



A division of the Council for Exceptional Children

NETWORK

Division on Career Development and Transition

Volume 48, Issue 2

Fall 2025

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DCDT WEBSITE
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



For those of you who were able to attend DCDT in Denver this month, we hope you found connection, community, and a renewed sense of hope for our field. I know I was inspired by the

presentations I attended about the future of transition and the good work that is happening across our classrooms within PK–12 and higher education settings. Much like what I spoke about at the opening session, I hope you are finding ways to bring more gratitude into your professional life. This is more important than ever while we find the profession of special education under attack.

I want to congratulate all of our DCDT award winners again on their accomplishments and for being stewards in the field for best practice with students, in research, and in the community. You are all pillars and role models for us in the field.

While we continue to find ourselves in a climate of uncertainty, fear, and instability, I know you remain a constant in your students' lives as they navigate these confusing times as young adults. The ripple effect of your impact and influence is never truly known.

As educators our primary goal is to best support our students, and we can continue to advocate within our schools, our districts, and in Congress. The Policy and Advocacy Committee has developed an Advocacy Toolkit you can find on our main page of the [website](http://www.dcdt.org). I encourage you to check it out, and to sign up for legislative action alerts through [CEC National](http://www.cec-national.org). Both are ways to become more actively involved at the local, state, and national levels. Remember to use a personal email address to communicate with state legislators in your advocacy efforts. Education is activism, and disability rights

are both a civil rights issue and one of social justice. I encourage each of you to join me as we continue to push for what we know is best for our students, ourselves as educators, and our field to create an inclusive and equitable world.

As I begin to wind down my presidential year with DCDT, I want to express my gratitude for my colleagues on the board—I would not have been able to lead as effectively this year without your unwavering support and shared mission. I look forward to continued involvement with DCDT as we continue to unveil exciting new initiatives like the DCDT Beliefs Campaign led by your current Vice President Dr. Malarie Dearthoff, and bring back the graduate student member to the board of DCDT.

Each year DCDT continues to grow, evolve, and adapt. As a field we must remain steadfast in our commitment to move the needle forward for postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, continue to advocate for our profession amidst unwarranted attacks and pseudoscience, and always remember to support each other as we do the necessary and difficult work of special education transition. I continue to be humbled and honored to have been elected to the DCDT presidential line, and I hope to see many of your names in future leadership positions in DCDT. It has been both professionally and personally fulfilling to serve our national organization.

Finally, I want to extend an invitation to reach out to me directly if you have any questions or want to connect. While I may be transitioning into past president in January, I continue to look for ways to support you. Feel free to email me anytime at tracy.sinclair@uconn.edu.

In community and solidarity,
Tracy E. Sinclair, PhD, BCBA-D
DCDT President
tracy.sinclair@uconn.edu

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

From Career Development to Certified Excellence: Celebrating 50 Years of Progress, Partnerships, and Possibilities



This year marks a remarkable milestone—50 years since the birth of the Division on Career Development and Transition! What began in 1976 as a visionary movement led by **Dr. Donn Brolin** to promote career development for individuals with disabilities has evolved into a powerful national professional association that champions equity, opportunity, and meaningful adult outcomes for youth across the country.

The Division's journal, which published its first issue in April 1978, highlighted this focus on employment, as it was named *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* with the "*and Transition*" being added much later. In his introduction to the first issue, Dr. Brolin wrote:

What is DCD? Is it an organization of work-study, secondary, vocational education-oriented professional workers? Yes, these people are members, but so are many others. DCD is an organization for *all* people who are concerned about the career development of exceptional individuals... preparation for life is what career development is all about. (Brolin, 1978, p. 2).

Although the field was focused primarily on helping individuals with disabilities find employment in the late 1970s, Brolin's comments in that first issue of the journal foreshadowed a focus on transition services that addressed the totality of adult life. It was in the early 1990s that, as an organization, DCD reflected that change and became what it is known as today, the Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT).

When the word transition entered our name, it reflected a deeper, more inclusive understanding of what it truly means to prepare students for adult life. It was never just about employment. It has always been about empowering students to live, learn, and work in communities of their choosing with dignity, purpose, and independence. And we have never stopped evolving.

From our earliest work study and vocational education roots to today's partnerships in postsecondary education, employment readiness, and inclusive community living, DCDT has remained focused on the same goal: to ensure that every young person with a disability has a plan and a pathway to adult success.

The Power of Collaboration: Then, Now, and Always

Our legacy was built on collaboration. From the start, we knew that no single professional, agency, or system could do this work alone. DCDT's first executive director,

Dr. Jane Razeghi, realized that the organization needed to connect with professionals from other disciplines within the special education and disability fields if they were to adequately support transitions to adult life in addition to supporting student access to the general education curriculum. She began, with then DCDT president, **Dale Matusevich**, to reach out to leaders in other CEC divisions, to collectively address how to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities. That improvement was thought to require a range of supports for individuals who were part of the transition team. While transition services are organized by school-based personnel as mandated in IDEA, there were others who were involved in the process who needed to have a seat at the table. These other transition stakeholders include students with disabilities themselves, their families, vocational rehabilitation counselors, community service agency staff, and community members. In the early 2000s, DCDT leaders began to reach out to other professional organizations as well as other divisions of CEC as part of their mission to collaboratively improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities by sharing research and practice strategies that work, and to engage in dialogue to tackle remaining challenges. The goal for this outreach was to encourage collaboration that accomplishes those improvements in practice, research, and policy.

And today, that collaborative spirit is alive and thriving under the current DCDT president, **Dr. Tracy Sinclair**. At the DCDT 2025 conference in Denver, Colorado, we are proud to co-host preconference sessions with CEC's Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners, and the Division on Learning Disabilities. These partnerships across CEC divisions are more than symbolic; they represent the very heart of effective transition planning: cross disciplinary, student centered, culturally sustaining, and grounded in evidence.

In a world that is increasingly complex and interconnected, collaboration is no longer optional. It is essential.

From Standards to Competencies: A New Era of Professional Excellence

As we celebrate our 50th year in 2026, we're not just reflecting. We're redefining what it means to be a transition professional. This year, DCDT and CEC proudly launched the CEC DCDT Transition Competencies, a groundbreaking framework outlining what special education teachers and transition specialists must know and be able to do to drive positive post school outcomes.

These competencies go beyond compliance. They are research informed, equity driven, and future focused,

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providing a clear roadmap for those entering the field and a powerful self-assessment for those already doing the work. They are designed to support:

- National Certification in Transition Services
- Personnel preparation programs
- Meaningful, ongoing professional development

But more importantly, they offer recognition to practitioners who show up every day, committed to supporting students and families with intentionality and care.

Unlike traditional program standards, these competencies evolve with the field. They are flexible, timely, and built by DCDT members who know the work firsthand. They honor the reality that learning happens everywhere, in graduate courses, in conferences, in coffee shop conversations, and in courageous classroom decisions.

Looking Forward: A Blueprint for the Next 50 Years

We know that youth with disabilities still face unacceptable disparities in employment, education, and independent living. We know that the promise of IDEA and WIOA will only be fulfilled when we start earlier, plan smarter, and collaborate better.

That's why we are committed to using the CEC DCDT Transition Competencies to:

- Guide professional development that is accessible, actionable, and aligned with real world practice
- Advance national certification and elevate the transition field as a recognized area of expertise

- Push research, policy, and partnerships that center equity, student voice, and culturally responsive practice

DCDT's path forward is clear. We must begin transition planning in middle school, connect students and families to services earlier, and build interprofessional teams that create positive possibilities and deliver results. We must train the workforce not only in legal requirements, but in self-determination, inclusive practices, and employment first mindsets. And we must lead and conduct transition services with empathy, vision, and urgency.

We Are All Part of This Journey

As I reflect on where we started and where we are going, I am reminded that our most powerful tool is not a framework, a policy, or even a position paper. It is each other. Our shared commitment, our collective wisdom, and our relentless collaboration are what move this work forward.

So, let's celebrate 50 years of DCDT by doing what we do best: connecting, innovating, and empowering. Let's keep working together to ensure that every student, every family, and every community has the support they need to ensure positive outcomes for us all! Let's make the next 50 years even more impactful than the last.

With gratitude and hope,

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**NTACT:C WILL CONTINUE
OUR WORK WITH YOU!**

NTACT
THE COLLABORATIVE

National Technical
Assistance Center
on Transition

Guess What?! The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) will CONTINUE! This continuation strengthens our efforts to assist state and local education agencies, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other service providers to implement effective practices and strategies that will promote collaboration and positive student outcomes. Through these partnerships we can help to ensure that students and youth with disabilities graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, and supports needed for credential attainment, postsecondary education, training, competitive integrated employment (CIE), and independent living, including

meaningful community engagement through the promotion of effective practices grounded in research for all students and youth with disabilities, considering individual youth and family strengths.

The University of Oregon—which will lead the existing partnership of George Washington University, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Maryland, University of Kansas, and Portland State University—received a grant award notification from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services on Wednesday, September 24, for the first year of funding beginning October 1, 2025, with funding continuing through September 30, 2030!



TIPS FROM THE FIELD: RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY GOALS AS PART OF A HOLISTIC TRANSITION PLAN



Stephanie M. Barr,
University of Arkansas



Suzanne Kucharczyk,
University of Arkansas

Introduction

Haven is a seventeen-year-old high schooler with an intellectual disability. Haven is outgoing and social. She navigates the school environment and is socially active through her church, Special Olympics, and a local support group for individuals with Downs Syndrome. She has formed strong friendships with her peers. Her parents report that she has had difficulties understanding boundaries in romantic relationships. When she was younger, she sent and received inappropriate texts and had a behavior plan at school to work on only appropriate touching. Haven's parents report that they want to support their daughter's choice to date, but they worry about her getting into an unhealthy relationship or having to deal with the consequences of an unintended pregnancy. Haven reports wanting a boyfriend but does not know how to go about meeting someone and establishing a relationship. Haven's teacher sought the information here to help design goals for a holistic transition plan that will help Haven build social and relationship skills.

Conversations around sexuality and relationships can sometimes feel awkward, and teachers may not feel comfortable opening a dialogue. There are ways that Haven's IEP team can help her to develop the relationship skills and experiences she would like to have. Sexuality and relationship education is often overlooked when formulating transition plans, but there are a number of reasons why building skills in this area is an important part of transitioning students with disabilities. Maria Lepore-Stevens (2024) notes that sexuality education can help prevent or reduce sexual violence, which is critical since around one-third of the rapes and sexual assaults which take place in the United States concern people

with disabilities. Young people with disabilities are also at greater risk for unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers. Although the need for comprehensive sex education is arguably greater for this population, youth with disabilities are far less likely to be educated in matters of sex and sexuality.

The following steps will get practitioners started on developing holistic transition plans that recognize, honor and support the rights of youth with disabilities to make choices and to form healthy, sustaining adult relationships.

Recognize Your Own Perspective and Experience

Professionals working with youth with disabilities should begin this process by examining their own attitudes and experiences, as well as their possible discomfort, towards sexuality generally and towards sexuality specifically involving people with disabilities. Be honest and ask, "How do I feel about my students with disabilities dating, having sex, and starting families?"

Misconceptions about sexuality are pervasive and deeply held in our society. These misconceptions include the belief that persons with disabilities are either asexual or lacking in the desire or capacity for sexuality, are child-like and need to be protected, or are oversexed and lacking in self-control (Neufield et al., 2002). Such beliefs are built on a long history in the United States of segregating people with disabilities and controlling the sexual and reproductive experiences of people with disabilities by those who do not have disabili-

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(**Tips from the Field**, continued from page 4)

ties, such as through routine sterilization (Long-Bellil, 2022). Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other important civil rights legislation, Long-Bellil notes that this discrimination lingers in the form of disparities in access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and higher rates of sterilization. Such misconceptions are one of the largest barriers for people to access healthy adult relationships and need to be addressed, in part, by the professionals working with this population.

Understand How IDEA Supports Relationship and Sexuality Goals

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act remains the cornerstone of special education and the language of Section 300.43 on transition services is clear that there must be a “coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability,” activities which should focus on “academic and functional achievement” and to “facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities” and that can include “adult services, independent living, or community participation” and can include “acquisition of daily living skills” (IDEA, 2017). Sexuality and relationship education fits into IDEA’s transition services mandate in several important ways.

First, sexuality education activities can be adapted, like activities from any other academic content, to meet the needs of the individual with disabilities, no matter what their strengths and needs. Resources are available to support students with specific disabilities, including Elevatus training and Positive Sex Ed, both of which are linked in the resource section below.

Second, sexuality education helps with the move from school to post-school life. Sexuality and relationships are a part of adult life. Since the Valencia Declaration (World Congress of Sexology, 1997), there is an increasing recognition that sexuality is a human right. By recognizing this right and providing comprehensive sexuality education, we help to overcome a long history of sexual discrimination against persons with disabilities and help them to grow into full adult life.

Third, sexuality and sexual expression requires a *skill set*, just like the skill set we want to develop in our students to help them in areas like employment or independent living. We recognize as educators that skills like time management, money management, food preparation and domestic hygiene are important. We must also recognize that skills such as using a tampon and other menstrual care, acting in a safe manner when online dating, or safely placing a condom are just as valuable and important in a repertoire of independent skills (Weber & Kaufman, 2021).

Be Aware of Sexual Education Standards and State Policies

There are several sets of educational standards that developed for teachers who are wanting to align their lessons and to gain a deeper understanding of scope and sequence for sexuality education (Fisher & Cummings, 2016). One good example of this is the **National Teacher Preparation Standards for Sexuality Education**, which supports teacher training programs in their efforts to educate teachers on the skills and knowledge they need to instruct effectively in this area. Other important national standards include **National Sex Education Standards** and **SHAPE America Physical Education Standards**.

It is important to point out, however, that these standards were not written with students with disabilities in mind and Lepore-Stevens (2024) notes that there is a strong need for *adapted* sexual education for student receiving special services. Curricula that are aligned to national sexuality education standards are available, such as the 3Rs curriculum listed in the resources below.

What sexuality education topics can and cannot be taught in the public classroom are dictated by individual states and vary widely from one state to another. The **National Conference of State Legislators** and **SIECUS** both have detailed information on how sexual education policies vary from state to state; within each state, sexual education policy can also vary from one district to another. Teachers, therefore, should understand what parameters their district is working under and to talk with supervisors before implementing a relationship and sexuality program.

Assess your Student for their Sexual Health Knowledge

Sexuality/relationship goals are like any other transition goal. They must be based on assessments so that a student’s strengths, priorities, and needs can be identified, and the appropriate goals formulated. **TALK-SC** is a validated tool which can help teachers to identify the level of a student’s knowledge of important areas of sexuality such as consent. One caveat is that a person must be trained in order to administer this test, but there is a questionnaire which can be filled out by a caregiver who is well acquainted with the person with disabilities, and which does not require training. The **SSKAAT-R** is also a validated tool for assessment and assists the IEP team by assessing the knowledge a person with a disability has in relation to the human body and its function, sexuality and intimacy, and both health and unhealthy relationships.

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(Tips from the Field, continued from page 5)

Both the TALK-SC and SKAAT-R require purchase, but there are other resources which are free to help assess the relationship/sexuality needs of your students. The **Transition Care Checklist**, developed by the Wisconsin Community on Transition, for instance, can help you pinpoint areas of strength and need in your student in regard to health and healthcare, including sexuality. The **Community-Based Skills Assessment**, developed by Autism Speaks, also allows you to assess knowledge and skills related to sexuality, sexual health and relationships as part of its comprehensive assessment.

Write Relationship/Sexuality Goals

Teachers should follow the same process for writing relationship and sexuality goals that they would follow for writing goals in any academic or adaptive area. In other words, the goal writing should be based on assessment of student needs and be the product of collaboration of all members of the IEP team. The ARC has developed a guide on *Sexual Health Topics and the Individualized Education Plan* (linked in the resources section below) to help families and school staff start the conversation about sexuality goals. There are also several websites, such as A Day in Our Shoes (see resources below) that can help stimulate ideas about how to write IEP goals in this important area.

Resources Needed to Translate Goals into Growth

A number of resources exist for teachers in the area of sexuality education for persons with disabilities. Whether you are looking for more information on curriculum, goal-writing, current policy, or other resources, the links below will give you a good start when developing meaningful transition goals to help your student fully transition to post-secondary life:

- **Rights, Respect and Responsibility** (free downloadable adapted sexuality curriculum)
- **FLASH** (free downloadable adapted sexuality curriculum; it also comes with a wonderful letter for parents with an opt in/opt out letter)
- **Healthy Bodies Toolkits** (a free tool to give to parents to help support them in sexuality education at home)
- **AMAZE** (free videos on sexuality education topics for students, teachers, and parents to explore)
- **Healthy Relationship Workbook** (free download from The Arc of Spokane Washington to help support youth with learning disabilities to learn about relationships)
- **Elevatus Training**. This curriculum is available for purchase and is targeted at individuals with

intellectual disabilities.

- **Positive Sex Ed**. This site gives great guidance on how to adapt sexuality/relationship education for those who are visually impaired.
- **Sexual Health Topics and the Individualized Education Plan** (this free site from The Arc of Harrisburg and Rockingham provides information to parents and teachers about how to include relationship/sexuality topics in the IEP).
- **A Day in Our Shoes** is a website with a wide variety of IEP goal ideas and suggestions, and this includes goals covering issues like menstrual health, consent, birth control, and good parenting.

In Conclusion

To create a transition plan that is truly holistic and supports students in their transition to adult life, sexuality and relationship goals need to be included. This helps students with disabilities to grow into themselves and into their full adult lives as they desire, which should be the ultimate goal of *any* transition plan.

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DCDT EXECUTIVE BOARD BELIEFS CAMPAIGN

Dear DCDT Membership,

We are thrilled to introduce a new, collaborative project from the DCDT Executive Board to develop a set of guiding principles designed to shape our work moving forward!

These principles represent more than words on a page; they capture our shared commitment to improving post-school outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, across all levels of support needs and throughout the life course. Aligned with DCDT's mission and vision, these beliefs are intended to elevate transition services and practices across the field of special education and beyond.

DCDT BELIEFS

At DCDT, we believe that all people with exceptionalities:

1. Deserve equitable, high-quality, person-centered career development and transition services and instruction.
2. Have the right to be self-determined.
3. Are experts in their lives and their voice is the priority in transition planning.

At DCDT, we believe that all transition professionals:

1. Deserve high-quality, evidence-informed professional growth opportunities in career development and transition.
2. Are highly-skilled change agents for positive post-school outcomes.
3. Engage in ethical and professional practices to challenge systemic inequities and participate in continuous self-reflection.

This introduction is just the beginning! In the coming months, we will share ways to incorporate the DCDT Beliefs into classrooms, communities, and systems. Our hope is that these beliefs will position DCDT as a change agent for future research, policy, and practice. We invite you to follow along, reflect on these beliefs, and explore how they can inform your own work. We look forward to seeing you at the DCDT conference!

The DCDT Executive Board

Drs. Tracy Sinclair, Tara Frazier, Malarie Deardorff, Sheida Raley, Leena Landmark, Al Daviso, and Stacie Dojonovic-Schutzman.



2025 DCDT Executive Board

From left to right: Al Daviso, PhD, Immediate Past President (Professor, University of Akron); Leena Landmark, PhD, Secretary (Professor, Sam Houston State University); Stacie Dojonovic, EdD, Executive Director (Associate Teaching Professor, University of Kansas); Tracy Sinclair, PhD, President (Associate Clinical Professor, University of Connecticut); Sheida Raley, PhD, Treasurer (Assistant Professor, University of Arkansas); and Malarie Deardorff, PhD, Vice-President (Assistant Research Professor, University of Oklahoma).

IN MEMORY OF DR. RENEE LEE CAMETO

The DCDT family is deeply saddened by the passing of our dear colleague, mentor, and friend, Dr. Renee Lee Cameto, on September 25, 2025. Renee's passing is a tremendous loss for all of us, both personally and professionally.

Renee was widely known for her groundbreaking work on the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and NLTS-2. These landmark studies gave our field the first national picture of how students with disabilities experience school and life after high school. Her work guided federal policy, shaped transition practices, and continues to influence how we prepare youth for adulthood. Renee's ability to turn complex data into meaningful stories about real students and families set her apart. She reminded us that every number represented a life, a hope, and a dream.

Within DCDT, Renee served as Research Chair and was an active member of the Publications and Research Committees. She gave countless hours of her time and energy to help strengthen the mission of our organization. She was generous in mentoring emerging scholars, providing encouragement, and creating space for others to shine.

Colleagues and friends have shared powerful memories that speak to Renee's impact. Dr. Valerie Mazzotti reflected, "Renee was the best! I was so lucky to work with her through DCDT and the Pub/Research Committees. She was an amazing mentor and friend to me in my early career. She was a rockstar." Dr. Mary Morningstar shared, "She contributed so much in time and energy to our field. She was rockstar!" Dr. Jane Ann Razeghi, DCDT Executive Director Emeri-

tus, added, "She was an amazing person who gave her heart to DCDT and to our community. Her legacy will endure." Dr. Kendra Williams-Diehm remembers, "Renee always had time to help anyone. She wanted the NLTS-2 to make a real impact on the field. I learned so much from her."

Personally, I remember Renee as a steady, thoughtful leader who always had time for me, a new special education teacher working in a city high school, always willing to listen and take the time to value my experiences working directly with youth and their families. Renee took the extra time to explain why quite honestly research mattered and what would help my kids achieve meaningful adult lives. She gave of herself with kindness, always willing to listen, ask questions, and provide guidance. Her generosity left a lasting mark on me and so many others in this field.

Renee's life reminds us that the heart of our work is not just about data, policy, or practice. It is about people. She lived this truth through her scholarship, her mentorship, her friendships, and her unwavering commitment to students with disabilities and their families.

On behalf of DCDT, we extend our deepest sympathies to Renee's family and loved ones. We will miss her dearly, but her legacy will continue to guide us. Renee helped grow our DCDT family and the transition field. She will always be a "rockstar" in our field and in our hearts.

Stacie Dojonovic
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From left to right: Christopher Sanford, PhD; Amber McConnell, PhD; Renee Cameto, PhD; Lori Hodge; and Jim Martin, PhD, at the TAGG-A Retreat, California 2017



CEC/DCDT National Certification in Transition Services

Your Credential. Your Impact. Your Future.

Join the first wave of nationally certified transition specialists!



Recognized Expertise: Demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills aligned with CEC/DCDT transition competencies.



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Are you a **transition** specialist, educator, or service provider?

Contact

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