

The Need For Health Care Transition: Bottom Line

With today's technological and medical advances, up to **90% of youth with chronic illnesses and disabilities will reach the age of 20.** (Source—Blum, 1995)

The National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (2002) results show only 16.4% of the respondents reported health care transition had been addressed in a comprehensive manner. Thirty percent identified their doctor had talked about shifting care to adult providers.

In a survey of college students conducted in 1995, nearly 25,000 students or **16%** identified themselves as having a health-related disability. (Source—Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000)

What is Health Care Transition?

Health care transition is the process of moving/transferring an adolescent from pediatric care providers to adult care providers. The transition is successful if the following conditions are met:

1. Young adults take charge of their lives, including health care.
2. Parents gradually “let go” of the care of their children.
3. Health care providers support this process.

The Role of the Pediatric Health Care Provider

1. Assist the youth with finding adult providers.
2. Relate to the youth as an individual and allow the youth to make decisions, ask questions about their care.
3. Educate the youth about their condition.
4. Provide information about adult services, settings and adult role expectations and give opportunities to practice adult behaviors related to decision-making, acquiring information and giving consent.
5. Meet or talk with adult service providers, (ideally with the youth present) to ensure continuity of care.
6. Summarize pertinent medical information from childhood to be passed on to adult care providers.

Strategies For Effective Transition Planning

Transition plans can be developed by utilizing a transition planning checklist that follows normal adolescent development from the age of 11 through age 22. Transition planning should proceed at the youth's pace according to their physical and cognitive abilities, psychological, emotional and behavioral stability, family and social supports and general health.

Within this framework, strategies can be divided into four (4) main content areas: Medical Care, Education, Employment and Recreation.

A Health Care Checklist can also be utilized to assess the health care skills of the youth. The youth can complete the checklist and discuss the areas that need improvement. A plan can then be developed to address these concerns before the youth turns 18.