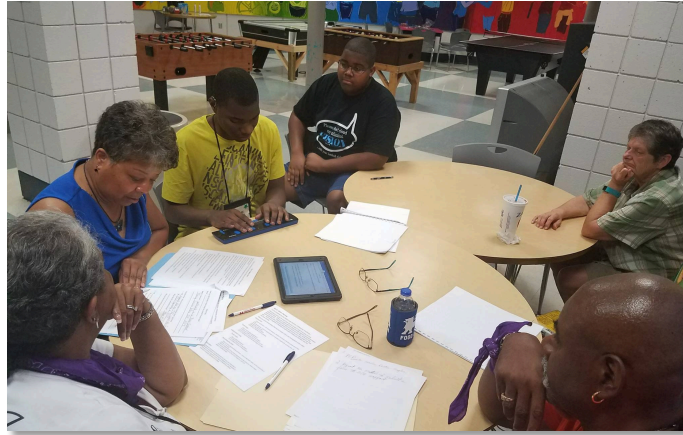


Transition Institute Follow-Up: Youth Action Planning

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This article describes a process developed by the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project (GSAP) to assist young adults who attend transition institutes to continue to work toward their goals after the institute they attend has ended. The process includes activities that take place before, during, and after an institute. As the use of transition institutes increases in regions across the country, we hope that other state deaf-blind projects will find this model useful for providing follow-up TA to young adults and their families.

Rationale

Young adults who are deaf-blind experience a myriad of challenges as they transition to adulthood. Their needs are pervasive and they require unique and consistent interventions to achieve outcomes that support employment, networking, self-determination, and access.

Transition Institute Overview

Southeastern state deaf-blind projects have been conducting annual transition institutes for youth who are deaf-blind for more than a decade. The institutes, which take place over several days, focus on topics important for college, career, and independent living preparedness. Young adults who participate are accompanied by a circle of support that includes family members, deaf-blind project staff and, in some cases, representatives from agencies that provide funding or case management.

At the institutes, young adults participate in facilitated discussions, interactive role playing, and presentations designed to be consistent with what institute planners consider to be our crown jewel, the peer-to-peer model. In this model, deaf-blind young adults who participated in previous institutes receive training to serve as mentors. Then, in subsequent institutes, they assist in developing program content and presenting information to young adult participants and their families. The focus of each institute revolves around promoting participants' self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, identifying goals they would like to pursue, and creating an action plan for accessing resources and supports to assist them in reaching their goals.

Action-Planning and Follow-Up Process

Although, as noted above, transition institutes have been an annual event for many years, processes for creating action plans and providing follow-up support have not been well established. In 2016, GSAP hosted the annual institute in Georgia and, in an effort to sustain youth engagement following the event, launched a pilot project of technical assistance to young adults and their families to assist the young adults in accomplishing their goals. The components of the process, which occurred before, during, and after the institute are as follows:

- *Prior to the event – Complete the following sections of a transition portfolio*
 - Describe hearing and vision abilities and accommodations needed for communication and information access
 - Reflect on preferences, strengths, needs, and support systems
 - Explore dreams related to education, employment, independent living, and connecting with others
- *During the event – Create an action plan*
 - Prioritize goals and identify the intermediate steps needed to work towards them
 - Identify resources or people who can provide support
 - Write an action plan with input from family, state deaf-blind project staff, and mentors
- *After the event – Take action and monitor progress*
 - Complete steps toward goals
 - Participate in a bi-monthly check-in with GSAP staff to update progress
 - Connect with a mentor for encouragement and guidance

Next Steps

GSAP is conducting a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of this model and initial findings indicate that several young adults have responded well. The model will be used again in conjunction with the 2017 transition institute in Alabama, where we will share information about action planning and the process of monitoring progress toward goals, as described above. Our objective is to support the youth participants to take decisive action in making their dreams become reality.



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