



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

## Preparing for Independent Living

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Samantha cuts food coupons from the Sunday paper to fulfill an activity listed on her Transition Individualized Education Program (IEP) for home living. Samantha's mother helps her sort the coupons by food type, insert them in labeled envelopes, and decide which ones will be used at the grocery store.

Samantha's father cooks the evening meal. He loves to cook and enjoys sharing his interest with Samantha. She loves this special time with her father. He has expanded the listed IEP activities by making recipe cards for easy-to-cook meals. Samantha is learning how to follow directions by preparing balanced meals with her father.

Samantha is in charge of choosing the recipe card each night and helping her father purchase the ingredients. She has to make sure that the ingredients are in the house before she starts cooking!

So far, her favorite meal is vegetable kabobs and rice.

### 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 Independent Living

It may be difficult to imagine your child living on his or her own - after all, he or she has been under your roof for so long! However, the skills you teach now will help your child to be confident and capable of living as independently as possible.

Remember that preparing for independent living means more than simply finding a place to live. Independent living takes into account: transportation, self-advocacy, financial management, and medical and support services as needed. Your child can develop independent skills in one, some, or all of these areas.

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## Explore Your Options

You and your son or daughter will need to evaluate the areas in which he or she can be and wants to be independent. Consider these areas in your discussion:

- Daily living skills: cooking, cleaning, shopping, personal hygiene
- Transportation: public, specialized, driver's license
- Housing opportunities: apartment, group home, subsidized housing
- Self-advocacy: decision making, rights and responsibilities, knowledge of disability, knowledge of available resources
- Financial: bank account, making purchases, paying bills, insurance, Supplemental Security Income
- Medical and Support Services: personal care services, doctor appointments, adaptive equipment, counseling, Medical Assistance

Since housing is such a big part of home living, you and your son or daughter should discuss all the possibilities:

- Living at home: Your son or daughter can still be somewhat independent in this situation. Families can set household rules and responsibilities for every member in the household.
- Living in an apartment: If your son or daughter rents, he or she will most likely not be responsible for the maintenance of the yard or building but also not be able to make many changes to the living space.
- Living in a house: If your son or daughter buys a house, he or she will be responsible for all maintenance and repairs, but there is often more living space and more freedom to change the property.
- Subsidized housing: Section Eight is a subsidized housing program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that allows individuals to make reduced rent payments and the government pays the remainder of the rent. This is a good option for someone on a fixed income.

If your son or daughter needs ongoing support to live in the community, options through county case management services should be explored. Semi Independent Living Services (SILS) or Supported Living Services (SLS) can help individuals with disabilities live in a less restrictive community setting.

- Group homes: This is a place where small groups of people with disabilities live together, and usually an organization manages the group home and hires staff to oversee activities of the residents.
- Living alone with support services: Usually a rental situation, this option allows for independent living with support staff.

## Set Your Destination and Map a Course

Once your child understands the different aspects of independent living, decide which skills are important for your child. You can practice many of these skills while your child lives at your home.

By offering opportunities for your child to try these activities, he or she will understand a little of what it is like to live independently. These experiences will help him or her after high school.

Involve your child in the many activities and planning required to run your household, go to work, and live independently:

- Ask your child to help with the cooking, cleaning, and shopping.
- Talk to your child about the importance of personal hygiene and show him or her your routine before work.
- Take your child to the bank to open a checking account, write a check, deposit money, and withdraw cash.
- Help or have your child schedule a doctor's appointment and write down any medical or health questions to ask the doctor.
- Obtain a copy of an apartment application and show your child how to fill out the form.
- Show your child how to read a bus schedule and take a trip to the store.
- Discuss what to do in emergency situations and who to call for help.
- Visit other young adults in their group home, apartment, or other living arrangements to see what challenges lie ahead.
- Talk to your child's teachers and guidance counselor about teaching home living skills in your child's education program.

## **Resources that Will Help You Reach Your Goals**

Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to advocate for the independent needs of people with disabilities, to identify and provide access to existing resources, to provide peer support, and to offer opportunities for people with disabilities to acquire the necessary skills to become more independent.

The centers offer specific services for students making the transition from school to work. These services include workshops on:

- Self-advocacy
- Assertiveness
- The legislative process (i.e., voting process, speaking with legislators, etc.)
- Cooking and nutrition
- IEP assistance
- One-on-one skill development
- Independent living skill assessments
- Accessing transportation systems

There are 12 Independent Living Center branches in Utah. For information on the closest one to you, please call 801-466-5565.

**RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSITION, PARENT AND STUDENT RIGHTS  
AND PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS:**

**UTAH PARENT CENTER**

801-272-1051 or 800-468-1160

[www.utahparentcenter.org](http://www.utahparentcenter.org)

Contact for a list of disability-specific organizations.

**DISABILITY LAW CENTER**

801-363-1347 or 800-662-9080

[www.disabilitylawcenter.org](http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org)

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

801-538-7500

[www.schools.utah.gov](http://www.schools.utah.gov)