

Secondary Transition Considerations and Guiding Questions for Youth Exiting from High School

Finishing high school is exciting but can also be scary and stressful.

This resource can help you take steps to transition from high school to adult life. Click on any of the items in the contents, below, to jump to more information. If you have a printer, you can type in some of the forms in this document and print them. Be sure to save your own copy of any forms you complete or get from your school, as they will be helpful when you connect with adult programs, colleges, or employers.

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Deciding where to Start

So where do you start? First, think about your needs, interests, and goals. Figure out which goal is most important to address first. The questions below will help you pick what to do first. Read the questions and follow the links to help you figure out the best way to move forward.

Are you are worried about where to get food and where to live? [If YES, click here.](#)

Are you are worried about money (For example, have you or a family member lost your job)? [If YES, click here.](#)

Do you need help making a doctor’s appointment or getting your medicine? [If YES, click here.](#)

Are you not able to contact your friends or family because you don’t have phone or internet service? [If YES, click here.](#)

Are you worried about how you will get from place to place (transportation)? [If YES, click here.](#)

Do you plan to go to college, community college, or another training program this fall? [If YES, click here.](#)

Do you plan to get a job this year? [If YES, click here.](#)

If you aren’t sure where to start, keep reading!

Questions to Answer

[Click here for a fillable, printable set of questions](#) that will help you plan your move from school to life afterward. Answer these questions with a family member or another adult who knows you well. Use these answers as you get ready for more school, training, a job, and enjoying your community. It’s important to think about your answers to these questions now, because you will probably be asked things like this when you apply for school, a job, or services from an adult agency.

Review Your Plans

After writing down your strengths and needs, look at your latest Individual Education Program ([IEP](#)), Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance ([SOP](#)), and any other outside agency related documents, including Individual Plan for Employment ([IPE](#)) or the Individual Support Plan ([ISP](#)). If you aren't sure where to find these documents, your family may be able to help you. If you do not have a copy of your most recent IEP or SOP, ask your school for a copy.

When you look at the plans, think about these things:

- What supports and services you might need from an adult agency
- Your education and/or training goals and what you should do next to make them happen
- Your work goals and what you should do next to make them happen
- Your independent living goals and what you should do next to make them happen

If you want to review or rewrite your goals for after high school, the information below, in "[a Plan for Education](#)," "[a Plan for Work](#)," and "[a Plan for Adult Living](#)" can help you organize your thoughts and find help.

Getting Help

Adult Agency and Service Contacts

There are agencies in your community that can help you transition from school to adult life.

If you have already been referred to, or are now receiving services, such as pre-employment transition services, from an adult agency provider call or email your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor, Pre-employment Transition Specialist, Community Rehabilitation Program, Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) Individual Supports Coordinator (ISP), or Center for Independent Living or other contact outside of school to let them know you are still interested in services. Be sure to leave your phone number or email, if you need to leave a message.

- If you do not have the VR agency and/or other provider's number, contact your school to see if they can give you that information or call the local VR office for you.
- Find a copy of your last IEP or [504 plan](#), and share it with your agency counselor (Be sure to keep your own copy, too.).
- Show your high school diploma or transcript to your agency counselor (Be sure to keep your own copy, too.).
- Talk with the agency counselor about any services you already finished while you were still in school or on-line at home. For example, help with:
 - identifying a career or job of interest,
 - working in the community,
 - finding a training or education program at a college,
 - understanding how to get and keep a job, or
 - advocating for what you need to be successful in a job or school program.

If you don't have anyone helping you and are not connected to any adult services, look below to find adult agencies in your area.

Finding Local Contacts

Below is a list of some of the agencies you might contact for help. They may not all have offices in your area, but they can be found in many parts of the United States (U.S.). This isn't a list of every agency, but it will give you a start at finding local resources to help with your transition to adult life. You should not contact every agency listed below. Your family member or another adult may be able to help you read this list, pick the right ones for you to contact, and make those contacts.

Parent Training & Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/> and/or <https://www.raisecenter.org/rsa-parent-centers/>

There are nearly 100 Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) in the U.S. and Territories. These Centers work with families of children of all ages (birth to 26) and with all disabilities (physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional). Services they may offer include: one-to-one help and support, workshops, publications, and websites. By contacting your local PTI or CPRC you and your family can learn about local resources and supports that might make your transition from school to adult life easier.

Family-to Family Health Information Center (F2F) or Family Voices Affiliate Organization (FVAO)

<https://familyvoices.org/affiliates/>

Family Voices is a national, family-led organization of families and friends of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and disabilities. They connect a network of family organizations across the US that provide support to families of CYSHCN. They promote partnership with families at all levels of health care— individual and policy decision-making levels—to improve health care services and policies for children.

<https://familyvoices.org>

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

<http://www.icdri.org/legal/CAP.htm>

CAP provides assistance and information to people with disabilities who are getting or applying for services under the Rehabilitation Act. Programs included are Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services and Projects with private firms. Each state and territory in the US has its own program.

State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

<https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies/>

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) is a state-supported division of services that helps people with disabilities who are looking for a job or a career. VR can help you find work that matches your interests, abilities, and capabilities. They can help with local job searches and tell you about self-employment and telecommuting opportunities. Some states also have separate agencies that serve people who are blind or visually impaired. States with such agencies are listed below the general state VR listing.

Centers for Independent Living

<https://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory>

Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and run by people with disabilities. Centers for Independent Living can provide: Peer Support, Information and Referral, Independent Living Skills Training and supports for transition.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation.

[Click here to return to “Deciding Where to Start.”](#)

The United Way

<https://www.unitedway.org/local/united-states/#> or call 211 from any cell phone or landline to speak with a United Way service professional in your area. All calls are private and confidential.

[Click here to return to “Deciding Where to Start.”](#)

Have you registered for Selective Service?

Almost all males living in the U.S., who are 18 through 25, are required to register with Selective Service. If you haven't already registered for the Selective Service, more information about who must register is available at <https://www.sss.gov/register/who-needs-to-register/>.

Your Plans

The following section helps you make a plan to meet your education, employment, and/or independent living goals.

Each Plan section includes:

- Things you can do now to help meet your goal
- A place you can list next steps to make your goal happen
- A list of agencies or offices you may need to contact and a list of questions you could ask to get help

Meeting Your Education and Training Goal

Your goals for postsecondary education and training help you get more education or training about something that interests you.

Things you can do now to help meet your education and training goal:

Visit the school or program you plan to attend if it is open for in-person visits now. If you can't visit, talk with them by phone or email. Ask when or how you might be able to visit.

- If you can't visit, ask if you can take a "virtual tour."
- Find out if the school or program will have in-person, online, or a mix of classes in the fall.
- If possible, be sure you have a dependable e-mail address and that you share it with the school or program. Remember to check your email at least once each day.

NTACT has a toolkit called the "[Postsecondary Education Training and Preparation Toolkit](#)." Sections 4, 6, and 7 of the toolkit might be useful as you finish your next steps for going to school or training after high school.

A VR counselor, Community Rehabilitation Service Provider, or a contact at your Center for Independent Living can help you understand what options are available for learning in your local community. Call them! They are there to help you.

Questions to Ask Yourself which Might Help You Meet Your Education and Training Goal

What is my future Goal for Education/Training? (It should be listed in your last IEP)

If you want to make any changes, rewrite your goal in the space below.

What strengths do I have? (things you're good at and that will help you learn new skills)

What supports help me learn? (accommodations, technology, assistance, or other things)

What next steps do I need to take to make my goal happen? (Write down at least one thing, though you might have more)

Connecting with an Educational Program, Agency, or College

What agencies or offices do I need to contact to finish the steps I just wrote down? **Note:** You probably won't contact every agency listed on the form. [Click here for a list of questions](#) you might ask and a form you can use to type or write down your questions and the answers you get to those questions.

[Click here to return to "Deciding Where to Start."](#)

Meeting Your Employment Goal

Your goal for employment is a goal you set to help you get the kind of career and job you want.

Things you can do now to help meet your postsecondary employment goal

- If you have been working with Vocational Rehabilitation, contact your counselor to talk about your plans for employment. Let them know if you have a job or ask for their help in getting a job. You can find the Vocational Rehabilitation office near you at <https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies>
- If you do not have a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor, contact your local VR office to talk about the services they offer and see if you should fill out an application. Vocational Rehabilitation has counselors who will work directly with you to identify career options and support needs. Find your local office by visiting <https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies/>.
- Find and contact your local American Job Center. They have access to national, state, and local job openings. They also offer career guidance and training to help people who are looking for jobs. Find your local American Job Center by visiting the Career One Stop website at <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/american-job-centers.aspx>.
- Make a list of work experiences or paid jobs you have had and have it ready for filling out job applications.
- Write down any career or technical education (CTE) classes you have taken. This is also good information for job applications. Contact your high school to get your transcript. It will list all of the classes you have taken, including CTE classes.
- Make a list of your career interests, the best work location for you, and types of jobs that best fit your skills. If you aren't sure what jobs or careers interest you, explore your options at "Get My Future" on the Career One Stop website <https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx>.
- Will you need help getting to and from work? If so, talk with your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor, Individual Supports Coordinator (ISP), or Center for Independent Living about transportation and travel training options.
- Will you need supports or accommodations from an employer to do a certain job? You can find out about accommodations and supports at work at <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/employment/#accommodations>.

Questions to Ask Yourself which Might Help You Meet Your Employment Goal

What is my Employment Goal? (It should be listed in your last IEP)

If you want to make any changes to your goal, rewrite it in the space below.

What strengths do I have related to work? (things you're good at and that will help you get and keep a job)

What supports help me work? (accommodations, technology, or assistance needed)

What next steps do I need to take to make my goal happen? (Write down at least one thing, though you might have several more)

Connecting with Vocational Rehabilitation, A Job Center, or Other Employment Programs

What agencies or offices do I need to contact to finish the steps I just wrote down? **Note:** You probably won't contact every agency listed on the form. [Click here for a list of questions](#) you might ask and a form you can use to type or write down your questions and the answers you get to those questions.

[Click here to return to "Deciding Where to Start."](#)

Meeting Your Independent Living Goal

Independent living can mean lots of things. It may be living in your own apartment. It may also mean living with your parents, but having more responsibility as an adult in your home and in the community where you live. Your postsecondary goal for independent living is a goal you set to help you live as an adult in your home and community.

Things you can do now to help meet your postsecondary independent living goal:

- Talk with your family about what you need to do right now so you will be able to live as independently as you would like now and in the future.
- If you answered "YES" on page 2 to any of the questions about your safety, finances, health, or phone access, contact your local [United Way](#) (or dial 211 by phone) or another agency in your community to get crisis support.
- Talk with a local Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) Individual Supports Coordinator (ISP), VR counselor, Community Rehabilitation Service Provider, or a contact at your Center for Independent Living to learn how they can help you live independently and become an active member of your local community.

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/aom-series-independence/> may also be useful to you and your family as you list and complete your next steps toward living independently and engaging with your local community.

The questions below will help you think about your strengths and needs for independent living so you can ask the right questions when you talk with agencies and programs. If you write down your answers, these pages may be helpful to share with the agency staff when you meet.

Housing Questions to Ask Yourself

Where do I want to live? (For example: at home, at the college, in group housing with supports, in a private apartment on my own) Will the housing be safe, affordable, and dependable?

Will I be able to live on my own, or do I need to live in a supervised setting?

Do I need to fill out an application for community housing?

Financial Supports

Do I or will I get benefits such as Supplemental Security Income?

Will I be able to support myself?

Do I need to talk with my parents or other family members about money to support me?

Will I need to apply for Public Assistance and Food Stamps?

One resource that might be able to help with this is: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/aom-series-finance/>.

Transportation

Do I have the skills and resources to get around the community (For example, a driver's license, use of public transportation and taxi services, specialized transportation needs)?

Do I need to complete an application for reduced fares for public transportation (For example, bus or train)?

One possible resource for help with this is:
<https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/resources/QGTransportation2016.pdf> .

Medical/Insurance Concerns

Do I have any special health concerns?

Do I have health insurance? If so, will this insurance cover inpatient mental health and chemical dependency treatment, if necessary?

Do I need to switch from seeing a pediatrician to an adult care doctor?

Note: If you are assisting an individual in answering these questions, does the young person need access to ongoing medical care and emergency medical care?

Social, Personal, Recreational

Do I get along well with others?

Note: If you are assisting an individual in answering these questions, does the young person socialize well with other people?

Do I enjoy activities with friends and family in my community?

Do I have access to telephone, voicemail, and e-mail?

How do I spend my free time? Do I have hobbies, interests, or belong to social groups?

Note: If you are assisting an individual in answering these questions, does the young person need to develop effective communication skills with family members?

Advocacy

Can I describe my strengths and needs to others?

Do I feel comfortable asking other people for help when I need it?

Note: If you are assisting an individual in answering these questions, does the young person advocate for themselves or does they need training to develop self-advocacy skills?

Questions to Ask Yourself which Might Help You Meet Your Postsecondary Independent Living Goal

What is my Postsecondary Independent Living Goal? (It should be listed in your last IEP)

If you want to make any changes to the goal, rewrite the goal in the space below.

What strengths do I have? (things you're good at related to chores in your house, finding and using services in the community like grocery store, banks or bus system, speaking up for yourself, or communicating with others)

What supports help me in this area? (accommodations, technology, or assistance needed)

What next steps do I need to take to make my goal happen? (Write down at least one thing, though you might have more)

Connecting with Independent Living Agencies and Programs

What agencies or offices do I need to contact to finish the steps I just wrote down? **Note:** You probably won't contact every agency listed on the form. [Click here for a list of questions](#) you might ask and a form you can use to type or write down your questions and the answers you get to those questions.

Have you registered for Selective Service?

Almost all males living in the U.S., who are 18 through 25, are required to register with Selective Service. If you haven't already registered for the Selective Service, more information about who must register is available at <https://www.sss.gov/register/who-needs-to-register/>.

Definitions

Special education uses many acronyms (shortened forms of words or phrases, such as USA for United States of America). This list will help you understand the meaning of several of the acronyms used in special education (SpEd).

504 Plan

This is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure his or her academic success and access to the learning environment.

[Return to the "Adult Agency and Service Contacts" section](#)

IEP

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. The IEP is a written document that includes the special educational services a child identified with a disability will receive as part of his/her [Free and Appropriate Public Education \(FAPE\)](#). The student, their family, school staff, and invited professionals will participate in the writing of the IEP. Beginning the year the student turns 16, the IEP will include a post-secondary community employment goal. It will also include a transition plan to support the identified adult goals. A 504 team generally includes a school counselor (case manager), general education teachers, and other specialists. The development of the IEP or 504 is a person-centered planning process that includes formal and informal information gathered about the student's academic and functional performance. This information is used to develop a plan of service that includes instructional goals, accommodations, modifications, specialized support services, transportation, and where the student will be served throughout the day, including the percentage of time spent in the general education environment.

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IPE

IPE stands for Individualized Plan for Employment. It is a plan that meets the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.45, and § 361.46 and which is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for VR services. If the VR agency is operating under an order of selection in accordance with § 361.36, the IPE is implemented for each eligible individual to whom the State agency is able to provide services. The IPE includes a description of the specified employment outcome chosen by the eligible individual and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice consistent with the general goal of competitive integrated employment. The IPE also includes a

description of the specific rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome; the specific transition services and supports needed to achieve the individual’s employment outcome or projected post-school employment outcome; timelines for achievement of the employment outcome and the initiation of services; and a description of the entity or entities chosen by the eligible individual to provide VR services and the methods to procure those services (Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ([WIOA](#))).

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ISP

ISP stands for Individual Support Plan. The ISP outlines when individuals need support services, what kind of paid or natural supports are needed, and where those supports are to be given. There are many people who may be involved in helping create an ISP, including family, close friends, Personal Agents, Service Coordinators, teachers, and others that the individual may choose. A Career Development Plan is part of an ISP or Annual Plan regarding Developmental Disabilities (DD) Services. It identifies the individual’s employment goals and objectives; the services and supports needed to achieve those goals and objectives; the persons, agencies, and providers assigned to assist the person to attain those goals; the obstacles to the individual working in Competitive Integrated Employment; and the services and supports necessary to overcome those obstacles. Person-Centered Planning: Throughout individual’s participation in the DD system, staff will spend time getting to know the individual by guiding them through a process called “Person-Centered Planning.”

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SOP

SOP stands for Summary of Performance. The [Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004](#) (IDEA 2004) states that for every student with disabilities who graduates from secondary school with a regular diploma or by exceeding the age of eligibility for special education services, the local education agency (LEA) “shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals.”

The Summary of Performance (SOP) is not the same thing as an IEP. The IEP outlines what students are currently working on while still in school, whereas the SOP is designed specifically to help students identify needed supports in postsecondary settings, education, employment, or community settings. The SOP should help students better understand the impact of their disabilities and articulate individual strengths and needs, as well as supports that would be helpful in post-school life. The SOP is also a means to assist in transferring responsibility to students in advocating for their own needs.

[Return to the “Review Your Plans” section](#)

WIOA

WIOA stands for [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#). This is a law designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. It brings together employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth and adult education, family literacy programs, and State Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs that assist eligible individuals with disabilities in getting a job.

[Return to the “IPE” section of this document](#)

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