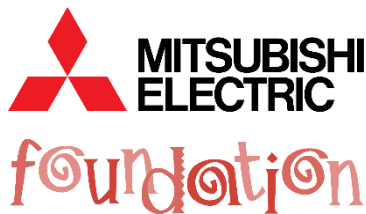


# Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood

## Trainer's Manual & Resource Guide

Developed by PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment



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# **Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood**

Trainer's Manual & Resource Guide  
2019

**PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment**

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# Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood

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# Introduction for Trainer

## Purpose and Goal of Training

*Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood* is a 4-part training that introduces families to concepts of transition planning. The training provides strategies for what parents and youth can do to help plan for the student's transition from high school to adult employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living.

## Intended Audience

The target audience for this presentation is parents or guardians of students with any disability in grades 8-12. Professionals and older youth would also find the information useful. Suggestions are provided in the "Ways to Customize the Training" section for ways the curriculum could be adapted for other audiences.

## Training Components

The curriculum includes the following 4 modules:

**1. Parent Involvement, High Expectations, and Secondary Transition Planning in the IEP** (slides 4-12):

The content in this section is foundational to the rest of the training. It provides background on the importance of parent involvement and high expectations. It also includes an overview of the transition planning process as part of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**2. Transition to Employment** (slides 13-19): This section provides parents with strategies on how they can begin thinking about employment early in their child's life and how they can help their child develop necessary "soft skills." The section also explores ways students' interests can be tied to career goals and community resources available to assist with employment.

**3. Transition to Postsecondary Education** (slides 20-30): This section begins by providing an overview of changes in students' rights and responsibilities from high school to postsecondary education or training. There is a brief overview of self-advocacy, with a focus on disability disclosure and accessing accommodations. Next the section provides information on what to consider when exploring different types of postsecondary education or training options.

**4. Transition to Independent Living** (slides 31-36): This section provides an overview of independent living issues to consider, whether or not the student has needs that will require support in this area in their IEP. A variety of formal and informal supports for recreation, community involvement, and housing are discussed.

Slides 1-3 include introductory information, and slides 37-40 cover resources and conclusion.

## Ways to Customize the Training

The *Mapping Dreams* curriculum can be customized for different presentation lengths or audiences.

### Presentation Length Options

**All 4 Components in 1 training, 2-2.5 hours:** It will take a minimum of 2 hours to present all 4 components of the curriculum. If you are presenting in a rural area where families have less ability to attend multiple trainings on different days, this may be the best option. However, material will need to be covered more quickly and there will be less time for questions.

**Series of 3 Workshops, 1-1.5 hours each:** You could choose to present separate trainings on employment, postsecondary education, and independent living. The parent involvement and IEP transition planning information could be summarized at the beginning of each session or embedded within the three modules. Focusing on one area of transition would allow the presenter to go into more depth on the topic and possibly include co-presenters from related agencies.

### Presenter Options

One individual from your organization could present the entire training or you could choose to have co-presenters. You may also wish to ask representatives from vocational rehabilitation services, college disability services, or centers for independent living come to share their expertise on relevant curriculum components.

### Target Audience Options

The curriculum as written is focused on providing information to parents or guardians, although professionals and older youth would also benefit from the information without any modification. Your organization could adapt the training to fit any of the following target audiences:

- **Parents or parents plus professionals:** Trainers could present the curriculum as written.
- **Parents with their young person (families):** Trainers could allow time for families to briefly discuss concepts covered in each section. More information on student involvement and self-advocacy could be added to the first section, or throughout the curriculum.
- **Youth only:** The slides could be adapted with young people as the primary audience. Sections may be shortened with more time planned to complete checklists or other interactive activities.
- **Parents of youth who are graduating with a regular diploma after four years of high school:** Trainers would focus on information relevant to students who spend the majority of their school day in a general education setting, will graduate based on meeting state standards and graduation requirements, are capable of attending a 2- or 4-year college program, and would likely not be eligible for vocational rehabilitation or other services.
- **Parents of youth who will graduate based on alternate achievement standards after transition programming:** Trainers would focus on information relevant to students who spend a larger portion of the day in special education settings, had academic modifications in addition to

accommodations, are likely eligible for transition services after 12<sup>th</sup> grade, need customized or supported employment, and likely qualify for supports from vocational rehabilitation and other agencies.

Another option to address the information needs that vary between families whose youth will graduate in 4 years with a regular diploma and those who will attend transition programming after 12<sup>th</sup> grade is to have breakout sessions. The entire group could meet together to cover the first module on parent involvement and high expectations. Then the audience could divide into 2 groups based on the level of their child's needs to cover some or all of the postsecondary education and training, employment, and independent living sections. The entire group could reconvene together for the closing.

**2 Hour Presentation, 2 Presenters:**

- Module 1 in Large Group (40 minutes)
- Modules 2, 3, and/or 4 in 2 breakout groups (1 hour)
- Closing in Large Group (20 minutes)

### **State-Specific Information**

The curriculum presenter notes highlight areas where state-specific information should be inserted. Depending on your state's requirements for transition planning, you can either adapt existing slides or add new slides that provide relevant information to families. If your state has a specific format that IEPs use to document transition services, you may wish to share a sample with participants. You could also include more detail on transition assessments or career planning tools used by schools in your area or state.

### **Supplies Needed for this Training**

- Included in the curriculum materials are a customizable resource list and related handouts. Several of the handouts contain space for parents and youth to write down questions they have as they think about transition or checklists of skills needed, so it is helpful to provide hard copies to training participants.
- You may also wish to provide copies of the PowerPoint in handout format. *(Note: If printing the slides in black & white, switch the color setting in the print menu from "color" to "grayscale" so the slides can be easily read.)*

### **Further Guidance on Conducting Trainings**

**Presenter Notes – Be Flexible!**

The curriculum PowerPoint includes extensive Presenter's Notes. These are meant to be used as a guide, not a script. The training will be less interesting to the audience if it feels overly rehearsed or if the presenter is reading the notes.

## **Answering Participant Questions**

It is important that the trainer is knowledgeable about the material so they can be flexible based on the audience's needs and questions. You may wish to ask the attendees at the beginning of the presentation if they have any "burning questions" they hope are covered and write them down on a list. If you don't have time to answer all of them during the training or they aren't relevant to the main topic, the presenter can follow-up individually with participants. If you're unsure of a response, it is better to say you will research the question and get back to them later than provide incorrect information. It's okay to say, "I don't know."

## **Connecting to the Audience**

Training attendees will be more invested in the presentation if they feel a connection to the presenter. It is helpful if presenters share their connection to the topic and add some personal stories to the presentation.

## **Evaluations**

Participant evaluations are an important component of any training. We encourage you to distribute and collect evaluation forms from all workshop participants. A sample evaluation survey is included in the Appendix. You may adapt the survey questions to fit your organization's evaluation needs.

## **Questions?**

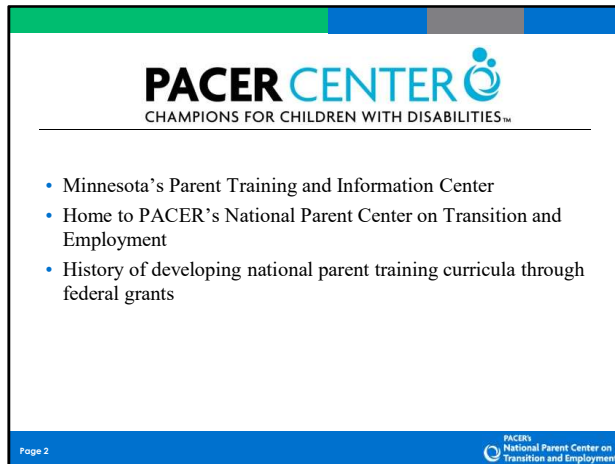
If you have any questions regarding this curriculum, contact PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment: 888.248.0822 or [transition@pacer.org](mailto:transition@pacer.org).





## Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood





**Presenter's Note:** *Revise this slide to include information about your organization and how you provide help to families.*

**Welcome and Introductions:**

- Introduce yourself and provide a brief overview of your organization and the ways you help families.
- Find out who is in your audience. Ask participants for a show of hands to indicate:
  - if this is their first workshop at your Parent Center or if they have been to other workshops;
  - if their primary role is that of a parent or a professional;
  - the age or grade of their child or the youth they work with (e.g. middle school, high school, 18 to 21 transition program, out of school)
- Take care of “housekeeping and agenda items,” such as bathroom locations, refreshments, silencing cell phones, any scheduled breaks, certificates of attendance, and whether questions will be answered during or after the presentation.
- Provide a brief overview of any printed items you have provided to participants, such as evaluation form, handouts, or brochures.
- If time allows, you may want to ask if anyone came with a “burning question” about the topic they hoped to have answered. Record the questions on a flip chart or whiteboard to refer back to during the presentation or at the end during Q & A time.

**Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Adulthood  
Session Agenda**

- Welcome & introductions
- The power of parent involvement
- Transition in the IEP
- Transition to employment
- 10 minute break
- Transition to postsecondary education or training
- Transition to independent living
- Closing thoughts, Q & A, evaluation surveys

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**Presenter’s Note:** *Revise the agenda as needed for the presentation option you choose. You may not be presenting all segments.*

**Introduction:** In this presentation, we will explore what families and youth can do to help plan for the student’s transition from high school to adult employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. One of the “tools” you can use in paving the way to a successful future is the school transition process. We will also provide suggestions for your family to use at home and in the community.

The transition your child will make from being a child to becoming an adult member of the community is an important journey, and one that requires a plan. It's important to begin thinking about your child’s transition to adult life as early as possible. Your child will need to make many significant decisions during this journey to adult life. **By using this presentation as a starting point, you can help your youth make those decisions and plan for life after high school.**

The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) explored the characteristics and experiences of a representative sample of nearly 13,000 students ages 13-21. The students and their families were surveyed in 2012 and 2013. [Volume 2 of the report](#) compares students across disability categories. Among the interesting findings in this section: Five groups—youth with autism, deaf-blindness, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, and orthopedic impairments—appear to be at higher risk than all youth with an IEP for challenges making successful transitions from high school.

**Related Resources:**

- National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) (2017). *Preparing for Life After High School: The Characteristics and Experiences of Youth in Special Education. Volume 2: Comparisons Across Disability Groups*: <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/national-longitudinal-transition-study-2012-vol-2-comparisons-across-disability-groups-full-report>
- National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) Website: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects/nlts2/>

## Factors Linked to Post-High School Success

- Performing the acts of daily living well
- Getting together with friends weekly
- Participating in a school sport or club
- Avoiding suspension
- Taking a college entrance or placement exam
- Having recent paid work experience
- Having parents who expect the student to live independently

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The National Longitudinal Transition Study **cites seven characteristics that are linked to post-high school success** for youth. *As I read this list, listen for how many of them are related to areas where parents may have a lot of influence.*

- Performing the acts of daily living well
- Getting together with friends weekly
- Participating in a school sport or club
- Avoiding suspension
- Taking a college entrance or placement exam
- Having recent paid work experience
- Having parents who expect the student to live independently

**In a youth's transition to adulthood, parents clearly play an important role!**

**“Parents are Forever”**

- Parents have the “history”
- Know youth the best
- Member of IEP team at least until transfer of rights
- Maintain high expectations
- Help student make informed choices
- Learn new supporting role

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**Presenter’s Note:** *You will want to be familiar with the age of majority in your state and perhaps provide a handout to parents about transfer of rights process.*

Why are parents and families so important? You have the “history” to carry forward into adulthood. You have been parenting and a member of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team since the beginning. You know what’s worked and what hasn’t worked so well. You know about your child’s whole life, not just a slice of it. You have the “big picture” view.

Parents are the keeper of high expectations that build upon the young person’s strengths, interests, and needs. Parents also support and guide their children to make informed choices and decisions.

Your involvement on the IEP team may formally end when rights are transferred to the student at the legal “age of majority”, which is age **xx** in our state. However, parents often become the “transition expert” or “case manager” once the student graduates, so involvement in the school transition process will help parents understand options and gain needed skills.

Students will begin to take on more responsibility, and parents will find new ways to provide support. It’s important to remember that while the parental roles *changes* when a young person graduates from high school and reaches the age of adulthood—it does not *end*. A student’s maturity, cultural values, and other individual characteristics will determine the kind of involvement and family support that is appropriate and helpful for each student.

**Related Resources:**

- Prepare Your Child for Age of Majority and Transfer of Rights:  
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-19.pdf>
- Parenting Post-secondary Students with Disabilities: Becoming the mentor, advocate, and guide your young adult needs:  
[http://www.ncset.org/publications/parent/NCSETParent\\_Mar02.pdf](http://www.ncset.org/publications/parent/NCSETParent_Mar02.pdf)

## The Power of Parent Involvement and High Expectations

*Family involvement is a greater predictor of successful outcomes for youth than income or social status.*



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Does parent involvement really matter at this stage of the game? **Research has shown that “family involvement is a greater predictor of successful outcomes for youth than income or social status.”**

In addition:

- Students with one or more parents who participated in the IEP meetings during 11th and 12th grades were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment.
- Students with parents who had **high expectations** were more likely to be engaged in postsecondary education and employment.
- When families remain involved in their children’s middle school and high school education, students are more likely to attend school regularly, have a positive attitude about school, earn higher grades, score higher on standardized tests, graduate from high school, and enroll in postsecondary programs. Those successes matter in the long run (Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K.L.).

Experts on human development consider late adolescence a “launching period” when parents help youth develop skills they will need as adults. Parental roles *change* when a young person graduates from high school and reaches the age of adulthood—they do not *end*. So stay involved. Take an active and supportive parental role.

### **Parent membership in transition planning is required and essential.**

- Parents can provide a foundation for keeping the transition process grounded and focused on their child’s individual strengths, needs, and preferences.
- Parents know their child’s postsecondary education or training and career ambitions and possible support needs. Parents may be able to identify family or community members who can provide additional support.


### **Related Resource:**

*Parent and Family Involvement Annotated Bibliography*, National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2017):

[https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/bibliographies/AB\\_Parent\\_6-2017.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=1458](https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/bibliographies/AB_Parent_6-2017.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=1458)

**High Expectations for Access, Opportunity, and Participation**

FEDERAL LAWS



- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Olmstead Decision
- Higher Education Opportunity Act

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As we learned earlier, **parental expectations are a key factor in a young adult's post-school success.**

The “higher expectation” is that people with disabilities will have equal opportunities for full participation in society.

In the United States, **having high expectations for individuals with disabilities is not just a nice idea or wishful thinking: it is embedded in civil rights law.** The Rehabilitation Act findings state: “Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.”

As your student begins transitioning toward life after high school, legislation such as Section 504 and the ADA related to employment, postsecondary education and community living take on greater significance. We will be talking more about this as we move forward.



**What Parents Can Do**

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- Hold and communicate high expectations
- Understand and take an active role in IEP process
- Support your youth's participation in the IEP process
- Make sure academic skills, self-advocacy skills, and accommodations are addressed
- Understand that the school can't and won't "do it all"

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**Presenter's Note:** *Insert your state-specific requirements around transition planning into notes below.*

Federal law supports early transition planning for children with disabilities beginning no later than age 16. In **(state)** planning must begin **before/during/by (age or grade)**. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) that provides special education and related services. These services are designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for: employment, postsecondary education and training, and, when appropriate, independent living. This may include community participation, recreation and leisure, and home living.

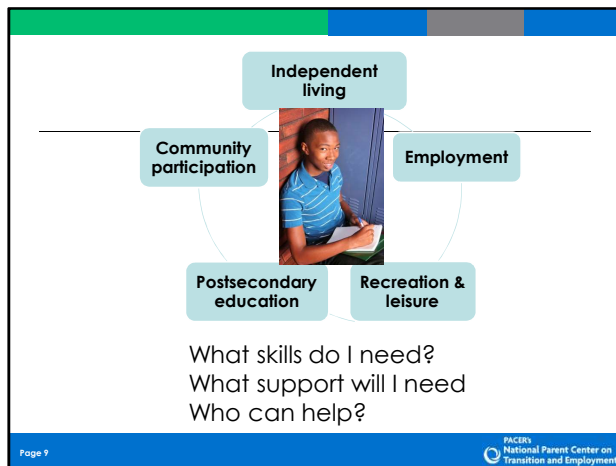
Parents also “transition.” They need to learn additional skills when their child enters the adult world after high school. Parents may need training on topics such as disability laws, fostering self-determination and decision-making skills, or adult service systems. Learning how to ask the right questions to the right people is also a key skill. Parents often are the investigators of what might be available far enough in advance in order to make decisions soon enough to prevent a gap.

IEP team involvement may formally end when rights are transferred to the student. However, parents frequently become the “transition expert” or “case manager” once the student graduates, so involvement in the school transition process will help parents understand options and gain skills.

Students will begin to take on more responsibility and parents will find new ways to provide support. Parental roles change when a young person graduates from high school and reaches the age of adulthood—they do not end.

**Transition Tips:**

- Everything takes twice as long as it's supposed to, so plan ahead for that.
- There will be lots of trial and error – so start early! Try to always have a “Plan A” and a “Plan B.”



While parents are important, **the student is at the center of transition planning.** As a teen moves towards adulthood, the family and IEP team will support the student as they look more closely at these “big” questions:

- Will I go to college or another type of school to receive training after I graduate?
- What kind of work do I want to do?
- Where will I go to learn the skills to do that work?
- Where and how do I want to live?
- What will I want to do for fun?
- Where will I “belong”? Who will I hang out with? How will I get places?

To achieve the desired results or outcomes, the student may ask:


- What skills do I need to learn?
- What support will I need to have?
- Who can help me get to where I want to go?

**It’s a time to start Mapping Dreams for the future. Let’s take a look at some ways to do that at school and at home.**

## How We Can Go from “Here” to “There”

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- Become aware of options
- Invite new people into student's life
- Stay flexible
- Ask questions
- Advocate for needs to be met appropriately



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Think of your child’s current skill and experience level as the “here,” and their hopes for further education or training, employment, and independent living after high school as the “there.” Families of children with disabilities want to help their children achieve their own dreams. This requires early planning and the active involvement of your child as much as is possible in the process. **As families, your involvement in the transition process includes:**

- Becoming aware of options
- Inviting new people into your child’s life
- Staying flexible
- Asking questions
- Advocating for your child’s needs

### **Explore what’s possible:**

It can be challenging to figure out what expectations to have for your child with a disability, especially when you want to have high expectations but don’t understand what possibilities are available. Understanding what’s possible is a great beginning step to creating a vision for your young person’s future. Families need to know what’s out there and the route to get there.

### **Learn about possibilities:**

- Meet or talk with other parents of older children with your child’s disability.
- Check out your area’s independent living center, vocational rehabilitation center, disability organizations, PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment website, and resources in your state.
- If your child has a county social worker, they may be willing to provide examples of how other young adults with similar needs are meeting their post-school goals in your community.

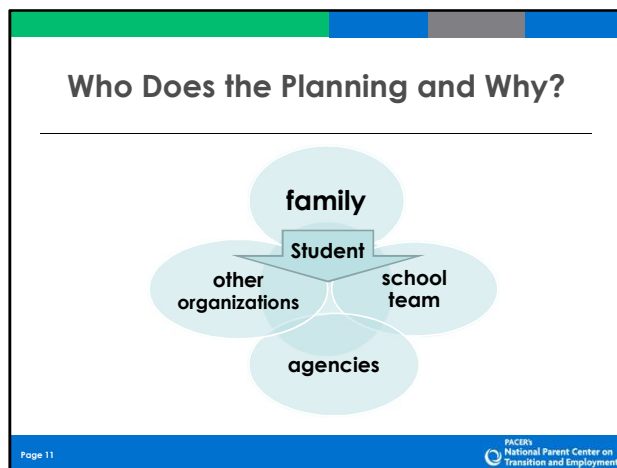
### **Become an adult services “detective:”**

- Visit a community college and meet with the disability services staff about entrance requirements, the accommodations and supports they provide, and the range of abilities of their student body.
- Attend transition resource fairs as a family. Prepare questions and discuss what you learned afterward.
- Connect with other parents and share what you’ve discovered.
- Ask Vocational Rehabilitation Services counselors, county social workers, and college

disability services personnel to share “success stories” of other youth with your child’s disability.

As you plan and help define clear goals and dreams with your child, you will increase their chances of achieving them.

The good news is: Families don’t have to do this planning alone as the next slide illustrates.



Transition planning in the IEP often includes additional team members at the IEP meeting.

**The student:** Although the student’s attendance at the meeting is not required, the school needs to invite them. The student’s dreams and goals will guide decisions about which transition services are needed. If your child does not attend the meeting, the team still needs their input.

**What can families do to support their youth’s meaningful participation?**

- Have a discussion about their hopes and dreams for the future.
- Use the checklists in this presentation to identify your child’s strengths, needs, preferences, and interests before attending a meeting.
- Help prepare your child to attend the IEP meetings. Some students will be able to participate in their IEP meetings more than others. Many students find it helpful to prepare a brief PowerPoint presentation with the help of school or their family to communicate their strengths and goals to the team.

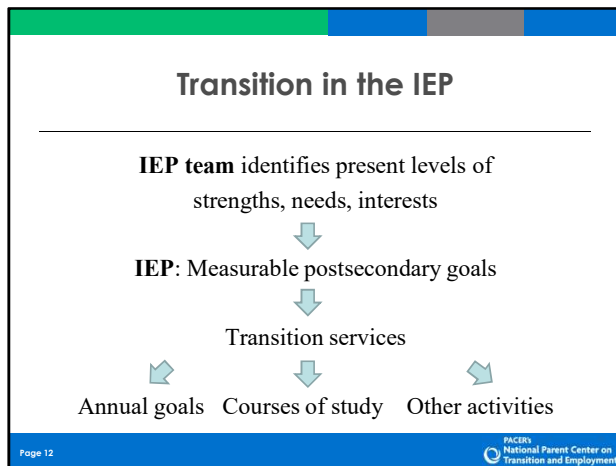
**Family:** Parents must be invited to the IEP transition meetings and informed prior to the meeting that the discussion will involve transition issues. **Parents know their child best and remain equal members of the IEP team until their child reaches the age of majority at 18.** Once the student turns 18, he or she assumes the rights the parents have had and can invite the parents to IEP meetings. The school is no longer required to invite the parents unless they have become the legal guardians of the adult child.\*

**Additional school staff:** When assessments or new evaluations are being discussed, a person who can interpret the results is required to be at the meeting. Other school staff may include transition staff, guidance counselor, work coordinator, and service learning coordinator.

**Others:** With the parent’s permission (or the student’s after the student reaches 18 years old), the school must invite a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. This might include people such as a county social worker, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, postsecondary school staff, and medical or related service providers. Parents or the student may invite anyone including staff of other organizations with knowledge or special expertise about the student such as family, friends, a mentor, or people in the community.

**Now, let’s take a look at the transition planning process in the IEP.**

**\*Presenter's Note:** *Some states have additional educational decision-making options for students who reach the age of majority. Add your state-specific information.*



**Presenter’s Note:** Depending on the length and structure of the workshop you may wish to include more detailed descriptions of the transition IEP components and share a sample from your state.

This graphic provides a kind of “map” of the secondary transition planning process in the IEP. The transition process begins with evaluation and leads to goals, services, and courses of study as steps on the pathway to achieve long-term goals for adulthood.

**Evaluation forms the foundation of the IEP.** The IEP team (including parents and student) will collect information needed to determine the student’s:

- current skills and abilities
- strengths, interests, and preferences
- academic and functional (activities of everyday life) needs
- long-term goals for learning, and the impact of the student’s disability on reaching these goals

Using this information, the **team will develop a program (the IEP)** to help pave a path from where your child is now, the “here,” to where he or she hopes to be in the future, the “there.” The IEP Team uses age-appropriate transition assessments, comprehensive evaluation, parent concerns, student input, professional (school, other agencies) input, progress in regular and special education, state and district test results, etc. to identify the student’s **present levels of performance** and then develop the IEP.

The IEP must include long-term, measurable postsecondary goals in the areas of education/training, employment, and (if appropriate to the student’s needs) independent living. Even though the student may not know what they want to do in the future, it’s still important to begin to figure out some initial long term goals and what supports they may need to develop those goals.

**Working backwards with the end result in mind, design school and community experiences to gain skills and connections needed to achieve outcomes.**

Work with your IEP team to address these questions: What transition services in the form of annual goals, course of study, activities, supports, services and linkages are necessary each year to move toward achieving the desired outcomes after high school? What extracurricular activities and enrichment opportunities might support the goals?

When determining what activities and goals to include in the annual IEP, families will want to consider whether progress on the goal or with the activity will move the student closer to being ready to successfully pursue their high expectations for learning, living and working as an adult.

#### Create Linkages

- When other agencies or service providers will be involved with the student after graduation, the IEP should create the contacts and links needed.
- Parents or students can request that the school invite individuals to participate in the IEP meeting, or they may invite them directly.

**Now it's time to take a look at how families can "map dreams" in each of the three transition areas.**

#### **Related Resource:**

- Understanding Measurable Postsecondary Goals in the IEP (4-minute video):  
<http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/>



## Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Employment

- Explore the options
- Talk with each other
- Set a destination
- Map a course
- “Recalculate”



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National Parent Center on  
Transition and Employment


The transition from childhood to adulthood—from school to employment—is a major transition that can seem overwhelming. When school ends, parents often report feeling like they have come to a transition cliff, rather than a launching pad with a trajectory to the future. When faced with a daunting project, often the only way to move forward is to break it into manageable chunks, like those described on this slide.

Planning the journey to the future is a lot like planning a family trip to a new destination. *(Provide a brief personal example, such as the first trip to Disney World.)*

Let's begin by looking together at ways to explore employment options.

**Transition to Employment:  
Explore Options**

- Explore interests, skills, and dreams
- Discover how interests, dreams, and skills relate to employment possibilities
- Plan for work-based learning opportunities

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**The first step in thinking about employment is to explore interests, skills, and dreams.** Encourage your child to explore a variety of elective classes, extracurricular activities, or community-based activities while in high school.

**The next step is to discover how interests, dreams, and skills relate to employment possibilities.**

- Talk about what you do at your own job. If appropriate, invite your child to your place of employment.
- Visit local businesses with your child to explore career opportunities.
- Have your child observe essential functions of an occupation by job shadowing someone who works in a field of interest.
- Arrange for informational interviews with friends or family members.
- Use web-based resources to research labor market trends and occupations.
- Contact the vocational rehabilitation services (VRS) counselor assigned to your child’s school. If your child is eligible for VRS, you may ask for a “functional vocational evaluation,” which helps to determine the types of jobs that fit their abilities the best.
- Participate with the IEP team in developing career exploration goals and services that will be written on the IEP.

**Having a job or work experience during high school is another important step toward post-school employment success.**

- Plan for work-based learning opportunities with the IEP team.
- Encourage internship opportunities.
- Consider self-employment in the community as an option, such as babysitting or doing lawn care.
- Explore volunteer opportunities that allow your child to experience a job, develop a routine, and learn about responsibility.


## Transition to Employment: Explore Options

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- Take note of “soft skills” development
 

Soft Skills = “The skills, traits, work habits, and attitudes that all workers across all occupations must have in order to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment.”

*-National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth*

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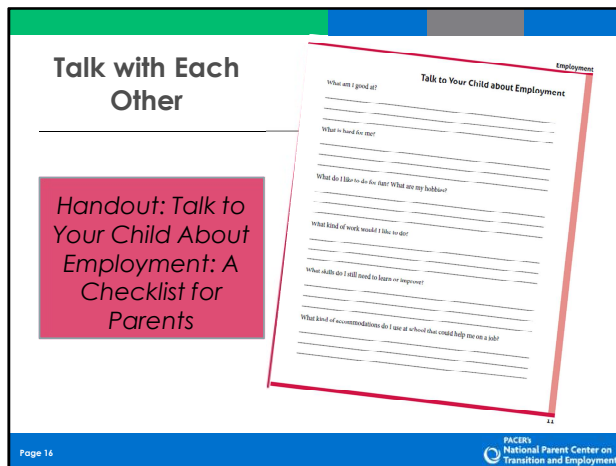
**Another step, as you explore employment options, is to take note of your child’s “soft skills.”**

**What are “soft skills?”:** These include being dependable, responsible, punctual, adaptable, honest, well-mannered, positive toward work, and appropriately dressed and groomed. Soft skills also refer to such attributes as the ability to get along with others, work in teams, attend to tasks, work independently, and provide excellent customer service. Having good “soft skills” will increase your child’s chances of finding and maintaining employment.

**Families can help their child develop these important skills.** Consider the following:

- Having assigned chores at home, and viewing school as “their job,” can be keys to future success.
- At school, learning to show up every day, get to class on time, follow directions, and take responsibility for homework are all valuable work skills.
- To improve communication and active listening skills, encourage your child to join a social skills group outside of school through Centers for Independent Living (CILs), self-advocacy organizations, or other disability organizations. The IEP may include a related communication goal.
- Encourage good personal hygiene, and emphasize that most workplaces require their employees to be well-groomed and to dress appropriately.
- Look for opportunities for your child to work cooperatively with others by participating on a team sport, volunteering in the community, or engaging in teamwork at home.
- Create opportunities to practice independence, learn a new skill, or pursue interests.
- Practice following directions, how to handle conflict, and using good manners.
- Be clear when tasks need to be done in a timely manner, and practice if necessary.
- Enforce expectations of personal responsibility by creating an organizational system to keep track of appointments, schoolwork, and social events.
- Participate with the IEP team in developing “soft skills” goals and services that will be included in the IEP.

**Another important step is to talk specifically about employment with your student.**



**Presenter’s Note:** Refer participants to the handout and suggest ways parents may use it to generate discussion with their teen. Parents may want to make 2 copies—one for the student and one for themselves. After they each record their responses, they can get together to compare answers. Then they can decide how to share information with the rest of the IEP team.

**Discuss the questions on the “Talk to Your Child About Employment: A Checklist for Parents” handout:**

- What am I good at?
- What is hard for me?
- What do I like to do for fun?
- What kind of work would I like to do?
- What skills do I still need to learn?
- What kind of accommodations or supports help me at school?

Put this information together with the “options” information you have been gathering and select one or two possibilities to explore further.

People usually plan journeys with a specific destination in mind and map the way accordingly. When you are planning for your child’s “journey” to employment, you will also need to decide on a specific “destination” or goal and then map a clear course of action to reach that goal.

**Transition Tip:** Don’t let the lack of certainty keep you from moving toward a possible destination. You can always “recalculate” as needed, once you are moving forward.

**Related Resource:**

- Frequently Asked Questions About Career Exploration for Youth with Disabilities:  
<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c244.pdf>

**Transition to Employment:  
Set a Destination**

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- Measurable post-school goal for employment in the IEP
- Get My Future at Career One Stop  
– [www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/](http://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/)
- Individual Learning Plan  
– Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS), Naviance  
– Minnesota CAREERwise:  
[www.careerwise.mnscu.edu/](http://www.careerwise.mnscu.edu/)



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**Presenter’s Note:** Before presenting, revise the blue slide content based on the “Individual Learning Plan” or other career planning information and resources available to high school students in your state. Check with your State Education Agency or ODEP’s Individualized Learning Plans Across the U.S. database: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/ilp/map/>.

You can use all the information your family, school and IEP team has gathered, and the insight you’ve gained from conversations with your child, to determine that “destination” or job goal. **This will be the measurable post-school goal for employment.** Remember, it’s okay to change the destination and select a different job at some point in the future — many people change careers several times in their lives. Think about your own career path—was your first job your “dream job? Your only job?

Think creatively about your child’s interests. Keep in mind that your child’s interest in an area increases the likelihood of his or her success in that career field. For example:

- Has your child always talked about being a novelist? If so, look for a part-time job in a bookstore that invites local writers to read from their books.
- (Add a student story as an example, or ask someone from the audience to share an example.)

Here’s another way to find a specific job goal. If your child, for example, expresses interest in working at a nearby YMCA:

- Help them call or look online to see what types of jobs might be available there.
- Talk these over with your child to determine which jobs would be best suited for their abilities and interests.
- Then, with that “destination” in mind, find ways for your child to learn the skills needed for that job. Begin to “map the course.”

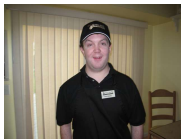
**Related Resources:**

- Look in the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment’s video library for a student employment success story:  
<http://www.pacer.org/transition/video/topic.asp?se=Employment>

## Transition to Employment: Map a Course

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- Develop a plan
  - Employment supports
  - Training
  - Job placement
- Set short-term goals
  - IEP goals and activities
  - Family support



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Once you have identified some future employment goals, you can **develop a plan** for how to achieve them.

**The plan will need to address questions such as:**

- How can we provide support for my youth’s needs?
- What support services, such as workplace accommodations, transportation, or technology are needed?
- How can my child obtain needed training?
- Will job placement services be provided?

**As you map your course, you may want to set smaller goals along the way:**

- Find out if your child can volunteer at a possible place of employment.
- Encourage your child to seek summer employment or part-time employment to develop work experiences.
- Help select specific classes that will support your child in reaching long-range goals.
- Work with the IEP team to incorporate career interests into the IEP.
- Work with the IEP team to build work-readiness, reading, math, and computer skills.
- Practice basic interview questions with your child.
- Practice working on automated job applications using the computer.
- Create a paper job application template. Support your youth to complete it accurately, then laminate it to bring along to copy from when filling out in person.
- A video resume (created with the help of an app) may be an effective alternative to a traditional resume.

Employment opportunities for people with disabilities have come a long way. This includes services and supports for those with significant disabilities. Youth cannot be placed in non-competitive employment or day programs without first being given the chance to explore competitive, integrated, paid employment. This philosophy, rooted in high expectations, is known nationally as “Employment First.” Families are encouraged to advocate for inclusive employment, postsecondary education and training, and independent living goals.

## Transition to Employment: Map a Course

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- Find others to help
  - Vocation Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor
    - Specialized Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services
  - State Services for the Blind (SSB) Counselor
  - County Developmental Disabilities or Mental Health Case Manager

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**Presenter’s Note:** You will want to customize the blue content of this slide with resources available in your state and community.

**For some students, there may be other agencies to help “map the course.”** Youth may be eligible for services from public agencies, such as the following:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)** is a statewide federally funded agency that administers a vocational rehabilitation program. Many states have a separate agency for persons who are blind or visually impaired. (*Note: There may be closed categories and a waiting list for their core services. Ask about Pre-Employment Transition Services for early career exploration opportunities.*)
- **DB (Disability Benefits) 101 website:** <https://www.db101.org/> has state-specific information and resources you can explore.
- **Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H)** programs are licensed services designed to provide supported employment, work-related activities, and training in independent living skills for eligible individuals with developmental disabilities or a related condition who are 18 years of age or older. (*Note: There have been many changes due to new requirements in WIOA for competitive, integrated employment and the “Employment First” philosophy. Look for accurate and up-to-date information specific to your child’s situation. For more information, you can contact your local social services agency or request help from your IEP team.*)

**Presenter’s Note:** Even if you’ve been taking audience questions as you go along, it’s a good idea to pause at the end of each main section to check in with the participants to see if they have any immediate questions on the content you’ve covered. If you made a list of “burning questions,” check now to see if you have addressed all of the employment-related questions. If time allows, you may also ask one or two people to share one “takeaway” from the section.

**Now, let’s look at the area of postsecondary education and training.**

## Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training

- Explore the options
- Talk with each other
- Set a destination
- Map a course
- “Recalculate”



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**Presenter’s Note:** Consider whether separate workshops or breakout groups are needed for families of youth who are on track to meet requirements for 2- or 4-year colleges versus those who need an alternate option. You may want to market the workshop specifically for one or the other groups, or you may plan “breakout sessions” to take place concurrently based on the needs of those who preregister for the general workshop.

Students with disabilities who are preparing for postsecondary education or training have an exciting road ahead of them. However, the pathway may not be clear at this point in their journey. If high school has been challenging, the prospect of more education may be daunting. So before launching into exploring options, let’s take a few minutes to consider some important motivational factors for students and families to consider. We will also explain some important differences between high school and college that students and parents need to be aware of in order to advocate for their needs.



## Why is Postsecondary Education or Training Important?

- Provides preparation for employment
- Builds life skills and social skills
- Lower unemployment rate for those who attended college
- College grads earn more money than those who did not attend college
- Most college students agree that going to college was “worth it”

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**Presenter’s Note:** Before revealing each of the bullet points, invite attendees to respond. (In “slide show” mode, each bullet point will appear with a click of the arrow or pointer.)

**Following are some reasons that students and their families should consider postsecondary education or training after high school:**

- It provides preparation for employment.
- It can builds life skills and social skills.
- Individuals who have attended college have a lower unemployment rate than those who have not.
- College graduates earn more money than those who did not attend college.
- Most college students agree that going to college was “worth it.”
- *Share other audience responses.*

**Learn about Changes in Rights and Responsibilities**

The IEP does not transfer with your child to a postsecondary education program.

Laws governing disability services in the postsecondary setting are Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disability Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), two antidiscrimination laws.

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One of the most important things for parents to know is how youth’s rights and responsibilities change from high school to college. In the United States, public K-12 education is a right. **When students graduate from high school, their legal rights will change.** For some students, graduation with a diploma takes place at the end of 12th grade, while for others it happens after receiving additional transition services or when he or she reaches the maximum age for special education. *(Insert state-specific information.)* The goal should be for the student to have a specific plan for postsecondary education or training in place when they receive the diploma.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer applies after your child receives their high school diploma, and an IEP does not transfer with your child to a postsecondary education program. While IEPs may include “modified” expectations, curriculum, and tests, students at the postsecondary level generally must be “otherwise qualified” to access the same “rigorous” college program requirements as students without disabilities.

Although equal access to postsecondary education is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act, the provision of “academic adjustments” (also referred to as “accommodations” or “auxiliary aids and services”) will not be initiated by the postsecondary program. Your child will need to disclose that they have a disability and request accommodations in order to receive them. Once accommodations are approved, it will be up to the student to take advantage of the supports and services available to them.

**It’s helpful to remember that the IDEA is about *progress*, while the ADA and Section 504 is about *access*.**

**Related Resource:**

- The ADA, Section 504 & Postsecondary Education:  
<http://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-42.pdf>

## What Families Can Do Now: Self-Advocacy is the Key to Success

Help your young adult discover....

- how their disability affects them
- what kind of help they need to succeed
- how to ask for accommodations
- their strengths and weaknesses
- their short-term and long-term goals



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Start preparing now. Your **family and IEP team can support your child to develop the self-advocacy skills they will need to be successful after high school.**

- Practice disclosing to teachers, coaches, friends, and family members.
- Pay attention to the sorts of accommodations that work and make a list.
- Make sure your student's final school special education evaluation is within 3-years from when they will be going to a Disability Services office.
- Ensure medical documentation is up-to-date.
- Explore postsecondary options and create a timeline or checklists of tasks.
- When touring colleges, set up a meeting with the disability services office. Families should plan to visit a local community college disability service office by junior year in time to learn to use Assistive Technology or try out possible accommodations while in high school.
- Take/re-take entrance exams (i.e. ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, etc.).
- Consider Financial Aid – FAFSA, scholarships, etc.
- Submit application-- usually during spring of Junior Year.

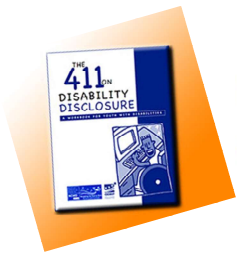
Your youth will also need to **develop specific skills** to prepare for this journey. For example:

- When you (or a case manager) are not there to manage schedules and paperwork, organization and time management may be a difficult challenge.
- The student will need to accept and understand his or her disability, know the accommodations needed, and have the self-advocacy skills needed to request and obtain those accommodations.
- Daily living skills, such as money management and self-care, as well as social skills, will be needed to navigate a college campus and adult living.
- Help your child learn to manage important documents, such as their current IEP or 504 Plan, evaluation reports, medical documentation, transcripts, and diploma. You may use a combination of hard copy and online methods (Google Docs, etc.) for recordkeeping.

**Working with your child at home and with the IEP team will help your youth develop these skills before leaving home and will increase their chances of success in a postsecondary setting.**

## How it Works at College: Disability Disclosure

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◆

One of the most personal decisions  
you will make as a person with a  
disability is whether or not to tell  
someone about your disability.

◆

<http://pacер.org/transition/learning-center/employment/self-advocacy.asp>

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Because disclosure is such an important part of the process for receiving accommodations after high school, we want to spend some time discussing it in more detail.

Once your child reaches the legal adult age, parents can only talk to or meet with the disability services office with the student’s written permission. Even then, colleges prefer to work directly with the student. College staff will not seek youth out to provide accommodations—even if the college is aware of the disability. If “academic adjustments,” or “accommodations” will be needed, the student must disclose their disability and provide the required documentation. The student can share as little or as much as they desire.

Disclosure is a choice, including what information to share and when to disclose. If your child needs to have accommodations right away, they must disclose right away. If they prefer to try to “self-accommodate” and see how it goes, they can disclose at any time and request accommodations then. However, the college will not make retroactive adjustments. Research has suggested that seeking accommodations early makes a positive difference in students’ GPA and number of credits earned.

### **Related Resources:**

- The 411 on Disability Disclosure – A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities: [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/411\\_Disability\\_Disclosure\\_complete.pdf](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf)
- Youth and Disability Disclosure: The Role of Families and Advocates: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Youth-and-Disability-Disclosure-The-Role-of-Families-and-Advocates.pdf>
- *Reasons University Students with a Learning Disability Wait to Seek Disability Services*, Lightner et al. (2012): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ994283.pdf>

## How it Works at College: The Interactive Process

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1. Disclose disability
2. Provide documentation
3. Request assistance and follow process
4. Collaborate with staff and faculty to determine "academic adjustments" (accommodations)

A Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. The top-left circle is labeled 'Student', the top-right circle is labeled 'Faculty', and the bottom circle is labeled 'Disability Services Staff'. All three circles overlap in a central area.

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Postsecondary institutions can't discriminate against a student who is otherwise qualified to enroll just because they have a disability. They must provide access to the education or training programs they offer. Accommodations that would alter the program of study or cause undue hardship to the college – such as requiring too much money or resources – do not have to be provided. Therefore, your child will need to be ready to work collaboratively with the school and may need to compromise on the accommodations to be provided.

Typically, the interactive process requires the student to communicate with his or her professors and an “access worker” at the disability services office to determine the specific approved accommodations that will be provided. **Your child will need to have necessary documentation and a list of accommodations that have worked in the past.** Parents can provide support to their young adult, but in general, the school will want to work directly with your child. It's best to see your role as the parent as being one of coaching and supporting from the sidelines.

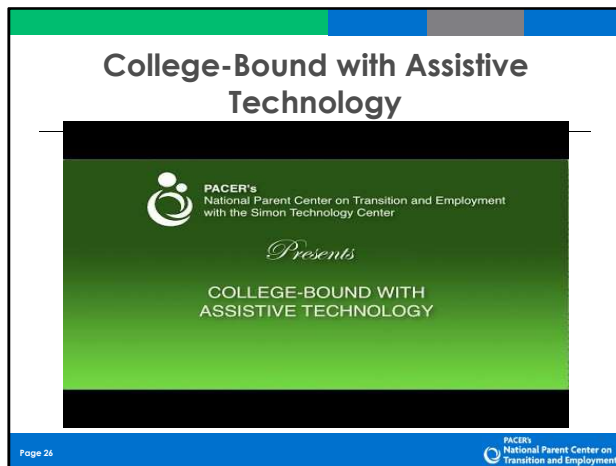
**The following are examples of accommodations provided by postsecondary programs:**

- **Testing:** extra time, reduced distractions
- **Notetaking Support:** notetaker or notetaking technology
- **Textbooks and Instructional Materials:** Books and other materials in alternative formats
- **Assistive Technology**
- **Housing Accommodations (rooms, food services, etc.):** private room, off-campus housing options

Students can change their mind or request different accommodations at any time. No one will be making sure the student takes advantage of the accommodations that were agreed upon, so your child's self-advocacy is important.

**Transition Tip:** Some students, especially those with with “hidden disabilities,” may worry about stigma associated with accessing the disability services office. There is often not as much stigma at college as there may have been with special education services in high school. Many people go into the disability services office area—students who provide access services, as well as students who receive them.

**Presenter's Note:** *You may also want to provide state-specific links to disability services information and show how to access online.*



Assistive Technology can be a key to success in postsecondary education (as well as in employment and independent living), and does not always require support from disability services to access. Be sure your child fully explores technology early enough in high school for them to become comfortable and proficient with it. Families often need to take the lead and access resources outside of the school and provide information to the IEP team.

**Related Resources:**

- Center on Technology and Disability (CTD): <https://www.ctdinstitute.org/>
- PACER's Simon Technology Center: [www.pacer.org/stc](http://www.pacer.org/stc)
- National Parent Center on Transition and Employment's Assistive Technology Resources: <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/assistive-technology/>

**Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training:  
Explore Options**

- Certificate or trade school programs
- Two-year technical school or community college
- Four-year college or university
- College experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Other postsecondary and training options



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**Presenter’s Note:** When presenting the options below, provide some examples of options in your area that families may be familiar with. If your state has any statewide lists or database of postsecondary options, you can provide that link.

There are many postsecondary education possibilities to explore, including full- or part-time vocational programs, two-year colleges, four-year universities or colleges, certificate programs, or specific job training experiences:

- **Certificate or trade school program:** These programs are typically completed in less than one or two years. Some examples of certificate programs include carpentry, culinary, cosmetology, dental assistant, and nursing assistant.
- **Two-year technical school or community college:** These schools have a variety of admissions requirements. Those with open admission typically accept anyone with a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) diploma.
- **Four-year college or university:** These schools tend to look at grade point averages, academic preparation, and scores on standardized college admissions tests. They also typically consider volunteer and community work, and require personal essays.
- **Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs (IPSEs) for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities:** Some two- and four-year colleges are making efforts to include students with disabilities who need modified expectations and additional supports by offering specialized daytime and residential program options. Think College ([www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)) has information about these opportunities.
- **Other postsecondary and training options:** Adult Basic Education classes, workforce training, apprenticeships, Job Corps, military training, Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H), and others.

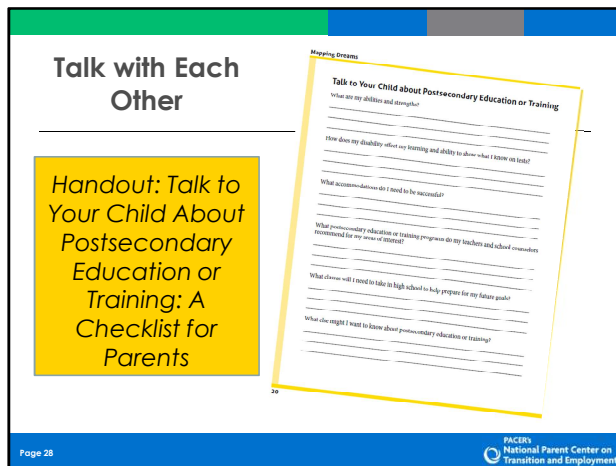
When discussing college options, you will want to think beyond a particular major. A school’s location or size could deter your child, even if the program is perfect. Whether the school will provide the specific accommodations your child will most likely need is another consideration. Not all programs provide the same accommodations, and colleges are not required to make modifications to alter academic requirements. Talk together about concerns and be sure to consider the following factors:

- Student Support Services
- Housing options
- School size and student/instructor ratio
- Location: Urban, suburban, or rural; distance from home; and transportation and other

support needs

- Cost and financial aid availability





With all these considerations in mind, let’s talk about the steps in mapping the transition to postsecondary training or education.

**Presenter’s Note:** Refer participants to the handout and suggest ways parents may use it to generate discussion with their teen. Parents may want to make 2 copies—one for the student and one for themselves. After they each record their responses, they can get together to compare answers. Then they can decide how to share information with the rest of the IEP team.

A first step is for parents and youth to talk with each other. **Discuss the questions on the “Talk to Your Child About Postsecondary Education or Training: A Checklist for Parents” handout:**

- What are my abilities and strengths?
- How does my disability affect my learning and ability to show what I know on tests?
- What accommodations do I need to be successful?
- What postsecondary education or training programs do my teachers and school counselors recommend for my areas of interest?

Discussing your child’s responses to the checklist questions, along with information about the various postsecondary education options, is a good way to get started in the exploration phase. Once your young adult has an idea of the kind of postsecondary education or training program they are interested in, **you’ll need to decide on appropriate schools.**

**Related Resources:**

- “Going to College” website: <http://www.going-to-college.org>
- NPCTE Postsecondary Education online learning center: [\(http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary/\)](http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary/)

**Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training:  
Set a Destination**

**Handout: Set a Postsecondary Education or Training Destination and Map a Course to Get There**

**Things to remember**

- Postsecondary programs have varying admission requirements including entrance or placement exams.
- A school or other agency may be able to help.

**Set a postsecondary destination or training destination**

What you and your child or teenager are planning for your young adult learner to postsecondary education or training you will need to decide on a specific destination and then map a course of action to reach it. The information you gather from the resources and agencies on the PACEO.org/transition website will help you determine the postsecondary goal. It is important to know the program you are interested in and the admission requirements, including test and grade requirements for the program. The information that the student is gathering about the destination can be used to help the student decide on the destination.

**Map a course**

Once you and your child or teenager have decided on a kind of postsecondary education program to be interested in, you'll need to find a course of action.

- Ask school counselors and teachers for resources for the type of education.
- Research the program. Schools almost always include information about their programs online.
- If possible, visit the school with your young adult to see how he or she would fit in and if the atmosphere is a comfortable one for admission.
- If possible, visit some potential schools or programs with your young adult to see how he or she would fit in and if the atmosphere is a comfortable one.
- Ask for an on-site recommendation from high school teachers and community members, and if you cannot visit, visit the best recommendation.

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**Presenter’s Note:** You may wish to provide participants a copy of the handout featured on this slide, “Set a Postsecondary Education or Training Destination and Map a Course to Get There.”


Using the information you and your child’s IEP team has gathered, as well as the insight you’ve gained from discussions with your child, you and your student can choose a destination and begin mapping a course. When you are planning for this “journey,” you will need to decide on a specific “destination” or goal, and then map a course of action to reach that goal. **The “measurable postsecondary goal” in the area of postsecondary education or training in your child’s IEP should describe the destination.**

You and your child may wish to consider the following when selecting a postsecondary education or training goal:

- Parents or other family members may provide input into financial considerations and support youth in completing the FAFSA and other paperwork within required timelines.
- High school counselors and teachers are resources for connecting with colleges and training programs. Many schools have “College Fairs.”
- You can also call postsecondary school admission officers to request brochures and fact sheets about the school and its programs. Schools almost always include information about their programs online.
- If possible, visit some potential schools or programs with your young adult to see how he or she would fit in and if the “atmosphere” on campus is a comfortable one.

**Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training:  
Map a Course**

- Clarify admission requirements
  - GPA or course requirements
  - College Board tests
  - Recommendation letters
- Update IEP as needed
  - IEP goals and activities
  - Create linkage to new program

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**Be sure to clarify what the requirements are for admission for your child’s preferred schools or programs while there is still time to meet the requirements.**

- Determine if your youth needs a certain grade point average, particular prerequisite coursework, or a College Board test score to be accepted.
- Ask if he or she needs recommendations from high school teachers and community members, and if so, consider who would be the best recommenders.

Be sure to update the IEP at least annually, or more often if needed, to reflect changes to the measurable postsecondary education or training goal, annual goals, courses of study, or transition activities. Make it a goal to create a “linkage” to the new program before the student graduates with a high school diploma.

**Presenter’s Note:** *Plan ahead to end this section by including a student example or “success story”—in person or via video.*

*Even if you’ve been taking audience questions as you go along, it’s a good idea to pause at the end of each main section to check in with the participants to see if they have any immediate questions on the content you’ve covered. If you made a list of “burning questions,” check now to see if you have addressed all of the employment-related questions. If time allows, you may also ask one or two people to share one “takeaway” from the section.*

**Related Resources:**

- Preparing for Postsecondary Education: What Families Need to Know (3-minute video): <https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=260>
- Think College Stories: <https://thinkcollege.net/publication-types/think-college-stories>
- Think College Videos: <https://thinkcollege.net/resources/who-is-thinking-college>

**Now, let’s look at the area of independent living.**

## Mapping Dreams: The Transition to Independent Living

- Explore the options
- Talk with each other
- Set a destination
- Map a course
- “Recalculate”



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**Presenter’s Note:** Consider how you might need to customize the content of this section, based on your intended audience. The “independent living skills” needed by students who meet college requirements are likely going to be very different from students with more significant disabilities who qualify for adult living support services.

When parents think about the transition to adulthood, employment or postsecondary education is often their first consideration. It’s also important to give careful thought to the skills youth will need to **live as independently as possible**.

Independent living skills impact all areas of adult living. These skills affect opportunities to learn, work, and live full lives integrated into the community at large. **Interdependence** is also highly valued in families, communities, and work settings—who of us does not need the support of a co-worker, friend or family-member almost daily?.

For instance, will your child have the skills needed to:

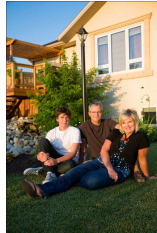
- Participate in the community?
- Help manage a home?
- Take part in recreation and leisure activities?

Not all youth will require support in this area on their IEP. Your child’s goals in these areas are determined by the IEP team based on age-appropriate formal and informal assessments, as well as input from you and your child. However, you will want to explore your child’s needs and strengths in the area of independent living regardless of school services.

## Transition to Independent Living: Explore Options

Will your child have the skills to live, learn, and work in the community?

- Recreation and leisure activities
- Community participation



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**As you begin thinking about independent living options, consider how your child might be able to pursue the activities they have shown an interest in as an adult without the school or you providing direct support.**

**Recreation and leisure activities:** Once your child is an adult, staying involved in recreational activities may require more initiative. You can help your child by encouraging them to explore a variety of recreational and leisure activities available during school, after school, and in the summer.

- Talk to a school counselor to find out what activities are available at school. Appropriate extracurricular and nonacademic activities must be made accessible for students with disabilities. Try to use natural supports as much as possible, as this level of support is often needed when school ends.
- Find activities of interest at home, such as gardening, building projects, music, computer activities, writing poems or stories, arts and crafts, photography, reading, or fitness.
- Consider programs in your community. Some programs are for everyone, while others are specifically designed for people with disabilities. Examples of places to look for recreational opportunities include summer camps, community recreation programs, community education, Special Olympics, and Centers for Independent Living.

**Community involvement:** Being involved in the community and having a strong social network is an important aspect of your child's future independent life. Community participation helps build a sense of confidence and inclusion, and it is also a great way for them to make friends.

- Consider involvement in community theaters, museums, art galleries, places of worship, libraries, community education programs, park programs, and youth organizations.
- Research places to volunteer, including food shelves, recreation programs, nonprofit organizations, schools, hospitals, retirement homes, and one-time community events, such as a fundraiser.
- Identify activities that your youth currently enjoys in high school that can transfer to adult life, such as art, sports, theater, or movies.

## Transition to Independent Living: Explore Options

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- Home living
  - Transportation
  - Medical care
  - Finance management
- Housing

PACER's Housing Project:  
[www.pacer.org/housing/](http://www.pacer.org/housing/)



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**Presenter's Note:** Add local information and resources when you present the housing options below.

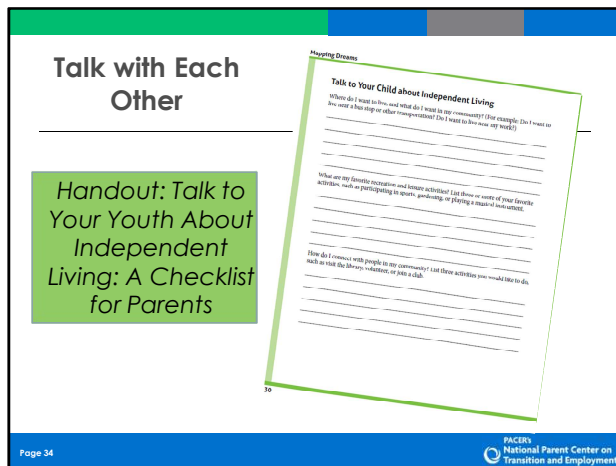
**Research from the NLTS-2 indicates that parents who hold the expectation that their youth will live outside their home by age 30 is a factor in successful adult outcomes.** It may be difficult to imagine your child ever living outside your home. However, children often rise to our expectations. The skills you teach now will help your child to be confident and capable of living as independently as possible. *Home living means more than a place to live.* It takes into account transportation, self-advocacy, financial management, and medical and support services as needed. Your child may develop independent skills in one, some, or all of these areas.

You and your child will need to explore the areas in which they can be — and want to be — independent. Since housing is such a vital part of independent living, you and your child should discuss all of the possibilities:

- **Living at parents' home:** Your child can still be somewhat independent in this situation. Families can set rules and responsibilities for every member in the household.
- **Living in an apartment:** If your child rents, they will likely not be responsible for maintaining the yard or building. However, they will likely need to know how to live with roommates.
- **Living in their own home:** If your child buys a house, they will be responsible for all the maintenance and repairs, but there is often more living space and freedom to make changes to the property.
- **Living alone with support services:** Often a rental situation, this option allows for independent living with support staff.
- **Group homes:** This is a place where small groups of people with disabilities live together. Usually an organization manages the home and hires staff to oversee activities of the residents.
- **Subsidized housing:** Section Eight is a subsidized housing program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that allows individuals to make reduced rent payments, and the government pays the remainder of the rent. This is a good option for someone on a fixed income, however there is often a waiting list.

**Related Resource:**

- PACER's Housing Project: [www.pacer.org/housing/](http://www.pacer.org/housing/)



**Presenter’s Note:** Refer participants to the handout and suggest ways parents may use it to generate discussion with their teen. Parents may want to make 2 copies—one for the student and one for themselves. After they each record their responses, they can get together to compare answers. Then they can decide how to share information with the rest of the IEP team.

**Discuss the questions on the “Talk to Your Youth About Independent Living: A Checklist for Parents” handout:**

- Where do I want to live?
- What do I want to do in my community?
- What are my favorite recreation and leisure activities?
- How do I connect with people in my community?
- What are three activities I’d like to do in the future?

Decide together what information you would like to share with the IEP team.

Discussing these questions and understanding the options available will help your young adult to set some independent living goals or “destinations.” The next step is begin to “map a course.”

## Transition to Independent Living: Set a Destination and Map a Course

- Practice independent-living skills at home and in the community
- Determine skills or experiences best addressed at school

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**Youth can practice independent living skills while living at home.** Although it's often faster and easier to "do it ourselves," including your child in the many activities required to run a household, go to work, and live independently in the community is the only way to build the needed skills.

- Include your child when cooking, cleaning, and shopping. Give them a list of groceries to buy and assign household chores.
- Make sure your child knows all the medications they take, what they are for, and when to take them. Try using a days-of-the-week pill box which they can fill and use.
- Help your child schedule a doctor's appointment and write down or record questions to ask the doctor. Have them check in when they arrive.
- Have your youth order their own prescription refills from the pharmacy.
- Help your child open a joint checking account with you so you can teach them how to write a check, use a debit card, deposit money, and withdraw cash.
- Obtain a copy of an apartment application and show your child how to fill out the form.
- Show your child how to read a bus schedule and take a trip to the store.
- Practice what to do in emergency situations and who to call for help.
- Look for ways to turn interests into real skills and social experiences. If attending movies is one of your child's favorite community activities, make the most of it. Help your child make plans to invite a friend and decide on a plan for transportation to and from the movie.



## Transition to Independent Living: Set a Destination and Map a Course

- Check into supports or services available from community-based organizations and public agencies such as:
  - Developmental Disabilities Case Management and Support Services
  - Centers for Independent Living (CILs)
  - Adaptive Recreation and Leisure Programs
  - Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools
  - Disability-specific organizations

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**Presenter's Note:** Families will be very interested in learning more about “adult service providers” and other options available at the local level. Parent surveys have indicated that families often do not receive this information from the school. You may want to invite representatives from one or more of these agencies or organizations to briefly share about their services and supports during the workshop.

You will also want to revise the terminology in this section to reflect accurate terminology used in your state.

### **For some youth, there may be other public agencies to help “map the course.”**

Your child may need ongoing support to live in the community. Programs offered through the county should be explored while your child is still in school and linkages established. Many public agencies may have eligibility requirements, fees, and waiting lists.

**The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act)** requires that states provide services and supports to people with developmental disabilities and their families. These services can include: case management through the county; assistance when applying for benefits, including Social Security; Medical Assistance; semi-independent living services; and assistance with housing, social, and recreational needs.

County services may also be available for children with mental health needs. Eligibility is determined by medical diagnosis, living arrangements, needs, and other criteria.

**Contact other adult service providers that do not require eligibility, such as Centers for Independent Living (CILs) or disability-specific groups.** They may help with teaching self-advocacy, providing written materials and other resources, offering peer support or support groups, giving ideas for assistive technology, and providing disability-related assessment resources.



**Presenter's Note:** You may wish to add a slide with a link to secondary transition information on your own organization's website.

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment website has a variety of handouts, videos, and other resources on a wide range of transition topics.

## State-Specific Resources

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- Add state-specific resources to this slide, such as:
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
  - Workforce Center System
  - Protection & Advocacy
  - Centers for Independent Living
  - State Education Agency transition web page
  - Disability-specific advocacy organizations


***Presenter's Note:*** Replace the blue text with state-specific resources.


**It's Worth the Effort!**

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**"Dreaming**, hoping, and seeing potential where others may not – that's the role of the family. Believe in the capability of your child, cultivate patience, and view your child's future with anticipation and optimism."

~ from *High Expectations* by  
PACER Center



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**Presenter's Note:** *The video linked below provides some helpful summary tips from parents about the transition planning process. You may wish to play it as part of the conclusion of your presentation.*

Long after the last teacher or therapist has disappeared from your child's life, you will be there to support and encourage your child. Will he or she be prepared for the future? You can make the difference now by asking questions, helping to develop your youth's school program, and supporting their learning of skills in the home and community.

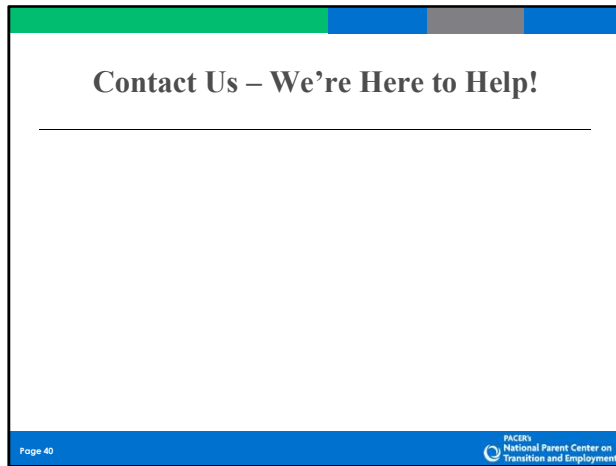
Dreaming, hoping, and seeing potential where others may not – that's the role of the family. Believe in the capability of your child, cultivate patience, and view your child's future with anticipation and optimism. Remember, children often live up to our expectations. What we do for them today has lifelong implications and benefits.

Thank you for attending this presentation. Your child is fortunate to have an involved and informed parent supporting them on their journey to adulthood.

**Related Resource:**

The Transition to Adulthood: Tips for Parents from Parents (3-minute video):

<https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=268>



***Presenter's Note:*** Add a slide with the contact information you wish to share. Be sure to highlight any upcoming trainings or opportunities relevant to your audience. Also, remind participants to complete evaluation forms, if you are using them, or any other logistics.

If you have questions or need help on an individual basis, be sure to contact us!

## Transition to Adulthood: Where Do We Start?

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The transition your son or daughter will make from being a child to becoming an adult member of the community is an important journey, one that requires a plan to pave the way to a successful future. With that successful future in mind, *it's important to begin thinking about your child's transition to adult life as early as possible.*

### Takeaways from this handout:

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- Begin thinking about transition for your student by age 13
- Begin planning for transition to adulthood by age 15 or 16 at the latest
- Federal law requires transition planning using a specific process involving evaluation and the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Planning must help the child prepare for life after high school in the areas of employment, postsecondary education and training, and, when appropriate, independent living

**Federal law supports early transition planning for children with disabilities.** Transition planning must begin by age 16 for each student with a disability who receives special education services (has an IEP). *Some states begin this process earlier*, so it's important to know the laws for your own state. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all children with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) that provides special education and related services. These services are designed to meet their unique needs and eventually prepare them for:

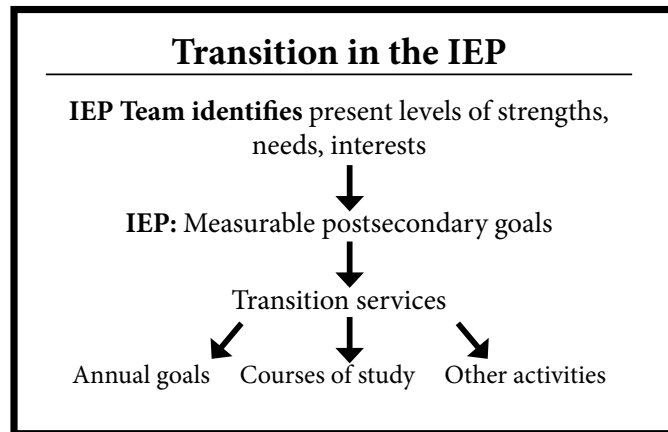
1. Employment
2. Postsecondary education and training
3. Independent living (when appropriate) – this includes recreation and leisure, community participation, and home living

**How Does the Transition Process Work at School?** Using the school's special education transition evaluation, the IEP team (including parents and child) will determine:

- Student's current skills and abilities
- Student's strengths, interests and preferences
- Student's academic and functional (activities of everyday life) needs
- Student's long-term goals for adulthood
- Impact of your son or daughter's disability on reaching these goals

Using this information, the team will develop the IEP to help pave a path from where your child is now to where he or she hopes to be in the future. Think of your child's current skill and experience level as the "here," and his or her hopes for further education or training, employment, and living situations after high school as the "there."

The following graphic shows how the transition process begins with evaluation and leads to goals, services, and courses of study as steps to achieve long-term goals for adulthood.



**What will your son or daughter need to learn to move from “here” to “there”?** Parents of children with disabilities want to help their children achieve their own dreams. This requires early planning and the active involvement of your child as much as is possible in the process. As parents, your involvement in the transition process includes:

- becoming aware of options
- inviting new people into your child’s life
- staying flexible
- asking questions
- sharing what you know about your child
- advocating for your child’s needs

As you plan and help define clear goals and dreams with your child, you will increase his or her chances of achieving those goals and dreams.

**When and how does the public school transition process end?** According to IDEA, the public school transition to adulthood process ends with:

- graduation with a high school diploma
- aging out of the special education system (age determined by your state’s laws)
- dropping out

At the end of special education services, the school district must provide a **Summary of Performance (SOP)**. The SOP includes a summary of academic and functional performance with recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting continuing postsecondary goals. An example of the SOP document can be found here: [wrightslaw.com/info/trans.sop.template.pdf](http://wrightslaw.com/info/trans.sop.template.pdf).

## **Transition to Adulthood: Who Plans and Why**

The special education transition planning team develops the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) lists required and additional IEP team members.

### **Takeaways from this handout:**

- The student's role is essential, regardless of the disability.
- Parents must be invited to transition IEP meetings until the child reaches the age of majority.
- The IEP team must include specific school staff.
- Additional people may be invited to be part of the transition team.

The following is a description of who is involved in the transition planning process and why their role is important.

**The student's role in the transition process is essential regardless of the student's disability.** Although the student's attendance at the meeting is not required, it is the student's own dreams and goals that guide decisions about which transition services are needed. If your child does not attend the meeting, the team still needs his or her input. What can parents do to make sure the team involves the child?

- Have a discussion with your child about his or her *hopes and dreams* for the future. Ask, "What are your strengths? What skills do you think you still need to learn?" Either the parents or child may share this information with the team.
- Use the checklists found in the Resource Library at [pacer.org/transition](http://pacer.org/transition) to identify your child's *strengths, needs, preferences, and interests* before attending a meeting. Either parents or child may share this information with the team.
- Help *prepare your child to attend* the IEP meetings. It will be easier for your child to participate in the meeting if he or she is prepared ahead of time. Some students will be able to participate in their IEP meetings more than others. While some may choose to lead the IEP meeting, others may find it helpful to prepare a PowerPoint presentation with the help of school staff to communicate their strengths and goals to the team.

**Parents must be invited to the IEP transition meetings and informed prior to the meeting that the discussion will involve transition issues.** Parents know their child best and remain important members of the IEP team until their son or daughter reaches the *age of majority*, which is 18 in most states (know what age your state has set). Once the student reaches the age of majority, he or she assumes the rights of the parental role and can invite the parents to the IEP meeting. The school is no longer required to invite the parents unless they have become legal guardians of the adult child.

Parents provide knowledge about their child's interests and medical history, as well as information about their child's experiences at home and in the community. Long after the last teacher or therapist has disappeared from your child's life, you will be there to support and encourage your child. **Your active participation as a member of his or her IEP team will help ensure that your child receives the education he or she needs and deserves.**



Although parents are equal members of the IEP team, it's not unusual to feel somewhat intimidated by the many professionals at the meeting. It may be helpful to remember that your role is critically important because of the following factors:

- You are the **expert** on your child. Your in-depth, ongoing relationship provides you with a wide-angle view. Professionals often see the child through the lens of their particular area of expertise.
- Parents are the **only continuous members** on a child's IEP team. You know what has worked and what hasn't worked over time. You will be the one constant factor through multiple transitions at school and in life. Professionals will change from year to year.
- The parent is the IEP team member who **represents and advocates solely for the individual child**. School personnel are responsible for many children and must be concerned with meeting all of their needs.
- You are the keeper and communicator of **high expectations** for your child. You are the one who cares the most about your child.

The team must include specific **school staff** including at least one **special education teacher of the child**, at least one **regular education teacher** if the child participates in general education classes, and a **qualified school district representative**.

**Special education teachers** have received teacher training specific to particular areas of disability and are licensed in one or more special education categories. This teacher is often assigned the role of IEP manager who is responsible for coordinating the delivery of special education services and serving as the primary contact for the parent and student. Special educators contribute to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provide current information, research, student assessment, and progress reporting data to guide the team in making IEP decisions
- Make recommendations about individualized learning strategies, teaching methodology, and effective accommodations in the classroom, home and community.
- Help regular educators adapt their teaching techniques and individualize or modify curriculum in the classroom
- Locate alternate teaching materials, assistive technology devices, and other needed resources
- Assist the team in finding ways to include the student in all aspects of the regular school program, including extracurricular activities

**A regular education teacher** must participate if the child participates in general education classes. Regular education teachers contribute to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provide information about the student's participation, performance, progress, and interaction with their peers in the regular classroom
- Share information about the general curriculum
- Identify areas of concern and help determine appropriate positive behavioral interventions and supports and other strategies for the child to be meaningfully included in the classroom
- Identify needed training, materials, or other classroom support teachers may need in order to help the student benefit from classroom instruction
- Make recommendations about individualized learning strategies and effective accommodations to be used in the classroom and school community
- Suggest ways parents can reinforce learning

**A qualified school district representative** is a required team member. This person is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, and must be knowledgeable about the general curriculum. The district representative contributes to the IEP team in the following ways:

- Provides information regarding service options available in the school district
- Commits agency resources to ensure that services in the IEP will be provided as agreed upon by the team

**Additional people may be needed**, based on the needs of your child.

- When tests, assessments, or new evaluations are being discussed, a school staff person who can interpret the results is required to be at the meeting.
- Other school staff may include transition staff, guidance counselor, work coordinator, and service learning coordinator.
- With the parent's permission (or student's permission after the student reaches the age of majority), the school must invite a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. This might include a county social worker, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, postsecondary school staff, and medical or related service providers.
- Parents or the student may invite anyone to be on the IEP team who has knowledge or special expertise about the student, such as family, friends, a mentor, or people in the community.

For more information on the **parent role** and **age of majority** visit [PACER.org/Transition](https://www.pacer.org/transition).

## Documents to Keep for Youth Transitioning to Adult Life

### Takeaways from this handout:

- You can ease the transition to adulthood for your youth by having him or her organize an ongoing file of important documents they will need after high school.
- You may want to develop a filing system using the categories and sections below; or you may want to set up your own method.
- The documents may be paper copies, digital copies, or some of each.
- It is important to make sure that all of the documents mentioned in this handout are organized and stored in an easily accessible location.

### Job Portfolio

- Job history, including dates and contact information
- Letters of reference
- Resume
- Vocational assessments
- Volunteer experiences
- Examples of academic or job accommodations that your son or daughter has used successfully in the past.
- Examples of effective assistive technology that your son or daughter has used in the past (including prices, suppliers, and potential funders if possible) for your personal use.

### Health History

- Allergies
- Documentation of any relevant medical diagnosis (current within the last three to five years)
- Immunization records

- Medications (type, date started or stopped, and any side effects)
- Keep contact information and names of doctors, dentist, specialists, and therapists
- Pharmacy contact information

### Personal Documents

- Birth certificate (copy)
- Passport (copy)
- Current community service providers
- Emergency contact information
- Health and other insurance information (copy)
- Social Security card (copy)
- Identification card or driver's license (copy)

### School Records

- Copies of Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for last several years
- Diploma (copy)
- High school transcript (copy)
- Current evaluation reports (over the past three years)
- Letters of recommendation
- Report card and progress reports
- Samples of academic, art or design work
- Examples of effective accommodations and assistive technology
- Summary of Performance (required upon graduation with a regular diploma or when a youth exceeds the age of eligibility for special education services at 21)

The documents you keep and organize will help your youth make a smoother transition from high school to adulthood.

## **Talk to Your Child About Employment: A Checklist for Parents**

Use these questions and checklist to begin a conversation with your child about employment. Be sure to read, "[The Transition to Employment: What Parents Can Do Now](#)" for more information.

What am I good at? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is difficult for me? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do I like to do for fun? What are my hobbies? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What kind of work would I like to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What skills do I still need to learn or improve? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What kind of accommodations do I use at school that could help me on a job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Use this checklist of skills to prepare for employment:

Yes	Sometimes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am able to follow written directions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am able to follow verbal directions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am always on time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am able to work independently without much supervision.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will be able to work full time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to try new things.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I like to work with people.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to locate resources for finding employment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to fill out a job application.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to interview for a job.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to be well-groomed and dress appropriately for a job.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand my rights and responsibilities as an employee under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

*Statements checked “no” are skills that may be areas to improve. Discuss them with your child’s IEP team.*

## **The Transition to Employment: What Parents Can Do Now**

Interviewing, finding a job, and going to work every day may seem like distant goals for your child right now, but you can still do things today to prepare youth for future employment.

### **Takeaways from this handout:**

- Parents have an important role in helping youth plan for future employment.
- There are four basic steps parents can take to support their youth's development of employment skills and to investigate employment options in the home and community.

### **The first step in thinking about employment is to explore interests, skills, and dreams.**

- Write down tasks, responsibilities, and interests your youth has at home, in school, or in the community. Those skills and interests can help define a career.
- Encourage your son or daughter to explore a variety of jobs or volunteer activities while in high school. Doing so will help him or her be better prepared to decide on a career path, identify needed job supports, and be successful at work.
- Ask your youth to think about jobs he or she would like. Talk about different careers when you see people working at the grocery store, near an office building, when passing a fire truck, or while watching TV. Remind youth that many people are needed to make a product or supply a service. For example, to buy bread in the grocery store, someone needs to bake it, slice it, bag it, label it with a price tag and deliver it to the store, where it needs to be put on the shelf. Talking about the many jobs available in the world will keep your child's mind open to all types of career opportunities and possibilities.
- If you have a computer, you might help youth complete an online assessment and create an interest inventory. Many exist but you can start with [jobcenter.usa.gov](http://jobcenter.usa.gov).

### **The next step is to discover how interests, dreams, and skills relate to employment possibilities.**

- Talk about what you do at your job. If appropriate, invite your youth to your place of employment.
- Visit local businesses with your youth to explore career opportunities.
- Have your son or daughter observe essential functions of an occupation by job shadowing someone you know who works in a field of interest.
- Arrange for informational interviews with friends or family members to gain firsthand information about their jobs. Help your youth think of questions to ask. Help him or her write a follow-up thank you note to the person he or she interviewed.
- Use web-based resources to research labor market trends and occupations that align with your son or daughter's skills and areas of interest. A place to start is [careerinfonet.org](http://careerinfonet.org).

- You may also want to contact a local vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor. Each state has a VR program to help eligible individuals prepare for, find, and keep a job. VR services can help determine the types of jobs that are a good match to your son or daughter’s abilities and interests.
- Participate with the IEP team in developing career exploration goals and services to be written in the IEP.

**Having a job or work experience during high school is *another important step toward post-school employment success. Parents can help:***

- Plan for work-based learning opportunities in high school. These experiences and the supports needed for success can be included as a transition service in the IEP.
- Encourage internship opportunities. These experiences are helpful because they allow students to learn by doing and can be stepping stones to future employment.
- Consider self-employment in the community as an option, such as babysitting or doing lawn care.
- Explore volunteer opportunities that allow your youth to experience a job, develop a routine, and learn about responsibility. Volunteer work can sometimes lead to part-time or full-time employment.
- **Important note:** if your son or daughter receives benefits through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid, or plans to apply for these benefits at age 18, you may want to determine how a job might impact those benefits. To learn more about this part of the process, refer to additional PACER handouts available at [PACER.org/transition/learning-center/benefits](https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/benefits).

***Another step, as you explore employment options, is to take note of your child’s “soft skills.”***

“Soft skills are the skills, traits, work habits, and attitudes that all workers across all occupations must have in order to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment. These include being dependable, responsible, punctual, adaptable, honest, honorable, well-mannered, positive toward work, and appropriately dressed and groomed. Soft skills also refer to such attributes as the ability to get along with others, work in teams, attend to tasks, work independently, and provide excellent customer service, both within the company and externally.” –National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

Parents can do much to help their youth develop these important skills. Having good “soft skills” will increase your son or daughter’s chances of finding and maintaining employment. Consider the following ideas:

- To improve communication and active listening skills, encourage youth to join a social skills group outside of school through Centers for Independent Living (CILs), self-advocacy organizations, or other disability organizations. The IEP may include a related communication goal.
- Encourage good personal hygiene and stress that most workplaces require their employees to be well-groomed and to dress appropriately.
- Help youth develop a sense of responsibility by assigning household chores.
- Look for opportunities for your son or daughter to work cooperatively with others by participating in a team sport, volunteering in the community, or engaging in teamwork at home when doing daily chores.
- Create opportunities to practice independence, learn a new skill, or encourage youth to join extracurricular activities of interest.
- Practice following directions, how to handle conflict, and how to use good manners.
- Be clear when tasks need to be done in a timely manner and practice if necessary.
- Enforce expectations of personal responsibility by creating an organizational system to keep track of appointments, schoolwork, and social events.

- Request a copy of PACER’s “Top Secret Job Skills: Declassified,” an animated, interactive CD for transition-age teens, with and without disabilities, to learn the interpersonal skills needed to be successful in the interview and on the job. Visit [PACER.org/publications/transition.asp](https://www.pacer.org/publications/transition.asp) to order.
- Participate with the IEP team in developing “soft skills” goals and services that will be written in the IEP.

For ideas on taking these steps with your child, read the handout “*Talk to Your Child about Employment*” at [PACER.org/transition/learning-center/planning/preparing-employment.asp](https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/preparing-employment.asp).



## **Set an Employment Destination and Map a Course to Get There**

People usually plan journeys with a specific destination in mind and map the way accordingly. Your young adult needs a place to start, but parents need to also help their son or daughter realize that it's okay to change the destination and select a different job. Many people change careers several times in their lives.

### **Takeaways from this handout**

- Parents can help their son or daughter find a place to start exploring employment opportunities.
- It's okay to change your mind and set a new employment destination or goal.
- The school and other agencies may be able to help.

### **Set an employment destination**

When helping to plan for your child's "journey" to employment, you will need to decide on a specific "destination" or goal, and then map a clear course of action to reach that goal.

You can use all the information you gather from the activities and suggestions on [PACER.org/transition](https://www.pacer.org/transition) to determine that "destination" or job goal. Think creatively about your child's interests. Keep in mind that your child's interest in an area increases the likelihood of his or her success in that career field. For example:

- If your child talks about being a professional football player, ask if he or she can volunteer at the local stadium.
- Perhaps being a cross-country truck driver is not feasible, but working at a truck stop could fulfill your child's interest in trucks.
- Has your child always talked about being a novelist? If so, look for a part-time job in a bookstore that invites local writers to read from their books.

Here's another way to find a specific job goal. If your son or daughter, for example, expresses interest in working at a nearby YMCA:

- Help him or her call to see what types of jobs might be available there.
- Talk these over with your child to determine which jobs would be best suited for his or her abilities and interests.
- With that "destination" in mind, find ways for your child to learn the skills needed for that job.

### **Map a course**

Once you have some future employment goals, you can develop a plan for how to achieve them. The plan will need to address questions such as:

- How can we provide support for my son's needs?
- What support services, such as workplace accommodations, transportation, or technology, will my daughter need?
- How can my son obtain the training he needs?
- How can my daughter receive job placement services?

As you map your course, you may want to use additional steps along the way:

- Find out if your child can volunteer at a possible place of employment.
- Encourage your child to seek summer employment or part-time employment to develop work experiences.
- Help select specific classes that will support your son or daughter in reaching long-range goals.
- Work with the team to incorporate career interests into the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Work with the IEP team to build work-readiness, reading, math, and computer skills.
- Practice basic interview questions with your child.
- Practice completing online job applications.

**For some students, there may be other agencies to help “map the course.”**

They may be eligible for services from public agencies, such as the following (see list in the resource section of this website for more information):

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) programs are licensed services designed to provide supported employment, work-related activities, and training in independent living skills for eligible individuals with developmental disabilities or a related condition who are 18 years of age or older.
- American Job Centers (sometimes called Workforce or One-Stop Career Centers) are a national network of neighborhood centers that house programs and services to help both youth and adults identify training programs, gain skills, and find jobs in growing industries ([jobcenter.usa.gov](http://jobcenter.usa.gov)).

Trying some of these strategies and exploring these resources can start you and your youth on the way to an employment destination.

## Talk to Your Child About Postsecondary Education or Training: A Checklist for Parents

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Use these questions and checklist to begin a conversation with your child about postsecondary education and training. Be sure to read PACER's handout, "[Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now](#)" for more information.

What are my abilities and strengths?

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How does my disability affect my learning and ability to show what I know on tests?

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What accommodations do I need to be successful?

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What postsecondary education or training programs do my teachers and school counselors recommend for my areas of interest?

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What classes will I need to take in high school to help prepare for my future goals?

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What else might I want to know about postsecondary education or training?

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Use this checklist of skills to prepare for postsecondary education or training:

Yes	Unsure	No	
			I would like help finding information about postsecondary education.
			I would like help finding a job training program.
			I would like help finding money to pay for school.
			I would like to live close to home.
			I want to live on campus.
			I know a school I want to attend.
			I want to go to a school where I know someone.
			I understand my rights and responsibilities as a postsecondary student.
			I know what type of assistive technology (AT) support and other accommodations I need to be successful.

Depending on your answers to the above statements, consider if this is an area you would like to learn more about. Share this information with your child's IEP team.

## Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now

Students with disabilities who are currently preparing for postsecondary education and training have an exciting road ahead of them. Consideration of many different factors will lead to a successful experience.

### Takeaways from this handout:

- Your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) will end when your child graduates.
- Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are important laws to know about.
- There are several options to consider for postsecondary education and training.
- The postsecondary educational institution has no responsibility to locate persons with disabilities.

Parents should know that **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ends and Section 504 and the ADA take over**. IDEA and your child's IEP no longer apply after your child graduates from high school (consult your state's laws for specifics about graduation and diploma or diploma options). Federal laws governing disability services in the postsecondary setting are **Section 504** of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the **Americans with Disability Act Amendments Act (ADAAA)**, two antidiscrimination laws.

### How do parents begin to plan?

Your child should have a specific plan for postsecondary education or training in place when he or she exits public school. This is a required part of the special education transition process so your child's IEP team will help.

### Many factors play a part in deciding the right postsecondary program for your child.

- Possibilities include full- or part-time vocational programs, two-year colleges, four-year universities or colleges, certificate programs, or specific job training experiences.
- A school's location or size may not fit your son or daughter, even if the program is perfect in other ways.
- Whether the school will provide the specific accommodations your child will most likely need is another consideration. Not all programs provide the same accommodations, and colleges are not required to make modifications to alter academic requirements.

In addition to choosing a postsecondary education or training option, *your child will also need to **develop specific skills to prepare for this journey after high school***. For example:

- If your child decides to attend college and live away from home, **organization and time management** may be a challenge.
- Your child will need to learn to **understand his or her disability**, know the accommodations needed to address the disability in a postsecondary setting, and have the **self-advocacy skills** needed to request and obtain those accommodations.

- **Daily living skills**, such as money management and self-care, are also skills your child will need to know to be more independent.

Working with your child at home and with the IEP team will help your son or daughter develop these skills before leaving home and will increase his or her chances of success in a postsecondary setting.

## Explore Postsecondary Education or Training Options

*Your son or daughter can take many different routes to arrive at a destination.* Start by considering the following options:

- **Certificate or trade school programs:** These programs are typically completed in less than one or two years. Some examples include carpentry, culinary, cosmetology, dental assistant, and nursing assistant.
- **Two-year technical school or community college:** These schools have a variety of admissions requirements. Those with open admission typically accept anyone with a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) diploma.
- **Four-year college or university:** These schools tend to look at grade point averages, academic preparation, and scores on standardized college admissions tests. They also typically consider volunteer and community work and require personal essays.
- **College experiences for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities:** A few two- and four-year colleges are making efforts to include students with all types of disabilities by offering transition programs located on campuses. Think College ([thinkcollege.net](http://thinkcollege.net)) has information regarding those postsecondary education programs.
- **Other postsecondary and training options:** In addition to colleges and technical schools, options include Adult Basic Education classes, workforce training, apprenticeships, Job Corps experience, military training, or Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) which offers training in life skills and work-related activities.

## Many institutions have specific offices for students with disabilities

It will be your child's responsibility to identify his or her disability, provide documentation, and request assistance. The educational institution has no responsibility to locate persons with disabilities. Find out in advance what documentation is needed and what kind of supports the office provides. If you can, talk to students who receive help from the office as their experiences can be helpful.

## You can help your child narrow postsecondary education choices by considering:

- **Student Support Services:** Colleges are required to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, but they are not required to modify academic expectations. What is considered reasonable may be different from college to college so it is important to ask. Students work with support services and make choices regarding services using an interactive process, rather than having a team decide for them. It is the student's responsibility to let the college know (self-disclose) that they have a disability, provide documentation of the disability, and request assistance.
- **Living choices:** Some schools and programs have dorm rooms for students; others (such as most vocational programs) do not. Talk to your child about living options.
- **School size:** Some programs have large classes and little interaction with professors; others have small classes and many opportunities to interact with professors and staff. Ask your child what option he or she prefers.
- **Urban, rural, or other places:** Does your child want to be in a big city with an array of cultural and extracurricular activities? What are the cost implications? Does he or she plan to spend most of the time on campus studying and meeting new people? What kind of support systems are in place? What are your child's transportation needs?

School staff on your child's IEP team can help explore options for programs, services, and choices that will meet the needs of your child.

**Keep in mind that not all students will be ready to continue their education through a postsecondary or training program.** Your son or daughter may choose to take time off from formal education. Working to save money or gain work experience before attending college or another training program may be an option to consider. This option might be attractive if your son or daughter already has an interesting job and can continue it after high school or has limited or no work experience.

**There are resources to help:**

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- You or your child can access online programs, such as PACER's Teens Succeeding with Technology (TeST). This program's four training videos incorporate innovative, web-based technologies and resources to help high school students with disabilities transition successfully to postsecondary education and careers, especially in science, technology, engineering, and math. The TeST program helps students explore career possibilities; create a transition plan; learn about self-advocacy, rights, and accommodations in high school versus postsecondary education; and take a virtual college tour using a variety of multimedia tools. More information can be found online at [PACER.org/stc/TeensSucceedTech](http://PACER.org/stc/TeensSucceedTech).
- For more information see "A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School" at [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).
- Ask your child's IEP transition team if there are specific resources in your state.
- "Mapping Your Dreams" [PACER.org/transition/resource-library](http://PACER.org/transition/resource-library)

## **Set a Postsecondary Education or Training Destination and Map a Course to Get There**

People usually plan journeys with a specific destination in mind, and map the way accordingly. It is important to begin to explore education and training options available to your youth before graduation, then beyond, based on their current interests and abilities. It may be helpful to revisit school or training programs as interests and goals change or as new opportunities become available.

### **Things to remember**

- Parents can help their young adult start exploring postsecondary education or training opportunities.
- Postsecondary programs have varying admissions requirements including entrance or placement exams. Be sure to plan ahead!
- Schools or other agencies may be able to help.

### **Set a postsecondary education or training destination**

When you and your son or daughter are planning for your young adult's journey to postsecondary education or training, you will need to decide on a specific destination or goal and then map a clear course of action to reach it.

The information you gather from the activities and suggestions on the [PACER.org/transition](https://www.pacer.org/transition) website will help you determine the destination or postsecondary goal. It is important to choose the program and environment that fits your son or daughter's personality, learning style, and needs. Refer to the publication [Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training: What Parents Can Do Now](#) for more information about available postsecondary programs.

### **Map a course**

Once you and your young adult have decided what kind of postsecondary education program they're interested in, you'll need to find appropriate schools.

- High school counselors and teachers are resources for this type of information.
- You can also call post-secondary school admission officers to request brochures and fact sheets about the school and its programs. Schools almost always include information about their programs online.
- If possible, visit the school with your young adult to see how he or she would fit in and if the atmosphere is a comfortable one.

When trying to find a school or program that is good for your son or daughter, consider what the requirements are for admissions.

- Determine if your son or daughter needs a certain grade point average to be accepted.
- Ask if he or she needs recommendations from high school teachers and community members, and if so, consider who would be the best recommenders.



- Be prepared by organizing a file of important documents.

### **Entrance/placement exams**

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Most college and university programs require students to take an entrance exam before they are admitted into the program. The most common admissions tests are the SAT and the ACT. These tests should be taken during your student’s junior year or at the beginning of the senior year in high school. Test accommodations for students with disabilities are available for those who qualify and should be applied for in advance.

Some two and four year institutions, particularly vocational colleges, require students to take ACCUPLACER® tests to determine their ability in math, reading, and writing. These are not admissions tests—they do not decide if a student will be admitted to the school. These placement exams determine what level of classes would be most appropriate for your student, and whether remedial classes are necessary. For more information on the ACCUPLACER® test, visit: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html).

### **Financial aid**

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You will also want to consider financial aid for postsecondary education.

- The career counselor or financial aid officer at your young adult’s high school can tell you how to apply for federal assistance. The amount and type of federal aid the U.S. Department of Education provides doesn’t always depend solely on financial need, so don’t assume you’re not eligible. Take the time to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you find the FAFSA form too difficult to fill out yourself, an income tax preparer will have all the information needed to complete the form for you.
- College admission offices also have resources on scholarship options.
- There are also many internet sites with information on scholarships, such as <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search> or [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com).
- Student financial assistance: The U.S. Department of Education provides free information about preparing for and funding education beyond high school. Call (800) 433-3243; (800) 730-8913 TTY; or visit the website: [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).

### **For some students, there may be other agencies and organizations to help “map the course.”**

You may also want to consider accessing information and services from the following:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- Disability Services office at postsecondary institutions and/or training programs
- Think College: Provides resources, tools, and a database for students, families and professionals who are interested in inclusive postsecondary options for students with intellectual disabilities.  
[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)
- The Heath Resource Center at George Washington University: This online resource provides information on financial aid, scholarships, and student services, and help students with disabilities successfully transition into college, university, career technical schools or other postsecondary programs.  
[www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)
- For a more comprehensive list of available postsecondary resources, visit PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment at [www.PACER.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary](http://www.PACER.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary).

Planning ahead and exploring these resources can start you and your youth on the way to success at a postsecondary education or training destination.

## **Talk to Your Youth About Independent Living: A Checklist for Parents**

Use these questions and checklists to begin a conversation with your youth about independent living.

Begin by asking your son or daughter the following questions:

Where do you want to live, and what do you want to live near in your community? (e.g., Do you want to live near a bus stop or other transportation? Do you want to live near your workplace?) \_\_\_\_\_

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What are your favorite recreation and leisure activities? What are three or more of your favorite activities, such as participating in sports, gardening, or playing a musical instrument? \_\_\_\_\_

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How would you connect with people in your community? List three activities you would like to do, such as visit the library, play a sport, volunteer, or join a club. \_\_\_\_\_

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Then ask your youth to respond to the following with a 'yes', 'sometimes', or 'no' answer.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know that the Americans with Disabilities Act protects me from being discriminated against in the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to request the accommodations I need to participate in public programs, purchase services, or shop in the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have good hygiene and grooming skills.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can maintain personal fitness and well-being.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to perform daily cleaning responsibilities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can shop for my own clothes and groceries.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can do my own laundry.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can cook a healthy meal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can communicate with peers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to use public transportation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have or would like to get my driver's license.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a primary doctor who will see me after I become an adult.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a dentist who will see me after I become an adult.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a medical specialist (e.g., neurologist, psychiatrist, cardiologist, etc.) to help me after I become an adult.

**Yes**

**Sometimes**

**No**

I can arrange my own doctor's appointments.

I can take medications as prescribed without help.

I know and understand my disability.

I know what to do in an emergency situation.

Statements checked "no" may be areas of needed growth. Discuss these with your youth and the IEP team.

Other areas of needed growth: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

For more information refer to the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment's Learning Center at: [PACER.org/transition/learning-center](http://PACER.org/transition/learning-center)

## **The Transition to Independent Living:** What Parents Can Do Now

When parents think about their son or daughter making the transition to adulthood and living independently, employment is often their first consideration. It may be just as important, however, to give careful thought to the skills your child will need to live as independently as possible.

### **Takeaways**

- Parents have an important role in helping youth plan to live independently in the future
- Independent living includes community participation, home living, housing options, and recreation & leisure

To begin planning for independent living, consider whether your son or daughter will have the skills needed to participate in the community, help manage a home, and take part in recreation and leisure activities. Your child's needs in these areas are determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team based on age-appropriate formal and informal assessments. Not all students will require support in this area on their IEP. However, you will want to explore their needs and strengths in the area of independent living regardless of school services.

### **Community participation**

Being involved in the community is an important aspect of your child's future independent life. If you can help them learn the skills needed to become actively involved in the community, they will be more able to develop and maintain a strong support network. Community participation helps people with disabilities build a sense of confidence and inclusion, and it is also a great way for them to make friends.

Many groups and programs your child is already involved with will carry over into the community after high school. Help them choose activities now by determining available community resources, such as community theaters, museums, art galleries, places of worship, libraries, community education programs, park programs, and youth organizations, including Scouts or 4-H clubs. You should also research places that your child might volunteer, including food shelves, recreation programs, nonprofit organizations, schools, hospitals, and retirement homes. One-time community events, such as a fundraiser, may provide additional volunteer opportunities. It's important to identify activities that your child enjoys in high school that can transfer to adult life, such as art, sports, theater, or movies. As you consider activities, investigate transportation options within the community.

### **Home living**

It may be difficult to imagine your child living outside your home. However, the skills you teach now will help them become confident and capable of living as independently as possible. Home living means more than

a place to live. It takes into account transportation, self-advocacy, financial management, and medical and support services as needed. Your child may develop independent skills in one, some, or all of these areas.

You and your son or daughter will need to explore the areas in which they can and want to be independent. Consider your child's needs in the following areas:

- **Daily living skills:** cooking, cleaning, shopping, personal hygiene
- **Transportation:** public, specialized, driver's license
- **Self-advocacy:** decision making, rights and responsibilities, knowledge of disability, knowledge of available resources
- **Financial support:** work wages, Supplemental Security Income
- **Financial activities:** banking, making purchases, paying bills, insurance
- **Medical and support services:** medications, personal care services, doctor appointments, adaptive equipment, counseling, Medical Assistance

## Housing options

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Since housing is such a vital part of independent living, you and your child should discuss all of the possibilities:

- **Living at home:** they can still be somewhat independent in this situation. Families can set rules and responsibilities for every member in the household.
- **Living in an apartment:** If they become a renter, they will likely not be responsible for maintaining the yard or building. However, they will likely need to know how to live with roommates.
- **Living in their own home:** If they buy a house, they will be responsible for all the maintenance and repairs, but there is often more living space and freedom to make changes to the property.
- **Living alone with support services:** Often a rental situation, this option allows for independent living with support staff.
- **Group homes:** This is a place where small groups of people with disabilities live together. Usually an organization manages the home and hires staff to oversee activities of the residents.
- **Subsidized housing:** Section Eight is a subsidized housing program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that allows individuals to make reduced rent payments, and the government pays the remainder of the rent. This is a good option for someone on a fixed income. There is often a waiting list for this program.


For more housing information, request a copy of PACER's booklet "Housing: Where Will Our Children Live When They Grow Up?" at [PACER.org/publications/transition/asp](https://www.pacer.org/publications/transition/asp). You can also visit [PACER.org/housing](https://www.pacer.org/housing) for more resources.

## Recreation and leisure activities

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Once your son or daughter is an adult, staying involved in recreational activities may require more initiative. That is why it is important for you to pave the way by helping them develop a strong interest in different recreational activities at a young age.

As they acquire a set of recreational interests, consider how they might pursue these as an adult. You can help them by encouraging them to explore a variety of activities available during school, after school, and in the summer.



To explore enjoyable recreation and leisure activities, your child may:

- Talk to a school counselor to find out what activities are available at school. Some activities may include the yearbook, the school newspaper, clubs, student government, choir, band, or sports. Keep in mind that each of these activities has many different levels of participation, one or more of which may be appropriate for your child. Appropriate extracurricular and nonacademic activities must be made accessible for students with disabilities.
- Find activities of interest at home, such as gardening, building projects, music, computer activities, writing poems or stories, arts and crafts, photography, reading, or fitness-related activities.
- Consider recreational programs in your community. Some programs are for everyone, while others are specifically designed for people with disabilities. Examples of places to look for recreational opportunities include summer camps, community recreation programs, community education, Special Olympics, and Centers for Independent Living.

## **Set an Independent Living Destination and Map a Course to Get There**

People usually plan journeys with a specific destination in mind and map the way accordingly. When you are planning for your child's "journey" to independent living, you will also need to decide on a specific "destination" or goal, and then map a clear course of action to reach that goal.

### **Takeaways**

- Parents can help their son or daughter explore independent living goals using self-determination
- Your child can practice independent living skills early and often
- The school and other agencies may be able to help

### **Set an independent living destination through self-determination**

When helping your youth set independent living goals, give careful thought to the skills they will need to live as independently as possible and meet their individual goals. Self-determination is a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead people to set personal goals and take the initiative to reach them. It is about being in charge, but is not necessarily the same thing as self-sufficiency or independence. It means making choices, learning to solve problems, and taking control and responsibility for one's life.

Families can provide support in developing self-determination skills. Parents can help prepare their young adults by giving them increasing opportunities to make their own decisions. Families should also provide their teenager with opportunities to explore employment, housing options, and community recreation programs. Utilize your own network of relatives and friends, as well as formal service systems to make connections. Most importantly, families should prepare themselves to accept their child in his or her new adult role and allow their adult children to actively make decisions that will determine their future - even if it means allowing them to take risks and make mistakes.

### **Then map a course**

Your child can practice independent living skills while living at home. Including your child in the many activities required to run a household, go to work, and live independently in the community will give your child valuable experiences. Consider the following ideas:

- Include them when cooking, cleaning, and shopping. Give them a list of groceries to buy or household chores to complete
- Discuss the importance of personal hygiene, and help them establish a morning and evening routine
- Make sure they know which medications they take, what they are for, and when to take them
- Help them schedule a doctor's appointment and write down any medical or health questions to ask the doctor



- Have them order their own prescription refills from the pharmacy
- Take them to the bank and open a checking account. Teach them how to write a check, deposit money, and withdraw cash
- Obtain a copy of an apartment application and show them how to fill out the form
- Show them how to read a bus schedule and take a trip to the store
- Practice what to do in emergency situations and who to call for help
- Encourage community participation by involvement in youth organizations, special interest clubs, community theater or arts centers, places of worship, community education programs, libraries, athletic centers, or volunteer opportunities
- Call a supervisor, coach, or manager to talk about your child’s disability and help these people access reasonable accommodations for your child. Some community education and park and recreation programs also offer recreation and leisure opportunities for adults with disabilities
- Look for ways to turn interests into real skills and social experiences. If attending movies is one of their favorite activities, make the most of it. Help them make plans to invite a friend and decide on a plan for transportation to and from the movie
- If the IEP team has identified needs in this area, participate with the IEP team to develop independent living goals and services that will be included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**For some children, there may be other public agencies to help “map the course.”**

Your child may need ongoing support to live in the community. Programs offered through the county should be explored while they are still in school. A number of these services have eligibility requirements or waiting lists, and some may also charge fees for services even if your child meets eligibility criteria.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) requires that states provide services and supports to people with developmental disabilities and their families. These services can include:

- Case management through the county
- Assistance when applying for benefits, including Social Security
- Medical Assistance
- Semi-independent living services
- Assistance with housing, social, and recreational needs.

County services may also be available for children with significant mental health needs. Eligibility is determined by medical diagnosis, living arrangements, needs, and other criteria. For more information on how to apply, contact the county where you live or your state’s Department of Human Services.

Contact other adult service providers that do not require eligibility, such as Centers for Independent Living (CILs) or disability-specific groups. They may help with teaching self-advocacy, providing written materials and other resources, offering peer support or support groups, giving ideas for assistive technology, and providing disability-related assessment resources.

# Resources to Help Plan for Your Child's Future

This resource list includes both national and Minnesota organizations. Many of the Minnesota-specific organizations are also available in other states. If you need assistance finding one of these organizations in your state, please email [transition@pacer.org](mailto:transition@pacer.org).

You can customize this resource list! When you hover your mouse over a Minnesota-specific resource, a blue text box will appear. Click your mouse in the blue box to edit the text. You can also add to this list or remove any of the resources that are not relevant to your audience. You can then save a new version of this document, delete these instructions, and provide your training participants with a resource list specific to your state and community.

## Employment and Career Planning Resources

**Career Guidance:** Most high schools have guidance counselors and access to computerized career information.

**Disability Benefits 101:** Offers tools and information on employment, health coverage, and benefits, including how work and benefits go together. [www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org)

**Friends and Relatives:** People close to you can also be good resources for finding a job. The most important tool you have in helping your child find a job is networking.

**CAREERwise Education:** A Minnesota State Colleges and Universities career and education resource (formerly isseek.org). [www.careerwise.mnscu.edu](http://www.careerwise.mnscu.edu)

**Minnesota Work Incentives Connection:** Provides answers about the impact of work on benefits, so people with disabilities can see their choices and take advantage of life's opportunities. Call (651) 632-5113 voice; (651) 632-5110 or MN Relay-711 TTY; or (800) 976-6728 toll free. [www.mnworkincentives.com](http://www.mnworkincentives.com)

**National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth:** Works to ensure that transition-age youth are provided full access to high-quality services in integrated settings to gain education, employment, and independent living skills. Also offers a range of technical assistance services. [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)

### **PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment | Inspiring Possibilities:**

Resources and support to parents, youth, and professionals on transition topics. Website includes a variety of videos, tip sheets, and online resources. [www.PACER.org/Transition](http://www.PACER.org/Transition)

**State Services for the Blind (SSB):** Offers services for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind by fostering the achievement of vocational and independence goals. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: 651-539-2300; 800-652-9000 toll free; Communication Center Customer Service: 1-800-722-0550. [mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/blind-visual-impaired/](http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/blind-visual-impaired/)

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS):** Provides vocational rehabilitation services for those with disabilities. Most of these services are located at a WorkForce Center. A counselor is assigned to each high school and may be able to provide information on the current job market, referrals, job coaching, and partial funding for assessments or assistive technology. Call for more information and eligibility requirements: (651) 259-7114 voice; (651) 296-3900 TTY; (800) 657-3858 toll free. <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/>

**WorkForce Centers:** These centers are designed to provide job training, education, and employment services at a single neighborhood location. To locate a WorkForce Center, call (888) 438-5627. TTY: 651-296-3900. [mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/workforce-centers/](http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/workforce-centers/)

## Postsecondary Education and Training Resources

**ACT Assessment:** Information about online test preparation, dates, how to apply for accommodations, and more. [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

**CollegeBoard:** Provides information about advance placement and PSAT/NMSQT and SAT assessments for students with disabilities, including test preparation, dates, and how to apply for accommodations.

[www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities](http://www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities)

It also provides information about the ACCUPLACER test to determine a student's academic skills in the areas of math, English, and reading. [accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students](http://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students)

**DO-IT Program:** The DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) Center is dedicated to empowering people with disabilities through technology and education. (888) 972-DOIT (3648) toll free voice/TTY. [www.washington.edu/doiit](http://www.washington.edu/doiit)

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid:** Provides online registration or downloadable application to apply for federal grants and loans. [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**The HEATH Resource Center at the National Youths Transition Center:** The HEATH Resource Center is a web-based clearinghouse that serves as an information exchange of educational resources, support services and opportunities. The HEATH Resource Center gathers, develops, and disseminates information in the form of resource papers, fact sheets, website directories, newsletters, and resource materials. [www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)

**Minnesota Programs of Study:** A sequence of courses both required and elective. They begin in middle or high school and progress throughout postsecondary education. The information on this site is intended to help students understand the combinations of courses currently available at their school that will provide the best preparation for the education/career direction he or she would like to explore. It also offers some idea of programs and majors in the pathways at various colleges and universities. [www.mnprogramsofstudy.org](http://www.mnprogramsofstudy.org)

**Minnesota Department of Education:** Provides resources and tools to help students, parents, and educators plan for transition using both federal and state requirements. Download the free "Planning for Students' Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment (120B.125) Toolkit" from the page: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/JustParent/CollPrep/index.html>

**Minnesota Office of Higher Education:** Provides a website with information about preparing for college, financial aid, entrance requirements, and evaluating colleges.

**Student Financial Assistance:** U.S. Department of Education resource that provides free information about preparing for and funding education beyond high school. Call (800) 433-3243; (800) 730-8913 TTY. [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

**Think College:** Provides resources, tools, and a database for students, families, and professionals who are interested in inclusive postsecondary options. [www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

**U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights:** Provides a guide with answers to questions that students with disabilities may have as they prepare for postsecondary education options. View “Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators” at [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html).

## **Independent Living Resources for Recreation and Leisure, Community Participation, and Home Living**

**Arc Minnesota:** Advocacy, resources, and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities. (651) 523-0823. [www.thearcofminnesota.org](http://www.thearcofminnesota.org)

**Centers for Independent Living:** Nonprofit organizations that advocate for the independent needs of people with disabilities; identify and provide access to existing resources, such as transportation; provide peer support; and offer opportunities for people with disabilities to acquire the necessary skills to become more independent. There are eight Centers for Independent Living across Minnesota. 651-646-8342. [www.mcil-mn.org](http://www.mcil-mn.org)

**Community Education Programs:** Offers lifelong learning for people with disabilities. These programs can provide classes in many areas of interest, such as cooking, sports, money management, art, drama, music, computers, and a variety of other activities. Contact your local school district and ask for the community education coordinator.

**Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC):** Identifies current local services, programs, and funding sources within a community for transition-age youth and their families. Contact your county or school district to locate your area CTIC.

**County Human or Social Service Departments:** Provides programs that promote independence, productivity, and community inclusion, as well as services, such as semi-independent living services and medical assistance. The Minnesota Department of Human Services can be reached at (651) 431-2000 or (800) 627-3529 TTY. <http://mn.gov/dhs/>

**Disability Linkage Line:** Offers up-to-date information about community resources related to people with disabilities. Inquiries include requests for information and referrals on disability benefits programs, home modifications, assistive technology, personal assistance services, transition services, accessible housing, employment, social activities, and disability rights. (866) 333-2455 toll free. [www.mcil-mn.org/programs/disability-linkage-line](http://www.mcil-mn.org/programs/disability-linkage-line)

**I'm Determined:** A state directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, which focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities, to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger.

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

**Medicaid:** Also called Medical Assistance, Medicaid is a government-run health insurance program that can pay health care expenses, such as doctor appointments, therapy, hospitalization, prescription drugs, and personal care assistance. Contact your county Department of Human Services to determine eligibility.

**Social Security Administration (SSA, Federal Government):** Offers programs that pay cash benefits to people with disabilities based on eligibility criteria. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) pays monthly benefits based on financial need to people who have disabilities and have limited income and resources. This financial support can be very helpful as youth with disabilities transition from school to adult life. Receiving SSI provides you with Medical Assistance/Medicaid health insurance. (800) 772-1213 voice; (800) 325-0778 TTY. [www.ssa.gov/disability](http://www.ssa.gov/disability)

**Special Olympics Minnesota:** Offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round sports training and competition. Locate your local chapter at (612) 333-0999 or (800) 783-7732.

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

**State Parks:** Offers outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and cross-country skiing. Inquire about programs and services for individuals with disabilities. To locate a state park near you, visit

[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us).

**YMCA:** Provides a variety of community-based programs and offers access to those with disabilities.

[www.YMCA.net](http://www.YMCA.net)

## Learning about Disability Rights as an Adult

**ADA Minnesota (Americans with Disabilities Act):** Gives civil rights protection to people with disabilities.

(651) 603-2015 voice; (888) 630-9793 toll free. [www.adaminnesota.org](http://www.adaminnesota.org)

**Minnesota Disability Law Center:** Provides legal help for Minnesota residents with disabilities. (612) 332-1441. [www.mndlc.org](http://www.mndlc.org)

**Minnesota State Council on Disability:** Provides information to expand opportunities, increase the quality of life, and empower all persons with disabilities. Services are provided to individuals with disabilities and their families, the governor and legislature, government and private agencies, employers, and the general public.

(651) 361-7800 voice/TTY; (800) 945-8913 toll free voice/TTY. [www.disability.state.mn.us](http://www.disability.state.mn.us)

**Office of Civil Rights, Region V, U.S. Department of Education:** Provides information about federal civil rights laws and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule, which together protect fundamental rights of nondiscrimination and privacy. 800-368-1019; 800-537-7697

TTY. [www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/index.html)

# Mapping Dreams Workshop Evaluation

We'd appreciate your feedback on this workshop.

**1. Are you a: (Please check all that apply)**

- Parent    Surrogate/foster parent    Grandparent    Other relative/guardian    Youth/Student  
 Regular educator    Special educator    Other professional    Administrator  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What is your child/young adult's age? \_\_\_\_\_**

**4. Please check your child/young adult's primary disability.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autism spectrum disorder                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Blind or visual impairment        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf or hard of hearing                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf-blind                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental cognitive or intellectual disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional or behavioral disorder  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other health impairment                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical or orthopedic impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severe multiple impairments                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific learning disability      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech or language impairment                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Traumatic brain injury            |

**5. On the whole, how would you rate this event?**

- Excellent    Very good    Good    Fair    Poor

**6. Have you learned anything new at this workshop?  Yes  No**

I found these topics most worthwhile:

**7. Did this workshop help you learn how to communicate more effectively with your youth about employment, postsecondary, and independent living options?  Yes  No**

**8. Did this workshop help you learn new ways to support your youth to achieve their employment, postsecondary, and independent living goals?  Yes  No**

**9. Will you use the information and resources from this workshop to help plan for your youth's transition to adulthood?  Yes  No**

**10. Were the materials received at this workshop of high quality?  Yes  No**

**11. What suggestions do you have for improving this workshop? Is there any information you were hoping to learn that was not covered today?**

**12. Other comments:**