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Experiences of Professionals Supporting Community Living Transitions

Transitioning individuals to community living is a complex process involving many stakeholders. In order to better understand the process we spoke with transition team members about their experiences. Four themes emerged. Three themes identified strategies that contribute to effective transitions. The fourth theme, *challenges*, must also be considered.

What is this research about?

Supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (PwIDD) in the transition from institution to community living is a multi-faceted process and transition team members play an important role. We spoke to team members to learn more about the process from their perspectives. We wanted to find out what worked, and what didn't during transitions to date.

What did the researchers do?

We held a focus group with professionals currently supporting PwIDD who are transitioning to community living. We asked them to share their experiences with the transition process to help identify successes and barriers.

What did the researchers find?

We found that four themes emerged from the focus group discussion. The first theme, using a *client-centered* and *individualized approach*, influenced and guided the other themes. Overall, successful transition planning was described as a flexible process. Flexibility helps to ensure individual needs can be met in a new community setting.

The second and third themes were *communication* and *collaboration*. Both are important to help ensure client-centered and individualized care is provided. Many stakeholders are involved in the transition process, including the individuals and their families, community agencies, and external systems. Collaboration with all these stakeholders is needed throughout the process. Communication should also be maintained while the person settles into their new home. Continued communication enables a holistic person-centred plan, which is the overall goal.

What you need to know:

We wanted to learn about the process of transitioning people to community living. We asked team members about their experiences helping people with a transition. Four main themes emerged when we spoke to transition team members. Using a client-centered and individualized approach was a central theme. Collaboration and communication were other important themes identified. Challenges was the fourth theme.

The fourth theme, *challenges* to a successful transition, must also be considered. Challenges can impact and influence the team's ability to be client-centered and provide individualized care. However, participants indicated that acknowledging challenges is part of the process. Identifying barriers actually helps support future transitions. All four themes need to be considered as they interact and positively influence one another.

Why is it important?

Moving to a community setting is a major life change with the potential to significantly impact a person's quality of life. We identified effective strategies to support people in



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their transition to community living. What we have learned from this study will help with planning successful transitions in the future. We demonstrated that examining the transition process does assist in identifying strategies and barriers. In turn, this knowledge provides new considerations to improve the overall transition process.

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Additional Resources

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Project completed 2016. Please see: <http://stamant.ca/research/our-research/project-summaries/> for more project summaries.