



# Life After High School

A Guide for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse  
Families of Youth with Disabilities

Open Doors for Multicultural Families  
[www.multiculturalfamilies.org](http://www.multiculturalfamilies.org)





# OPEN DOORS

*for* MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES

...dedicated to the needs of diverse families who have loved ones with developmental disabilities and special health care needs

## **Mission**

The mission of Open Doors for Multicultural Families is to ensure that diverse families of loved ones with developmental disabilities and special health care needs have equitable access to culturally and linguistically appropriate information, resources, and services.

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<http://multiculturalfamilies.org/wordpress/youth-transition-program/>.

This guide was created using the LifeCourse Framework, developed by UMKC Institute for Human Development, UCEDD, and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License. More tools and materials at [lifecoursetools.com](http://lifecoursetools.com).

## Important Contributors from the Community

We extend special thanks for the culturally and linguistically diverse parents and self-advocates for sharing their experiences and advices.

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# Table of Contents

Mission.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Before getting started: Tools to Consider.....	1
How can this guide help?.....	2
How is the guide organized?.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Who should read this transition guide?.....	3
Why do we need a Transition Guide?.....	3
Transition: What is it? What does it mean for you?.....	4
Integrated Support and Services.....	5
Meet Mickle and his Integrated Support System.....	6
Section 1 Youth, Personal Discovery, and Transition.....	7
Discovery: Who Am I?.....	9
What is Person-Centered Planning?.....	9
Why is PCP important?.....	9
Meet Mickle and His Family.....	10
Discovery: What Do I Want for the Future?.....	11
Family Advice: Why is early planning important?.....	11
Mickle and His Family’s Vision for the Future.....	11
Experiences that supported Mickle during Transition.....	12
How Our Family Supported Mickle during Transition.....	12
Discovery: How Can I Get the Support I Need?.....	13
What is Disability Disclosure?.....	14
Why is Disability Disclosure Important?.....	14
Advice: Families and friends talk about disclosure and self-advocacy.....	15
How can families help?.....	15
Resources.....	16
Person Centered Planning (PCP).....	16
Self-Advocacy & Disability Disclosure.....	16

## Before getting started: Tools to Consider

As youth move into adulthood, preparing ahead becomes important. It helps to think about the future life youth and family want. Finding the right supports helps youth and families move toward long term life goals.

## Charting the Life Course:



The above framework helps individuals of all abilities and ages and their families to:

- develop a vision for a good life.
- think about what they need to know and do.
- identify how to find or develop supports.
- discover what it takes to live the life they want.

Charting Life Course is a framework of the Family to Family Life Course Network | UMKC IHD, UCEDD. More materials at [lifecoursetools.com](http://lifecoursetools.com)

## How can this guide help?

When we add culture and language differences to the transition process, preparing for adult life becomes a very complicated puzzle. With this guide, we hope families and youth will be able to:

- communicate individual and family needs.
- work with the transition team.
- complete applications for services before a youth leaves school.
- make connections with people who support you and important resources for life after school.

## How is the guide organized?



Introduction: What is Transition?



Section 1: Personal discovery and Self-Advocacy



Section 2: School Transition



Section 3: Daily Life Options



Section 4: Safety and Security



Section 5: Community Living



Appendix: Resources



# Introduction

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## Who should read this transition guide?

If you are a youth between the ages of 16 and 21 with a disability, we wrote this guidebook for you and your family. During **transition**, the period of time when you move from high school to adult life, it will be important for youth and their families to take an active role in **transition planning**.



This guide is especially important for families who need extra help and time to understand the transition process and to find out what resources are available.

## Why do we need a Transition Guide?



### Culture Matters

Families come from different cultures. Family beliefs and values might be different from those of professionals. This guide helps youth and families recognize differences and make informed decisions about what is best for them.

### Planning Matters

We don't know the future, but we can prepare for it. Some families need help to prepare for the future. Knowing where to get information about transition resources helps the family and youth to get the services they need.



### Time Matters

Transition also involves applying to services. Adults with disabilities need to qualify for services in order to receive them. It is also important to start planning early as some youth might need extra time to learn skills they need as an adult.



## Transition: What is it? What does it mean for you?

During high school, the word **transition** appears again and again.

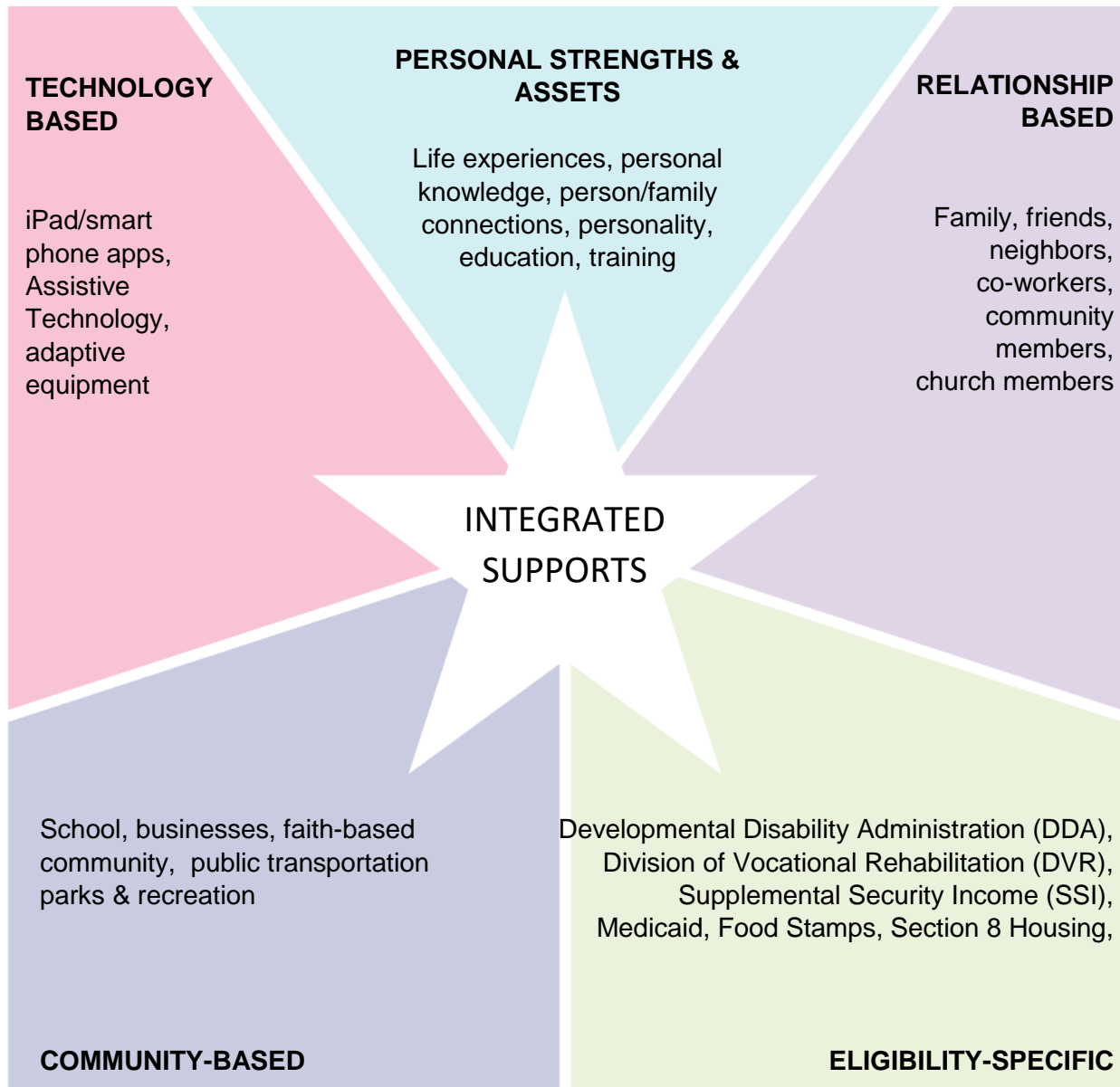
**Transition** is an important period of time for youth between 16 and 21 years old. Like most people your age, you probably go to high school and live at home with your family. Many coordinated supports between family, professionals and school help with daily life. However, when you graduate from school, some parts of your life will change. You will not go to high school anymore. How will you spend your day? Maybe you will live in your own apartment. Maybe you will go to college or get a job. There will be many changes, and preparing for those changes is called **transition**.



Every person needs support in life. However, knowing where to find support and whom to ask can be challenging for some people. Do you know how to talk about your needs? Do you know which people to ask for support when you need it? Do you know how to plan for the support you need? All of these questions are part of **transition**.

## Integrated Support and Services

Throughout this manual, we will use the model below to help youth and families explore and organize different types of support. Everyone needs support in life, and using different types of supports and services helps us move toward the life we want. The tool below can help you and your family think about how to find and coordinate the right supports for your future. Types of support may include:



Access the LifeCourse framework and tools at [www.lifecoursetools.com/](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/)

## Meet Mickle and his Integrated Support System



### TECHNOLOGY BASED

I use an iPad to set a timer, which tells me when I'm done with my work and activities

I fold pizza boxes at work. My **Assistive Technology**, a frame made with pipe, helps me count 10 pizza boxes!

I like to use gestures to communicate, but I have a **communication device** in case I want to use it for communication.

### PERSONAL STRENGTHS & ASSETS

I'm friendly, happy and funny. I'm easygoing and get along with people. I have a good smile.

I like helping people!

I'm physically strong and active.

### RELATIONSHIP BASED

Mom and Dad help me at home and in the community

My sisters are away for college, but they help me when they are home.

My supervisor and coworkers help me at work when I need help with my job



I attend church, and participate in Special Olympics and lots of events and activities through my local Community Center. I meet people there, and they help me when I need support!

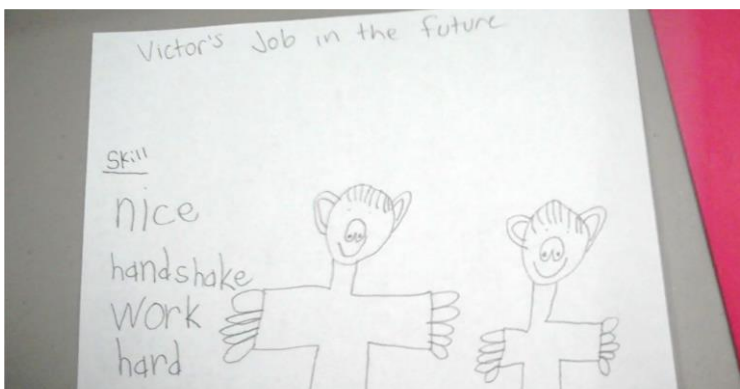
### COMMUNITY-BASED

My parents helped me apply for services which I qualify for as an adult with a disability. **DDA** funds a caregiver, who takes me to Special Olympics and other activities. **DVR** and my job coach helped me get my pizza job and learn job tasks. I take **Paratransit** service to my work all by myself!

### ELIGIBILITY-SPECIFIC

# Section 1

## Youth, Personal Discovery, and Transition



## Section 1: Self-Discovery & Self-Determination



What kind of support do we need in life? In this section, we ask important questions about what you want for your life and how to plan for your future.

### This section will cover:

1. Discovery: Who Am I? - Person Centered Transition Planning
2. Discovery: What Do I Want for the Future?
3. Discovery: How Can I Get the Support I Want for the Future?
4. Advice: Family and Friends Share Their Experiences
5. Advice: Professional Opinion
6. Resources

### For Youth:

- Explore your interests, preference, strengths and support needs
- Practice making decisions and accept responsibility for your own decisions
- Communicate what you want and need to the people who support you
- Practice **disability disclosure**—when, what, and with whom to share information about your disability
- Practice requesting accommodation

### For Family & Caregivers:

- Support youth in discovering their interests, strengths, and vision for future
- Believe in youth's capacity to make their own decisions and support their decisions
- Know youth's support needs and help them practice disability disclosure and requesting accommodation
- Encourage youth to have new experiences that help lead them toward their future life goals







## Meet Mickle and His Family



Mickle is 21 and graduating this year from his **transition program** with a job. He is a happy young adult and loves to observe people. Because of his autism, he has many support needs, particularly with communication. He communicates mostly through body language because he does not like assistive technologies.



When he was transitioning from elementary to middle school, he and his family started to do **PCP**. It helped them learn more about who Mickle is, what his strengths are, and what he loves to do. They identified the supports he needs and the family's goals and dreams for Mickle. Because they started PCP early, Mickle and his family were prepared for changes that come with transition. More information about resources for PCP is available in the resources page (p.16)

## Discovery: What Do I Want for the Future?

Some youth might know what they want for their life—getting a job, going to college, or having life-long hobbies. Some youth and their families might not know what they want in the future.

However, it is important to discover what youth and family **want** and **don't want** for life after high school. Successful transition requires step-by-step planning. Families and youth will have better results if they develop plans for what youth need to learn and which experiences and resources will assist them prepare for adult life.

## Family Advice: Why is early planning important?



*“For us, work is a very important part of our life. Mickle loves to be around people, so he will have a much better life if he has activities or a job that lets him be around people. In our transition planning, we thought about things he needs to be able to do independently. He needs to have behavior that people will accept. He has to be able to understand basic instructions.*

*These are things we thought about. It's a lot for Mickle to learn, so we started early and figured out what support works for him.”*

## Mickle and His Family's Vision for the Future

### What I DON'T want:

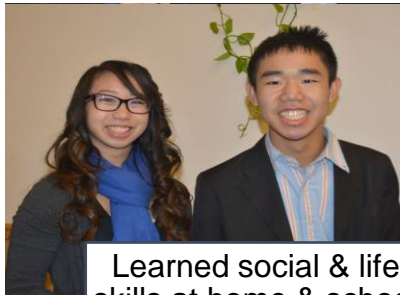
Treated with disrespect  
People making decisions *for* me  
Be alone & isolated  
Stay home all day

### My Vision for a GOOD life:

Be around people I love  
Be respected & be happy  
Get a job  
Enjoy hobbies



## Experiences that supported Mickle during Transition



Learned social & life skills at home & school



Volunteered with dad & church members



Participated in Special Olympics



Found hobbies out in the community

## How Our Family Supported Mickle during Transition



*“We see many parents are afraid to let their child with disabilities try new experiences. But if we always tell them “no,” they get afraid to try anything or believe in themselves. We have let Mickle try new experiences since he was young. He made mistakes along the way, but we never made a big deal out of it.*

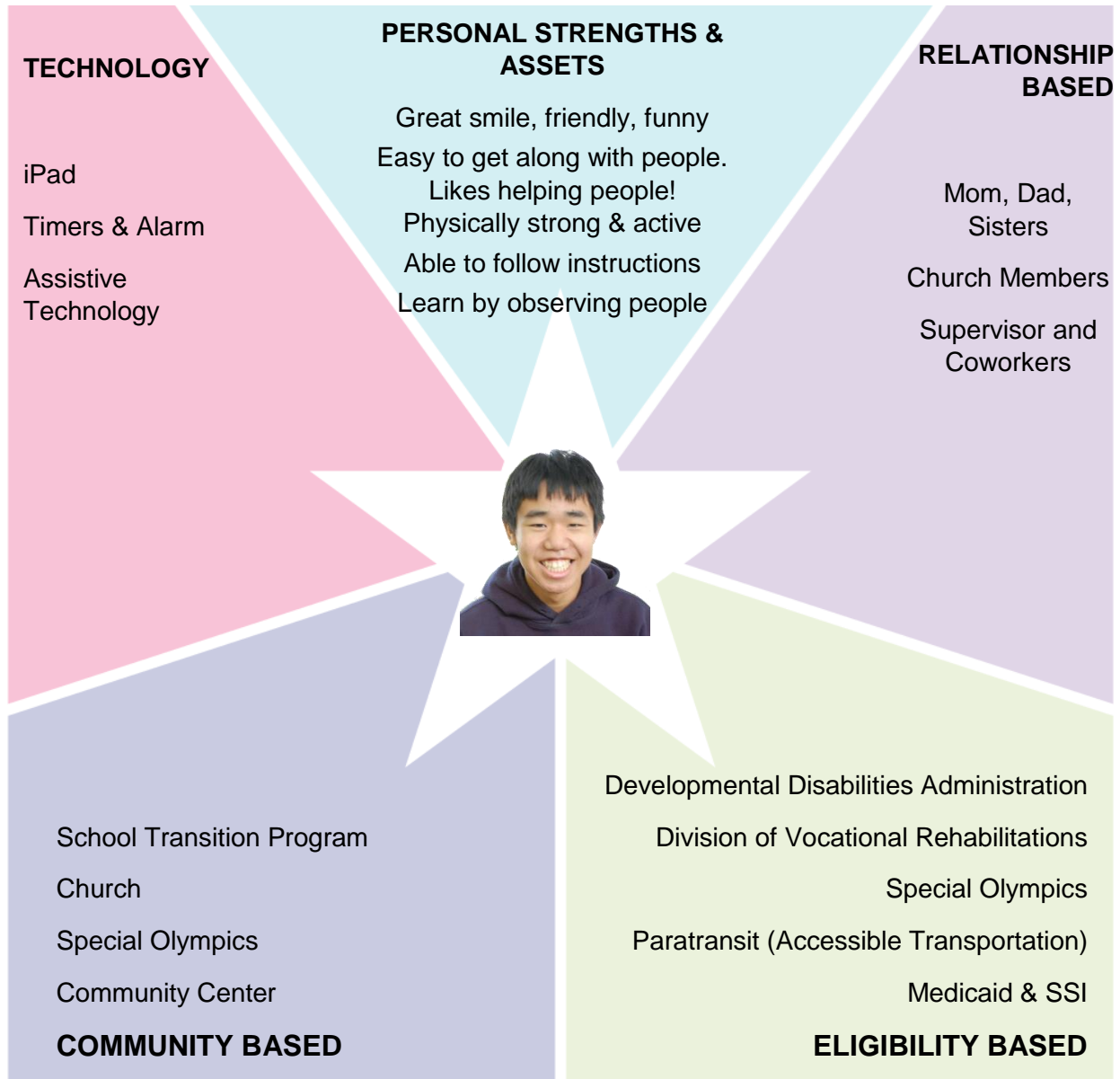
*Because we know it takes time for Mickle to get used to new experiences, we don’t expect him to be perfect. It’s worth counting his successes over things he cannot do.”*



## Discovery: How Can I Get the Support I Need?

All people use a combination of support to lead a life they enjoy. Accessing different types of supports and resources helps youth maximize their possibilities. To get started, learn about different types of support.

### Mickle's Integrated Support System



The ***Life Trajectory Worksheet*** is a helpful tool to brainstorm your ideas about the future. It can also help you communicate with people who support you in the transition process. [www.lifecoursetools.com/planning/](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/planning/)

## What is Disability Disclosure?

When individuals with a disability become adults, there will be situations where they need to explain the disability. **Disability Disclosure** means that a person shares information about the disability to achieve a specific purpose. However, **Disability Disclosure** is a choice. An individual with a disability does not have to share personal information unless the disclosure is necessary.



*Sometimes you need to talk about your disability to ask for support you need. Disability is not something bad or shameful. It's part of who I am. I have a choice about when and who to talk to about my disability—like at college or work. I recommend that people know how to disclose their disability because they might need an **accommodation**.*

*Without that support, it might be hard to be successful with your job or education.*

**Accommodation** is any arrangement an individual with a disability requires to achieve equal opportunity at school, work or in the community.

To learn more about **Disability Disclosure** and **accommodation**, please see the resources page (p.16).

## Why is Disability Disclosure Important?

While youth with disabilities attend school, their families, teachers, and professionals understand their needs and arrange accommodations. However, when a youth leaves school and becomes an adult, accommodations are not automatic. Support will not be provided until he or she requests accommodation. It is very important to understand how to ask for accommodations.

Special Education teachers and Independent Living Centers can help youth and families understand **Disability Disclosure**. They can also help youth and families practice sharing personal information about a disability and requesting accommodations. More information about Independent Living Centers is available online and in the resources page (p.16).

## Advice: Families and friends talk about disclosure and self-advocacy



*Families should set high expectations and not think someone can't do something just because of a disability. Yes, it will be hard sometimes, but support and encouragement helps youth try new experiences. My son has a disability, but I know he is capable of learning many things. Time and support will help him learn what he needs.*

*It's important to learn how and when to talk about your disability. I learned how to make decisions by myself and with support from family, teachers, and other people in my life. I discovered my strengths, likes and dislikes. I tried different activities, like volunteering in the community. I discovered more about myself and learned how to be responsible for my decisions. Everyone can learn from mistakes.*



*If you depend on your parents talking for you, people don't know what you like, and what you don't like. It's important for you to speak up! Speak up, tell your family and teachers what you want to do. If you don't speak up, they cannot help you and you might end up doing things you don't like.*

### How can families help?

Family can help youth by learning about **Disability Disclosure**, when and why it's important to share information about his or her disabilities. To learn more or to get help, please see the resources page at the end of this section (p.16).



## Resources

### Person Centered Planning (PCP)

Individual & Relationship-based support: Ready to make your personal profile with family and friends?

- My Life Plan: <http://www.mylifeplan.guide/>
- Life Trajectory Worksheet and one page profile: <http://www.lifecoursetools.com/planning/>

Where to get information about personal assistance on PCP?

Community Based Supports & Resources:

- Informing Families: <http://informingfamilies.org/person-centered-planning/>
- Washington PAVE: <http://wapave.org/programs/person-centered-planning/>
- Open Doors for Multicultural Families: <http://multiculturalfamilies.org>
- Independent Living Center: Find your local chapter at <http://www.wasilc.org/> under the “IL center” tab
- The Arc: Find local chapter at [http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local\\_arc\\_chapters](http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local_arc_chapters)

Eligibility-based Supports & Resources:

- If you are client of **Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)** or **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**, contact your case manager.

### Self-Advocacy & Disability Disclosure

Community-Based Supports & Resources:

- Independent Living Center: Find your local chapter at <http://www.wasilc.org/> under the “IL center” tab
- The Arc: Find local chapter at [http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local\\_arc\\_chapters](http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local_arc_chapters)

Online Resources:

- 411 disclosure: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/topic/disability-disclosure>
- Parent Center Hub: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/disability-disclosure-video/>

**For additional questions on this resource guide, or if you need help from a person who speaks the same language, please contact:**

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253-216-4479

[www.multiculturalfamilies.org](http://www.multiculturalfamilies.org)



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