



Beyond High School Graduation

Transition Tips for Young Adults with Intellectual Challenges

High school graduation is a time for celebration. It also marks the beginning of another interesting and exciting journey — the transition from high school to adult life in the community. Planning for adult life should begin well before graduation. Here are 20 transition tips to help plan for a fulfilling life after graduation.

Speak up!

1. Learn how to advocate. During Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, state your vision of the future succinctly. Talk about goals for work, housing, socialization, transportation, health and independent living. *Bring these topics up early, beginning at age 14.*
2. The student with intellectual challenges and relevant family members must attend the IEP meeting — this is where plans are set for the future! Speak up about school and life after school. Meetings can be lengthy. The student should decide how long they should be.
3. Invite an advocate to make sure all issues are discussed. Contact your local Arc chapter for free school-age advocacy services (www.thearc.org).

Plan ahead, stay ahead.

4. Pennsylvania residents should fill out the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) with the assigned supports coordinator from the Office of Developmental Programs five years before graduation.
5. Determine and document the year of graduation in the IEP.
6. Planning for work in the future is important.
7. Start brainstorming about future professions. Wanting to be a teacher could lead to working in a school, day care center or community program.
8. Chores need to be done at home as early as possible to build responsibility, accountability and self assurance — key skills for employment.
9. Find occasional jobs like delivering a weekly newspaper or babysitting.
10. Independent interactions in the community are critical — visiting the mall and bank, ordering a pizza by phone or paying for items at the store.
11. Ride the bus and train. Walk through town and cross the street. Ask that travel training be part of the Transition IEP as a work-related goal. Request information about public transportation services.
12. Review time and money skills — and practice them at home and in the community.

Get to work.

13. Unpaid work experiences during high school are a good way to explore interests and abilities. These are often called community-based work assessments (CBWAs).
14. Request that the school contract with an adult provider agency to assess employment skills and interests and to arrange CBWAs.
15. Request a monthly progress report on work-related goals from a teacher and/or CBWA job coach or supervisor.
16. Build a portfolio and resumé of work experiences and related reports. Request letters of reference.
17. Inquire whether school-arranged work experiences can become paying jobs after graduation.

Build your network.

18. Invite staff from adult service systems to IEP meetings during the last two years of school, including staff from the Office of Developmental Programs, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and agencies providing job development and job coaching services.
19. Interview staff from several adult provider agencies during the last year of high school to find out about supports they offer in your community.
20. Be creative. Ask about customized employment and explore franchises and Internet-based jobs. Ask friends about job opportunities, too.