



# ADULT SERVICES

The transition from school to work is recognized as a difficult one for the student. Equally important is the stress and apprehension it causes parents. The focus of transition to employment and adult services and activities should be on the strengths of the individual. We need to be asking, "What does the person do best and enjoy?" not "What are the weaknesses that will make this person's transition difficult?" This positive approach will open our minds to more possibilities.



The basic problem that we are faced with in transition planning is that students in transition from school are leaving a somewhat organized provider system and entering a more complex and confusing world, not fully understood by most school professionals, much less by parents or consumers. The biggest challenge that we have is that it is impossible to prepare for transition to work and adult living if we do not know anything about agencies and services to which our students will be transitioning. Let's find out how we can solve this problem and meet this challenge.

Families that remember these two points when setting up their expectations will probably be more successful:

1. No one is entitled to services. Each agency or program has its own eligibility requirements and acceptance may be based on the individual's capacities and the potential for successful outcomes in that program.
2. Services are not coordinated or housed under one roof. Families may be required to access several programs and agencies to achieve goals and be creative, innovative, and open-minded in achieving goals.

The following list suggests some ways families and young adults can prepare to effectively access adult and community services:

- Encourage your son or daughter to take the lead. Be sure that services offered are based on their needs and desires...not yours.
- Clarify your expectations. You and your child both need to be clear on your expectations of service and share those expectations with the professionals with whom you work.
- Participate as an equal on the team! Rather than giving the professional too much power, you and your young adult with a disability should be an equal part of the team.
- Understand the services offered. Be sure you understand the services offered by each agency.
- Network with professionals and other parents. Begin networking with support coordinators and other professionals in the adult services. Renew your efforts at least every 6 months. Also, connect with parents who are ahead of you in the process.

***If your child has special needs, so do you! We can help!***

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- Ask for a statement of rights and appeal procedures. Ask all service providers for a statement of rights and appeal procedures.
- Become active on advisory boards. Becoming active on advisory boards and agency board of directors are good ways to make sure that your concerns are voiced and heard.
- Attend and participate in public comment meetings. Get information about public comment meetings. Attend those meetings and participate. Speak up!!
- Develop strategies and supports by yourself or with others who need the same services. When services don't exist, develop a system of strategies and supports by yourself or with other parents or advocates needing the same services.

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***“Are we lost?” Milo asked.***

***“...I know one thing for certain; it's much harder to tell whether you are lost than if you were lost, for, on many occasions where you're going is exactly where you are. On the other hand you often find that where you've been is not at all where you should have gone, and since it is much more difficult to find your way back from somewhere you've never left, I suggest you go there immediately and then decide.”***

***- The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster, 1989***

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Sometimes this is how it feels for families when we try to make sense of adult services. Yes, we are lost!! To help us 'find our way', let's identify a number of adult agencies and organizations that offer services and programs to young adults with disabilities. Here are some brief descriptions of some of the adult service providers that exist. There may be others. Please do some research on your own in your own community.

### **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)**

The mission of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment. VR services help people with disabilities prepare for work and find a job so they can live more independently.

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS (IL CENTERS)**

The general mission of Utah's Independent Living Centers is to assist persons with disabilities achieve greater independence. They are located in six communities. Each serves a region of the state. Generally, services and programs are similar, but may vary. The six centers are located in the following communities: Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake City, Provo, Price, and St. George. Satellite offices are located in other communities. Contact the Center closest to you for information about their programs and services.

### **THE DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (DSPD)**

The mission of the DSPD is to promote opportunities and provide supports for persons with disabilities so that they will have every opportunity to participate fully in Utah life. DSPD serves people with severe or chronic disabilities caused by intellectual or physical impairments, or a combination of impairments, which are likely to continue, resulting in substantial limitations in three or more major life activities.

### **THE DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Division of Mental Health is part of the Utah State Department of Human Services. Their mission is to make mental health services available to the citizens of Utah. There are local offices of the Division of Mental Health throughout the state of Utah. Services may vary in the various community mental health centers.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is one of the disability programs directed by the Social Security Administration. To get SSI, you must be 65 or older, or blind, or disabled. Children as well as adults can receive benefits, but the Social Security Administration considers the family's income and assets. When a person turns 18 years old, the family's income is no longer considered.

### **SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OFFICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Individuals with disabilities will want to find out about disability-related support services and classroom accommodations available at colleges and universities they are interested in attending. According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, an institution of higher education receiving federal funds may not exclude an individual from participation in or deny them the benefits of any program or activity offered solely because that individual has a disability. Nearly all post-secondary institutions receive federal financial assistance. Most colleges and universities have Disability Resource Centers to assist students with disabilities.

### **VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS**

Vocational and technical schools are designed to prepare students for gainful employment in recognized occupations such as technician, bank teller, dental assistant, data processor, electrician, etc. Vocational training is provided so that an individual can obtain skills in a specific area of interest or increase the level of skills they have already achieved. A course of study may take anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 years to complete, with the general entrance requirement of a high school diploma, or satisfactory equivalent. These schools place great importance on placement of their graduates.

### **ADULT EDUCATION**

Adult education programs are designed to provide instruction below the college level to any person 16 years of age or older who is no longer being served by the public education system. There are many different programs available in a variety of settings. In many states, local applied technology centers operate as part of the public school system. Secondary students may receive instruction there during the day while instruction for adults in the community is available at night.

### **DISABILITY SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS**

Organizations such as the Brain Injury Association of Utah (BIAU), Learning Disabilities Association of Utah (LDAU), CHADD of Utah, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Utah (NAMI Utah) and others serving people with a specific disability often provide information and some also provide vocational assessment and training. The types of training provided may vary, but the goals of the training are usually the same: the individuals with disabilities will obtain employment and become as independent as possible. Some of them also provide support services. The Family to Family network provides support for all disabilities.

### **PRIVATE PROVIDERS**

Private providers operate in many different ways. Some of them receive public funding. Many different services are provided to the community through private providers. Some may receive public funding. One example in Utah is Scenic View in Provo which works with young adults to learn skills for employment.

*This content is taken from the Utah Parent Center handbook:  
From NO Where to KNOW Where: A Parent Handbook for the Transition to Adult Life.*