

Research Highlights

Topic: Person-Center Planning and Friendships

Turnbull, A.P., Blue-Banning, M.J., Anderson, E.L., Seaton, K.A., Turnbull, H.R., & Dinas, P.A. (1996). Enhancing self-determination through Group Action Planning: A holistic perspective. In D.J. Sands & M.L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *Self-determining across the lifespan: Theory and practice* (pp. 237-257). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

BOTTOM LINE

Self-determination has three key components: motivation, individual skills, and a responsive context. Group Action Planning is one effective way to create a responsive context. This chapter describes Group Action Planning and how it can enhance self-determination for students with disabilities. It highlights the action group experiences of two individuals transitioning from high school to adulthood.

TIPS

- Recognize that permanent members of the Action Group should be those people most committed to the student with a disability. They are typically those who are available over a long period of time and who provide support for the daily challenges of implementing the vision.
- Identify a comfortable place for action group meetings that is a nonthreatening environment for all group members such as a library, home, or restaurant.
- Have action group meetings when convenient and as often as necessary.
- Remember that the bottom line of action groups is *action*. This is critical to enhancing the student's motivation and skill related to self-determination.
- Identify a facilitator who is skilled in the problem-solving process and who can empower the student to demonstrate problem-solving skills.
- Invite people to join the group from all environments of the individual's life including employment, school and community.

TIPS

- Keep the student involved and the focus of the action planning group.
- When planning an action group, always consider the student's and family's cultural context, including level of acculturation and family composition.

KEY FINDINGS

- The purpose of action groups is to be a responsive context in which students choose how to live their lives and to provide the necessary support to actualize their preferences.
- While this chapter focuses primarily on Group Action Planning as a strategy for supporting students with disabilities who are moving from high school to adulthood, it is a flexible process that can be used at any point in a person's life.
- Group Action Planning is a process of creating a reliable alliance among an individual with a disability, family members, professionals, and friends for the purpose of creating and achieving a vision of how the individual wants to live life.
- Fundamental components of action groups include: (a) inviting people to participate in a reciprocal and interdependent manner, (b) creating a context of social connectedness and caring, (c) creative problem solving fueled by great expectations, and (d) celebrating progress.
- While action group members include family members, friends, professionals, and community members, the focus member of the group is the student with a disability.
- Participation in action groups can be on both a permanent and temporary basis.
- Key roles in the problem solving process for all group members include supporting the student's self-determination by enhancing motivation and skills and participating in the creation of desirable transition supports and services.
- The action group facilitator's role is multifaceted and includes inviting support, ensuring a reciprocal social support atmosphere, encouraging creative problem solving, and promoting celebration of success.

KEY FINDINGS
cont.

- Implementation varies according to whether the Action Group is in a preliminary stage or if it has been ongoing for a period of time.
 - ◆ *Initial planning*: Action groups can be initiated by students with disabilities, family members, friends, or professionals. Initial conversations focus on the student's visions for the future, potential action group participants to be invited, and the logistics of the first meeting.
 - ◆ *First meeting*: The first meeting sets the tone for the Group Action Planning process. Envisioning the future is the priority focus along with the identification of priority issues to be addressed.
 - ◆ *Life of Group Action Planning*: After the first meeting, participants focus on successive action plan development and implementation.
 - ◆ *Celebrating success*: Celebration of progress made toward accomplishing visions is an integral part of action planning.

RELATED
PUBLICATIONS

Bui, Y.N., & Turnbull, A. (2003). East meets west: Analysis of person-centered planning in the context of Asian American values. *Education and Training and Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 38(1), 18-31.

Blue-Banning, M., Turnbull, A.P., & Pereira, L. (2000). Group Action Planning as a support strategy for Hispanic families: Parent and professional perspectives. *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), 262-275.

Turnbull, A.P., Turbiville, V., & Schaffer, V. (1996). "Getting a shot at life" through Group Action Planning. *Zero to Three*, 16(6), 33-40.

Turnbull, A.P., & Turnbull, H.R. (1996). Group Action Planning as a strategy for providing comprehensive family support. In L.K. Loegel, R.L. Koegel, & G. Dunlap (Eds.), *Community, school, family, and social inclusion through positive behavioral support: Including people with difficult behavior in the community* (pp. 99-114). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

This research was conducted by the Beach Center on Disability. It was funded by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Families of Children with Disabilities of the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research (H133B30070) and private endowments. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.