



MOVING ON PROJECT: TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD – PROJECT SUMMARY

The “Moving On” Project was initiated by KidsAbility and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The goal of the “Moving On” Project is to develop a process to transition youth with physical disabilities to adult living that is supported by the community.

In an effort to determine the transitional needs of youth with physical disabilities and their families in Waterloo Region, interviews with KidsAbility staff, clients and their families, community agencies, and Ontario Children’s Rehabilitation Centres were conducted from April – July, 2007. Surveys were then mailed to all current and former KidsAbility clients (ages 14-25) and their parents/caregivers. The results of the survey provided the basis for follow up focus groups with youth of KidsAbility and their families to confirm the survey findings and identify needs and priorities.

The means by which these needs could be met were explored further at the Community Forum on March 5, 2008. The purpose of the Community Forum was to share our findings and explore how we can work together with the community to plan and develop a system for the transition of youth with physical disabilities living in Waterloo Region. As an outcome of the Community Forum, a shared vision for transition was articulated and a Transition Network Committee established with the goal of developing a formalized process to transition youth with physical disabilities to adulthood.

The Transitions Network Committee includes youth and adults with physical disabilities, family members, adult service providers, local school boards, and KidsAbility staff. The vision for transition established during the community forum was ratified by the committee and objectives for the Transitions Network Committee were established. These include:

- *To bring together community representatives including youth with disabilities and family members, community agencies, and KidsAbility staff to share and exchange information regarding local practices for transition and community resources available in Waterloo Region.*
- *To provide community resource information to youth and families to support early linkage with the adult service sector.*
- *To promote opportunities for formal and informal networks and community participation for youth and families.*
- *To foster the development of early and on-going planning for the transition to adulthood.*
- *To support the development of self-determination skills, self-advocacy skills and daily living skills required for the transition to adulthood.*

The decision to proceed with the establishment of a Transitions Network Committee was based on the premise that no single agency or organization has the resources, knowledge, or mandate to plan and deliver the multitude of resources, skills, supports, and strategies required for effective transition planning. A transitions network committee can bring together community stakeholders to focus their collective expertise and combined resources to plan a process for the transition of youth with physical disabilities to adulthood

The Transitions Network Committee has met 4 times so far. We have shared and exchanged a great deal of information about the transition to adulthood in Waterloo Region. One of the primary objectives of the committee is to provide community resource information to youth and families to support early linkage with adult services. Youth and families told us they need more information and connection with adult community services – particularly regarding education, employment, finances, housing, and recreation and social options. As a result, KidsAbility has partnered with the Ontario March of Dimes and the Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region to host annual information sessions for youth and families. These sessions will help to inform youth and their families and facilitate linkage with needed adult services. In addition, youth and families have identified the need for skill development to facilitate the transition to adulthood, specifically in terms of daily living skills, self-determination skills and self-advocacy skills. As a result, KidsAbility is partnering with ILCWR to develop a Youth In Transition Group. This pilot project will focus on developing the skills youth need for the transition to adulthood.

The Transitions Network Committee will continue to work toward increasing community capacity based on a shared community vision to facilitate the transition to adulthood. Through this collaborative committee process, a comprehensive process responsive to the transition needs of youth with physical disabilities in Waterloo Region will continue to be developed.

The Moving On Project is now winding down and will be completed by November 28, 2008. The ongoing work to meet the transitional needs of youth and families will continue through the collective efforts of the Transitions Network Committee.