manitoba, n.d.) into standards of practice and provide dedicated resources so that service providers can adhere to the standards. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| **Insufficient availability of trained staff** | 8i Facilitate and incentivize accreditation for service providers who provide direct support to PwDs through organizations such as the Council on Quality Leadership. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8j Establish a centralized public portal identifying day programs, the services they provide, and wait lists to monitor access to services and ensure the timely receipt of support. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8k Require service providers for PwDs to track and report staff turnover ratios and set targets to reduce current rates. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8l Significantly increase the wages of direct service providers. | Provincial Government |
| | 8m Establish provincial training standards as a part of the accreditation process of service providers for PwDs to increase the professionalization of the direct service providers workforce. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8n Establish a professional learning hub for direct service providers of PwDs and communities of practice, and ensure access to ongoing professional development and training, including learning opportunities related to the needs of PwDs. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 8º Establish a centralized public portal identifying respite support, the services they provide, and wait lists to monitor access to services and ensure the timely receipt of support. | Provincial Government Department of Families |

## TABLE 9 Barriers to Further Education

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited post-secondary options Restrictive entrance and eligibility criteria** | 9a Develop, expand, and improve inclusive post-secondary education and training options at all colleges and universities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This may include micro-credentialing and badging as ways to acknowledge learning and expertise. | Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education and Training |
| | 9b Incorporate inclusive post-secondary education for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in multi-year strategic plans addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), and evaluate and report on progress in this area. | Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education and Training |
| | 9c Update *Towards Inclusion: A Handbook for Modified Course Designation, Senior 1–4* document and clarify the profile of learners who may receive modified credits. Modified credits involve in-school transition processes but were described as barriers during the post-school period. Provide professional training to educators on how to best support these students as they transition to adulthood. | Manitoba Education |
| | 9d Develop common documentation to be used by all school divisions to guide the decision-making processes involving the use of modified credits and student or caregiver consent. | Manitoba Education |
| | 9e Develop accessible online information for students and parents about modified credits and the implications of receiving modified credits. | Manitoba Education |
| | 9f Identify post-secondary programs that accept modified credits as a part of their entrance requirements and develop an online resource with this information. | Manitoba Education |
| | 9g Identify alternate options to pursue post-secondary education when the modified course designation has been used, for example, working through the General Educational Development (GED) process, applying as a mature student, micro-credentialling, badging, online learning, etc. | Manitoba Education<br>Post-secondary Institutions |
| **Lack of access to accommodations** | 9h Ensure post-secondary teaching staff and/or faculties are aware of the duty to accommodate and provide inclusive pedagogies including UDL. | Manitoba Education<br>Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education and Training |
| | 9i Ensure enhanced collaboration between post-secondary institutions and secondary schools so that students with disabilities are aware of accommodations available to them through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) within post-secondary educational settings (colleges, universities, and vocational schools) and how to access them prior to and during programming. | School Divisions<br>Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education and Training |
| | 9j Review the eligibility criteria in place to access SAS at post-secondary institutions to ensure services can be provided on a needs-based versus diagnosis-based manner. Reduce reliance on medical diagnoses, certificates, and notes. | Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education |
| **Inadequate or inflexible resources to provide accommodations** | 9k Ensure that a flexible continuum of resources is available to support individualized accommodation needs in the full range of programs available to students at post-secondary institutions. | Post-secondary Institutions<br>Manitoba Advanced Education and Training |
| **Inadequate preparation for and consideration of post-secondary education or training** | 9l Ensure that post-secondary education and training goals are identified and addressed early in the individualized transition planning process and are included in the ITP. This is related to an in-school transition process but emerged as a barrier during the post-school period. | Manitoba Education<br>School Divisions |

## TABLE 10 Barriers to Employment

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **A lack of willingness of employers to hire PwDs**<br>**Limited accommodations in the workplace** | 10[a] Adopt and implement *Moving Forward Together: A Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work*, which includes developing disability-inclusive workplaces and providing comprehensive support for PwDs. Tailor action plans to address local needs such as sector, size, and location of businesses in consultation with PwDs, community members and business partners. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade<br>Manitoba Department of Families<br>Business Partners |
| | 10b Create a resource hub to support employers through the employment cycle, with a focus on building disability inclusive workplaces. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| | 10c Incentivize the participation of employers in job matching tools such as Jobs Ability AI (https://jobsability.ca). | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| | 10d Provide flexible, customizable resources and support for employers and employment service agencies to support recruitment, training, onboarding, and accommodations throughout the employment cycle. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| | 10e Increase awareness of incentives for employers as well as the value of diverse and inclusive workplaces and workforces through focused campaigns. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| | 10f Establish a comprehensive outcomes framework to assess progress and determine the achievement of the Accessible Employment Standard (AES), and the objectives of becoming a disability confident and inclusive workplace and providing comprehensive support to PwDs. | Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade |
| **Limited employment opportunities – PwDs are limited to low-paying part-time jobs.** | 10g Provide a stable, reliable living wage. Include access to health, dental health, and mental health supports, especially when these are not offered by the employer. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Economic Development, Investment and Trade<br>Business Partners |
| **Claw backs to financial and programmatic supports when employment is obtained** | 10h Ensure that the Employment and Income Assistance Program (EIA) promotes its employment first/ pro-work focus, such that employment is prioritized and PwDs are not penalized through claw backs for being employed. | Provincial Government |
| | 10i Unbundle income benefits and employment support. Eliminate conflicting eligibility criteria. | Provincial Government |
| | 10j Provide flexible support tailored to the individual needs and circumstance of PwDs. | Provincial Government |
| **Lack of transportation** | 10k Provide resources to support the implementation of the Accessible Transportation Standard (ATS), particularly in rural areas, including the expansion of the infrastructure of accessible transportation options that exist in these areas. | Provincial Government |
| | 10l Increase transportation support for PwDs to and from work. | Provincial Government |

## TABLE 11 Barriers to Independent Living

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **A lack of safe, affordable, and accessible housing**<br>**The need to be moved to crisis to access supported housing** | 11[a] Significantly increase the supply of accessible housing through construction and conversion, with a focus on social housing. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation |
| | 11b Explore innovative approaches to the provision of social housing such as containers or modular housing. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation |
| | 11c Repair and renovate vacant housing to reduce waitlists | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation |
| | 11d Ensure affordability of housing by increasing rent supplements and allowances, and ensuring rent is less than 30% of total before tax household income. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation |
| **Inadequate preparation to live independently** | 11e Ensure independent living skills are developed and assessed as a part of the ITP process. This relates to an in-school transition process but was identified as a barrier during the post-school period. | School Divisions |
| | 11f Continue to develop and assess independent living skills into adulthood, such as through day programming, and education or training opportunities, aligning with a life course approach. | Department of Families |
| | 11g Ensure ongoing access to supported independent living including assistance to secure housing, develop or recover independent living skills, pay rent, perform budgeting and housekeeping, and mental health, physical health, social, recreation, employment, and peer support. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation<br>Department of Families |
| | 11h Ensure ongoing access to supported living resources. | Provincial Government<br>Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation<br>Department of Families |
| **Insufficient income** | 11i Provide stable, reliable, and sufficient income to PwDs to offset the cost of living including rent, accessing nutritious food, transportation costs, and medical and dental expenses outside of those covered by Manitoba Health. | Provincial Government |
| **Rigid eligibility criteria for supported independent living and rigid rental requirements** | 11j Streamline the application process for supported independent living, supported living and other options that may be available to CLdS clients. This may be accomplished with a centralized application process. | Provincial Government<br>Ministeries involved in Human Services |
| | 11k Develop policies in partnership with other government systems so that supported independent living and supported living can be accessed seamlessly without bureaucratic delays and competing and contradictory eligibility criteria. | Provincial Government<br>Ministeries involved in Human Services |

## TABLE 12 Impacts of COVID-19

| Key Findings | Recommendations | Entities Involved |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited access to essential supports, particularly day programs** | 12[a] Adopt a Disability Inclusive Response and Recovery Plan to COVID-19 informed by the pre-conditions outlined by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). | Provincial Government Ministeries involved in Human Services |
| | 12b Ensure continuity of care-giving support for PwDs. | Provincial Government Ministeries involved in Human Services |
| | 12c Increase the number and scope of available day programs. | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| | 12d Increase availability of highly trained direct support staff, the professionalism of the workforce and their wages (see 8m above). | Provincial Government Department of Families |
| **Increased caregiving responsibilities** | 12e Develop a policy framework in consultation with caregivers that includes economic and social supports, to support the implementation of the *Caregiver Recognition Act 2011* (MB). | Provincial Government Ministeries involved in Human Services |
| | 12f Establish metrics and monitor the impact of the implementation of the *Caregiver Recognition Act 2011* (MB). | Provincial Government |

# Conclusions

THE INSIDER PERSPECTIVES of PwDs, caregivers, educators, and service providers about their firsthand experiences with the transition to adulthood provided critical insights about how this process is experienced in the province of Manitoba. Applying the QI-2 as framework for examining reported transition practices in K-12+ schools provided a structured approach to assess the degree to which reported transition practices adhered to the seven overarching domains and selected key indicators of this instrument and allowed for the identification of targeted recommendations in each domain of transition planning.

Overall, participants reported a high degree of variability in transition planning among schools and school divisions. This included inconsistent approaches to determining who should receive an ITP, what it should entail, as well as a lack of timely plan development. There was also a high degree of variability reported regarding the use of transition assessments to determine students' strengths, interests and needs to guide transition planning. If transition assessments were used, they were often employed by clinicians to determine eligibility for services rather than to guide individualized transition planning.

When examining the use of transition-focused curriculum or education, unmet needs were reported in several key areas including, but not limited to, instruction in self-advocacy skills, opportunities for vocational or work experiences, and participation in career development courses. Inconsistent

approaches and competing expectations regarding the instruction of independent living skills were also described.

Resource limitations such as a lack of educational assistants or job coaches and transportation were further described as interfering with the provision of appropriate educational programming, including access to community-based opportunities (e.g., work experience, volunteer positions) and as limiting course options for students with disabilities.

Interagency collaboration was characterized as challenging, with some participants describing poor communication and the absence or limited involvement of key service providers in the ITP process. Several aspects of the policy context or system-level infrastructure were also described as interfering with the provision of exemplary transition support. Outside of education, there was limited awareness of the provincial protocol, *Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community*, and if there was awareness of this protocol, concerns were raised regarding the degree to which it was being implemented, an absence of accountability for adherence, and limited resources to provide the support that it describes. Inflexible transition timelines determined by chorological age were also described as impeding the ability to provide person-centred supports, which was exacerbated by limited resources for students between the ages of 18 and 21 years. Moreover, many students with disabilities were not included in regular classrooms, with approximately half of the participants reporting that students with disabilities spent 50% or more of the school day outside of this setting during their kindergarten to grade 12+ years.

Areas of relative strength in transition planning included having access to a case manager in school and student participation or voice in the ITP process when an ITP was in place. Importantly, several examples of person-centred, innovative approaches to transition planning and support were identified, such as PATH, Project SEARCH, Project Life, and Remote Job Coach Applications, and examples of ITP processes adhering to the timelines outlined in *Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community* were noted. Access to career and community experience teachers or personnel was also an area of strength that was described as enhancing opportunities for community-based experiences for students with disabilities.

Barriers identified during post-school transition included challenges with accessing services such as service navigation, long waitlists, and rigid eligibility criteria. Further education and training issues such as insufficient

education or training to meet entrance criteria, limited post-secondary options for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and a lack of access to needed accommodations were also described. Employment concerns such as insufficient education and training to obtain desired employment, employers' unwillingness to hire PwDs, and a lack of accommodations in the workplace were noted. In the area of independent living, a lack of safe and affordable housing, not meeting eligibility criteria to receive needed supports, limited income, and insufficient education and training to live independently were identified as challenges.

Regardless of the transition phase, there is overwhelming evidence of an under-resourced system that is undermining the personal dignity, freedom of choice, and equitable access to support for PwDs and changes are urgently required. Canadian disability activist and scholar Raymond Lemay characterized the experiences of PwDs when interfacing with service systems as having to accept "the least/worst option" (Lemay, 2018). One of the most frequently noted sentiments from the dedicated educators and service providers who participated in this study was that they are doing the best they can with what they have. However, when the best being done involves the least/ worst option, or in some cases no option at all, we can and must do better.

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