



MAPPING YOUR DREAMS: EMPLOYMENT

Elisa always loved books as a young child one of her favorite activities was to be read to before bed. She likes to be around people, but she is shy around people she does not know.

Elisa works in her high school library and has completed a short training program in library science as part of her Transition Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan. As one of her IEP activities Elisa visited the local WorkForce Center with her parents and brother. They learned how to use the computer to do a job search and print out the results.

The search identified a job opening in a nearby library. Elisa was very excited about the opportunity to work in a place filled with great books! On the way home the family stopped at the library and picked up an application for Elisa to fill out in her employment class the next day at school.

She practiced interviewing with her mother. Her hard work and dedication paid off, Elisa now has her first job in the city library on weekends!

TRANSITION TIPS: PLANNING FOR YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

The transition your son or daughter will make from being a child to being an adult member of the community is a long journey. This journey can be difficult for anyone, but for your child with disabilities, determining where to go, the best way to arrive there, and then completing the journey can be especially challenging. This is why it is so important for you to think about, as early as possible, the important transitions your child will need to make and to develop a plan. Take the ideas in this handout to your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting when you start talking about transition. This handout may help your IEP team generate other ideas about the transition to adulthood that apply specifically to your child.

With your encouragement and careful planning, you can help pave the way for your child to go where he or she wants to go!

THE TRANSITION TO... EMPLOYMENT

Finding a job, interviewing, and heading off to work everyday may seem like very distant goals for your child right now; however preparing for a future career starts early in a child's life and happens in many different ways. Exploring a variety of jobs as a student will help your child be better prepared to decide on a career path and eventually be successful at work.

Encourage your son or daughter to think about jobs he or she would like and help him or her to develop a sense of responsibility by giving them household chores. Talk about different careers

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230 West 200 South, Suite 1101

Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1337

801-272-1051 or 800-468-1160

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when you see people working-at the grocery store, near an office building, and when passing a fire truck. Remind your child of all of the people needed to have one job done-for example, for a person to be able to buy bread in the grocery store, someone needs to bake it, slice it, bag it, put a price tag on it, and deliver it to the store where it needs to be put on the shelf.

By showing your child how many people are involved in different jobs, you keep your child's mind open to all of the career opportunities and possibilities!

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

The first step in thinking about your son or daughter's future transition to employment is to consider the different employment possibilities, as well as your child's interests and abilities.

Write down the tasks, responsibilities, and interests your son or daughter has at home, in school, or in the community-those skills can help define a career.

Don't worry if your child has trouble identifying what interests him or her. Think about the connections you have in the community. Talk to your local baker about showing your child how to make bread and run a business. Ask your friend if he could take your child to work and talk about operating the computers. Volunteer to go with your child to help out if a problem arises. These experiences will give your child ideas. Keep in mind your child's abilities, strengths, and needs:

- Interpersonal skills: attitude, cooperation and teamwork, and communication skills. Look at how a student interacts at home with the family, with people in the community, with peers at school, and with teachers and employers.
- Perceptual skills: ability to judge where, how, and if things fit together.
- Work aptitudes: ability to remember and follow instructions and procedures, ability to plan, organize, and improve with practice.
- Work behaviors: ability to concentrate and stay on a task, and motivation.
- Interests: personal goals and interests, hobbies, leisure time activities, academics, favorite and least favorite subjects
- Cognitive skills: reading and math skills, concept formation, thinking style, and problem-solving abilities.
- Motor Skills: using one's hands, eye/hand coordination, fine motor skills, mobility.
- Ask school guidance counselors, religious leaders or friends about job shadowing and internship opportunities for youth.
- Talk with your child about his or her dreams. Help them ask and answer questions, such as:
 - What am I good at?
 - What is hard for me?
 - What do I like to do?
 - What makes learning easy for me?

As part of his or her education, your child should have a vocational evaluation, which helps to determine the types of jobs that fit your son or daughter's aptitudes the best. The results of a vocational evaluation will help you develop specific goals that will be incorporated in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP).

For some individuals, job shadowing or internships may be more helpful than a vocational evaluation because they learn by doing or watching someone else. As part of the transition assessment in the IEP, schools also conduct transition surveys and interviews for students to help identify skills and interests.

SET YOUR DESTINATION AND MAP A COURSE

Before you start any journey, it is important to have a good idea of where you are trying to go. When you are planning for a transition into employment, try to set clear and specific goals.

For example, if your son expresses interest in working at a nearby YMCA, call and find out what jobs are available. Talk those over with him to determine which jobs would be best suited for his abilities and interests. Then, with that "destination" in mind, find ways for your child to learn the skills needed for that job. Tell your child it's okay to change the destination and select a different job-many people change careers several times in their lives.

Your child can always try different careers by volunteering at several different places. Volunteering allows your child to experience the job, develop a routine, and learn about responsibility. Also, volunteer jobs sometimes lead to part-time or full-time jobs.

Once you have a good idea of the future employment goals, you can develop a plan for how to achieve them. The plan will need to address questions like:

- How can we provide support for my son's needs?
- What support services will my daughter need? (i.e. workplace accommodations, transportation, technology, etc.)
- How can my son obtain the training he needs?
- How can my daughter receive the job placement services she needs?

As you map your course, you may want to set smaller goals along the way:

- Find out if your son can volunteer at a possible place of employment.
- Encourage your daughter to seek summer employment to develop work experiences and history.
- Consider specific classes that will give your son or daughter appropriate skills.

Think creatively about your child's interests. If your child talks about being a professional football player, find out if he or she can volunteer at the local football stadium. Perhaps being a cross-country truck driver is not feasible but working at a truck stop fulfills your child's interest in trucks. Maybe your child has always talked about being a novelist, so look for a part-time job in a bookstore that brings in local writers to read from their books. Keep in mind that your child's interest in an area increases the likelihood of success.

RESOURCES THAT WILL HELP YOU REACH YOUR GOALS

There are many different resources available to help you plan for your son or daughter's future:

- Career guidance: Most schools have guidance counselors and access to computerized career information.
- WorkForce Centers: These centers are designed to provide job training, education, and employment services at a single neighborhood location.

- **Rehabilitation Services (RS):** Most of these services can be found at the WorkForce Center. A counselor may be able to provide information on the current job market, referrals, job coaching, and partial funding for assessments or assistive technology. For more information, call 801-526-9675 or visit www.jobs.utah.gov.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** SSI provides monthly payments to persons who have disabilities and have limited income and resources, and may offer financial support while your child finds employment or works part-time.
- **Medicaid:** Also called Medical Assistance, Medicaid is a government-run health insurance program that can pay health care expenses such as doctor appointments, therapy, hospitalization, prescription drugs, and personal care assistance.
- **Friends and relatives:** People close to you can also be good resources for finding a job. The most important tool you have in helping your child find a job is networking.
- **Utah State Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (USDBVI):** USDBVI provides services for persons who are blind or are visually impaired by fostering the achievement of vocational and independence goals. For more information on USDBVI at 801-323-4343.
- **Disability Law Center (DLC):** A free advocacy program ensures that people with disabilities receive the vocational services they are entitled to by law. Call the DLC at 801-363-1347 or 800-662-9080 or visit www.disabilitylawcenter.org.
- **Social Security Administration (SSA):** They provide programs that promote independence, productivity, and community inclusion, as well as services, such as semi-independent living services and medical assistance. Call 801-524-4115 or visit www.ssa.gov.
- Your county department of human services is under your county listing in the government section of the phone book. Call the Utah Department of Human Services at 801-538-4001 or visit www.dhs.utah.gov.

OTHER RESOURCES

- **UTAH PARENT CENTER**
801-272-1051 or 800-468-1160
www.utahparentcenter.org
Contact for a list of disability-specific organizations.
- **DISABILITY LAW CENTER**
801-363-1347 or 800-662-9080
www.disabilitylawcenter.org
- **UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**
801-538-7500
www.schools.utah.gov

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