

Independence, Inc. Youth Transition Program

Building a more confident future. One step at a time.





Independence, Inc.

- Center for Independent Living (CIL)
- Every county across the nation is covered by a CIL
- Federal and State funded
- work with all ages, any type of disability
- person-centered planning
- all programs and services are delivered with the independent living philosophy at the core
- 5 core services (required for federal funding) - Youth Transition is one of those services



KYTN

- Kansas Youth Transition Network
- developed through a Federal Pathways to Partnership Grant
- funded through the Federal Department of Education and Kansas Department of Education
- purpose is to create collaboration, sustainability and innovation for greater outcomes in youth transition



YTAWC

- Youth Transition Alliance of Wyandotte County
- council made up of community organizations, service providers, educators, advocates, youth, families
- essential tool in building partnerships and collaboration
- professional development, capacity building, community events, school support



Youth Transition is...

✓ **Connection**
communities, opportunities,
peers, information, resources

✓ meeting youth
and families
where they are

✓ **Discovery:** helping youth discover and develop their
goals, interests, strengths, potential and
vision for the future

✓ Building
executive
function skills

Systems navigation

✓ Helping families navigate Medicaid,
Social Security, HCBS waivers, legal
documents, community resources,
applicat

Support

programs and services
tailored to each individual

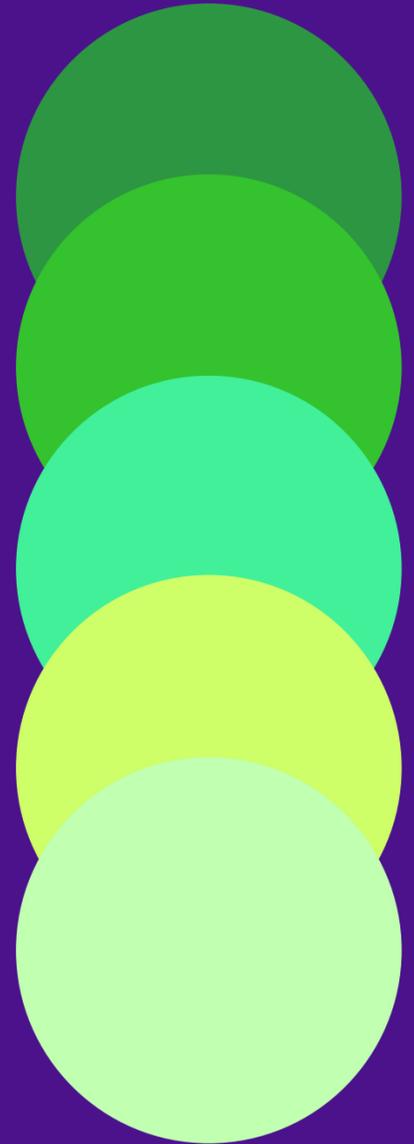
✓ **TEAMWORK!**
families, schools, community
organizations all working
together

✓ A critical building block
along the path to a
secure, accessible,
bright and thriving
future.

an essential part of
independent living skill-
building for youth and
young adults with disabilities

**Transition
services
can start as
early as age 10!**

**What
exactly
is
youth
transition?**



Why Transition Preparation Matters

Early transition support changes the narrative.

- from uncertainty to direction
- from reliance to self-advocacy and empowerment
- from dependence to independence
- lack of resources to community support
- from feelings of isolation to inclusion
- from just getting by to thriving

- **Early, specialized transition support helps families navigate services, reducing stress and fostering more inclusive, resilient communities.**
- **Transition training provides tools to navigate the workforce and community, which are proven skills to aid in the prevention of long-term reliance on crisis-based services**
- **Creates a life-long understanding of community support, inclusion and confidence in seeking and finding resources**
- **Creates a sense of self-awareness, identifies goals, challenges and strengths and gives a sense of direction**

A CIL's Roll in Transition Planning

Early transition support

- focuses on helping students with disabilities prepare for life after high school academically, professionally, and personally
- can begin as early as age 10, giving students time to explore interests, identify strengths, and build essential life skills.

This support may include:

- Self-advocacy training
- decision-making skills
- Executive functioning
- Career exploration and goal setting
- Workplace readiness
- Independent living and community navigation

When introduced early, these tools empower youth to actively shape their futures instead of reacting to limited options later.

Research and lived experience consistently show that students with disabilities who receive early transition and employment support are far more likely to obtain meaningful employment and live independently after graduation.

Early support allows youth to:

- Build confidence in their abilities
- Understand their rights and accommodations
- Develop communication and problem-solving skills
- Gain exposure to real-world work environments

Building Confidence is critical, not just for employment, but also for:

- Continuing education
- Independent living
- Healthy relationships
- Community involvement

Executive Function

weaving cognitive processing concepts into everything we do

Key Components

Working Memory:

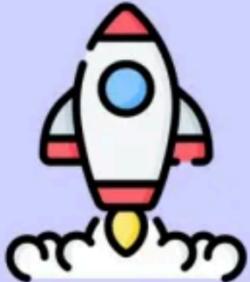
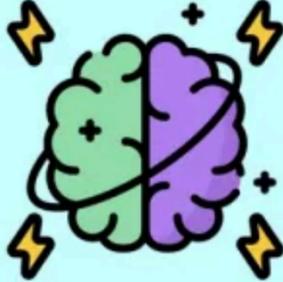
Holding and manipulating information over short periods.

Cognitive Flexibility:

Adjusting to new situations, shifting attention, and thinking outside the box.

Inhibitory Control (Self-Regulation):

Managing impulses, emotions, and resisting distractions.

Planning 	Organization 	Task Initiation 
Time Management 	a set of cognitive, brain-based skills that allow individuals to plan, focus, remember instructions, manage emotions, and juggle multiple tasks. These skills are important for youth with disabilities to achieve academic independence, regulate behavior, and manage daily life	Attention 
Self-Control 		Metacognition 
Working Memory 	Flexibility 	Perseverance 

Disruption Jeopardy

Executive Functions Addressed:

- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Self-Control
- Time Management
- Task Initiation
- Perseverance

Elite

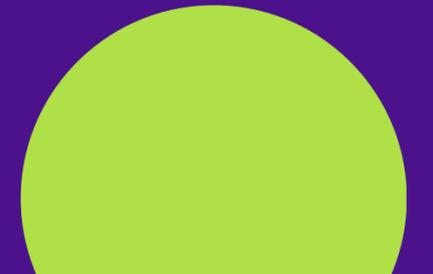
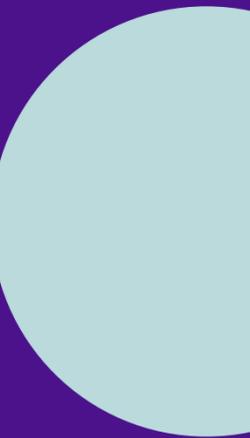
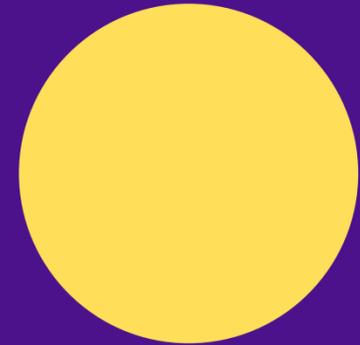




The Nuts & Bolts of Our Programs & Services

One-on-One,
Group and
In-Class
Support

- Self Advocacy Training
- Executive Function Skill-Building
- Community Involvement
- Systems Navigation & Application Assistance
- Peer Groups
- IEP Support
- Study Skills and Academic Support
- Information and Referral/Network of Partner Organizations
- Strengths, Needs, Interests Assessments
- Goal Setting Strategies and Support



1. My student doesn't engage with their classmates and feels isolated



Making connections can be hard at any age and in any circumstances. For youth with disabilities, it may be even more challenging to identify a friendship base and feel included.

We can help by:

- establishing peer group activities**
- teaching effective communication**
- working on self-advocacy and problem-solving skills**
- connecting youth to community activities and volunteer opportunities**
- identifying strengths, interests, and needs**

2.

We feel unprepared at IEP Meetings and don't know how to contribute



IEP meetings can feel intimidating to students and families.

IEP and 504 planning can be a complex process that many students and their families don't fully understand.

We can help by:

- **explaining the IEP/504 process in depth**
- **educating on student and family rights**
- **helping you set goals and plan for your IEP**
- **sitting in on IEP/504 meetings**
- **teaching self-advocacy skills**
- **helping build confidence through knowledge of the process**
- **Creating an IEP Podcast with your student**

3.

My child is about to start middle school - why would we start transition planning so early?



Transition planning and training is like any other necessity - starting early is key. Preparing for life after high school takes time and key building blocks can be set into place at an early age. We utilize long-term planning and thinking-ahead techniques to start laying the groundwork for a thriving future.

We can help by:

- early essential skill-building like problem-solving and critical thinking through fun and educational activities**
- helping to identify strengths and talents**
- creating vision boards and long-term goals**
- building effective communication strategies**

4. I don't think my child will ever be able to work or attend college



Unfortunately, this thinking is all around us and grew out of wide-spread discrimination against people with disabilities prior to the Civil Rights Movement - and still creates an attitudinal barrier to independent living to this day. With programs, services, supports, training, advocacy and knowing your rights, nearly anyone can work and learn.

We can help by:

- educating on disability rights law**
- explaining reasonable accommodations**
- identifying strengths, weaknesses and barriers to employment or education**
- identifying assistive technology needs**
- training in employment readiness skills**

5.

My child doesn't have a formal diagnosis but is struggling in school



We don't require an official medical diagnosis to work with your student. If your child self-identifies as having a disability, we can help. Many disorders like ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Dyslexia, Sensory Disorders and even difficulty hearing and low vision can often go undiagnosed.

We can help by:

- **listening to your experience and needs and connecting you to appropriate resources**
- **working on social skill-building and peer relations**
- **advocating for accommodations - even if there is not a formal IEP or 504**

The Process



1. Contact us

Office: 1101 Haskell Ave. Suite 201
Kansas City, KS 66109
upstairs in the Discover Vision Center

General office number: 913-553-3680

Amy Ballinger, KYTN Manager
aballinger@independenceinc.org, 785-371-1646

Elle Jennings
rjennings@independenceinc.org, 785-371-1634

Will Colling, Independent Living Specialist
wcollins@independenceinc.org, 913-533-3680 ext. 122



3. Fill out intake form

We are federally and state funded and have to track all of our work. This is short, simple form to gather information for reporting purposes.

4. Fill out brief KYTN “survey”

This is for the Federal and State Department of Education for them to gather information

2. Set up an initial meeting

Set up a time to meet so we can get to know you and your student. We can meet

- in our office
- at school (if approved by the school)
- at your home
- in a public space (library, coffee shop etc.)

5. Let the work begin! (it’s actually more like fun!)

- Create goals
- Create a transition plan
- set up regular meetings, programs or services accordingly
- track our progress
- celebrate milestones!



Key Takeaways

CIL's youth transition and employment readiness programs are designed to meet young people where they are and grow with them over time. Through guided exploration, skill-building, and real-world preparation, we help youth move from uncertainty to confidence and from potential to opportunity.

The earlier we start, the stronger the future becomes.

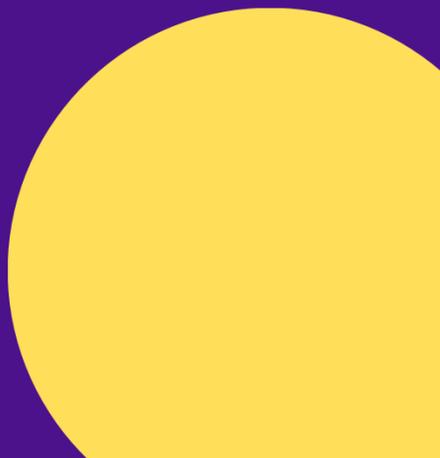
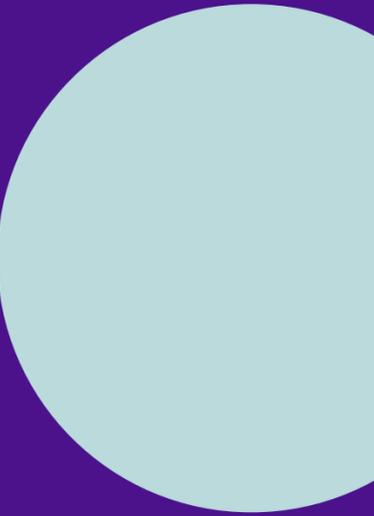
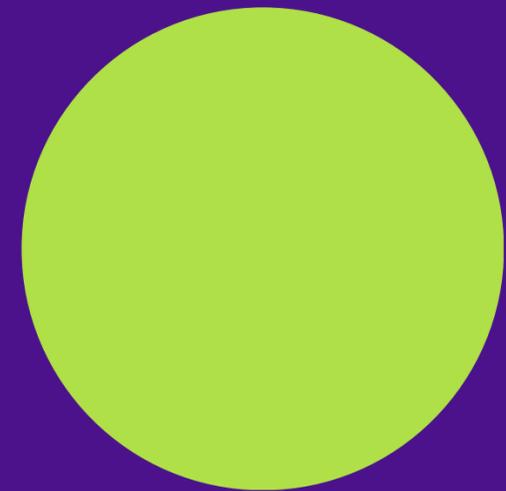
Early transition support doesn't just benefit individuals, it strengthens entire communities.

When young people with disabilities receive intentional, early support, they gain more than skills, they gain confidence, independence and real opportunity.

The need for self-confidence:
Young people must believe in themselves. Early transition programs help youth recognize their strengths, learn to advocate for their needs, and feel empowered to make choices about their own lives. When youth feel capable and supported, they are more likely to take risks, pursue goals, and envision a future that includes independence and fulfillment.

Q&A

**Ask us
anything...**



Resources

KYTN Informational Flyers

<https://independenceinc.org/wp-content/uploads/KYTN-Flyers-1.pdf>

Independence, Inc. Website - KYTN

<https://independenceinc.org/kansas-youth-transition-network/>

Youth Transition Alliance of Wyandotte County

<https://www.facebook.com/ytawc/>

Independence, Inc. KYTN Program Brochure

<https://independenceinc.org/wp-content/uploads/KYTN-Brochure.pdf>

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