



Preparing Your Teenager with Special Needs for Adulthood: Transition Planning

Rhode Island Department of Education

The word "transition" means to make a change or a move from one place to another. A big transition for teenagers happens when they are ready to leave school and enter adulthood. This transition may include attending a college/university or other training program, entering the workforce, living independently, or all the above.

As a parent of a teen with disabilities, it is important to plan early for this transition. This includes working together with your child to set goals and plan for:

- Health care needs; possibly switching to a different doctor or practice;
- Education beyond high school;
- Work;
- Independent living; moving out of his/her parents home; and
- Participating in the community.

When To Begin Transition Planning

You should begin to plan for your child's future by the age of 14. During this time it is important to work closely with your child and the Transition Planning Team. The Transition Planning Team is part of the Individualized Education Plan Team (IEP) you work with at your child's school. The purpose of this team is to talk about options your child has after leaving [high school](#) - like more schooling and/or work. As a parent, you can invite anyone to the meeting that you feel will be supportive to you and your child, such as a friend or family member, physician, or other professional. The team will help you and your child create a plan that will help prepare him/her to meet their long-term goals.

Planning For Your Child's Health Care Needs

Planning for your child's health care needs as they transition to adulthood usually includes moving their care from a pediatric health care provider to an adult health care provider. Making this change can help make sure that your child continues to receive the care they need as they get older. To get this process started:

- Talk to your child's pediatric health care provider. Your pediatrician can refer you to an adult health care provider who is knowledgeable about your child's disability.
- Set up a time for you and your teen to meet his/her new health care provider. This will give you, your teen, and the provider a chance to get to know one another before a health care issue arises. (It is also a good idea to interview a few health care providers to be sure that the provider you and your teen select will meet all his/her health care needs.)

Texas Parent to Parent

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When helping your teen with disabilities plan for their health care needs as an adult, it is important to think about options for proper health insurance. There are several options available including:

- Private Health Insurance: Private health plans often have different policies regarding the age at which your child no longer qualifies for coverage. Make sure that you are familiar with your health insurance policy.
- SSI: Social Security Insurance (SSI) is for both children and families. Eligibility depends upon the income of the family. In order to qualify, the child must be medically or developmentally disabled. For more information, call 800-772-1213.

To avoid losing health care coverage, it is a good idea to begin this process before your child turns 18 by calling the Social Security administration office nearest you.

Planning For Your Child's Education After High School

There are many options for education after [high school](#) that your teen may be interested in. Colleges, universities, and training programs may be among those your teen explores. To help your child find the program that is right for him/ her:

- Meet with your child's guidance counselor and IEP Team. They can help you and your teen identify educational programs that may be of interest.
- Once he/she finds a program of interest, speak with someone in the Office of Disability Services to find out what disability support services they offer. Encourage your teen to choose a program that provides the level of support that will best meet his/ her needs. Remember to ask each program what proof of disability they require in order for your teen to qualify for services.

Planning For Your Child's Work

There are thousands of different jobs and [careers](#) for teenagers to choose from. Young adults with disabilities may choose to work in a variety of settings, with or without support. The challenge is to help your teen find a job where his/her skills and interests match the needs of the employer. There are several agencies that offer support to teenagers with disabilities who are ready to enter the workforce. These agencies offer assistance with:

- Resume [writing](#);
- Finding internships;
- Volunteering; and
- Job shadowing.

Preparing For Your Child's Independence

Part of helping your child transition to adulthood includes teaching him/ her to be independent. Teaching independence includes taking responsibility for daily activities such as managing health care, going to school or work, getting around, managing a budget and even voting.

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