

*Thinking about  
Life after Graduation*



## **Introduction**

Graduating from high school is one of the most exciting milestones in a young adult's life. Along with excitement and a sense of accomplishment, there is a lot of planning that needs to be done to create the life the individual wants when school is finished. The process of thinking about the future, and planning for it is called **transition planning**.

Transition planning is a journey an individual will likely take with people he/she counts on most to help with making decisions...family, friends, teachers and his/her Community Services Worker from the Department of Families.

As one starts to think about life after school, we want to share an option called **In the Company of Friends (ICOF)**.

An individual may be eligible for In the Company of Friends if he/she meets the eligibility criteria of the Community Living disABILITY Services of the Department of Families.

## **Together, begin talking about the future!**

Whether you are familiar with services or exploring options for the first time, take a minute and focus on what is important to the individual. How might you maximize his/her choice, voice, and desire to lead a full and meaningful life? How might you provide support to deepen relationships and assist him/her to be a contributing member of the community?

Planning for the future is a 5-7 year journey of talking, meeting and making decisions that is driven by the person and his/her family. The sooner discussions begin, the better prepared everyone can be when the time comes - this includes the individual's school, so they can help the person learn the skills they need to be successful in life after school, and the Department of Families so that they know what the individual wants and what it will take to help him/her achieve it!

There is good information about important age timelines in the Manitoba Department of Education transition booklet called. "***Bridging to Adulthood: A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community***" starting on page 10. But always keep in mind, ideally, planning should begin by age 16!

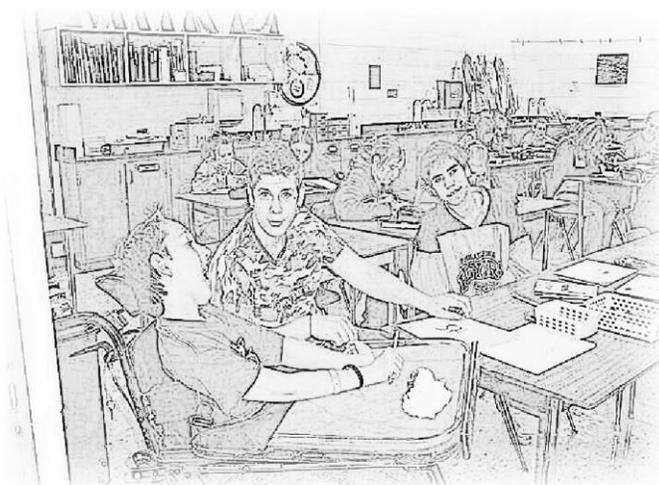
For a copy go to: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/transition/index.html>

## **How can teachers help?**

Teachers and other professionals within the school system will help the student and his/her family to take the first steps in planning. Each high school can help create a **transition plan** which will help the individual develop the skills, pursue interests and overcome any obstacles. You might ask other people to be involved.

Teachers and other professionals will plan an annual planning meeting with the individual and his/her family often known as a 'PATH'. Remember, if it gets forgotten each individual has the right to ask that one be done so that everyone knows what the individual's hopes and dreams are as he/she moves into their adult years.

Teachers will also provide information about adult options and the transition planning process - In the Company of Friends is one of the adult opportunities choose to explore.



## How can family and friends help?

Family and friends play a significant and special role in helping an individual plan for their future.

Often, family and friends know the individual best and can support the person to ensure future plans reflect his/her interests and values.

*Family and friends can help by:*

- Attend school meetings with the individual to talk about his/her life after graduation.
- Ask questions about the planning process.
- Share with other people what they know about the individual...abilities, strengths and interests
- Offer opinions and help the individual in making decisions (this is what's called Supported Decision Making).
- Help the individual to reach his/her goals.
- Help the individual to carry out the responsibilities required as part of his/her transition plan.
- Explore options with the individual as they transition to adulthood



## What are some steps the individual can take?

- Attend school meetings to talk about life after graduation.
- Ask questions about the planning process.
- Talk about what things you like, where you would like to live and work, your interests, your hobbies, your dreams and the things that may challenge you. People will be asking you lots of questions!
- Be involved in decisions being made...that's part of how we learn to make decisions for ourselves! Tell people what you think.
- Do your part to make your goals happen.
- Carry out the responsibilities assigned to you as part of your transition plan.
- Learn more about adult options available to you, such as In the Company of Friends.



## *In the Company of Friends provides:*

Direct Funding

Choices

Self -Direction

Flexibility

Person-Centered  
Approach

In the Company of Friends (ICOF) is a **unique model of support** which gives individuals with an intellectual disability the opportunity to manage their lives with support from family and friends.



In the Company of Friends **philosophy** is based upon a

**Foundation of respect, relationships  
and supports a person-centered approach.**

## **The Vulnerable Persons Act**

In Manitoba, legislation called the Vulnerable Persons Act (VPA) recognizes that individuals with an intellectual disability have a right to make decisions about their lives.

Using plain language, the Vulnerable Persons Act (VPA) states:

- Vulnerable people are presumed able to make their own decisions
- Vulnerable people are encouraged to make their own choices
- If a vulnerable person needs help to make their his/her choice, the legislation encourages family, friends and service providers to help him/her to understand the choices to make an informed decision
- Any help provided must be respectful of the vulnerable person's privacy and dignity as an adult
- There may be a decision that the vulnerable person is unable to make, even with help. As a last resort, a substitute decision maker can be identified.

**For information on Manitoba's Vulnerable Person's Act go to**

**[https://gov.mb.ca/fs/pwd/what\\_is\\_vpa.html](https://gov.mb.ca/fs/pwd/what_is_vpa.html)**

## **Support networks are integral for each ICOF employer**

A support network is a group of people the ICOF employer chooses to assist in his/her life. Support network members may be family members, friends or acquaintances with whom the person is developing a relationship. Support networks can develop organically, intentionally or both ways. Each ICOF employer has his/her own support network and they are the structure that helps the individual manage their ICOF responsibilities.

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### *Support networks are unique and diverse*

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Many ICOF employers have life-long friendships as a result of the commitment of network members. Support networks have shown to create positive outcomes for people such as expanded opportunities and increased self-esteem and self-worth.

### **Support networks offer assistance with:**

Relationship and  
Community  
Connections

Managing  
Finances

Managing Staff

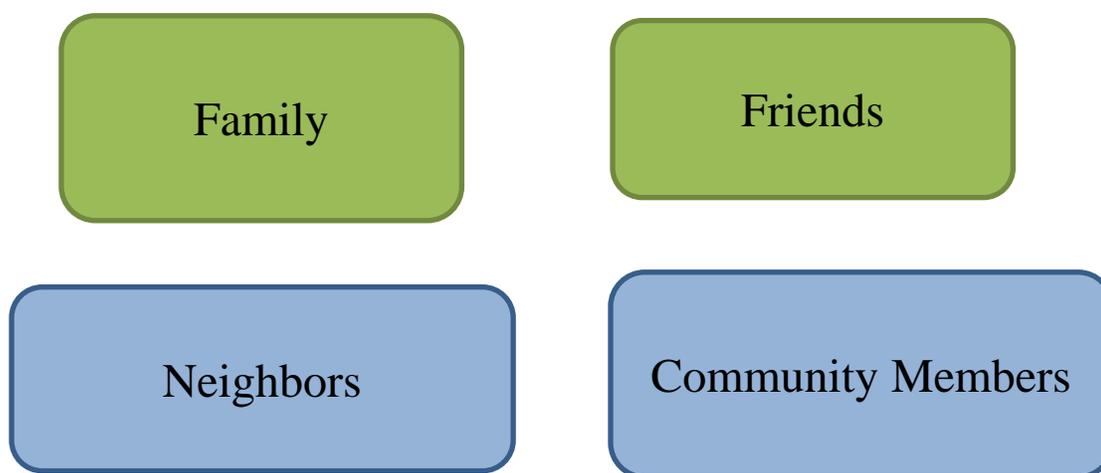
Support Network  
Nurturing and  
Celebration

**Supported decision making** is an integral part of how support networks operate. The assistance support networks offer comes with many decisions whether helping with hiring a staff person or throwing a party.

Supported decision making is ensuring the individual is informed and involved with making decisions about his or her life. It is woven through conversations, planning and action. It does not take a back seat to convenience. It looks different for each person except that the structure is always made up of people who care.

Supported decision making is fundamentally the reason why support networks exist.

### Who might be invited to join a support network?



Support network development isn't something that you have to do alone. **Innovative Life Options (LIFE)** is committed to helping ICOF employers build and strengthen their individual support network and walk alongside ICOF employers to create, sustain and deepen their connections. We understand the significance of support networks and how a network is an integral part of an ICOF employer's success.

This chart outlines some responsibilities of ICOF employers, while also highlighting the difference between In the Company of Friends and a Service Model.

<b>In the Company of Friends</b>	<b>Service Model</b>
<p>ICOF employers, along with their support network manage their staff and their lives.</p> <p>We call this self - directed support.</p>	<p>Agencies have an Executive Director who manages day to day operations.</p>
<p>ICOF employers, along with their support network hire and guide their staff.</p>	<p>An agency is responsible for hiring and overseeing staff.</p>
<p>Staff report to and are supervised by the ICOF employer and their support network.</p>	<p>Agency Staff report and are supervised by the Executive Director.</p>
<p>ICOF employers choose where they would like to live in Manitoba - urban or rural - a house, condo or an apartment.</p>	<p>Housing is typically at a predetermined location.</p>
<p>ICOF employers are not bound by licensing requirements.</p>	<p>Agencies are required to meet regulations through Residential Care Licensing, including restrictions on the location of your home.</p>
<p>Friendships, relationship development and community connections are a critical and intentional part of the design of ICOF.</p> <p>Support networks are not optional - they are essential!</p>	<p>Agencies typically focus on the importance of friendships and community connections.</p> <p>A support network is optional.</p>

## *ICOF Benefits*

There are ICOF employers in each region of the province; Winnipeg, Westman, Eastman, Interlake, Northern, Parklands and Central.

ICOF employers are contributing members in their communities and often lead rich and fulfilling lives. Some ICOF employers work full time, while others have part-time positions. Some individuals volunteer in their communities, while others are entrepreneurs. Many individuals choose to attend day programs, while others hire their own day staff. ICOF employers are active on sport teams, work out at the gym and keep healthy doing yard work, gardening or helping their neighbors. ICOF employers also come together with family and friends to celebrate holidays, share meals and spend leisure time together. With a unique support network each individual is surrounded by people that they choose to be part of their lives.

ICOF employers live in apartments, condos and houses – whatever suits their needs best. They each have an individual budget based on Budget Guidelines that meets their staffing and living needs, with each person’s budget monitored regularly by the LIFE team.



***We're here to help you.***

Call us to learn more information about In the Company of Friends (ICOF).

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**Other Publications:**

Learn more about LIFE  
Learn more about ICOF  
LIFE and the CSW  
ICOF Entrance Process and First Steps!  
ICOF Protection Book: A Guide to Reporting Abuse and Neglect  
ICOF Support Network Planning