Suggestions for Transitioning to Adulthood

Teens and young adults should be active participants in the transition to adult services. This is a time for parental support without being overprotective. "Letting go" is a necessary process experienced by both parent and young adult. Where do you start? Choose a goal that your young adult feels is most important to his or her independence and identify "safety nets." Safety nets are smaller steps taken to achieve independence and the support that is needed to assist them on their journey. Having these safety nets in place will make it much easier to transfer the responsibility to your young adult.

Following is a list of some of the health concerns parents should consider in their child's transition to adulthood. ***This does not include individuals whose disability requires legal guardianship by another person.***

< Guardianship

- At age 18, in most states, adolescents reach the age of majority and are expected to make decisions about their own care.
- Parents discover, by law, their young adult cannot be dependent forever.
- Begin to think and plan for YOUR future as your teen becomes a young adult.
- Please contact Wyoming Guardianship Corporation at (307) 635-8422 for information on Guardianship.

< SSI (short for Supplemental Security Income)

- A person of any age can receive SSI, if they are disabled and meet the income and asset limits. In the case of minor children who live with their parents. We must also consider the parents' income and assets. Once a child is 18**,** parental income or assets are no longer considered.
- Disabled means you have a physical or mental problem that keeps you from working and is expected to last at least a year or to result in death.
- For more information about benefits for your young adult, please contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.
- Take a look at SSA's **Listings** of Impairments and analyze if your disability(ies) may qualify: http://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/listing-impairments.htm

< Healthcare providers

- Allow time for your teen or young adult and the doctor to be alone during an appointment. It is important that he/she have time to ask the doctor questions when you are not present. This conveys to the doctor that they are competent to ask personal questions and get correct information.
- You and your young adult should talk to your doctor about his or her future medical needs.

< Healthcare after graduation from high school

- Who is responsible for making doctor appointments and getting prescriptions filled?
- Does your young adult know about his or her illness or disability?
- Do they know their rights to medical information, to decline services, and to understand complications of a medical procedure?
- Are they able to communicate their needs to the doctor or be comfortable in asking that all communication be written down to help them remember correctly?
- Who is responsible for hiring and firing live-in attendants to assist your young adult through the day or evening?
- There is a free guide you may find helpful in the decisions and choices ahead of you and your child: **Parents' Guide to Transition: What Happens After High School?** You can find it on the internet at http://www.pluk.org/trans.html . It will answer many of the questions listed above as well as others.

< Addressing your young adult's health needs on the job, Mental Health issues

- Who is responsible for scheduling of medication to be taken while at work?
- Is it necessary for an employer or a mentor to know about medications and the effects it could have on your young adult while they are at work? (Consider work schedule versus medication schedule.)
- Are there certain tasks and/or machinery that should not be assigned?

< Sexuality

- What is sexuality? It is having friends, caring about others, being needed, being loved and having opportunities to be with others. It is also holding hands, putting a head on a shoulder, hugging,

touching or kissing. Ignoring sexuality has profound effects on body image, self-identity and self-esteem in the teen or young adult.

- Knowing the answers to sexual questions reduces vulnerability. Parents are in the best position to teach sexuality to their teen or young adult. Parents are the constant in their child's life and they know them best. If you need further resources to introduce your teen or young adult to his or her sexuality, don't be afraid to ask for help. Disability organizations, parenting groups, teachers and doctors can provide resources and information.

< Health insurance, medication and appliances

- The ***FIRST STEP*** is to read your insurance policy or call your claims representative at your insurance company to find out what age your young adult may lose coverage on the family health insurance.
- If your teenager turns 18, completes high school and does not go on for further schooling, he or she may no longer be eligible for the family's insurance.
- Involve your young adult in discussions about healthcare financing.
- Learn what questions to ask as you explore insurance options. Be sure the plan will meet your young adult's needs. Here are some questions to consider:
    - What are the specific needs of your young adult?
    - What are the medication costs?
    - Does the plan cover home care?
    - Does the plan cover durable medical equipment (i.e., wheelchair, glucose monitors)?
    - Is physical, occupational or speech therapy covered in the plan?
- The State of Wyoming, Department of Health has the following resources that may benefit you in obtaining coverage and/or services through adulthood:
    - Medicaid – Once an individual turns 18, Medicaid no longer considers the parent's income when determining financial eligibility. Medicaid provides coverage for children up to age 19. Apply at the local Department of Family Services office for coverage.
    - The Wyoming Prescription Drug Assistance Program
      *Need to apply at the local Department of Family Services office, one month prior to age 19.
      http://wdh.state.wy.us/healthcarefin/pharmacy/index.html
    - Wyoming Health Insurance Pool
      PO Box 2419
      Cheyenne, WY 82003
      1-800-442-2376
      http://insurance.state.wy.us/whip.html