

INTRODUCTION

The transition from engaging in typical pediatric occupations into adulthood is a critical period of development for any individual to acquire the skills, roles, and routines necessary for successful performance and participation in adult occupations. For children with disabilities or on individualized education plans (IEPs), this transition is even more complex and challenging. These individuals and their families must consider the changes in services, supports, accommodations, routines, roles, relationships, and other various alterations in the contexts of their lives. Children with disabilities on IEPs receive transition services to achieve IEP goals related to exiting the school system and entering post graduation life.

According to the Individuals With Disabilities Act from the U.S. Department of Education- transition services facilitate the transition from school to post-school activities such as postsecondary education, vocational education, employment, adult services, independent living, and community participation. It also states that these services must be introduced no later when the first IEP is to be in effect when the child is 16 years old (IDEA 2015). In Colorado the requirements are different and stated as services should begin with the first IEP developed when the child is age 15, but no later than the end of 9th grade, or earlier if deemed appropriate by the IEP Team (Colorado Department of Education 2025).

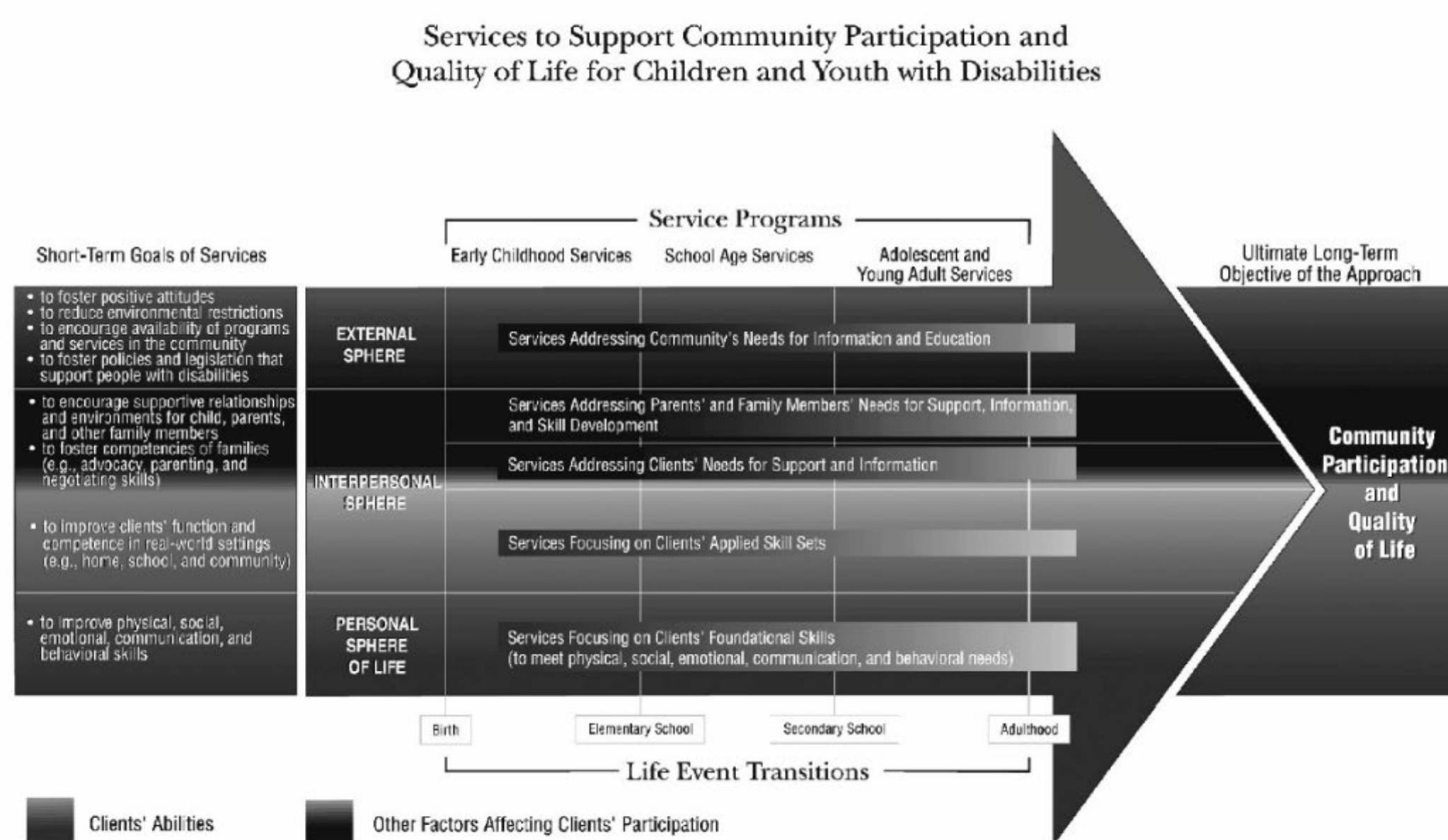
Background/ Literature Review

The literature reveals that transition services frequently have deficits that negatively impact students and families. Research shows these services can have a lack of individualization of support, a lack of client/ family inclusion, can leave families feeling uninformed, and have challenges with the timing of implementation (Benson et al., 2021; Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Cavendish et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2019; Hatfield et al., 2017; Hirano et al., 2018).

Research suggests that earlier transition planning addresses many of these needs. Families expressed that late high school planning left insufficient time for solid individualized plans, and should begin earlier (Hirano et al., 2018.). Parents also suggested formal transition planning begin in grades 9–10, focusing on education and career paths, while informal transitional services should start in primary school to build life skills, resilience, and self-advocacy (Hatfield et al., 2017).

Theoretical Basis

A Life Needs Model of Service Delivery



Evaluation Methods

- Regular check-ins with Capstone mentor to review progress and professional performance.
- Follow project timeline and milestones to track completion of draft and final deliverables.
- Gather written and verbal feedback from stakeholders (CTT staff, IEP teams, families, students, and community members) to guide revisions.
- Review feedback and progress through midterm and final Capstone evaluations to ensure alignment with project goals.

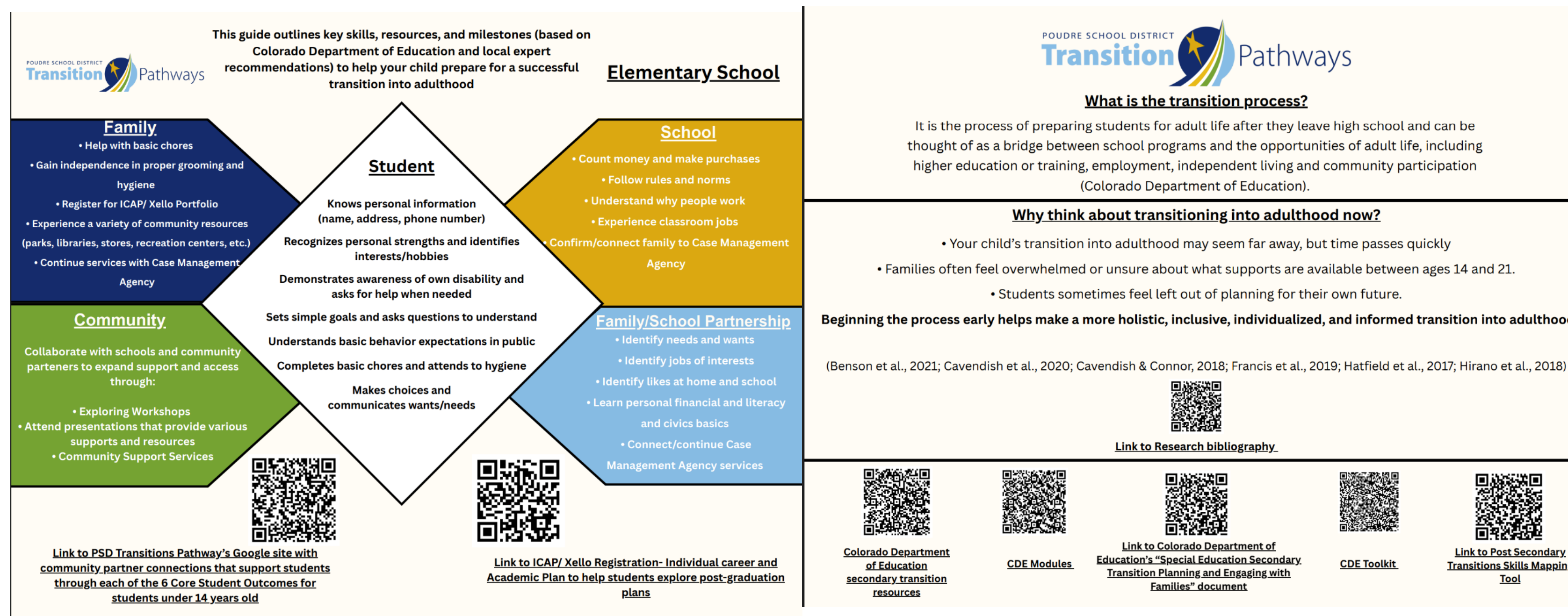
Transition Timing

Introducing Transition Services at Younger Ages

OTD Capstone Project

Goal, Objectives & Activities

The goal of this capstone project was to develop educational/ informative program material for the Poudre School District Community Transition Team with the aim of improving individualization of support, student and family knowledge, and family/ student involvement in the transition process at younger ages.



Objectives	Activities
Complete an intensive needs assessment on early transition services	- Consult with CTT, IEP teams, parents, families, students, and school staff to understand current needs and practices - Review CDE guidance and existing PSD processes
Gain a comprehensive understanding of pathways and services available to students within the school system	- Participate in IEP meetings and professional trainings. - Collaborate with teachers and support staff to learn service structures. - Assist with Student Self-Determination initiatives. - Finalize Poudre Transition Pathways Google Site - Integrate CDE recommendations and local supports.
Develop educational materials for parents, school staff, IEP teams, and the Community Transition Team (CTT)	- Create clear, actionable guides and implementation steps. - Align ICAP and Transition IEP requirements for improved planning efficiency - Produce a mock early-transition information deliverable - Informally gather community perspectives to ensure materials meet stakeholder needs.
Finalize and distribute all informational deliverables	- Compile and submit all project materials to PSD-CTT for review. - Revise based on feedback and prepare final versions for dissemination. - Develop and deliver a presentation summarizing project purpose, findings, and recommended early-transition outcomes.

Stand Out Activities

- Finalize Google Site
- OT collaboration with Transitions Pathways Academy
- CTT Pilot Program
- Contribute to Resource Mapping
- Attended Division on Career Development and Transition Conference
- Attended Transition Leadership Institute Conference- Goals
- Participate in Individual Career and Academic Plan development
- Participate with Project Search
- Contribute to Self Determination Initiative
- Participate in all aspect of CTT

Ethan Montrose

Occupational Therapy Doctoral Student

Findings

Through this capstone experience the following outcomes were identified:

- Families, students, and Interdisciplinary IEP teams were accepting and encouraging of programing involving earlier transition timing
- Community partners were willing to contribute to earlier transition timing materials
- Early transition timing is a subject of development nation wide
- Occupational therapy perspectives and inputs are valued and encouraged in nontraditional school-based settings such as with administrative teams
- Colorado has significant initiatives to improve and develop transition services where occupational therapy can have a positive impact
- Poudre School District has significant supports and developments for the transition aged population
- There is a need for additional occupational therapy engagement within traditional/ and non-traditional transition services

Discussion/ Conclusions

The need for early transition services is recognized by all involved stakeholders within the school system including families, students, teachers, IEP team members, therapists, councilors, transition coaches, and community partners. The process to integrate significant changes to the currently implemented services within the school system is challenging and requires significant time commitments to educate and inform stakeholders.

Early transition services have a distinct value in providing positive outcomes for students when they transition to post-school life. Providing families/ students with age relevant transition information can result in a more informative process, increased individualization in services, and increased family inclusion.

Occupational therapy has huge opportunities to provide beneficial and impactful changes within school systems beyond traditional school-based services. Occupational therapists have a unique lens that provides unique supports to the variety of contexts of student's lives within this nontraditional setting.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

Capstone Site Mentor-Emilie Ring- Transition Coach
Faculty Mentor- Michelle LeRoy- PhD, OTR/L, BCP
Doctoral Capstone Coordinator- Julie Silver-Seidle- PhD, OTR/L
Poudre School District Community Transition Team
Transitions Pathways Academy
The participating school staff, students, and families

Their support, collaboration, contributions, and guidance were essential to the development of this work.

Key References

