

# *Planning for the Nest Exit: Preparing Young Adults with Disabilities for Transition Beyond Residential/ Therapeutic Programming*

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# Advanced Organizer for Today's Presentation...

- Review NLTS-2 outcomes for our population from 2016 presentation as background
- Identify prerequisite skills for successful transition of students serviced in more restrictive settings
- Support Matrix: overview and conceptualization
- What programs can do to support the final stages before discharge
- Review of case studies, and feedback from students we serve
- Please alert me if I use an abbreviation you are not familiar with (special ed teachers are the worst in this area!)
- Presentation (including links and resources) will be available at [www.iepguardians.org](http://www.iepguardians.org) under “presentations”



# Our Practice

- I am a career special education administrator in Chicagoland high school settings and worked closely with transition specialists as part of a progressive transition services model
- How my practice as an EC is structured (ISBE approved RTC)
- Background in research in transition at the University of Florida
- Ph.D. in special education policy (with emphasis on school funding and special education law)
- Maintained close ties with students (both in and out of RTC) after graduation
- Realization that self awareness of disability and executive functioning were key factors in post-high school success
- Developed private practice to support young adults and families who struggled “inside and outside of the special education system”
- As an EC, I work closely with programs and funding school districts on the development of meaningful and effective transition services consistent with the spirit of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



# Our Shared Population: Emotional Disturbance (IDEA)

- The student exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:
  - Inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
  - Inability to develop or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers
  - Inability to develop or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with school personnel
  - Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
  - General pervasive mood of anxiety, unhappiness, and/or depression
  - A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
- The behaviors noted above must be exhibited in all three of the following areas:
  - Over an extended period of time (duration)
  - To a marked degree (intensity, severity)
  - Adversely affecting academic progress



# What exactly are Transition Services?

- What are transition services (34 CFR 300.43)?
- **Transition services** means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability; and to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.
- These services are based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes instruction; related services; community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.
- These services may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education



# Foundations of Successful Transition Services

- School Based Prevocational Experiences
  - Age Appropriate Transition Services
    - Career Training
  - Youth Development and Leadership
    - Connecting Activities
- Family/Community Involvement and Supports
  - Early and Dynamic Interagency Linkages



# Transition Services...

## Legal Expectation

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- Comprehensive needs assessment, using qualitative and standardized assessment that arrives at a clear picture of “competitive assets”
- Plan based on a variety of sources
- A wide entrée of services designed to meet strengths and needs
- Constant reflection on goals and improvement towards more normative and competitive environments
- Intensely specific to the student’s profile
- Team and student confident as termination nears

## Reality

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- Student self-report based on preferences
- “Feet of clay” presumptions based on one source of info
- A “one size fits all” program for all young adults, independent of disability
- Yearly meeting where success is measured in a loose and undefined fashion
- “A lick and hope it sticks” mentality that isn’t truly evaluated until AFTER the student terminates



# What Does a Good Transition Plan Look Like?

Source: National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center [NSTTAC]

- Realistic, strength-based, data-driven, and attainable *Post Secondary Outcome*
  - (“After meeting graduation requirements, Jenny will enroll in a technical school, take paralegal coursework, in support of her career goal as a paralegal.”)
  - Goal reflects strengths identified in the data collection process (i.e., Age Appropriate Assessment)
- Clear, observable, and measureable goals (i.e., the “third party rule) for Education/Training, Employment, and Independent Living (at least 1 per domain)
  - Clear focus inherent to goal
  - Goals correspond to identified post-secondary outcome
  - Goals should not be process-focused, but oriented to a real outcome
  - Great examples and non-examples available here: [http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/transition\\_planning/NSTTAC\\_ChecklistFormB.pdf](http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/transition_planning/NSTTAC_ChecklistFormB.pdf)
- Age appropriate transition including a variety of qualitative and standardized assessments that gather a *realistic picture of the student’s strengths, needs, and assets relative the identified post-secondary outcome.*
- Suitably resourced related services and instruction to support the above goals
- Schedule of team decision making to reflect, amend, and tweak “upward”



## Summary of Findings from NLTS-2

- Source: **The Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults with Disabilities up to 8 Years after High School: A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2).** NCSE 2011
- 8 year study of across all disabilities, with intake outtake interviews
- When controlling for intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities (including intellectual disabilities), young adults with emotional disturbance score consistently lowest in virtually all areas... Following stats are conditionalized on this statement
- Implications for young adults with ED are abysmal and indicative of a transition model that is systematically failing students with ED needs



# NCSEER-NLTS<sub>2</sub> 2011 Study

- Respondents across all disabilities more likely to enroll in a 4 year program than young adults with ED
- Respondents across all disabilities more likely to self-disclose or self-identify presence of a disability than those with ED
- 75% of respondents with ED “involved to some degree” of involvement with criminal justice system
- Except for traumatic brain injury (TBI), respondents with ED more likely than all other disabilities to have been arrested and have been on parole or probation in past two years
- After 8 years, only 35% had successfully completed training or vocational program



# NCSEER-NLTS2 2011 Study: ED-College Bound Specifics

- 27% did not disclose disability (or need for accommodations/support) to post-secondary program
- 20% receive/received no accommodations in post-secondary program
- Demonstrated highest average of time ( $\mu=11$  months) between graduation and post-secondary programming
- Maintained the “least steadily enrolled” group in post-secondary programs; 58% reported “on and off” enrollment
- Maintained lowest percentage of full time enrollment, post high school (11%)
- Lowest percentage among all disabilities for “getting help on their own”, and only 37% getting any assistance from college program
- Average 2 year enrollee maintained 20 credits for AA degree (roughly 1/3 required for that degree in most states)
- Over 8 years, 92% reported employment at onset of study, but only 49% were actually employed at outtake



# ED Youth: Other Attributes

- ED youth are “more likely to be unemployed, underemployed, or employed in lower-skilled jobs than any other groups of the same age” (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996)
- The earnings of young adults with ED “are slightly more than minimum wage and often in less than fulltime employment, placing them in poverty” (Davis & Vander Stoep, 1997)
- Young adults with ED “are at great risk of homelessness and dependency on public assistance once they leave the school system” (Doren, Bullis, & Benz, 1996; Davis & Vander Stoep, 1997; Way et al., 1997)
- Youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties are “more likely to demonstrate substance abuse, unplanned adolescent pregnancy, involvement with the criminal justice system, psychiatric disorders, and poor work, marital and occupational adjustment than other groups” (Doren et al., 1996; Vander Stoep, Davis & Collins, 2000; Way et al., 1997)
- In several longitudinal studies, young adults with ED are consistently “found to have the highest high school dropout rates among all exceptionalities” (Brown, 1995; Wagner, 1995)
- The largest percentage of individuals who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Disability Insurance (DI) benefits have a psychological disability (SSA, 2007)
- Those who are receiving SSI or DI benefits due to a psychological disability are more likely to begin receiving benefits while young and continue to receive benefits for the rest of their lives (Baron and Salzer, 2002)



# Support Matrix: Overview and Conceptualization



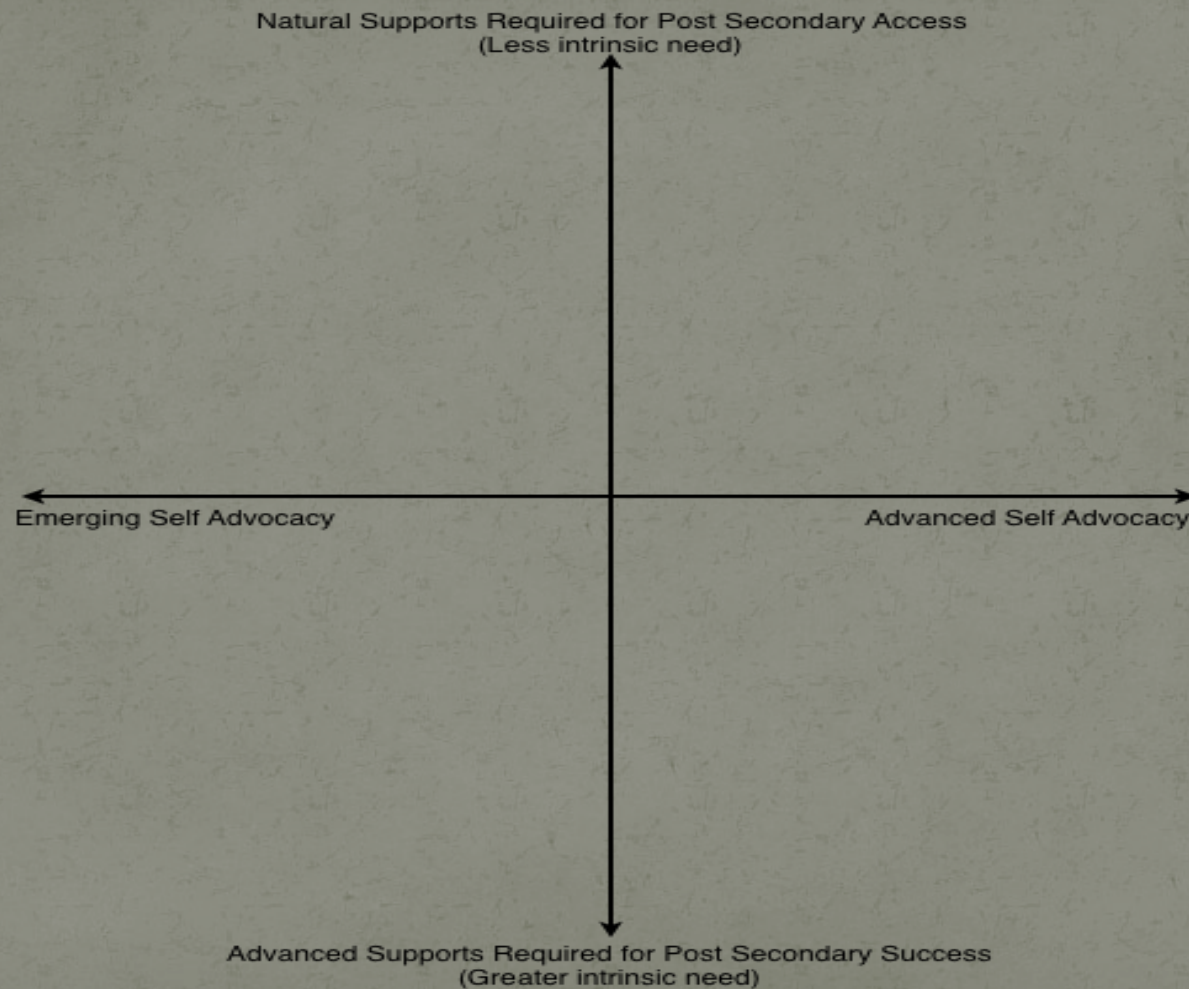


# Support Matrix: Overview and Conceptualization

- Based on our experience, two continuums associated with access to the post-secondary environment
- X Axis: The repertoire of self-directed/self-advocacy behaviors a young adult can bring to bear (emerging self-advocacy to advanced self-advocacy)
- Y Axis: Based on the severity of disability/functional impairment (less support required to greater support required)
- Thoughts on *Self-Advocacy* as a functional behavior

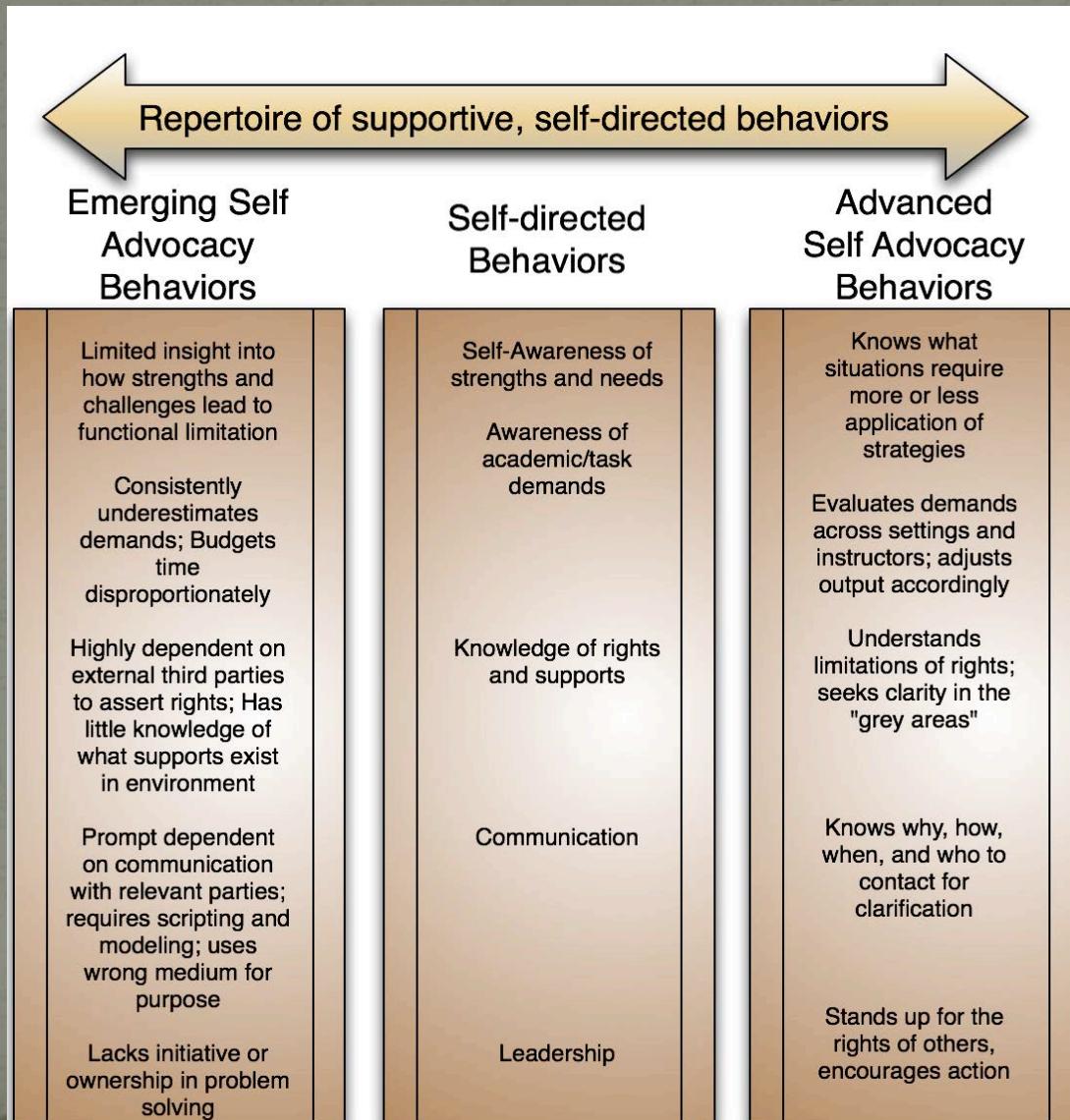


# Support Matrix: Overview and Conceptualization






# Support Matrix X Axis: Self-Directed/Self Advocacy Behaviors





# Support Matrix Y Axis: Intensity of Need/Functional Limitation

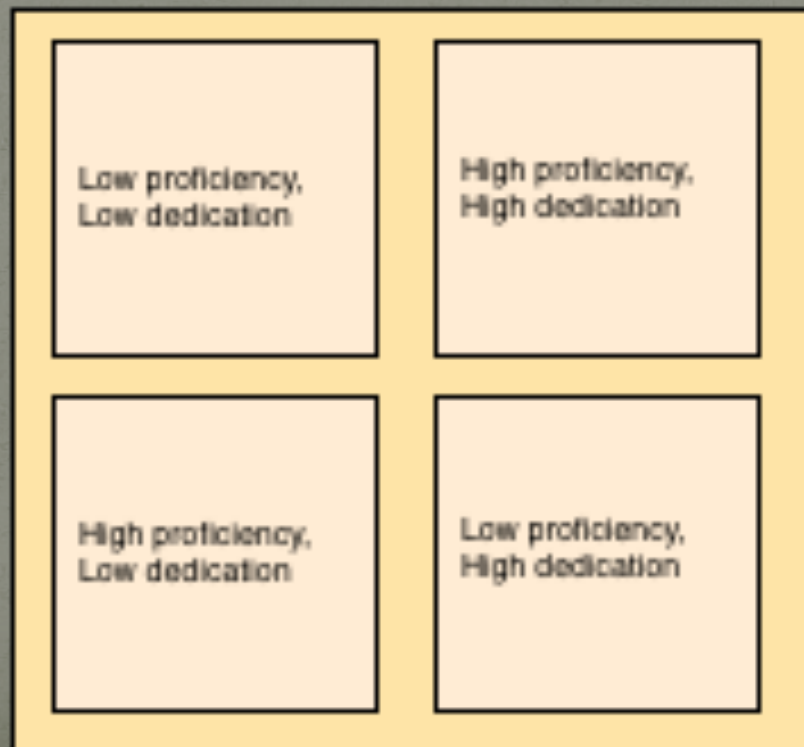
		
Greater Intrinsic Need of Student	Need Basis	Less Intrinsic Need of Student
<p>Requires adult assistance in waking, getting to appointments on time</p> <p>Requires external support to analyze degree of problem/communicate</p> <p>Requires modeling and assistance to adapt/shift between multiple tasks</p> <p>Requires assistance to physically access support</p> <p>Requires external supports to maintain focus during difficult tasks</p> <p>Requires modeling and instructor support to organize written responses</p>	<p>NEEDS RELATIVE TO ALL YOUNG ADULTS (relative strengths/weaknesses)</p> <p>NEEDS RELATIVE TO DISABILITY (highly unique)</p> <p>NEEDS RELATIVE TO INTERACTION OF TYPICAL YOUNG ADULTS' NEEDS AND DISABILITY</p>	<p>Minimal/no support required for planning/time management</p> <p>Minimal/no support needed to problem solve, develop plan, and communicate with relevant parties</p> <p>Minimal/no support needed to multi-task and manage multiple demands</p> <p>Can independently access supports</p> <p>Can inhibit, initiate, and maintain tasks with minimal/no support needed to</p> <p>Can independently organize and construct written responses</p>



# Support Matrix:

## Overview and Conceptualization

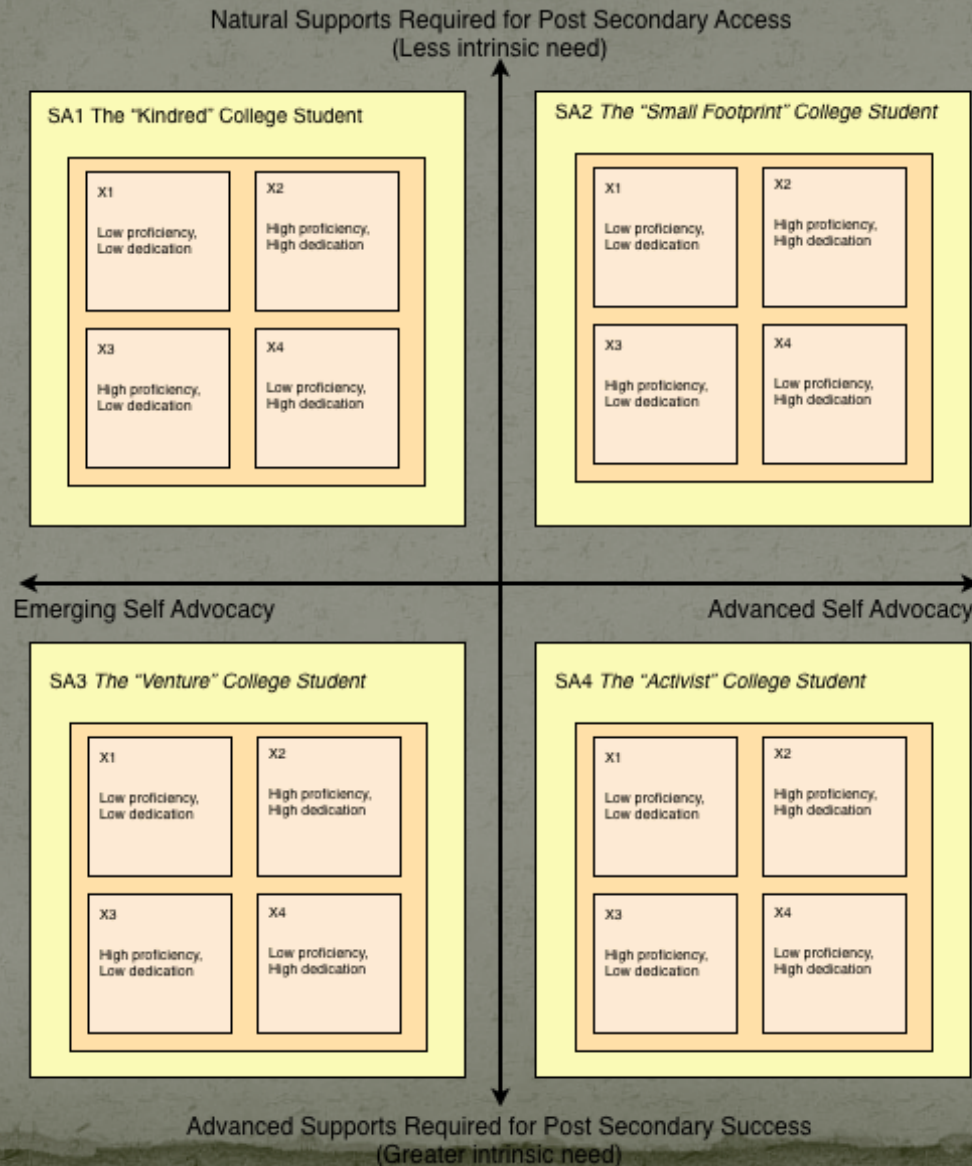
- Within each quadrant, another pair of continuums
- **Proficiency**: *The student's compensatory skill set available (low to high)*
- **Dedication**: *The student's ability to consistently select the correct/apply available compensatory skills to the specific demand (high to low)*





# Support Matrix

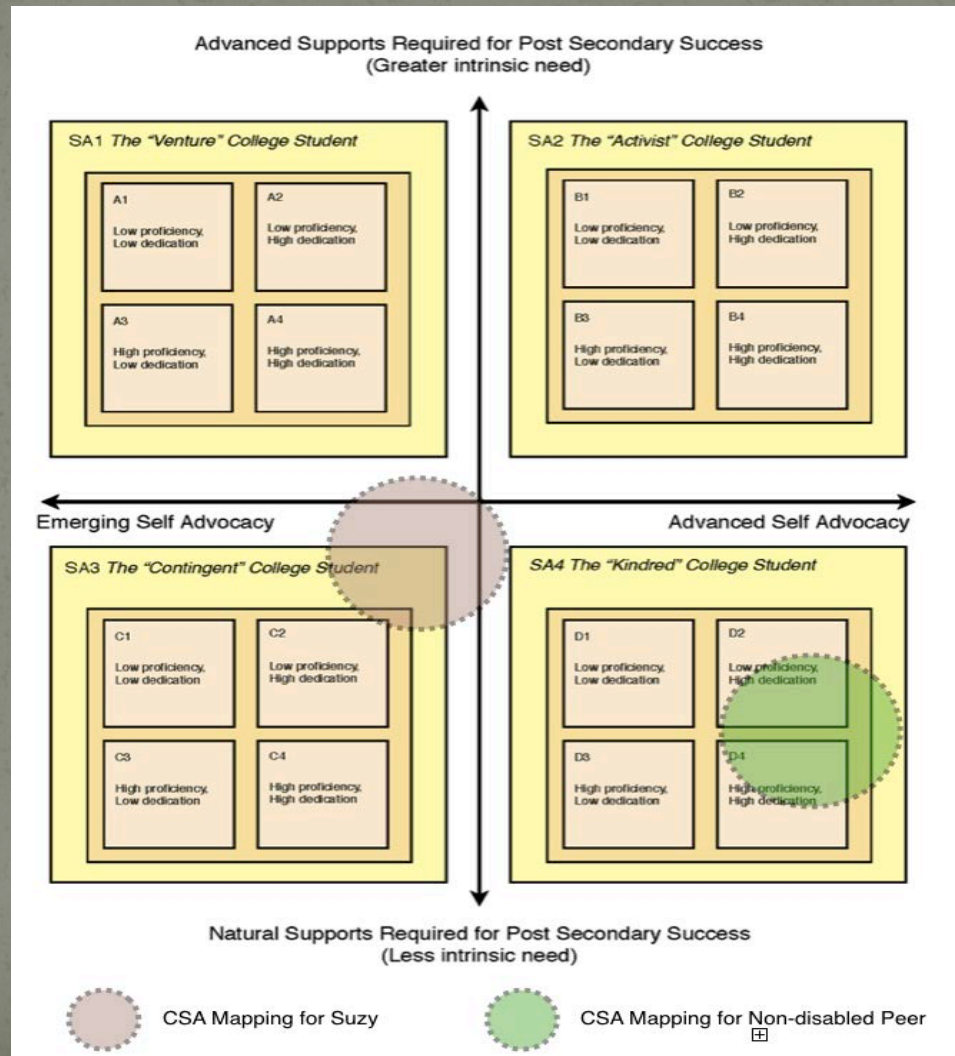
- The matrix accounts for demand variation of settings, and within each quadrant, how proficient and dedicated a student is at applying needed compensatory skills





# Support Matrix: A Pre-discharge Intervention Tool

(criterion-referenced assessment in the works)





# Support Matrix: Designations

- Four designations based on learner characteristics
  - SA<sub>1</sub>-*"The Kindred College Student"*:
    - Need is lower, but self-advocacy skill set is commensurate with needs of non-disabled students; high/low dedication & proficiency (SOLID!)
  - SA<sub>2</sub>-*"The Small-Footprint College Student"*:
    - Need is lower, but advocacy skills are advanced and outpace non-disabled students; high/low dedication & proficiency (MONITOR!)
  - SA<sub>3</sub>- *"The Venture College Student"*
    - Need is higher, but self-advocacy skill set is splintered or absent; high/low dedication & proficiency (RISKY!)
  - SA<sub>4</sub>-*"The Activist College Student"*
    - Need is higher, but skill set is highly advanced and intact; high/low dedication & proficiency (MONITOR AND SUPPORT!)



# Pre-Discharge Transition Intervention Considerations

- Post Secondary Success =
- The *diminishing frequency* and intensity of parent, school, or third-party based interventions while the student accesses and meets demands, PLUS...
- *The increased application* of self-advocacy skills and self-directed behaviors, in a variety of settings and conditions, DIVIDED BY...
- The extent to which current supports the student benefits from receives in current *setting are available/accessible in the next setting*
- Check your Math:
  - Is it meaningful to the student?
  - What is “duplicable” or closely approximated that worked in RTC?
  - Is it sustainable?
  - Is there a simpler approach?
  - Does the student see real “payoff” relative to the effort invested?
  - What is the exit plan?



# Pre-Discharge Transition Intervention Considerations (continued)

- The process “requires wrinkles, but hopefully no tears...”
- Assessment and the risk of over-reliance on self-report
- Students who insulate and maintain coping strategies (efficient and inefficient alike) that have sustained them in the past
- Avoiding superimposing schemas that work for us on kids
- Trial and Error: ESSENTIAL!
- Understanding that these needs globally impact all areas of functioning, not just academics
- Post secondary success: “the least destructive assumption”
- Our Mantra: PLAN-EXECUTE-REPAIR
- Identifying the gray areas, and willingness to delve in and clarify
- EARLY MONITORING AND FEEDBACK CRITICAL! (after mid term, we’re just admiring the problem and “*watching the bomb go off...*”)



# Suggestions for programs to improve transitions services prior to discharge...

- Procedural considerations
  - Assessment, observation, and adaptation of plan
    - Effective established programs
      - Linkages
- Self-Advocacy and explicit instruction in application of these skills
- Understanding and targeting executive functioning deficits



# Guidance: Predischarge Considerations for Youth with ED

- Whether RTC's operate within the legal parameters of IDEA or not (i.e., development of an Individualized Education Program), the nature of ultimate "hand-off" and articulation to college support, adult service agencies, and other community supports the development of transition plans along aforementioned guidelines (at least by age 16, as early as 14.5)
- Implications of "late-eligibilities" in special education
- IEP services in all states are mandated to age 21, with many states serving "age 21 inclusive" (the day before the student turns 22), and even some insular districts serving students through the completion of the school year they turn 22.
- Funding sources through school districts are more reliable, more accountable, and more flexible than most state funded programs associated with Vocational Rehabilitation
- ED and the nature of "silent disabilities" in ongoing funding



# Suggestions for Improvement in RTC: Assessment

- Best practice suggests moving “age appropriate assessment” beyond self-reports which can be in dire need of reality testing. Consider the development of a *Service Plan Assessment Package*:
  - Updated psychometrics and other standardized tools to support accommodations and supports at college level (WISC, WIAT, Nelson Denny, etc.)
  - Coaching and role playing on how to articulate these needs
  - Application of workplace and community access assessments to garner an understanding of competitive, pre-competitive, and sub-competitive workplace competencies
    - VALPAR Component and Work Samples (numerical and orthographic sorting, product assembly, range of motion, dexterity)
    - Worker Role Interview (WRI) (semi-structured interview for use in work rehabilitation, with emphasis on psychosocial and environmental impact on disability)



# Suggestions for Improvement in RTC: Assessment

- Many good, free inventories available
  - **Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment** which tests reported competencies in several domains (career planning, daily living, household and money management, self care, social relationships, medical) against actual demonstrated competencies; used to target deficiencies and identify areas that are relative strengths
  - **AIR Self-Determination Scale**: identifies core of self-directed behaviors required for independent living
  - See <http://transitioncoalition.org/tc-assessment-reviews/> for a great clearinghouse of these types of assessments



# Suggestions for Improvement:

- Shifting towards “person-centered” planning: *Viewing someone as a person first, rather than defining that person by his or her disability*
- Community Based Training programs (teaching in the community for all relevant areas of transition need) are consistently regarded as a “most effective pre-vocational model” for outcomes for all young adults with disabilities
- Monitoring of access to local college environments while in RTC
- Programs that scaffold and systematically disassemble supports over time prepare students for the harsh realities of competitive employment where supports may be less robust
- Soft skills deficits (shown to be the prime reason students with social communication disabilities maintain low rates of competitive employment, post high school) should be targeted and provided “direct and explicit instruction”
- Money management and personal finance should be an established curriculum for all students. See: *Managing your Personal Finances*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Ryan and Ryan, Cengage Learning)
- Employ an exploratory career curriculum, and dovetail with the USDOL Occupational Outlook to examine wages, trends, and required training See: *Strong Interest Inventory* ([skillsone.com](http://skillsone.com))



# Suggestions for Improvement in RTC: Effective Programs

- “Planned Sabotage” prior to termination allows teams and young adults real opportunities to evaluate resiliency and generalization of coping strategies before the student is expected to manage on their own
- Programs should strongly consider the designation of a dedicated staff member or team who can develop, cultivate, carve, and maintain jobs within a facility or in the outlying community
- Students must decide on their own to self-disclose disability to third parties, like colleges, but should –in this process-- begin discussions with local college disability centers on exactly how information is kept and utilized
- Understanding how more restrictive settings provide support inherently and how colleges and other training programs provide reasonable accommodation is an important goal for any RTC to embellish before discharge



# Suggestions for Improvement in RTC: Linkages

- Consult and include vocational rehabilitation (VR) specialists in the student's programming well before graduation (DRS referral usually begins around age 16)
- Investigate and evaluate local adult service agencies in the student's home community
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) may be a good supplemental financial support for qualifying individuals (by age 18)... Be prepared to be patient and often discouraged!
- Link younger students with successful upperclassmen/mentors in your program
- Investigate, interview, and secure psychiatric and counseling supports well before students arrive on college campuses
- For students approaching age of majority, discuss rights and responsibilities associated with this paradigm shift. Consider limited powers of attorney for whom guardianship is not appropriate.



# Executive Functioning Skills Supporting Post-Secondary Success

(adapted from the BRIEF)

- Initiation: the ability to begin a task independently
- Inhibition: the ability to stop a behavior at the appropriate time
- Maintenance: sustaining attention during a task and developing task routines
- Flexibility: moving from one activity to another and adapting to various academic demands
- Organization of Materials: imposing order on school materials and storage spaces
- Forecasting: the ability to manage current and future demands, including time and task management; includes assessment and budgeting of required resources
- Self-Directed Behavior: the ability to self-monitor oneself, maintain awareness of one's own capabilities/limitations, and functionally advocate for one's own needs
- Working Memory: the ability to retain information in the moment while solving multi-step problems
- Emotional Control: modulation of emotional responses by bringing rational thought and coping strategies to the situation



# Our Coaching Model for College Students

- Highly relationship-based
- Executive Function Intervention Plan (EFIP): Development of at least three goals (ie, parent, student, coach)
- Exercises vs. Strategies
- Min: Weekly, 1 hour sessions for minimum of 3 months
- Instructional component as needed (ex: SIM, Learning Strategies, rehabilitative exercises)
- Summer: great for skill instruction, but less to organize (best to teach while demands are authentic and support is meaningful)
- Distance and commuting are critical (online coaching is sometimes an option once relationship is built)
- Data driven
- Ideally addresses both skill development and management of workload
- Maintenance: case management



# Case Studies

- Profile, Age, Background, functional limitation, coping skills (intact and in need), environmental challenges and “pleasant surprises” in college setting
- Stacy Onak: “Simon”
- Kevin Berner: “David” & “Lance”
- Matt: “Amanda”, “John”, “Angela”



## Quotes From Some of Our Shared Students- Amanda

- *Take one step at a time, baby steps. Know that you have your family, mentors and teachers that will help you so take advantage of that. Remember to ask for help. It's okay to not know what to do.*



# Quotes From Some of Our Shared Students- John

- *I think my biggest thing would be not to underestimate how great of an opportunity it (college) is. It's okay to leave without knowing what you want to do, but it is EXTREMELY important to be proactive in figuring out what that is, at least taking the correct steps to expose yourself to a variety of things that peak your interest. Also, going to class makes or breaks your success. No one is there to tell you when you have to go and it is tempting when you see other kids not going. Most of them won't be back for the second semester. I think it's also important to say you're just not ready, it's beneficial to go to somewhere like COD (community college) and find a job for a year. It will help you grow as a person and realize how important college really is. And off the top of my head, it's really about doing what you feel is best for yourself. Don't let the opinion or judgment of others influence your decision because the moment is way too big to let others have a say*
- *And if you want you can say that's from a kid who wouldn't have listened to any of it at 18!*



# In Closing...



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[www.iepguardians.org](http://www.iepguardians.org)



# Links and resources

<a href="http://transitioncoalition.org">http://transitioncoalition.org</a>	<a href="http://www.bls.gov/ooh/">http://www.bls.gov/ooh/</a>
<a href="http://www.gottransition.org">http://www.gottransition.org</a>	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html</a>
<a href="https://www.ssa.gov">https://www.ssa.gov</a>	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html</a>
<a href="http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts/mental-health">http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts/mental-health</a>	<a href="https://www.naset.org">https://www.naset.org</a>
<a href="http://www.nlts2.org">http://www.nlts2.org</a>	<a href="http://transitioncoalition.org/blog/welcome-youth-edbd/">http://transitioncoalition.org/blog/welcome-youth-edbd/</a>
<a href="http://lifeskills.casey.org">http://lifeskills.casey.org</a>	<a href="http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/self-determination-assessment-tools.html">http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/self-determination-assessment-tools.html</a>
<a href="http://ruralinstitute.umd.edu/transition/Articles/RIWorkExperience_Manual.pdf">http://ruralinstitute.umd.edu/transition/Articles/RIWorkExperience_Manual.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.hrop.org/wizard/">http://www.hrop.org/wizard/</a>
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<a href="http://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/detail.aspx?title=brigtsi">http://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/detail.aspx?title=brigtsi</a>	<a href="https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/College-Readiness_Assessment.pdf">https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/College-Readiness_Assessment.pdf</a>
<a href="http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productview.aspx?id=6678">http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productview.aspx?id=6678</a>	<a href="http://centerontransition.org">http://centerontransition.org</a>