



Montrose Access  
Inspiring Quality Lives

# GROWING UP

Planning for the Transition to Adulthood  
*A Guide for Parents & Caregivers*



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### 1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This handout was developed for parents of clients of MontroseAccess, who are preparing for the transition to adulthood in the coming years. MontroseAccess is currently funded to support clients until they reach the age of 18 years. Following 18 years of age, clients of MontroseAccess make the transition to adult health and support services. This handout will provide information on transition planning as well as explain how the MontroseAccess team can support clients and families with planning for this transition to adulthood.

This handout was developed with the support and collaboration of the following people:

- Members of the MontroseAccess Transition to Adulthood Working Party - Mathilde Backhouse (General Manager Client Services North), Geraldine Burgess (Social Worker) and Rebecca Jones (Recreation Officer)
- The MontroseAccess Discipline Specific Professional Advisors for assistance with clarifying the role of each team member.

Resource Developed by: Tegan Pinese (Occupational Therapist)

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## 2. THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENT TO ADULTHOOD

Growing up there are many stages in life that children and young people experience, such as starting school, progressing to high school and then moving into adulthood. These stages in life can be referred to as “transitions”. One transition of particular significance for young people is moving from high school to adult life. This period in a young person’s life can bring with it both excitement and uncertainty.

Just like typically developing adolescents, young people with disabilities can also have life goals, which may include building relationships and friendships, achieving their personal potential and engaging within the wider community. For young people with disabilities, planning for the future can bring with it additional challenges, as there may be extra needs to think about and plan for.

## 3. WHAT IS TRANSITION PLANNING?

Transition planning involves thinking about and preparing for life after school and into adulthood.

- It can involve talking with young people about what their hopes and dreams for the future may be.
- It can be an intentional, structured process that helps young people and their families set clear goals and actions to achieve these goals.
- It can include developing young people’s skills and confidence in making decisions and setting goals.
- It can include assisting young people and families to identify and link with community support agencies in adulthood.
- It can involve planning and preparing for the transfer from paediatric to adult health services.

## 4. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE?

It can be difficult to think and plan for the future when dealing with the day-to-day events that are involved with having a child with a disability. Parents may ask themselves, “How do I plan for a future, when the future is unknown?” or “Why do I have to think about that now?”

Research tells us that it is important for families to give themselves time to talk about the future and plan for this transition to adulthood for young people with disabilities.

For young people with disabilities, there can be more steps involved in planning for life after school.

This may include;

- How will the young person spend their time once they finish school?
- Who will provide the care needs of the young person?

- What services or equipment will the young person require in adulthood?
- What funding supports are available to the young person in adulthood?

Young people with disabilities may also require additional support to develop the confidence and skills required as adults, such as making their own decisions, having more responsibility for managing their health and learning about adult roles.

## 5. WHEN SHOULD PLANNING FOR ADULTHOOD BEGIN?

It has been suggested that initial planning and discussions around the transition to adulthood for young people with disabilities should begin around **13 to 14 years of age**. This is in order to provide for additional time for young people and their families to plan for the services and supports required by the young person in the future.

It is understood that this age won't be appropriate for everyone, and that families will determine when it is appropriate for them to begin thinking about life after school. If you are uncertain about when is the right time to start talking about what might happen for your child once they leave school, you might like to discuss this with the team social worker who can assist you in starting to prepare for this, and working out how best to approach this with your child.

## 6. HOW WILL MONTROSEACCESS ENCOURAGE TRANSITION PLANNING?

The MontroseAccess team will begin transition planning by working with you and your child to develop an understanding of the kind of adulthood you and your child would like. This might include;

- How the young person would like to spend their days after leaving school?
- What is important to them and to their family?
- What support or assistance is essential for the young person in adult life?

Part of growing up often involves taking more responsibility for making decisions and becoming more involved in managing your own health and wellbeing. Here at MontroseAccess, we hope to assist young people and families prepare for the transition from our service to adult services by supporting and encouraging the increased involvement of our adolescent clients. We acknowledge that everybody has individual needs and desires, so we will be guided by young people and their families as to what will work best for them.

How MontroseAccess will address planning for the transition to adulthood;

- Young people aged 14 years and older will be encouraged to actively attend and participate in the annual review and creation of our Service Plan.
- Clients aged 10 years and older will be encouraged to be involved in identifying and setting their Individual Goals.

- Adolescent clients will be provided the opportunity to work more individually with team members where appropriate.
- MontroseAccess consent documents now include the name and place of signature for clients aged 14 years and older. Parent/Caregiver signature will still be required for clients under 18 years.
- Adolescent clients will be encouraged to become more involved in communicating with MontroseAccess team members. This may include;
  - Young people being contacted directly to organise or confirm appointments.
  - MontroseAccess correspondence to be addressed to client, rather than parents.
  - Adolescent clients to be cc'd into email correspondence (where appropriate) e.g. providing information on recreation activities, confirming appointments, providing information related to individual goals.
- MontroseAccess has also developed a “Transition Booklet” which will be provided to young people and families to assist them in identifying what they might need to consider in the years leading up to transition from school and discharge from MontroseAccess services. Please ask one of your team members for this booklet if you haven't already received it.

## **7. HOW CAN THE TEAM ASSIST WITH PLANNING FOR ADULTHOOD?**

Besides the normal supports you receive from the individual health professionals on your team, there are other specific areas of assistance that team members may be able to provide you and your child when planning your child's transition from school to adulthood. An outline of how each discipline might be able to support your child during this time is provided below. If you would like assistance with any of the areas below, or something that may not be mentioned, you are able to discuss this with any of the team members, and they will then link you with the appropriate person to assist you.

### *Family Support*

- Discuss and explore the future with young people and families, and explore what options are available for young people once they leave school.
- Provide information and assistance for accessing appropriate community resources such as government benefits, housing and respite for adulthood. This may include assisting young people to apply for the Disability Pension and to register for Post School Funding through Disability Services in preparation for adulthood.
- Advocate and consult with other service providers the young person may wish to access in adulthood regarding their support needs (e.g. medical specialists, respite agencies, TAFE or University).
- Provide confidential counseling and support for young people and families in areas related to preparing for adulthood. This may include encouraging autonomy and independence in young people, separation from carers, loss and grief, coping with

change, stress management, sexuality and relationships, palliative care or practical and emotional support across all stages of the lifespan.

- Provide assistance with funding submissions for equipment or supports required in adulthood.
- Link young people and families to respite options for adulthood as well as support the young person to feel comfortable with others providing their care needs, as they get older.

### *Occupational Therapy*

- Work with young people to identify and explore what their hopes and dreams for adulthood are.
- Discuss what activities young people might like to do after they have left school and identify goals to encourage their independence and engagement in adult roles.
- Provide support with identifying assistive technology to promote independence in daily activities.
- Provide information and support to young people to explore career options and pathways.
- Assist young people with planning pathways for further learning (e.g. university or TAFE) or employment post school.
- Review environmental access within the community (e.g. work experience placements, places of employment or TAFE & University).
- Educate and advise staff at TAFE, University or workplaces around the young person's individual strengths and support needs.
- Plan and prescribe equipment for adulthood (e.g. mobile shower commodes, hoists and slings, daily living equipment).
- Explore pathways for young people to access the community through public transport or gaining their driver's license.

### *Physiotherapy*

- Plan and prescribe equipment for adulthood (e.g. making sure mobility equipment is suitable for the future).
- Assist with linking young people to adult medical specialists (e.g. respiratory specialist, cardiologist) and adult physiotherapy services.
- Provide physiotherapy programs that will promote physical wellbeing and exercise into adulthood (e.g. hydrotherapy programs, stretching routines).
- Explore physical access within different environments young people may be entering (e.g. TAFE or university).

- Provide information on where to source equipment and orthotics in adulthood.

### *Speech Pathology*

- Provide assessment of and management strategies for eating and swallowing.
- Review mealtimes and provide strategies to increase safety, manage fatigue and promote independence.
- Provide support to develop the communication skills of young people so they may feel more confident communicating within social situations and in developing friendships and adult relationships.
- Assist with identification and trial of technology to assist with verbal and written communication to promote participation in further study, employment or leisure activities in adulthood.
- Support the development of decision making, planning and organisational skills required for adulthood.
- Provide support to develop communication skills required for vocational activities..

### *Recreation*

- Provide recreational opportunities to young people where they can try new leisure activities and develop skills to promote independence in adulthood.
- Work to create links with community organisations and agencies to support leisure and recreational activities post school.
- Provide information on external organisations that run camps or respite activities for young people and adolescents with disabilities.
- Provide education to different community agencies around the needs of individual clients to ensure their participation in recreation and leisure activities within adulthood.
- Work with individual clients to develop skills in community access prior to leaving school (e.g. becoming confident and familiar with using public transport).

We hope that this information assists you in understanding how the MontroseAccess team can support you and your child as they prepare to make the transition to adulthood. If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to discuss them with a member of your team.

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**montroseaccess.org.au**

(07) 3379 9200 | [info@montroseaccess.org.au](mailto:info@montroseaccess.org.au)

54 Consort St | PO Box 50, Corinda Q 4075

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