

How to Host A Community Event On Transition Planning

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My Future My Plan
A National Outreach Campaign on Transition Planning



Graduating

Peter

**for more information about the campaign visit:
<http://www.myfuturemyplan.com>**

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How to Host A Community Event On Transition Planning

INTRODUCTION

As of March of 1999, students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are required to have a statement of transition included in their IEP by the time the student is age 14, or earlier if the IEP team finds it appropriate. The release of “Graduating Peter” and “My Future My Plan” can provide your community with reason to discuss how successful transition planning is in your community. This guide will help you put together an event where people in your community can get together, talk about transition planning and help the students to begin to think about their own goals.

This event can be used as the starting point for a dialogue that promotes learning, helping and cooperation in a community. Your community event can be as small as a viewing of a film in a family home and an informal discussion about transition planning or as large as a transition planning fair that brings together all of the organizations that have an interest in this transition for students with disabilities. Everything depends on your resources and the needs of your community.

This planning guide is not made for any particular type of event. It gives ideas that can be used in all events on transition planning, large or small.

For any event of any size:

- Begin with a **Brainstorming Meeting** to focus the ideas and resources of the community.
- Then take a week and reconvene for a **Planning Meeting**.
- The **Event** should go smoothly since it is well planned out by this point.
- Lastly, and this is important if the event is ever going to be repeated, conduct an **Evaluation** so you know what you did well and what can be improved.

BRAINSTORMING MEETING:

In order to put on a successful event the organizers must sit down with representatives from a range of groups that are involved in transition planning for youth with disabilities. This will help to make the event successful and interesting from every angle. People to think about inviting to the brainstorming meeting include the following:

- Students who have transitioned
- Students who are or are about to transition
- Families
- School Personnel
- Transition Service Providers
- Adult Service Providers
- Community Disability Groups
- School to Work Programs
- College Disability Services Representatives (Remember to invite representatives from community colleges, 4 year colleges and trade schools.)

The planning meeting should clearly define the following parts of how an ideal and realistic event would be run.

- Goal
- Attendees
- Activities
- Equipment
- Time
- Place
- Publicity
- Funding Opportunities
- Job Assignments for the next meeting

A good agenda for the meeting can come from the “event wish list” that is included in this packet. As you go through and discuss the above listed topics put them on the “event wish list” and assign a person to research that area before the Planning Meeting.

See Section F for a sample “Event Wish List.”

GOAL:

Every event needs a goal, or a reason for the attendees to come together. In the case of transition planning there could be many things that you want to happen, choosing an attainable goal will help to ensure success. “Graduating Peter” profiles one family’s

experiences during middle and high school and the “My Future My Plan” materials are specifically designed for students with disabilities and their families who are beginning or about to begin the transition planning process so goals should focus on this time in a student’s life. Some possible goals of the event are as follows.

- To inform youth with disabilities who are reaching the age of 14 about what to expect when they begin their transition planning.
- To inform families about what they should expect when the student begins transition planning.
- To inform the students and their families about their rights and the services that are available at school and in the community to help with transition planning.
- To bring together older students and students about to start transition planning so that they can relate to each other and possibly form a mentor-mentee type of relationship.
- To bring together the school system and the community based organizations in order to better support students that are beginning transition planning.
- To talk with students about the importance of self-advocacy and how they can advocate for what they want in their transition plan, their IEP meetings and for their life after high school.

After deciding on a goal, the meeting needs to focus on the specifics of what reaching the goal will do for the students. Ask the group: What should the students come away with? This question may have a simple answer such as: We want the students and families to know more about transition planning services that are available at school and in our community. You also may want the attendees to take action at the event. This could be in the form of:

- Making an appointment with a community group that can help the students reach their goals or support the family during the transition planning process.
- Assigning a student mentor who is deeper into the transition process.
- Receiving the information on how to get the “My Future My Plan” materials.
- Educating students, families or teachers on how to use the “My Future My Plan” resources in their own planning.

ATTENDEES:

Once you have established your goal you should figure out who needs to be involved to reach that goal. The most important people to include are the students! In order to help the students you should include people that are knowledgeable about how transition planning works and

can answer questions. Having representatives from all groups that are involved in each step of a student's transition will help to cover all the bases.

Groups to include may be:

- Students about to transition
- Students who are or are finished transitioning
- Families
- School Personnel
- Transition Service Providers
- Adult Service Providers
- School to Work Programs
- College Disability Services (Representatives from both community colleges and 4-year colleges or local trade schools)

MEDIA:

Another consideration that needs to be made early in the process is whether or not to involve the media. There are many ways to use the media to get event information out to the public or to bring general community awareness to an issue. At this stage it is difficult to create specific media print pieces because the plan is only theoretical. More information about using media resources will be provided later in this guide. Before the next meeting an assigned person should do some local research to create a list of local news organizations or newspapers and how and when they prefer to receive information about upcoming events. In addition to the phone book, a good place to find a list of media organizations is through the local Chamber of Commerce. An especially good way to get your event noticed is to speak with a NEWS professional who is directly affected by your cause. For instance if you know that there is a person in the news industry that has a child with a disability that may be heading towards transitioning then this would be the person to try and speak with because they can get the topic noticed. When researching how to address the media, you should ask questions about:

- How to promote an event – You don't always have to pay money to announce a community event
- "Public Service Announcements" at your local radio, television or cable access stations as well as local newspapers
- Community event calendars that may be released on a daily, weekly or monthly basis
- What kind of materials the media organization wants from you
- A timeline of when they want to receive information

ACTIVITIES:

The activities that you include in your event should be suitable, educational and interesting to your target audience. The following is a list of possible ways to use the "My Future My Plan" and "Graduating Peter" materials to create activities:

- Screen "My Future My Plan" (30 minutes) and follow up with a discussion prompted from the discussion guide.

- Screen “Graduating Peter” (1 hour 14 minutes) and follow up with a discussion prompted from the viewer’s guide.
- Use the “My Future My Plan” notebook to help students to begin to understand how transition planning works and to begin making their own plan.
- Use the “My Future My Plan” student notebook and parent – teacher guide to walk through with families, teachers or trainers how to help students to take control of their transition.
- Talk about the resources in “My Future My Plan” and how to use them.
- Have a panel of students who have successfully transitioned speak about their experience and answer any questions the students and families may have.
- Bring together students, families, teachers and community groups to have a dialogue about how to make transition planning more successful for young students.
- Bring in a speaker to talk about the things that students about to turn 14 should be thinking about and resources they should be looking to and how their family and the school can support them.

The person assigned to organizing the activities should make sure and contact the key people that you want at the event and or speakers. These people also may have ideas that you can consider for the activities at the event.

EQUIPMENT:

Once the event activities have been decided on and a theoretical time and place have been chosen it is good to talk through the entire event and make a list of all of the equipment that will be needed. This will be important when you make the budget. The person or persons in charge of equipment should make sure to ask about timing for delivery and pick-up so that this can be added to the timeline at the Planning Meeting. This is also the section that can reap the most benefit from donations from the community. If there is someone with a lot of connections then that person would do well with this job. The following is a list to get you started:

- Audio/Visual Equipment
- Tables/Chairs
- Refreshments
- Nametags
- Information Sharing Materials (fliers, booths, signs, sign-up sheets, etc.)

TIME:

The time and place for the event should be decided based on all of the attendees at the event. The first priority is to choose a good time for the target -audience that will help you accomplish your goal. For students you should make sure and take into consideration when they are at school, how they will get there, who will bring them and when the families will also be available to participate. For community groups and school personnel you should make sure that the event is not during working hours. Try and schedule the event when students, families and professionals can all attend. This could be an evening or a weekend.

PLACE:

Make sure that the place you choose is not only accessible to all involved but also welcoming to students with disabilities and their families. You should take into consideration all of the equipment necessary to put on the activities that you want to include (for instance audio/visual equipment). Estimate how many people could theoretically attend to help decide if the venue is the right size. Some venue possibilities include:

- Schools
- Local Libraries
- Community Centers
- Parks
- Classrooms
- Family Homes
- Training Centers
- Faith-Based Organizations

PUBLICITY:

An event is only successful if the necessary people attend. Getting the word out should happen as early as possible and more than once. At the planning meeting it is a good time to think about all of the ways you want to promote the event. The person assigned to publicity should begin creating fliers so that once the time and date are set they can go out right away. This person should also speak to the school or chamber of commerce about the rules for posting fliers or posters etc.

A great way to get in touch with the people that you are trying to reach is through e-mail listservs. Check with the local disability organizations to find out if they have a listserv for professionals that may be interested in attending this event. The schools may have listservs to reach the parents that can be very helpful in promoting the event to students and families, so check with the schools.

FUNDING:

Once the ideal venue, time, attendees, activities, equipment etc. have been decided on it is time to put together a proposed budget. This will probably require some research by individuals. If you already have an allotted budget then you can give individuals a budget for each of their pieces of the event. If you need to find funding at this point then there are a few good ways to start. To begin, assign someone to ask for donations from the community for things like food, flier printing, signs etc.

In order to find a larger scale sponsor for the event you should outline why this event is important to the organization that you are asking. Included in this planning guide is a sample letter to ask for money from an organization. Make sure to include any benefits that the organization will receive for sponsoring, like the inclusion of their name as a sponsor at the event on the publicity fliers. When deciding which organizations to ask for money think about the goal of the event and choose organizations that would like to see this goal happen. This is often the most difficult portion of the event planning process and money often ends up being the limiting factor for the event.

This type of event can be successful no matter what the cost. Work with someone at a high school and find out how to get permission to use a classroom for one evening to view the film or films and have a discussion. Or if funding is not a problem then throw a transition planning fair that includes information stations for all of the community, employment, school and college based programs that students with disabilities should be thinking about or learning about during their transition.

See Section F for a sample “Letter.”

ASSIGNING JOBS:

To make sure that everything gets done go back to the “event wish list” and assign every job to a single person. This way there is one person who is in charge of making sure that all the information is researched for the next meeting. Also there should be one person who is the event coordinator that keeps track of all of the things on the “wish-list” and makes sure that everything gets done. The “due date” for these tasks should be at the Planning Meeting.

Now you are ready for the planning meeting! Set a firm date for the meeting and call everyone and remind them to come (or better yet, assign someone this job).

PLANNING MEETING

GOAL:

Now that you have a goal and a plan for the ideal event it is time to focus on how to make it all happen. It is important to remember the goal as you are planning and make sure that any changes from the ideal plan to the actual plan don't affect the goal.

DATE AND VENUE:

Begin by choosing a date and place for your event. Throughout the planning meeting schedule every step so that you can get everything done before that date. Stop again at the end of the meeting and make sure that you have left enough time, if not choose a later date.

BUDGET:

If each person brings a proposed budget for their part of the event then the event budget should go smoothly. Begin by listing all of the donations that have been made. Then go down the "event wish list" and get a brief update on how the research went. Subtract the donations from the total budget and fit the rest of the costs into what's left. If the budget is less than what is needed to create the theoretical event then go back to the drawing board, scale back and make all of the necessary pieces fit. This could take a while and will take cooperation.

TIMELINE:

Once the exact plan for the event has been set a timeline needs to be established so that everything is kept on track. This timeline should include when things will be purchased, printed, delivered, picked up etc. One person should be in charge of making sure that everything happens when it should. If you want the media to be involved then the timeline is very important. See the publicity section for more specific information about the media timeline.

ASSIGNING JOBS:

Additional job assignment needs to take place at this meeting to make sure that the actual event logistics are taken care of. A small event may only need the planning committee to make sure everything runs smoothly but a larger event may necessitate additional volunteers. Some places to look for volunteers include:

- School clubs or teams
- Civic organizations
- Senior Centers

If there are going to be volunteers involved then a job list should be created. If not then, jobs should be assigned to those who will be at the event. Some jobs to remember are:

- Greeter/Registration Crew
- Information Area Crew
- Refreshments Crew

- Audio/Visual Crew
- Setup Crew
- Tear Down Crew
- Cleanup Crew
- Equipment Coordinator

It is important to have a meeting to go over with everyone involved exactly how the event should run. A volunteer coordinator should be chosen so that all questions from volunteers can come through one person. This person should know what has been discussed in the planning process.

PUBLICITY:

In the weeks prior to the event the most important piece is publicity. Since the exact specifics had not been decided upon before this Planning Meeting, all of the publicity will have to take place after this point. First and foremost the goal is to bring in the target audience. Secondary to that, the goal is to bring in the media or some sort of community attention.

In most cases the target audience will be students with disabilities around the age of 13. The easiest way to reach this group is through the school. Most schools send home information on a regular basis to families and adding your flier about your transition planning event to this information is very simple. A good way to make sure that you are reaching the audience you want in the most effective way possible is to ask someone in that group how they get information. Some ways to think about are through telephone trees, e-mail lists, the internet, school newspapers, school announcements, and local newspapers.

To bring in the media you must first get a feel for the kind of information that the media in your community wants. This “research” should have been done prior to the planning meeting. Things to talk about are the following:

- What information do you want the media to know about the event? For instance, the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.”
- What information do you want the media to know about transition planning? For instance, when to begin, why it is important, what is involved and most importantly who is affected.
- What do you want the media to do with this information? For instance, come to the event, announce the event, and follow up after the event.

In order to make your event newsworthy it is important to help the media to understand that successful transition planning for students with disabilities can greatly benefit the community. Students that plan well will be more likely to finish high school, work in the community and go to college. It is important to approach the media in the standard way, through some sort of media kit.

Three things are included in a standard media kit: a fact sheet, a backgrounder and a press release. The combination of these three pieces will give the media a good idea of what the

issue is, who is involved in this event and what the event entails. You can give the media organizations any or all of these pieces.

See Section F for a sample “Fact Sheet,” “Backgrounder,” and “Press Release.”

The **Fact Sheet** is a one-page summary of the organizations and people involved in the event – if there is a single organization putting the event on then this should outline the organization and its reach.

The **Backgrounder** is a one-page summary of the context of the event, transition planning, including who is involved and what it looks like.

The **Press Release** is a one-page outline of the event with short paragraphs that outline transition planning and who is involved in the event. A key to getting the press release to be read and reported is to relate the affect that the event or transition planning will have on the community. The Press Release, the most important piece to go to the media, includes a few standard pieces:

- Headline and the Date Sent
- Date for release By the Media
- The Name and Daytime Phone number of a contact person
- The “Who,” “What,” “Where”, “When,” “Why,” and “How” of the story.
- A Symbol marking the end of the release (###)
- The first paragraph should include all of the essential information and following paragraphs should expand on that.

EVENT

If you have covered everything thoroughly at the two meetings then there should be very few problems. Be ready for small issues to come up and have fun. The most important things for the day of the event is making sure everything goes smoothly and all of the jobs are taken care of. Make sure that people are there when equipment is being dropped off and picked up and make sure that someone is there to greet the speakers, attendees, volunteers and the media.

EVALUATION

After the event has concluded, for future improvements, it helps to look back and evaluate what went on. Look back first at the goal of the event and to what extent it was achieved. Discuss the attendees at the event and if they were the people that were necessary to achieve the goal. Were the place and time effective choices for the event? Did the media come and did they cover the event in the way that helped bring the people in or bring attention to the transition planning experience? Was all the equipment that was needed for the event accessible? Were there any unforeseen occurrences that should be taken care of for next time? Are there any changes that need to be made for next time to make the event more successful?

See Section F for a sample “Evaluation.”

Last, but certainly not least, remember to thank those people that were helpful in making the event a success, including the sponsors. Thank you notes are a nice way to culminate the event and show your appreciation.

SAMPLES

EVENT WISH LIST

	Tasks	Notes	Person Responsible	Phone Number
	Attendees			
	Groups to Invite			
	Best way to reach them			
	Media			
	List of Contacts			
	Information they need			
	How to advertise an event			
	Timeline			
	Activities			
	Invite Speaker			
	Contact Necessary Groups			
	Funding			
	Time and Place			
	Availability			
	How much			
	How to Reserve			
	Necessary Logistics			
	Equipment			
	What is needed			
	Where to get it			
	How much it costs			
	How will it be delivered			
	How will it be returned			
	Donations			
	Publicity			
	Where to distribute			
	How to distribute			
	How to get permission			
	How much will it cost			
	Funding			
	Local Groups			
	Donations			
	Sponsors			

Additional Tasks:**LETTER**

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE LETTERHEAD FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION OR THE EVENT REMEMBER TO INCLUDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IN THE LETTER

DATE

SPONSOR'S CONTACT NAME
COMPANY
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear SPONSOR'S CONTACT NAME,

YOUR ORGANIZATION is holding an event to help the students with disabilities in our community to begin their planning for life after high school at an earlier age. Under IDEA, amendment to the American's with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities who receive services in the school system must begin planning for their transition from high school to community life at or before age 14. The transition is often difficult for students as they are moving from the school system to the more segmented world of community services.

We would like to invite (SPONSOR'S NAME) to be a sponsor of (NAME OF THE EVENT). The event will be held on DATE/PLACE/TIME. We will begin with (a screening of the newly released film "Graduating Peter" or "My Future My Plan") and will proceed with (a discussion about who transition planning is working in our community,) lead by SPEAKER AND HER/HIS TITLE. EXPAND ON THE EVENT.

This event is a community effort to bring together all of the people involved in the lives of students with disabilities. This event with (STATE YOUR GOAL) and will help students to begin thinking about their own transition in an atmosphere that is fun and exciting for them. We would like YOUR ORGANIZATION to join us as a sponsor. Enclosed is a proposal that outlines the event, our funding requirements and benefits to the sponsor. I will be in touch with you soon to answer any questions you may have.

We appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to possibly working together.

Sincerely,
NAME
ORGANIZATION

FACT SHEET

What: Screening of “My Future My Plan,” followed by a discussion on Transition Planning led by Tom Smith, Director of Special Education for the county.

When: Tuesday March 3, 2007, 7:00PM

Where: Washington High School Auditorium

Why: To promote an early start to transition planning at age 14 for students with disabilities and their families. To bringing together the groups that are involved in this transition, encourage students and their families to think about their own goals and what they need to reach the goals. For the professionals, coming together will aid in cooperation to support the children in the most effective way possible.

How: This event is sponsored by: Washington High School, Eastside Community College Office of Disabilities, Safeway and Kinkos.

Who: The attendees at the event include students, parents, teachers, community groups, school-to work programs, and college disability offices.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Education estimates that only one-third of students with disabilities receive the necessary job training and assistance. As of 1997 federal law mandates that students with disabilities who have IEP (Individual Education Plans) must begin a process called transition planning at age 14. This program is designed to connect students with the proper transition planning services that give them the important skills and career planning tools to better prepare them for a successful life after high school, whether it be in the college setting or in the community.

In (CITY) on (DATE) students and their families will gather at (PLACE) to talk about how to start thinking about and planning for their future. A National Outreach Campaign titled “My Future My Plan” includes the release of the two films and accompanying discussion guides along with a transition planning curriculum that includes a student resource notebook and parent/teacher discussion guide. The first film, “Graduating Peter,” follows a young student with Down syndrome as he and his family plan for his life after high school. The second film, titled “My Future My Plan,” follows three students transitioning out of high school and focuses on their specific goals and how they address them.

(EXPLAIN WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE EVENT) The event will include a screening of (LIST THE FILM TO BE SCREENED) and will be followed by a discussion lead by XXXXX XXXX is (TALK ABOUT TITLE AND RELEVANCE TO THIS EVENT). This speaker and the following discussion will help to begin the dialogue about transition planning amongst the students who are heading into this process.

(INCLUDE ANYTHING ABOUT THE EVENT THAT IS NOVEL TO THE COMMUNITY OR THE PEOPLE THAT ARE INVOLVED: FOR INSTANCE, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THIS GROUP HAS BEEN BROUGHT TOGETHER TO HELP THE CHILDREN. OR, THIS IS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE LIVES OF THESE AMAZING CHILDREN.)

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release –

Community Open Doors for Youth with Disabilities. Local event brings together all players to improve transition from school to community for students with disabilities.

CITY, STATE, (DATE) People with disabilities are nearly three times more likely than people without disabilities to be living in households with total income of \$15,000 or less. Also, only one third of young people with disabilities who need job training receive it. The staggering reality of these numbers has brought together the community of (YOUR COMMUNITY) to help their youth with disabilities to have a more successful transition from high school to life after high school. On (DATE) at (TIME) at (PLACE) students, families and community groups will be uniting to become more informed about this transition.

The process of transition planning for youth with disabilities is mandated by the state under an amendment to the American’s with Disabilities Act that is called IDEA. The law states that students with an IEP (or individualized education plan) must begin making plans for the transition from high school to life after high school at age 14. Students with disabilities in this age group are being brought together with families, teachers, community members and older student role models to help motivate the students to take control of their own transition and become self-advocates.

The event will commence with a screening of (“Graduating Peter,” which follows one family’s struggle to make the best future for their son as he navigates through middle and high school. “Graduating Peter” is the follow-up to the academy award winning “Educating Peter.”) OR (“My Future My Plan” profiles three students who are advocating for themselves in their transition planning for life after high school) Following the screening there will be a discussion led by (SPEAKER) about the needs of students who are transitioning and the steps that students, families, teachers and community members should take to support the student. (ELABORATE, AS BRIEFLY AS POSSIBLE, ABOUT WHAT YOUR EVENT WILL INCLUDE AND THE GOAL OF THE EVENT)

###

If you would like more information on this event please contact (YOUR CONTACT PERSON AND TELEPHONE NUMBER AND/OR E-MAIL).

If you would like more information on transition planning (?????)

If you would like more information on the films and materials being presented at this event please go to <http://www.myfuturemyplan.com> or contact office@stateart.com.

EVALUATION

The Goal of this event was to (STATE YOUR GOAL HERE).

1. Do you think this goal was met? Yes No
Why or why not?

2. Did you enjoy this event? Yes No
If you answered no, why not:

3. What was the most interesting part of the event?
 - a. the movie
 - b. the speakers
 - c. the discussion

4. Do you know more about transition planning now then you did before the event? Yes No

5. What is the most important thing you learned about transition planning?

6. Rate the following from 1 to 5 (5 being the best)
 - a. Location _____
 - b. Volunteers _____
 - c. Activities _____
 - d. Information Available _____

7. Was there anything that you thought we would talk about that we did not?

8. How can we improve this event?

Ordering Information

“My Future My Plan” is now available!!!

*A Transition Planning Resource for Life After High School
For students with disabilities and their families*

My Future My Plan is a curriculum designed to motivate and guide students with disabilities and their families as they begin early transition planning for life after high school. It promotes positive attitudes and self-advocacy, and assists students, parents, and professionals to make the transition planning process more effective. The curriculum package – which may be used in home, school, and community settings – includes a videotape and discussion guide, a planning notebook for students, and a guide for family members and teachers.

To Order

Publications Office
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<http://ncset.org/publications/mfmp.asp>

Sponsorship & Support for the Project

My Future My Plan was developed and is distributed by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD), University of Minnesota; and by State of the Art, Inc. Development of My Future My Plan was supported in part through cooperative agreement #HR326J000005 between the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education and the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. It was also supported by grant#RW97076013 from the U.S. Department of Education and grant #5 R44 HD68640-03 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Education or National Institutes of Health.

“Educating Peter” and “Graduating Peter” are now available!!!

To Order

Copies of Graduating Peter are now available from Films.com
<http://www.films.com>

"Graduating Peter" is a feature-length documentary film and the sequel to the 1992 Academy Award ®winning "Educating Peter." "Educating Peter" follows Peter, a third grader with Down syndrome, as he experiences his first year of being included in a typical classroom. Peter and his classmates go through a difficult and rewarding process of adjustment as he becomes a regular third grader. "Graduating Peter" shows the journey of a student with severe disabilities and his family through middle school and high school. The film culminates at the important point in Peter's life when he will be leaving the support of the school system for the often difficult worlds of adult life and adult disability services. "Graduating Peter" is the story of a family's struggle to build the best future for their son. "Graduating Peter" was broadcast on HBO in 2003.

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