

School Leavers Program

TRANSITION PLANNING GUIDE



Program developed by
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Disability Support Program, Department of Opportunities and Social Development

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Introduction

Overview and Purpose

The **School Leavers Program** pairs students with a community-based planner called a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) who will work alongside them, their family, their Student Planning Team, and the community to build a transition plan. This plan is to support their transition to live a full life in community. Transition planning for life after school is an important part of every student's journey.

Nova Scotia is acting on several changes recommended in the Human Rights Remedy – a legally binding agreement that guides government's work to transform the disability support system in Nova Scotia. One of the recommendations was to work with students who are transitioning into community life and adulthood.

One of the biggest changes with the Human Rights Remedy is that the LAC is trained and prepared to help students plan for a good life in their community after graduation from high school – not just in terms of their disability-related needs, but what it means to them to live a good life in the community after they graduate.

A **School Leaver** is a youth enrolled in the School Leavers Program with a disability or disabilities who is preparing to leave the school system and planning for valued roles, community life, and supports after graduation.

This guide is meant to support everyone involved in transition planning for the School Leavers Program, including LACs, parents/guardians, students, and school-based Student Planning Teams (SPT).

As the LAC builds relationships alongside School Leavers, information will be added to the guide. The information gathering will be led by School Leavers and the support person of their choice.

Goals of this Guide

This guide is designed to:

1. Support LACs to provide School Leavers the tools they need build the life they want to live.
2. Provide tips that support active participation of School Leavers, their families, and/or support networks in the transition planning process.
3. Provide information on supporting a collaborative approach to transition planning.
4. Promote transition planning that enables School Leavers to choose meaningful opportunities in their communities that are related to their skills and goals.

What is the Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy?

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy is a legally binding agreement that resulted in a five-year plan to transform the disability support system in Nova Scotia.

There was a complaint filed against the province of Nova Scotia by three people with disabilities along with the Disability Rights Coalition (DRC). They said the government was discriminating against people with disabilities. The complaint was linked to actions by several government departments, including Opportunities and Social Development (OSD; formerly Community Services), Health and Wellness, Growth and Development (formerly Infrastructure and Housing), and Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

The DRC and OSD worked with experts to create the Remedy, a plan to end discrimination and improve how supports are provided in Nova Scotia. The Remedy identified four problems:

1. **Unnecessary Institutionalization** – People with disabilities were placed in institutions or hospitals when they did not need to be.
2. **Right to Assistance** – Some people who were eligible for help were not getting the support they needed.
3. **Denial of Community of Choice** – People were often sent to live far from their families and friends instead of in their chosen community.
4. **Delays in Assistance** – Many people waited a long time to get help, even though they were legally entitled to it.

The Remedy aims to address these issues and make sure people with disabilities in Nova Scotia are treated fairly. The School Leavers Program is one of the initiatives outlined in the Remedy.

For more information about the Remedy, please visit:
<https://www.dsp-transformation.ca/remedy-overview>

What is a Local Area Coordinator?

One of the roles identified in the Human Rights Remedy is the Local Area Coordinator (LAC). Local Area Coordination is a local, accessible, inclusive and connected approach to supporting individuals with disabilities and their families/support networks to build and pursue their vision for a good life within welcoming, inclusive, and supportive communities.

The purpose of Local Area Coordination within the School Leaver Program is to:

- Work alongside School Leavers to understand their hopes and dreams for what a good life in community looks like for them, utilizing templates like the **School Leavers Program – My Transition Plan Workbook** (the Workbook);
- Increase the capacity and resilience of individuals, families, communities and service systems; and
- Enhance access to, connections with and contribution to natural community opportunities, supports, and resources.

The following guiding principles provide a foundation for the work of Local Area Coordinators

- **Citizenship:** All people in our communities have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in and contribute to the life of the community, respecting and supporting their identity, beliefs, values and practices.
- **Relationships:** Families, friends, and personal networks are the foundations of a rich and valued life in the community.
- **Natural Authority:** People and their families are experts in their own lives, have knowledge about themselves and their communities and are best placed to make their own decisions.
- **Lifelong Learning:** All people have a lifelong capacity for learning, development and contribution.
- **Information:** Access to accurate, timely and relevant information supports informed decision making, choice and control.
- **Choice & Control:** Individuals, often with support of their families and personal networks, are best placed to lead in making their own decisions and plan, choose and control supports, services, and resources.
- **Community:** Communities are further enriched by the inclusion and participation of all people and these communities are the most important way of building friendship, support, and a meaningful life.
- **Contribution:** We value and encourage the strengths, knowledge, skills and contribution that all individuals, families, and communities bring.
- **Working Together:** Effective partnerships with individuals/families, communities and services are vital in strengthening the rights and opportunities for people and their families to achieve their vision for a good life, inclusion, and contribution.

- **Complementary Nature of Services:** Services should support and complement the role of individuals, families and communities in supporting people to achieve their aspirations for a good life.

Who Developed this Guide?

Information in this guide includes research and materials from various perspectives, including School Leavers, their families, teachers, and a working group of representatives from OSD and EECD.

A survey was conducted amongst school graduates, students, their parents/guardians, and school support staff to build first voice into the program. Based on the findings of the survey, the experiences of school graduates, students, their parents/guardians, and school support staff were built into this guide where appropriate.

This survey examined the current transition planning practices for students with disabilities across Nova Scotia focusing on strengths, gaps, and opportunities to improve support as students prepare to leave high school and begin adulthood. We heard from over 50 people which included current students, recent graduates, families, and education staff across the province. The findings from this research were incorporated in the development of the School Leavers Program beginning in Fall 2025.

While not representative of all experiences, this research highlights that transition planning for students with disabilities in Nova Scotia must improve to support their needs. In summary, five (5) key themes were found:

1. Inconsistent Implementation of Transition Planning

Although 64% of participants reported that transition planning was included in students' IPPs, many students and families were unaware of this connection. Education staff reported high awareness of applicable policies (80%), but **only 36% felt confident** in implementing them. Students (48%) and families (73%) were **less likely to recognize or recall transition planning**, indicating a gap between policy and practice.

2. Need for Earlier, More Inclusive Planning

Best practices recommend transition planning start around 14 years old, in line with current departmental policy. However, **many students reported either starting their transition planning in Grade 12 or not at all**. Rural areas more frequently reported earlier planning (Grades 9/10), while urban areas saw a delayed start. Students, families, and education staff expressed a strong desire for earlier, more inclusive planning that focuses on **real-world skills such as independence, communication, and financial literacy** to gradually support the transition into adulthood.

3. Gaps in Post-School Supports and Awareness

There were frequent reports of students and families **feeling unsupported and left to navigate transitions alone**. While staff recognized the value of strong relationships with community organizations, students and families did not always share the same experiences. Differences in reporting about who was typically a part of the planning team suggested mismatched expectations across groups.

4. Delays in Assistance

After graduation, students and families face **long waitlists, unclear pathways, and inconsistent availability of supports**. Some students choose to stay in school until they turn 21 because they are comfortable, while others default due to a lack of clear alternatives. Schools try to bridge this gap but **need help due to limited staff, resources, and awareness**.

5. All Parties are Impacted

Students often carry the weight of uncertainty and disconnection when their voices are not centered, revealing that **transition challenges affect everyone involved**. Families, especially caregivers, report significant emotional strain and economic concerns about their own future when the student graduates. Education staff also feel limited by **structural constraints such as staffing, funding, and program waitlists**.

These findings align well with national and international transition planning practices reviewed by the project committee. The following six (6) themes were found through external research analyzing transition planning processes around the world:

1. School Feels Safer Than the Unknown

Students with disabilities often stay in school as long as they can — not always because they are still learning, but because they and **their support networks do not feel ready for what comes next**. They may face a “black hole” with limited adult services, few community options, and uncertainty about their future. Without coordinated support, the emotional, financial, and physical impact can be significant for both students and their families.

2. Students Need Support to Reach their Goals

Many students want to work, continue their education, build meaningful connections, and be independent after high school. **Students with disabilities, unfortunately, face more barriers in reaching these goals**. Without appropriate support, many end up in segregated programs or unable to find meaningful opportunities. The system needs to match the ambition students already possess to help them find opportunities in their communities.

3. Transitions Work Better when Everyone is Involved

When **students, families, teachers, and service providers work together, transitions go more smoothly**. Excluding students or their support network can lead to plans inconsistent with their goals, strengths, or needs, so students and families should always be involved.

4. Planning Too Late Makes the Process Harder

Delayed or **last-minute planning increases worry and reduces the likelihood of smooth transitions**. Evidence from New Zealand, Scotland, and British Columbia notes transition planning should start in early teenage years (e.g., age 14) and extending support into adulthood (e.g., up to age 25).

5. Monitoring Can Keep Transition Plans on Track

Regular reviews and check-ins are **essential to track progress and adjust transition plans** to fit evolving needs and circumstances. Best practice frameworks (e.g., Scottish and New Zealand models) emphasize structured follow-ups and progress measurement, though it can be hard to monitor after graduation.

6. The Right Support Leads to Better Outcomes

When students receive person-centred, community-based, and coordinated supports, they are **more likely to access employment, education, and meaningful community roles**. Lack of support often leads to placement in segregated programs or prolonged stays in school purely for stability

This research highlights that transition planning for students with disabilities in Nova Scotia must improve to support their needs. Transition planning must begin earlier, be more inclusive, and address real-world needs like housing, life skills, and community participation.

The School Leavers Program supports these needs by pairing students with Local Area Coordinators (LACs) who collaborate with families, schools, and communities to create personalized plans. Rooted in the Human Rights Remedy, the program helps bridge school and community supports, preventing crises and ensuring meaningful, student-centered transitions.

School Leaver Transition Planning

What is Transition Planning?

Transition planning is intended to support School Leavers as they explore options for the future that aligns with their hopes and dreams. Person-centred planning can focus on students' strengths, challenges, interests, values, aspirations, and goals. School Leavers and the people who support them can implement their plans.

It is important that transition planning is an engaging first voice process that considers current and future student supports and resources.

Transition planning within the School Leavers Program should be coordinated with School Leavers, LACs, families/support networks, school staff, and community partners. Supports should address School Leavers' education, employment, social development, income assistance, housing, healthcare, and advocacy centred around their personal goals.

Here is a link to the EECD *Transition: A Lifelong Process* document:

https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/Transition_WEB.pdf

What is the Inclusive Education Policy?

The Inclusive Education Policy ensures schools support the well-being and achievement of every student through a commitment of high-quality, culturally and language appropriate and equitable education to all.

The Inclusive Education Policy centres student voice and focuses on equity by supporting success for students who are historically marginalized and racialized (African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students) or who come from other groups that have been traditionally under-represented and under-served, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and those struggling with poverty.

Parents/guardians, families, and the broader community, including Health and Wellness, Opportunities and Social Development, and Justice, are identified and welcomed as key partners in education, who work together in an accepting, respectful, and supportive manner that honours all students' cultural identities and values their experiences and world views to support student success.

The School Leavers Program directly reinforces the principles of the Inclusive Education Policy by providing space and time to hear School Leavers' hopes and dreams for their future and connecting them to the supports to help them transition from high school to adulthood. The Inclusive Education Policy commits to ensuring high-quality, equitable education, and supports for all students. The School Leavers Program aims to ensure that

the commitment to inclusion extends beyond the school years, fostering independence and successful participation in community life for all Nova Scotian learners.

Here is a link to the *Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy* document:

<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/inclusiveeducationpolicyen.pdf>

Who is Involved in Transition Planning?

With first voice at the center of the plan, planning will look different for each School Leaver. This may include different approaches to building their plans, the people involved, and where they meet with their LAC. Five main groups that are involved in transition planning could include:

- **School Leavers:** When School Leavers are involved and have choices about their future, they achieve better results. It is important that School Leavers are the voice of the planning, so their plans reflect who they are and what they want.
- **Families/Support Network:** Families and/or the student's support network play a significant role in successful transition planning. They help identify the student's strengths, create plans, and advocate for them when needed. Their involvement is essential.
- **Local Area Coordinator (LAC):** LACs are based in communities across Nova Scotia. They assist School Leavers and their families/support networks, connect with local services in their community, and facilitate the transition planning process.
- **Student Planning Team (SPT):** Student Planning Teams support the identified well-being and achievement of individual students. The SPT is a collaborative team that can include students, parents/guardians, administrators, teachers, specialists, outside agencies and community partners that support the student. The student and the parents/guardians bring valuable insights, are valued members of their SPT, and will be supported and involved in decisions around additional programming and/or supports for the student.
- **Community Partners:** Community organizations may be important in transition planning. They provide services and supports that help make the move from school to adulthood successful for School Leavers and their families and/or support networks).

School Leavers are at the heart of the planning and decision-making process. The approach to student planning should be guided by choice, inclusion, and independence. Family voice is important but does not replace the need for School Leavers' involvement.

Who is Eligible for the School Leavers Program?

The School Leavers Program for 2025-2026 focuses on Grade 12 students who will be transitioning from school to roles and opportunities within their community upon graduation. The Program will centre on Grade 12 students who have:

- an intellectual developmental disability and/or one or more significant disabilities
- support from a multi-disciplinary team (including Learning Support Teachers and other supports)
- an Individual Program Plan (in the areas of functional academics, social development, and life skills) with a focus on transition planning from school-to-community.

How do LACs help School Leavers Develop a Transition Plan?

LACs work alongside School Leavers, their families/extended support networks, and community partners to develop a first voice transition plan. Transition plans will be tailored to individual School Leavers and their strengths, challenges, interests, values, aspirations, and goals.

This process is intended to compliment and align with existing school-based transition planning. It *does not* replace existing efforts in schools.

The steps below outline the process.

Step 1: Assignment

- Once eligible students are selected to be invited to register for the School Leavers Program, the student and parent/guardian will be sent an invitation with information on how to register via email and physical mail.
- The registration/consent form includes a privacy notice and informs registrants that it will require the collection of personal information. Eligible students become School Leavers once the registration information is received by the Disability Support Program and EECD.
- School Leavers will be paired with an LAC by the Disability Support Program and informed of their pairing by phone, email, and/or letter.
- LACs will create a case file for each of their assigned School Leavers where they will record meeting notes.

Step 2: Get to Know the School Leaver

- Step 2 of planning focuses on the LAC learning about the School Leaver (the student), getting to know them and building trust. This may include learning about their:
 - Goals, skills, and talents
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Culture, language, and community connections
 - Communication style and health needs
- Over the course of the 2025-2026 school year, whenever possible, the School Leaver, their family/support network, and the LACs may meet with the Student Planning Team, and transition planning information will be shared with the school team which may inform the TIENET Transition Plan.
- The LAC will share the ***School Leavers Program – My Transition Plan Workbook*** (the Workbook) with the School Leaver.
- LAC responsibilities will include:
 - Recording the School Leaver’s transition plan. Every plan is unique and tailored to the School Leaver’s goals, hopes, and dreams.
 - Documenting the progress that School Leavers and their families/support networks have made in their Workbook, which includes questions to facilitate School Leaver Team meetings and templates to collaboratively fill in.
 - Adhering to all applicable privacy legislation and regulations. Notes may be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Notes should be accurate, factual, professional, and concise. The LAC will ensure the proper storage of personal information for any assigned School Leaver.

Step 3: Build a School Leaver Team

- A School Leaver Team helps School Leavers develop a transition plan focused on their goals, hopes, and dreams. To do this, the team should be balanced with different perspectives.
- LACs are responsible for forming the School Leaver Team with the School Leaver. Members of the School Leaver Team can include:
 - The School Leaver
 - Parent(s) or guardian(s)
 - Community Partners
 - Members of the School Leaver’s support network
 - School Staff
- Once the School Leaver Team is assembled, work can begin on a transition plan.

Step 4: Develop the Transition Plan

- There are five big questions the transition plan should answer:
 - What are the School Leaver’s goals, hopes, and dreams?
 - What skills do they need to achieve their goals, hopes, and dreams?
 - What local programs, services, and supports can support these goals, hopes, and dreams?
 - What gaps or barriers exist within programs, services, or supports that need to be addressed?
 - What are the responsibilities of the School Leaver, school, community partners, and family/extended support network in meeting those goals, hopes, and dreams?
- Answers to the questions above can inform action items to meet the School Leaver’s short-term and long-term goals. Each member of the School Leaver Team may play an important role and can be assigned a task they are responsible for completing.
- Developing a transition plan is a dynamic and ongoing process. The School Leaver Team will consider with the School Leaver their goals, hopes, and dreams, and related programming and services available in their region, including:
 - My Health
 - Skills and Working
 - Life and Social Skills
 - Living Arrangements
 - Managing my Money
 - Family, Friends, and Community
 - Leisure and Recreation
 - Transportation
 - Advocating for Myself
 - My Plans for My Future – Transition Plan Summary
 - Support Network
- The transition plan can also list services and supports the School Leaver currently uses. The plan should address identified gaps and list services needed to achieve the School Leaver’s goals, hopes, and dreams.
- School Leavers and their families/support networks will have their own copy of the Workbook so they can reflect ideas and document action items in meetings.

- Each section of the Workbook includes things to consider and/or prompting questions to guide conversations and discussions.
 - *The Workbook is not to be completed in one meeting but can be completed over time the course of many meetings. It can be filled out in whatever order fits with the School Leaver’s goals, hopes, and dreams.*
- School Leavers and their families/support networks will work together to keep their Workbook in a safe place and refrain from including personal information as noted in the Workbook.

Step 5: Implement and Update the Transition Plan

- Assign specific roles and responsibilities to members of the School Leaver Team to ensure accountability.
- Communicate with members of the School Leaver Team. Make sure team members stay accountable to one another, and tasks are completed on time.
- The School Leaver Team works with the LAC to schedule follow-up meetings to update the plan as needed. LACs can schedule regular School Leaver Team meetings to review and update the plan.
- School Leavers are encouraged to share their updated transition plan with their Student Planning Team.

Step 6: Review the Transition Plan at the End of the School Year

- Once the School Leaver is near the end of high school and preparing to transition into community, the LAC will organize a planning session with their School Leaver Team.
 - If the School Leaver wishes, they can continue to work into adulthood with their LAC.
 - The School Leaver transition plan is a living document and can be adapted as the School Leaver enters adulthood.
- During this planning session, the School Leaver Team will discuss completed tasks and objectives. They will consider potential next steps for the School Leaver, their family, and support network to continue achieving the School Leaver’s goals, hopes, and dreams.
- If appropriate, key information will be communicated to the Student Planning Team at the final IPP review or another dedicated transition planning meeting with the school.

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Leaver Team

School Leavers

- Directs their own path.
- Contributes to the transition plan on an ongoing basis.
- Attends the School Leaver Team transition planning meetings.
- Leads School Leaver Team meetings where possible and desired.
- Shares their personal preferences, interests, skills, goals, hopes, and dreams, and needs with the team (with support, as needed).
- Asks questions and provide information to the team on various issues that they want to address such as My Health, Skills and Working, Life and Social Skills, Living Arrangements, Managing my Money, Family, Friends, and Community, Leisure and Recreation, Transportation, and Advocating for Myself.
- Takes responsibility for working towards their goals and completing the tasks listed in the transition plan.

Family/Support Network

- Attends transition planning meetings.
- Supports their School Leaver for participation in the process.
- Leads School Leaver Team meetings where possible and desired.
- Provides valuable insight into the cultural and linguistic background and preferences of their family.
- Shares their students and their own preferences, interests, skills, goals, and needs.
- Liaises between the Student Planning Team and the School Leaver Team, as appropriate.
- Focuses the School Leaver Team's efforts on the School Leaver and family's needs and goals.
- Provides their student with opportunities to learn and practice foundational skills, such as problem solving, assertiveness, self-advocacy, stress management, and other skills that support active participation in the transition planning process.
- Provides information on the programs and support services that are accessed by and available to their student.

Local Area Coordinators

- Takes the time to get to know the School Leaver(s).
- Coordinates and schedules School Leaver Team meetings.
- Attends Student Planning Team meetings with school, when appropriate and invited.
- Coordinates the writing of the transition plan using the templates provided in the Workbook.
- Obtains commitment for follow-up action and ensures that all participants are clear on the specific tasks/actions they need to carry out.
- Regularly monitors and evaluates the implementation of the transition plan.
- Maintains applicable transition plan documentation and case files in accordance with privacy legislation and regulations.
- Works with School Leavers, family members, support networks, and others to find solutions if disputes arise.
- Connects School Leavers to community and supports.

Community Partners

- Attends the School Leaver Team meetings, as appropriate.
- Assists and supports School Leavers and their family/support networks to discuss their needs and goals.
- Follows up and completes their assigned tasks as part of the transition plan.
- Provides informal supports, where appropriate and if possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why create a program to help transition students from school to community when schools already do transition planning?

The School Leavers Program does not replace other supports a student may receive, such as school-based transition planning with a Student Planning Team. Students in the School Leavers Program will have the opportunity to work with the Local Area Coordinator who will support their transition from school to community. This new approach will help to more effectively and intentionally strengthen the bridge between the public education system and the programming and services offered through the Disability Support Program (DSP).

The School Leavers Program was developed in response to the findings of the *Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination Against Nova Scotians with Disabilities*, also known as the Remedy. It states, “intentional efforts targeting school leavers can prevent crisis and out of community placement while creating local community pathways. More information about The Remedy can be found here: <https://www.dsp-transformation.ca/>

How often will the LACs be meeting with the School Leaver and/or family?

The frequency of meetings with the LAC will be determined based on needs identified by the student and their family/support network. LACs may also attend Student Planning Team meetings.

What does the School Leavers Program mean for schools?

The School Leavers Program is an additional support to students with an intellectual developmental disability and/or one or more significant disabilities as they plan for community life beyond school. The Program does not replace school-based transition planning, which remains an important part of a student’s Individual Program Plan (IPP).

Through the School Leaver Program, students are paired with a community-based planner called a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) who will work with them, their family, their Student Planning Team (SPT), and the community to support their transition plan.

The LAC continues to work with the student and family to develop and support their transition plan. The School Leaver Program will look different for each student as they decide how and where they meet with their LAC and what community resources and opportunities to explore. The LAC may continue to support the student after high school completion.

How were students selected for the School Leavers Program?

The School Leaver Program will support 100 students, focusing on Grade 12 students, starting Fall 2025. Students who are eligible for the School Leavers Program were identified by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). A randomized selection process was used to select students who were then invited to register for the program.

Program spaces were allocated in proportion to the number of students who met the criteria from high schools within the Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP). The School Leavers program also includes designated spaces for eligible Mi'kmaw/ Indigenous/and African Nova Scotian/Black students who self-identified.

For every student, whether they are in the School Leavers Program or not, transition planning is a mandated component of the Individual Program Plan (IPP). Starting at age 14, transition planning forms part of a student's annual plan.

Can anyone with a disability be a part of the School Leavers Program?

The School Leavers Program currently focuses on Grade 12 students who will be transitioning from school to roles and opportunities within their community. The Program will centre on Grade 12 students who have:

- an intellectual developmental disability and/or one or more significant disabilities
- support from a multi-disciplinary team (including Learning Support Teachers and other supports)
- an Individual Program Plan (in the areas of functional academics, social development, and life skills) with a focus on transition planning from school-to-community.

What personal information is needed for the School Leavers Program?

Students invited to participate in the School Leavers program complete the Registration form which includes a Privacy Notice. Personal information submitted during registration is shared with DSP staff, including LACs, and may be shared with other individuals involved in the School Leaver Team and/or other community-based service providers, as applicable.

Information will be used to facilitate the School Leavers Program, specifically to develop a student transition plan and to work with the student until they leave school. Personal information will not be disclosed to another government entity or third party without your express consent or as authorized by law.

Personal information for the purpose of registration in and facilitation of the School Leavers Program is authorized by and will be consistent with the requirements of the Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Appendix A: School Leaver Personas

The following four personas illustrate a range of students that Local Area Coordinators (LACs) may support through the School Leavers Program. These fictional examples reflect a diversity of experiences, needs, strengths, and community contexts of youth with disabilities across Nova Scotia.

Each persona is designed to help LACs understand how transition planning can be personalized, culturally responsive, and grounded in the School Leaver's goals and support network. These scenarios can be used in training or team discussions to explore how the program can be adapted in real-life situations.

School Leaver Persona 1 – John

John is an 18-year-old student with an intellectual developmental disability who lives in Kentville. He spends time during the school day in a learning centre setting and has the support of a Teacher Assistant (TA). John has a full Individual Program Plan (IPP) that focuses on developing his life skills, social interactions, knowledge and functional academic skills.



John dreams of working at a local grocery store, as he enjoys helping people and organizing things. He also wants to improve his social skills and learn to travel independently within his community. The Local Area Coordinator (LAC) works alongside John and his family to collaboratively develop the **My Transition Plan Workbook** with clear steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities for John and his student planning team at school.

Based on goals identified in the **My Transition Plan Workbook**, the LAC works alongside John to connect to local employment opportunities, such as part-time roles at the grocery store. They also connect John to community-based workshops on communication and social skills. The LAC will collaborate with John's Student Planning Team to create a transition plan that can be supported through his IPP outcomes so John can achieve his goal of independent travel, by identifying training programs and local recreation groups he can join.

School Leaver Persona 2 – Sohrab

Sohrab is a 17-year-old student with a significant physical disability and an intellectual developmental disability who lives in Halifax. He spends time in a learning centre setting, where he receives personalized support from specialists. Sohrab has a full IPP with outcomes focusing on increasing his independence and enhancing his ability to engage with technology.



Sohrab is passionate about computers and wants to learn more about digital design and technology. In addition, he wants to live on his own independently in the next two years. The LAC works alongside Sohrab and his School Leaver Team to collaboratively **develop the My Transition Plan Workbook** with clear steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities for Sohrab and his support network.

Based on goals identified in his **My Transition Plan Workbook**, the LAC works alongside Sohrab by **coordinating with local technology companies** to explore programs and opportunities. The LAC connects Sohrab **with a recreational tech club**, where he can further develop his computer skills and socialize with peers who share his interests. Sohrab connects with Inclusion NS's workshop series to **help them understand how to support his independence and navigate funding options**. To prepare for his move, Sohrab and his LAC will explore appropriate DSP supports he may be eligible for through the DSP program.

School Leaver Persona 3 – Samantha

Samantha is 18 years old and has an intellectual developmental disability. She just moved to Baddeck from New Brunswick. She spends time in a learning centre setting and has a full IPP designed to improve her communication, academic, and social skills. Samantha's program includes regular assistance from a TA and speech language pathologist.



Samantha is interested in music and hopes to join a local choir or band. Though she wants to stay in school and at home for as long as possible, she wants to develop skills that will help her interact with others in her community once she transitions. The LAC works alongside Samantha, her family, and her student planning team to collaboratively **develop the My Transition Plan Workbook** with clear steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities connected to IPP outcomes that align with her interests.

Based on her goals, the LAC works alongside Samantha and her student planning team to **identify local music programs** that cater to her interests. They also **connect her with a workshop series** by Inclusion NS, to build on the communication and interpersonal skills connected with her IPP outcomes. Through **collaboration with local recreation programs**, the LAC and Samantha find a music group she can join, fostering her passion and helping her make new connections. Once she leaves school, she will move into a basement apartment in her parents' home.

School Leaver Persona 4 – Élisabeth

Élisabeth is a 17-year-old student with Down syndrome who lives in Clare. She receives support in a learning centre setting, where she works closely with TAs and specialists on her IPP outcomes, which focuses on enhancing her social skills while preparing her for the transition to community and adulthood.



Élisabeth loves cooking and dreams of working in a local café or bakery. She also wants to continue learning and practicing new skills, like entrepreneurship, in a supportive environment after she leaves school. The LAC works alongside Élisabeth, her family, and student planning team to collaboratively **develop her My Transition Plan Workbook** with clear steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities supported by Élisabeth's IPP outcomes.

Based on goals identified in the Transition Plan and her IPP, the LAC, Élisabeth, and her family explore options, such as **baking workshops organized by a local community centre**. Élisabeth and her student planning team decide she should start exploring baking by **working with a breakfast program** at a local café or bakery. The LAC will work alongside Élisabeth to find entrepreneurs to mentor her once she graduates school.

Appendix B: LAC Personas

The following four personas illustrate a range of Local Area Coordinators (LACs) may support students through the School Leavers Program. These fictional examples reflect a diversity of background and experiences.

Each persona is designed to better understand how transition planning can be personalized, culturally responsive, and grounded in the School Leaver's goals and support network. These scenarios can be used in training or team discussions to explore how the program can be adapted in real-life situations.

Local Area Coordinator Persona 1 – Bruce

Bruce is a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) based in the Annapolis Valley who has been paired with John through the School Leavers Program. With a background as a Care Coordinator, Bruce's deep connections to the Valley inspired him to become an LAC. After receiving John's registration and background information, Bruce arranges an introductory meeting with John and his mum and dad at their neighbourhood library in September 2025. Bruce makes sure these meetings are scheduled monthly, to build consistency going forward. He takes time to listen to John's goals—especially his interest in working at the grocery store, improving his social skills, and learning to travel independently—and works with them to identify members of his School Leaver Team.

After introducing himself to John's school-based supports, Bruce brings John's School Leaver Team together to identify short- and long-term goals, breaking them into achievable steps that align with his school team. For example, Bruce provides an introduction for a trial shift at the local grocery store. He also facilitates John's introduction to communication workshops hosted at a local community centre.

Over the following months, Bruce maintains regular monthly check-ins with John and his family, chairing Transition Planning meetings, offering guidance, and encouragement. Together, Bruce and John use **My Transition Plan Workbook** to guide the planning process. John practices taking the bus, and having their meetings in the community, with Bruce. Together they visit a youth recreation group where John can practice social interaction in a safe, supported setting. Bruce loves being a connector — linking John, his family, School Leaver Team, and his broader support network — ensuring John's voice is central and that his choices drive the process. Bruce is more than a connector; he is a champion for John's vision for adulthood and helps him move toward it with confidence and support.

Local Area Coordinator Persona 2 – Ibrahim

Ibrahim is an LAC living in HRM who has been paired with Sohrab through the School Leavers Program. Ibrahim is a retired technology business owner and longtime volunteer soccer coach who wanted to get involved in his community. He saw the posting for LAC positions and knew it would be a great fit. He meets Sohrab and his parents at a local café and asks him about his goals, hobbies, community connections, preferred communication styles, and health needs. They discover they have a shared love of video games. Once Ibrahim has learned some of the basics about Sohrab, he helps convene his School Leaver Team with individuals Sohrab identifies as key to his development. These include his parents, big brother, a community recreation leader, and his Learning Centre teacher.

Together, the team starts asking questions about Sohrab's goals, hopes, and dreams. Sohrab tells them that he wants to learn more about digital design and technology, and in two years he wants to live on his own. Using the **My Transition Plan Workbook**, Ibrahim connects a former colleague who runs digital design workshops to Sohrab. Together they build Sohrab's digital literacy skills, which is identified in the 'Skills and Working' section of **My Transition Plan Workbook**. Sohrab makes a friend who invites him to join a recreational tech club.

Sohrab hears about an Inclusion NS workshop that could help build his independence, so Ibrahim helps him register and helps him co-ordinate travel with Access-A-Bus. After Sohrab attends the workshop, he works with Ibrahim to reflect using the **My Transition Plan Workbook**. While he is too young to receive DSP funding now, Ibrahim recognizes it is not too early to work with Sohrab on his personal finance skills. They build a budget with savings goals and Sohrab's mom offers to help with his finances, including DSP funding applications.

Local Area Coordinator Persona 3 – Otni

Otni is working with Samantha and her Student Planning Team. Since she just moved to Baddeck with her family, Otni's knowledge of the area will help her find opportunities. Otni moved to Baddeck twenty years ago and worked as a recreation worker, with a deep background and love for Cape Breton's music scene. She meets Samantha at her school, and works alongside her, her family, and her Student Planning Team to identify her goals, hopes, and dreams. Samantha is less sure about her path, but through multiple meetings using the **My Transition Plan Workbook**, becomes more comfortable talking about her future.

Otni is quick to introduce Samantha to Baddeck's music community, and they attend a choir performance and ceilidh together. Samantha tells Otni she wants to join a choir, and together they use the **My Transition Plan Workbook** to develop clear steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities. They decide that Samantha's music teacher and her school's counsellor would make a great addition to her School Leaver Team and help her prepare for auditions for the school choir. Building on her goals of strengthening her communication and interpersonal skills, they connect her with a workshop series by Inclusion NS to increase her comfort in group settings.

To help her plan for life after high school, Samantha and Otni use the 'Living Arrangements' section of **My Transition Plan Workbook** to build a plan for moving into her parent's basement apartment. Samantha loves learning and wants to continue her education. Otni connects Samantha and her School Leaver Team with an advisor from the Achieve Program at NSCC's Sydney campus. Samantha's dad works at NSCC and can drive her to and from Sydney when she has classes. With her application accepted, Otni helps Samantha plan for postsecondary education.

Local Area Coordinator Persona 4 – Irene

Irene is a LAC based in Church Point. She recently graduated from the Université Sainte-Anne with a BA in Acadian Studies, where she was very active in the community.

Irene chose to become a LAC as she was not sure what her career path would be, but knows she wants to stay close to home and find a job helping people. Through the School Leavers Program, she was paired with Élisabeth, a student from Clare who dreams of working in a café and one day running her own small business. Irene met with her and her parents at the Université Sainte-Anne campus to introduce herself and learn more about Élisabeth's goals. She also introduced **My Transition Plan Workbook**, explaining that they would work through it together over the year to help Élisabeth prepare for adulthood and take steps toward achieving her dreams.

Élisabeth is excited when she arrives at the meeting. She shares her love of cooking, especially with her grandmother, and highlights that cooking class is her favourite part of school. During the School Leaver Team meeting, Élisabeth and Irene start collaborating to set clear goals and outline roles based on Élisabeth's interests. One of the first commitments is to help Élisabeth volunteer with her school's breakfast program, offering a hands-on opportunity aligned with her interests.

Over the following months, Irene helps Élisabeth prepare for her future career by helping her find resources to help with a resume and job interview skills. With Irene's help, Élisabeth gets a job at the Université Sainte-Anne meal hall once a week. Irene continues to support her by gathering information on self-employment and entrepreneurship, including resources from Nova Scotia Works and the Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED), which they plan to explore together when Élisabeth is ready.

Appendix C: Resources

- Transition: A Lifelong Process:
https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/Transition_WEB.pdf
- Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy:
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/inclusiveeducationpolicyen.pdf>
- Nova Scotia Program Planning Process:
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/psp/program-planning-process>