



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

## Family Roles in the Transition from School to Work

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The following are suggestions of things parents can do to help their sons and daughters in planning and preparing for college and careers:

- Listen and support your child when discussing their interests and future goals, even if their ideas may seem unrealistic
- Provide early career exploration activities such as opportunities to visit and discuss a variety of job/career opportunities through family outings, job shadowing experiences with family, relatives and friends
- Emphasize through family and home activities the basic skills needed to succeed in school and the workplace such as: organization, decision-making, time management, problem-solving, and getting along with others
- Monitor school assignments and capture opportunities to relate skills to the world of work and adult roles and responsibilities such as: relating math skills to budgeting; relating written and oral language assignments to interacting with employers, co-workers, the public; relating research assignments to collecting information that help make informed decisions
- Encourage career-related activities during your child's spare time such as volunteering at a hospital or a veterinary clinic, baby-sitting, odd jobs in the neighborhood
- Communicate openly and often with your child's teacher; ask how school work can be coordinated with the home; work together to resolve problems when they arise; help create a system of regular communication not just when bad things happen (phone call schedule, e-mail, notes, etc.)
- Build a relationship with your child's career or guidance counselor or transition specialist; ask for career information
- Be available for visits or phone calls from your child's employer; if appropriate offer to provide firsthand information or suggestions that may be helpful on the job
- During transition planning meetings provide the team with information regarding your child's skills and behaviors at home, past experiences, and dreams and goals for your child
- During transition planning meetings ask questions of teachers, counselors and your son or daughter regarding education and career options, labor market trends, community resources, specific family and student preferences and realities

- Encourage your child to be a major player on the planning team and to talk about their interests, dreams and goals

The National School to Work Information and Learning Center (1996) identified effective features of transition programs for students with disabilities that families can look for:

- Longitudinal Planning - beginning at age 14, students with disabilities begin looking ahead and making long-term plans which will facilitate their transition from school to adult life, which may include college, advanced technical skill training, or direct entry into employment
- Emphasizing Careers, Not Labels - the individualized assessment and planning of students should lead to placement according to the student's interests and preferences, not according to expectations based on "labels" or by what is available in the community
- Work-Based Learning - many opportunities are available for real exploration and experiences in the world of work, including job-shadowing, internships and paid work experiences.
- Connection to Community Resources - linkages are needed with community and adult services so that all aspects of a student's life are considered including independent living skills and arrangements, family and community interactions, all of which impact on a successful transition
- Sustained Involvement of Employers - true Business/Education Partnerships where employers are part of the transition planning and training process, system-wide and on an individual basis, lead to a sustained investment by employers where they benefit directly from the partnership and work experiences.

To help ensure that youth with disabilities were served through inclusive School-to-Work Opportunities Act programs, the following strategies were identified:

- Full participation of the student with disabilities in the planning and decision-making process with a focus on the student's preferences.
- Full integration of youth with disabilities into the school-to-work system rather than a separate, set-aside programs.
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the members of the IEP and transition planning team including students, parents, teachers, counselors, and service providers.
- Continuous communication between members of the IEP and transition planning team.
- Employment of a Transition Specialist who can provide career guidance and counseling to students as well as assist employers, teachers and parents plan and implement strategies for assisting youth with disabilities.
- Emphasis on long-term planning and future workforce demands, as opposed to one-year program planning and current job availability.

- Providing the same school-to-work opportunities and options for all students, including students with disabilities, while holding all students to the same high standards.
- Providing opportunities for students with disabilities to build the social and interpersonal skills needed to become fully integrated into the world of work and the community.

The Partners for Independence Project, a project of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) in Virginia originally prepared this information. The TATRA Project provided PEATC with additional resources to develop their expertise on School to Work issues. To access additional online information produced by PEATC's Partners for Independence project go to [www.peatc.org/helpfulinfo.htm#Transitioning](http://www.peatc.org/helpfulinfo.htm#Transitioning)