

**A Directory of
Transition Programs
in College, University or
Community-Based Settings
in Connecticut**



Connecticut Interagency Transition Task Force

Department of Education
Bureau of Special Education

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Introduction

During the past four years, the Connecticut Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education has supported the development of a number of “age-appropriate” transition programs for young adults with disabilities.

Many young adults with significant learning, social or intellectual disabilities are provided their educational programs in a traditional academic setting during their high school years. The emphasis on full integration, academics and access to the general education curriculum, leaves minimal time to address critical needs related to employment, independent living and social/recreational areas. When a student reaches age 18, it is “typical” that they would transition to the next step in their lives. For students with intellectual disabilities, remaining in a high school setting through their twenty-first birthday is often inappropriate and does not provide the opportunity for interaction with age appropriate peers and/or activities. Students with learning and/or social emotional disabilities are often unwilling to remain in the traditional high school setting.

Many school districts graduate these students when they reach age 18 because they have technically met the “academic” requirements for graduation. Unfortunately, many of these students have been enrolled in high school courses considered “low level” and do not offer the competitive level of academics necessary for success in a postsecondary educational setting. Not only are these students ill-prepared for the demands of a college environment, they have not been given the opportunity to gain the skills necessary for entry into the workforce, independent living and the ability to access resources in their communities. Even if schools were willing to support a student for another year or two, comprehensive high schools do not have the alternative transition programs in place, nor do students want to remain at their high school for another year. There is a critical need in Connecticut to develop alternative programs for young adults with disabilities that take them beyond the pure academics offered in a high school setting, allow them to attain self-confidence and self-esteem in an integrated, age-appropriate environment, and teach them life-long skills to prepare them for independence in adult life.

Transition Programs in College, University or Community-Based Settings

This directory provides a brief overview of some of the transition programs that are located in college, university or community-based settings. Some of the programs have been supported by the Department of Education and are coordinated by an LEA or a consortia of LEA's. Several of the programs are recognized as private programs.

This directory is meant as a resource only and you are encouraged to contact the staff member listed to obtain further information.

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Program Name: **Burroughs Transition Program**

Program Location: Burroughs Community Center

Primary Contact Person: Maureen Shannon

Address: 2479 Fairfield Ave.
 Bridgeport, CT

Phone Number: (203) 332-2759 **Email:** Mshannon@bridgeportedu.net

Program Description:

Overview of Extended Community-Based Transition Program at the Burroughs Community Center

- Prior to “graduation” or final year(s) of high school program, students receive intensive transitional services that facilitate and ease the adjustment from school to life after their public school education.
- The initial step is assessment of the individual transition needs of the student through staff, parent and student interviews.
- Students are selected by the Special Education Staff in each of the High School Special Education Clusters. Parents, students and staff meet at Planning and Placement Team. Meetings to approve participation in this program and begin development of an individual transition and education plan.
- This extended Transition Program is coordinated and planned in conjunction with the partnership of the Burroughs Community Center and the Student Support Services and Special Education Department of the Bridgeport Public Schools.
- The intent is to provide an array of intensive transitional supports and services at an age appropriate, inclusive community based site.
- Students participate in community-based instructional activities with age appropriate peers and adults in inclusive community based settings to ease the transition into independent adult life and employment.
- Parents and families support the program by cooperating and routinely communicating with program staff.
- Students agree to participate for one or more years (student & family choice – can remain as participants up to the age of 21), remain enrolled as students of the Bridgeport Public Schools and receive their diplomas upon completion of the program.
- The services of the Transition Program are developed according to the individual student needs and include:
 - Vocational training at various community sites;
 - Situational assessments of individual student’s vocational skills;

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- Job coaching and job placement;
- Development of appropriate job related social skills;
- Development of self-advocacy and independent living skills;
- Instruction of related functional academic skills needed for work place and independent living skills; and
- Linkage with appropriate adult service agencies (DMR, BRS, etc.).

Unique Features of the Program:

The Community Center serves as a resource to the program by providing an array of vocational settings, i.e. community-based day care facility, community-based offices and agencies, community-based agencies that use the setting for meetings and programs and an industrial kitchen setting, location on the Coastal Link Bus Route (from Milford to Norwalk), closeness of major tourist attraction of Captain's Cove and a wide array of small local businesses.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Ages 18-22; specific learning disabled, intellectual disabled and multiple disabilities

Program Name: Farmington Valley Transition Academy (FVTA)

Program Location: University of Hartford
West Hartford, CT

Primary Contact Person(s): Gretchen Nelson, Special Education Teacher/Program Coordinator
Jane Currie, Director of Special Services, Farmington Public Schools
Helen Donaher, Director of Special Services, Simsbury Public Schools

Address: Gretchen Nelson
Simsbury High School
34 Farms Village Rd.
Simsbury, CT 06070

Phone Number: (cell) (860) 202-6177

Email: gnelson@simsbury.k12.ct.us

Program Description:

The Farmington Valley Transition Academy (FVTA) is an age-appropriate transition program for students with disabilities. Established in 2000, the FVTA is located on the main campus of the University of Hartford and is a collaborative partnership between Simsbury Public Schools, Farmington Public Schools and the University of Hartford.

The mission of the FVTA is to prepare students with disabilities for transition, to maximize their potential for independence in employment, community and activities of daily living, to foster self advocacy skills and to facilitate linkages with necessary adult service supports upon transition. Through classroom and community-based experiences, students develop skills in the following areas:

- Functional Academic Skills.
- Vocational Skills
- Activities of Daily Living
- Community Skills
- Social/Self-Advocacy Skills
- Leisure/Recreation Skills

Unique Features of the Program:

- Highly individualized goals and objectives designed to develop skills in needed areas of transition;
- Small student/staff ratio – Current enrollment – 10-11 students; current staff includes: a special education teacher/program coordinator, vocational coordinator and two job coaches, one of whom also serves the role of an activities of daily living (ADL) coach;

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- A variety of on-campus and community-based internships and employment opportunities based on situational assessments highlighting students interests, skills and needs for support;
- Activities of daily living skills program conducts individual assessments of student's skills, provides *hands-on instruction in students' home environments* and follow-up and support for students and families as they strive to foster and maintain independence in activities of daily living. Direct, in-home instruction is supported by classroom instruction, as well;
- A program van is available for weekly community trips and to support vocational experiences;
- Affiliation with the Special Education Department at University of Hartford is a win-win relationship, providing undergraduate students first-hand experience with students with disabilities while providing FVTA with age appropriate role models;
- Under the direction of clinical staff from the Center for Relationship & Sexuality Education, which promotes safe and healthy relationships for all people, students participate in seminars on appropriate relationships and expressions of sexuality for people with special needs;
- Partnership with the Best Buddies chapter at University of Hartford fosters individual age-appropriate social relationships for students at the FVTA during, and outside of, program hours;
- Strong partnerships with adult service support systems foster smooth transitions for students with disabilities; and
- Full access to campus facilities at the University of Hartford (i.e. computer lab, Sports/Fitness Center, dining services, etc.).

Population of Students Served by the Program:

The FVTA is designed to meet the needs of students with moderate disabilities, ages 18-21, who have been recommended by the PPT.

Program Name: **The Hamden Transition Academy on the Campus of Southern Connecticut State University**

Program Location: Southern Connecticut State University
501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515

Primary Contact: Sandra H. White, Program Coordinator

Address: Hamden Public Schools
60 Putnam Avenue
Hamden, CT 06517

Phone Number: (203) 407-2223 Email: sandy.white@hamden.org

Program Description:

The Hamden Transition Academy, located on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), was established in September of 2003 as the result of a unique partnership and collaboration between the Hamden Public Schools and the School of Education at SCSU. It has been supported by grants from the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Doris Feldman and Grace Donahue Funds of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and endorsed by the Department of Mental Retardation and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The Hamden Transition Academy serves the transition needs of students with Intellectual Disabilities, ages 18 -21, once they have completed Grade 12, and is open to Hamden students and qualified students from surrounding districts on a tuition basis.

The Hamden Transition Academy offers students an age-appropriate, culturally diverse environment with non-disabled peers and adults, which can more effectively prepare them for entry into adulthood and the workplace. Prior to entering the program, a “person-centered futures planning meeting” is held for each student at which time s/he shares his/her interests, strengths, challenges, goals, and dreams with family members, other supporters, service providers, and program staff. Through a highly individualized approach, the staff of the Hamden Transition Academy is able to facilitate the development of functional academic skills, daily living skills, and appropriate social and pragmatic language skills across settings. Each student is exposed to a variety of work sites both on the Southern campus and in the community, where the job coaches and the Vocational Coordinator are continually assessing, developing, and documenting each student’s progress. Additionally, by participating in weekly recreational and community service activities with Southern student “mentors,” HTA students increase their feelings of acceptance, self-confidence, self-esteem, and independence.

Unique Features of the Program:

- Individualized and small group instruction in the *CEC Life Centered Career Education* curriculum by a certified Special Education Teacher on campus;
- In collaboration with the SCSU Department of Communication Disorders, the development of a *Functional Communication Profile* for each student, and training to enable the HTA staff to facilitate appropriate social and pragmatic language skills across settings throughout the day for all HTA students;
- A weekly “Transition Seminar” with the HTA School Psychologist, with opportunities for small group or individual counseling, as needed;
- A collaborative home-based approach to developing Daily Living Skills, involving parents and offering home visits to monitor student progress;
- Participation in the *Best Buddies Colleges Program in Connecticut*, with each HTA student “matched” with a Southern student as a “college buddy”;
- A curriculum strand addressing health and medical issues, and sex education, coordinated with the HTA School Nurse and educators from *Planned Parenthood of CT*;
- Opportunities for recreation and socialization in activities planned by “student mentors” from the SCSU Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies; and
- A very active *Parent Support Group* with opportunities for parents to network with each other, with former parents, and with representatives from DMR, BRS, and other adult agencies in the area.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

The Hamden Transition Academy serves the transition needs of students with Intellectual Disabilities, ages 18 -21, once they have completed Grade 12. It is open to Hamden students and qualified students from surrounding districts on a tuition basis.

Program Name: **RISE Transition Program**

Program Location: Sacred Heart University

Primary Contact Person: Tony Maida (C.E.S.) Kay Moser (Monroe Public Schools)

Address: 25 Oakview Drive, Trumbull, CT 06611 375 Monroe Turnpike, Monroe, CT
06468

Phone Number: (203) 365-8837 (203) 4525843

Email: maidat@ces.k12.ct.us kmoser@monroeps.org

Program Description:

The RISE Transition Program was collaboratively developed by five districts from the Greater Bridgeport area (Bridgeport, Fairfield, Monroe, Region #9 and Stratford) and Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) with Sacred Heart University (SHU). It provides a regional alternative for students who have completed four years of high school and can benefit from a post-secondary experience on a university campus for social, recreational and vocational skill development.

The program which was designed for students with severe intellectual and learning disabilities makes available a variety of educational experiences on both a university campus and in the community to address IEP transition goals. The curriculum involves an array of basic core instructional domains and is taught in both classrooms and practical settings on the SHU campus and local community environments in the Greater Bridgeport area.

Students have highly individualized weekly schedules that include functional education and practical opportunities to learn vocational, social and personal management skills. They also have opportunities with age-appropriate peer models (SHU students) to build social relationships while being involved in activities of daily living, fitness and recreational experiences. Weekly work experiences toward the goal of competitive employment are also an integral part of weekly schedules.

The program which is run by C.E.S. on behalf of the participating districts makes available via a multidisciplinary staff a range of services including individual/group counseling, vocational counseling, educationally-based therapies, travel skills training and referral assistance to adult service agencies. The core staff consists of a certified Special Education Teacher and a number of teaching assistants who also serve as job coaches for students.

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Unique Features of the Program:

- Peer buddy program with Sacred Heart Program;
- Use of campus facilities (student activity center, cafeteria, library, shuttle system) for social, vocational and recreation skills; and
- Courses developed and provided by SHU students on topics related to personal care, life skills, community-development and recreational/leisure skills.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities 18-21 years of age.

Website: <http://www.ces.k12.ct.us/>

Program Name: **Work Experience Program, Off-Campus Classroom
New Haven Public Schools**

Program Location: Community-based sites

Primary Contact Person: Mark Caruso

Address: 181 Mitchell Drive, New Haven, CT 06511

Phone Number: (203) 946-8570

Email: msjleane@yahoo.com

Program Description:

To provide students who have significant disabilities with an age appropriate post-high school educational experience that promotes independence and life long learning through the use of community based vocational, independent and social integration activities.

New Haven has developed partnerships with four sites Hospital of Saint Raphael, Gateway College, Jewish Home for the Aged and Adult Education. These sites satisfy the various skill levels of individual students and provide unique opportunities to reach their potential for independent living.

Unique Features of the Program:

The majority of the students spend a full day at their work site. Each site is unique to the location and the functional level of the students. For example:

- Adult Education provides services to students who require a more structured setting;
- At The Jewish Home for the Aged students established a partnership with their mentors to learn a specialized skills with their vocational interests in mind;
- At Hospital of Saint Raphael students need to learn the appropriate work and social skills to function within a professional environment with doctors, nurses and business people; and
- At Gateway Community College in North Haven, students independently access public transportation to and from a variety of career fields/job opportunities of their choice, that are located within the Greater New Haven community.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Students with intellectual disabilities, ages 18-21

Program Name: **Transition for Life (TFL)**

Program Location: Trumbull, CT

Primary Contact Person: Brenda McNeal, Director of Special Education
 John Wrobel, Transition Specialist

Address: 6254 Main St., Trumbull, CT 06611

Phone Number: 203-452-4352, 452-4217

Email: WrobelJ@Trumbullps.org

Program Description:

- Community-based program hubs;
- Community-based vocational component facilitated by local rehabilitation agencies;
- Practical academics and life skills;
- Community college classes with TFL support at family’s expense;
- Self-advocacy/socialization group with transition specialist;
- Travel training;
- Access to community for recreation opportunities; and
- Work readiness component (resume writing, filing employment application, mock interviews, accessing CT Works and BRS).

Unique Features of the Program:

Housatonic Community College is at family expense. Students undergo the typical admissions process, including placement testing and advisement through the disability resource office. Support services are provided on an as needed/requested basis through disability resource office. TFL teacher is available for support as needed.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Higher functioning students with intellectual disabilities, Asperger’s, neurological impairment, and OHI.

Program Name: Middlesex Transition Academy

Program Location: Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

Primary Contact Person: Ann Mallin

Address: Regional School District #13, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, CT, 06422

Phone Number: 860-349-7110

Email: amallin@sbcglobal.net

Program Description:

The Middlesex Transition Academy at Wesleyan University is collaboration among Regional School District #13, Cromwell Public Schools, Wethersfield Public Schools and Wesleyan University. The program was designed to provide students with disabilities, ages 18-21, the opportunity to address their individual transition goals in an age-appropriate environment. Students participate in a variety of vocational, social, and independent living activities on both the university campus and in the Greater Middletown community.

Program Components:

- Functional Academics
- Work Experiences
- Travel Training
- Self-Advocacy
- Social Skills Development
- Best Buddies
- Transition Planning Activities
- Recreation and Leisure Activities

Unique Features of the Program:

The Middlesex Transition Academy opened in March 2004. It is reviewed on an on going basis by an advisory committee comprised of parents, teachers, school administrators, adult agency representatives and university staff. The Advisory Committee continues to meet quarterly to address the changing needs of the program.

The Ronald McDonald Grant Foundation awarded a van to the program so students with disabilities could access a variety of activities not only on campus but also in the greater Middletown community.

Students have more than fifteen job sites available to them on campus.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

This program serves students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-21.

Program Name: **Region # 19 Campus Experience Transition Academy**

Program Location: University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

Primary Contact Person: Debra Hultgren

Address: Region # 19, 1235 Storrs Road, Storrs, CT 06268

Phone Number: 860-429-7739

Email:dhultgren@eosmith.org

Program Description:

The Region # 19 Campus Experience Transition Academy is located at the University of Connecticut. There is a classroom/office site located in the Buckley Dormitory where students will meet for direct instruction, meetings, social activities and other activities during as determined in individual plans.

Students are all involved in supported employment situations located both on the UConn Campus and in the community. Campus employment situations continue to be developed beyond the dining halls and library where students have been working in the past. Employment situation are developed with transition to adult services in mind and may include collaboration with adult providers during the last year of eligibility.

The program also includes instructional and social opportunities in building throughout the campus. UConn students from the School of Education and other school and programs on the campus will be interacting with the transitional students in both instructional and social activities. The Best Buddies College program will be directly involved.

Unique Features of the Program:

The program is located in close proximity to the E.O. Smith High School making it possible to share services and staff. This also makes transportation easier for staff and students. Before the campus site was established, E.O. Smith High School had a long-standing relationship with various employment sites on the campus. Students have worked throughout the campus.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Students are all in the 18-21 year old range. However, younger students will be involved in some transitional activities and planning for when they formally participate in the program. Students have a wide range of disabilities. Students include individuals with good basic academic skills as well as students who are learning on a more functional and concrete level.

Program Name: Allen Institute – Center for Innovative Learning

Program Location: 85 Jones Street, Hebron, CT 06248

Primary Contact Person: Dr. Peter Love

Address: 85 Jones Street, Hebron, CT 06248

Phone Number: Toll Free 1 866 666 6919

Email: plove@thealleninstitute.org

Program Description:

The Allen Institute-Center for Innovative Learning provides a caring and nurturing environment for students with learning disabilities where students are encouraged and expected to reach their potential. Supportive and dedicated staff communicate daily on individual student challenges, progress and successes, and reinforce the value in becoming a self-determining adult in a highly competitive world.

The school is located in beautiful and scenic Hebron, Connecticut. Staff and faculty develop individual plans that integrate different areas of the students' lives. It is this integration that allows students at the Allen Institute-Center for Innovative Learning to experience new challenges, master old ones and grow into their fullest potential.

We believe that a well-supported post-secondary education and college experience is essential for most students with learning disabilities to make a successful transition from home to the workplace or continued higher education in a community-based setting. Our supportive environment provides for the development of the whole person to promote self-determination.

Unique Features of the Program:

The Allen Institute offers several programs including a Pre-college program, an Associate's or a Bachelor's degree program, (offered in partnership with Charter Oak State College) and a life skills program. We are focused on process issues such as emotional self-regulation, organizational and study skills, and helping students develop competency in their social interactions.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Students are from 18 – 26 years old, and come to us with a wide range of disability labels including specific language-based disabilities, ADD, high-functioning autism and Asperger's Syndrome, and mild intellectual disabilities.

Website: <http://www.thealleninstitute.org/>

Program Name: Chapel Haven

Program Location: 1040 Whalley Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515

Primary Contact Person: Judy Lefkowitz, V.P., Admissions

Address: 1040 Whalley Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515

Phone Number: 203-397-1714, Ext.113

Email: jlefkowitz@chapelhaven.org

Program Description:

Chapel Haven, a private agency and state approved school for cognitively disabled young adults 18 years and older, was founded in 1972 and since that time has been providing hundreds of young men and women with the skills to live independently. Chapel Haven is a nationally recognized leader in the field.

We offer a continuum of support services designed to serve our clients for a lifetime. From their stay in our residence, to their own apartments in the community, we provide them with a variety of opportunities as they strive to establish a life on their own.

Chapel Haven offers life skills, employment services, functional and enrichment academics, and recreation and socialization, in an intensive residential program as well as in the community.

Unique Features of the Program:

In addition to our other programs we have an affiliation with the local colleges for our College Program, including our College Excellence Program. We also offer a six-week Summer Residential Program, which allows high school age students to experience an Independent Living Program as they plan for their futures. The Bridge Program provides students who require an additional year for transition between the 24-month Residential Program and the Community Supported Living Program. The Employment Training Program includes: Retail Sales and Management Training, Food Service and Management Training, and Commercial Maintenance Training Programs.

We are pleased to announce our NEW Asperger's Program beginning in 2006.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Chapel Haven serves individuals 18 years and older with cognitive disabilities.

Website: <http://www.chapelhaven.org/>

Program Name: **Step Forward**

Program Location: Gateway Community College North Haven, CT

Primary Contact Person: Jaime French

Address: 88 Bassett Rd, North Haven, CT 06473

Phone Number: 203-285-2505

Email: JFrench@gwcc.commnet.edu

Program Description:

Step Forward is a non-credit certificate program designed to teach students with mild cognitive disabilities the skills necessary to be prepared and productive in today's workforce. This innovative program blends classroom instruction with practical workplace experience. Classroom learning takes place in an age-appropriate environment at Gateway Community College.

Participants are encouraged to utilize peer support, campus, and community resources. Each participant creates a plan which identifies strengths, weaknesses, and job preferences. Internships and job shadowing activities complement and reinforce concepts learned in the classroom.

Some of the topics covered will be:

- Job readiness skills including workplace communication skills, social and behavioral expectations;
- Resume and cover letter writing and interviewing techniques;
- Personal finances;
- Service learning projects;
- Job shadowing opportunities;
- Mastering basic computer skills i.e., e-mail, Internet, word processing/keyboarding;
- Time management;
- Public transportation training;
- Self Advocacy;
- Connecting to community services; and
- Preparing an employment portfolio.

Unique Features of the Program:

Step Forward is unique in that it serves individuals with mild cognitive limitations. It is designed to bridge the service gap for individuals that fall between the ID and LD disability classifications. Step Forward has the following enrollment options:

- Students can enroll concurrently while in high school. (Classes are held Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:00 am -12:00 noon. Internships are TBA);

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- Utilize the program as a 5th transition year; and
- Enter after graduating high school.

Step Forward participants will work in a year-long internship with an identified workplace mentor.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

Step Forward serves young adults ages 18-21 with borderline intellectual disabilities or below average I.Q. (approximately 70-85).

Program Name: Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center

Program Location: Westbrook, CT

Primary Contact Person: Linda Rogen

Address: 1356 Old Clinton Rd. Westbrook, CT

Phone Number: (860) 399-8080

Email: lrogen@vistavocational.org

Program Description:

Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center is a nationally recognized, post-secondary program for adults with neurological or developmental disabilities. Vista offers a community-based training program designed for individuals who would like to succeed in work and independent living, and who are seeking a non-traditional program to address their needs. Its goal is to help students transition to adulthood and to learn the social and vocational skills necessary to live independently.

Vista's philosophy looks at each individual holistically and takes each student's success seriously. Each is given the opportunity to do his or her best through a comprehensive program tailored to meet each individual's needs. Life skills instruction, vocational training, counseling and many levels of support services are offered as needed.

There are two major phases of Vista programming: the Entrance Program and Outreach. Initially, young adults entering Vista begin in the three-year Entrance Program. This is a structured and supportive program offering a full range of training. In the Entrance Program, young adults learn the functional and social skills necessary to be self-sufficient. They then graduate to the Outreach Program, which is Vista's independent phase. Members of the Outreach Program may receive long-term services and live in their own apartments in neighboring communities.

Unique Features of the Program:

- Counseling-based training model;
- Holistic and comprehensive programming;
- Opportunity for life-long services;
- Training focused on four major training areas: vocational, independent living, social development and self-esteem, community involvement;
- Individualized programming; and
- Safe and welcoming community.

Population of Students Served by the Program:

The students attending Vista have neurologically based learning disabilities or a developmental disability as their primary difficulty. For the majority, this has affected their work, school and social skills. Most, although they are chronologically adults, function as adolescents. They are just beginning to establish their identity, to develop meaningful relationships, and to think about a career.

Vista students function from the borderline to average range of intellectual ability on standardized tests and have usually received special education services while in school. Individuals must be at least 18 years old and interested in working, living outside their family's home, developing peer relationships and gaining independence and self-esteem.

Website: <http://www.vistavocational.org/>