



**Utah Parent Center**  
Special needs, extraordinary potential

## Career Guidance and Exploration

# Career Guidance and Exploration in Action

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Research over the past 20 years indicates that parents play a major role in raising career aspirations for their sons and daughters. Without parental approval or support, teens are less likely to pursue diverse career possibilities. It's important for parents to learn about the many opportunities in today's schools to help students prepare for careers and postsecondary education. Parents can provide support to their teen as they begin the career development process.

There are many ways that parents contribute to their teen's early career development. Parents are often the primary source of their teen's work values and attitudes.

- Career decision-making skills have been linked to early childhood experiences, family attitudes and practices regarding careers, and role modeling by parents.
- Parent expectations and support contributes significantly in helping their teen have the maturity to make career decisions.

Many school counselors have reported that if parents participate in the decision-making process for selecting courses, students will choose a more rigorous curriculum. Many parents are not aware of graduation requirements or what classes will benefit students in terms of career options. Take this opportunity to learn more about your teen's career interests by becoming familiar with career assessments used in schools and the importance of career and education plans.

The best way to begin career exploration with your teen is by talking about your own career. What do you do in your job? What decisions did you make that led you to this point in your career? Teens aren't always overly interested when parents begin to share their wisdom with them. As a parent, you want to help guide your teen as much as possible when making decisions that will impact their careers, but the questions are, "When do I begin?" and "How much do I offer?" There are many critical points where your teen will need your assistance.

Parents have daily contact with their child and are experts in the area of what makes their child unique. Their guidance and encouragement can make a significant difference in their child's career success. Parents of students with disabilities should:

- Pay close attention to their child's skills and interests;
- Provide opportunities for the child to make choices and practice self-determination skills;
- Provide opportunities for the child to experience work settings;
- Provide disability-specific and career-specific information;

## Utah Parent Center

230 West 200 South  
Suite 1101  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101  
801.272.1051  
1.800.468.1160  
info@utahparentcenter.org  
www.utahparentcenter.org

- Make use of community connections and resources;
- Encourage their child to dream and to plan;
- Participate in services, trainings, and workshops on career guidance that improve their ability to support the child in this process;
- Connect with peers, friends, community, agencies, and professionals in career guidance.

The career decision-making process described below includes activities that can begin in middle school and continue into high school and postsecondary education.

### **Step 1- Learn More About Your Teen.**

Encourage your teen to take interest and ability assessments. These are available at [www.utahfutures.org](http://www.utahfutures.org) or career assessments can be provided through Vocational Rehabilitation. Talk to your VR Transition Counselor. Review the results of the assessments with your teen. Discuss his/her interests and dreams to help determine goals for the future.

### **Step 2 – Identify Some Possibilities.**

Help your teen explore a wide range of occupations in a variety of areas that match the results of his/ her assessments. Look at what postsecondary opportunities are available for a particular career. Careers may need further training from colleges, community colleges, technical centers, the military, apprenticeships or on-the-job training.

### **Step 3 – Evaluate Your Teen’s Options.**

You and your teen may also want to consider lifestyle implications and the overall impact on life for each option. For instance, will the job require irregular hours? Will the salary support the lifestyle your teen wants? How much education does the occupation require? It’s important for your teen to understand the relationship between lifestyle, occupational choice, and educational pursuits. Help your teen understand and balance the difference between wants and needs.

### **Step 4 – Decide How Youth Will Gain Experience**

Youth with disabilities may need hands-on experience to know what careers they would be interested in. Look at high school courses of study, volunteering, job shadowing, workplace visits and tours, guest speakers and employer presentations, internships, interviewing employed individuals in a career area and job fairs. Job shadowing is an activity in which youth gain an up-close look at the world of work by accompanying a professional in the workplace as they do their job.

### **Step 5 – Take Action**

Meet with the IEP Team to discuss IEP Goals and how the team can include workplace experiences that allow the student to learn about employment settings and vocational opportunities. IEPs can include specific plans for developing or strengthening self-determination skills. Community professionals, such as vocational rehabilitation counselors, postsecondary education representatives, DSPD providers and others can be invited to attend the IEP Meeting and participate in the planning process. Interagency collaboration can make students’ transition experiences more successful and less frustrating.

*NCSET Topic on Career Guidance & Exploration retrieved from [www.ncset.org/topics/career/faqs.asp?topic=1](http://www.ncset.org/topics/career/faqs.asp?topic=1) July 17, 2013*

*NCWD/Youth Brief, "Career Exploration in Action: An Innovative Strategies," retrieved from [www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies/practice-briefs/career-exploration-in-action](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/innovative-strategies/practice-briefs/career-exploration-in-action) , July 17, 2013*