CT DDS Employment First Initiative. Real Work for Real Pay

This timeline is adapted from the Wisconsin Guide “Opening Doors to Employment”. It outlines important steps to help you build a foundation for employment during your school years.

Transition to Employment: Timeline for Planning K-12

Awareness of Employment (Grades K-5)
- Discuss what work is and what jobs you know about.
- Participate in opportunities to learn about careers / jobs.
- Take part in household chores (e.g., sorting laundry, setting the table, cleaning your room.)
- Participate in choice making about things at home (e.g., what to wear to school) and at school.
- Learn basic academic skills (e.g., reading, math, and writing).
- Begin to develop soft skills.
- Explore / Develop social opportunities.

Explore Employment Options (Grades 6-8)
- Explore school jobs (e.g., office monitor, mail attendant, library worker).
- Volunteer in the community (e.g. neighborhood groups, religious groups).
- Take part in neighborhood jobs (e.g. mowing the lawn, shoveling snow).
- Job shadow (observe employment environments and tasks) with parents / family / friends.
- Learn about a variety of careers through Career Center / Library / Internet to find job / career options.
- Talk to adults about what they do for work.
- Identify your interests and skills. Start a portfolio of any jobs and volunteer work as well as references.
- Build on your academic skills (include writing and other communication skills).
- Begin to develop self-advocacy skills and understand your needed accommodations / modifications.
- Continue to develop soft skills related to job success.
- Continue to develop social opportunities.
- Share hopes and dreams for the future (e.g., what types of jobs you like).
- Explore websites related to work like http://www.connect-ability.com/

Planning and Preparing for Employment (Grades 9-10)
- Begin your IEP transition planning process by age 15 and discuss future employment goals.
- Continue taking academic courses needed for graduation.
- Practice completing job applications (online and on paper).
- Identify people that will help you with your career goal.
- Seek out options take classes that relate to career or job choices.
- Make copies of work-related documents (social security card, birth certificate, CT I.D.).
- Complete work experiences / volunteer work based on interests.
- Participate in any career exploration / preparation classes offered by your high school.
- Learn about resources and make connections with community agencies.
- Complete interest inventories and self-directed searches at the high school or on the Internet.
- Begin and update a career portfolio (include updated resume, job applications, letters of reference, career research findings, mock or practice interview results).

Exploring Employment / Career Options (Grades 11-12 and Post-Grad)
- Reexamine your needs, preferences, interests with regard to careers based on your work experiences.
- Learn about training requirements in your career area of interest.
- Research Labor Market and utilize CT WORKS.
- Continue taking academic courses needed for graduation.
- Develop transportation strategies (e.g. driver's license, independent travel skills training).
- Continue volunteer work based on interests.
- Participate in school to work programs with your high school (e.g., apprenticeship, work study).
- Participate in paid work experiences in the community (ask each employer for a letter of reference describing your skills and attitude on the job).
- Find summer employment opportunities.
- Continue to revise your career portfolio.
- Learn about resources and make connections with community agencies.
- Continue to develop self-advocacy skills.
- Continue to develop soft skills and social opportunities.

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