

# *Tips for* Transition Planning

*Step 1: Person-centered Planning*—Give students a chance to share their dreams for the future. Together, the student and a planning group develop a vision of “positive possibilities” for the student’s future. The group leaves with action steps that can be taken to move in the direction of the student’s vision.

*Step 2: Intake, Eligibility and Benefits*—Families should learn about these community resources and agencies, eligibility requirements, and the process for applying. IEP teams can assist students and families to complete applications so that when the student leaves school, services are in place. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal income supplement program designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income and provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Medicaid is a state-federal partnership to provide health care services to disabled adults, the elderly and certain low income populations, primarily children. In order to be eligible for some state funded services, you need to be approved for SSI and Medicaid.

*Step 3: Identify Community-based Activities and Connections*—Explore person centered options for opportunities to become active in the community. Explore volunteer work, internships, or summer jobs so that your child develops work experience, skills, can discover what they like and build connections with community members. Initiate participation in clubs, social groups, faith based organizations, recreational and leisure events. Also, start to explore post-grad activities, employment opportunities, college courses, and other areas of interest.

*Step 4: Transition Assessment*—Assessments can be formal or informal, and should support the student and the IEP team to determine the student’s interests, strengths, preferences, and priorities related to adult living. Assessments should be selected based on the questions and priorities the student and team have about the student’s successful transition from school.

*Step 5: Self-advocacy and Student Training*—One important and often overlooked area is the student’s need for support and training to participate in planning teams. This can include training in effective communication, leadership skills, disability awareness, and understanding how to access community-based services to meet health, transportation, and community living needs.

*Step 6: Parent Training*—Parents need training about the changing role of their child when transitioning to adulthood, and about the opportunities and systems that exist from a number of adult service agencies that support people with disabilities. Parents can participate in transition parent groups, attend transition trainings and workshops, and get to know other parents who have supported their children with disabilities to make a successful transition from school to adult life.

*Step 7: Guardianship and Estate Planning*—All families need to consider the reality that part of a student’s changing role is that he or she will automatically become an independent adult decision-maker at age 18. There are a number of options to protect a student’s decision-making in a way that fits with the student’s ability level when he or she turns 18. There are also a number of strategies to plan for student’s

financial protection as adults. Families should meet with an attorney to discuss these options well in advance of the student's 18th birthday.

*Step 8: Visits and Gathering Information about Options*—As students enter their last two years of high school they should begin visiting places that may provide services to them after they transition. Students and their families will need to collect information about what different places have to offer, and advocate for individualized services if there is not a clear fit for the student's needs based on these visits. The goal of these visits is to determine what places and services would be ideal to fill the student's daily schedule after he or she finishes school.

*Step 9: Answer the "Transportation" Question*—A critical question that students and families need to answer is, "How will I get there?" Public transportation options are often limited; however, look for other options that exist to support students to get to and from work, school, and recreational activities after they finish high school. Families should discuss transportation options with their IEP teams, and investigate services including driving assessments, travel training programs and other specialized driver's education, ADA door-to-door transportation services, and making sure students know how to call and pay for a cab in emergencies. Families should also consider how they will communicate once the student is spending time out and about in the community.

*Step 10: Building Strength/Maintaining Hope*—No one can navigate the transition from school to adult life without help. It's important for students who have disabilities and their families to consider how they can build in activities and relationships to enjoy this time, as well as activities and relationships to support themselves in the future. If students and families pay attention to the things that will encourage and support them, transition planning can be exciting, rewarding, and — believe it or not — FUN!

Resource Available online:

[http://transitioncoalition.org/transition/tcfiles/files/docs/Tips\\_Sep09\\_final1254168142.pdf/Tips\\_Sep09\\_final.pdf](http://transitioncoalition.org/transition/tcfiles/files/docs/Tips_Sep09_final1254168142.pdf/Tips_Sep09_final.pdf)