



Get Ready. Get Set. Let's Go to Work!

Transition Tips for Young Adults with Intellectual Challenges

A job boosts confidence, provides structure and spending money, and enhances support networks. Finding the right job can be hard. Here are some tips that can help.

Plan the work and work the plan.

1. The Transition Individualized Education Program (IEP) should be specifically tailored. Interests and abilities should determine the work experiences set up by the school.
2. Ask what will be done at the work site and who will supervise.
3. Request weekly progress reports on work experiences, with measurable goals and outcomes noted.
4. If one work experience is frustrating, call a team meeting to discuss a more appropriate one.
5. Ask for letters of reference from supervisors to build a resumé and portfolio.
6. Ask if a successful work experience can become paid employment after graduation.

Teamwork and network.

7. Invite the supports coordinator from the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) to IEP meetings during the final two years of school to review funding and referrals to job-development and job-coaching services. In Pennsylvania, the ODP is the former Office of Mental Retardation Services. In New Jersey, it is the Division of Developmental Disabilities.
8. Ask your high school transition coordinator about vocational training programs in your community.
9. Ask your ODP supports coordinator which adult provider agencies have successfully supported young adults with similar disabilities in jobs in your community. Visit and interview the staff of those agencies.
10. Contact the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and schedule an intake interview two years before graduation.
11. Invite your VR counselor and staff from an adult provider agency to IEP meetings during the final two years of high school.
12. Tell friends, co-workers and family about the job search.

Coach the job coach.

13. During the last year of high school, select an adult provider agency for vocational support. Meet the assigned job coach; and invite him or her to IEP meetings.
14. Be clear about your expectations of the agency and the job coach, who will be an advocate on the job.
15. To avoid months of sitting at home, advocate for job development and placement in an appropriate job before graduation.
16. Include travel training as part of the Transition IEP to assess and enhance street and public transportation skills.
17. Ask about public transportation services in your community, including publicly funded transportation services for people with disabilities. Apply for these services during the last year of high school.

Check in with Social Security.

18. Apply for Supplemental Security Income (or confirm enrollment) three months before turning 18. Go to www.ssa.gov/disability. Assets cannot be more than \$2,000.
19. Ask your Social Security counselor about Ticket to Work, a work incentive benefits program for people with disabilities.

Keep the future in mind.

20. After graduation, continue to network with the ODP supports coordinator, VR counselor and job coach for future job opportunities.
21. Join local social self-advocacy groups to learn how to speak up and advocate for new dreams.

Celebrate with dinner and a movie. The new wage-earner should treat!