

## Tracks in Transition: Thinking, Problem Solving, Organizing.

Caregivers play an important role in helping teens be prepared to handle things by themselves after high school. Paying attention, organizing, planning, prioritizing, and responding to challenges are skills known as executive function. These skills are used every day to learn, work and handle daily life. Problems in these areas can stop teens from being successful in home and community events.

Remember that your teen may not have a problem with knowing how to do things but a problem with completing tasks that have already been taught.

Ways to help your teen improve executive function are:

- Practice real life activities.
- Give visual reminders for certain tasks in certain places.
- Use visual supports such as posters with problem-solving steps or routines, and color-coded schedules. Use pictures or words based on how your teen learns.
- Decrease clutter.
- Label spaces for their items. Example might be that **shoes go here**.
- Teach them how to break down large tasks into small tasks.
- Review earlier learning on a routine basis. Especially before a new or hard task.
- Give them a chance to take breaks from hard tasks.
- Allow your teen to have short breaks when they are getting upset.
- Add aerobic exercise into the day schedule as this helps refresh the brain.
- Encourage the use of technology to help them stay organized.

Ask your teen's Teacher, Speech Therapist, or care team at Children's Health if you need help in teaching these tasks.