



**Utah
Parent
Center**

**Special needs,
extraordinary potential**

Preparing Youth with Disabilities For Post-Secondary Education

Youth and young adults with disabilities have many options for beginning the adventures of lifelong learning. Early preparation can help your youth more easily access and succeed in the programs of choice. What can parents and youth do to prepare for education after high school? Here are some ideas.

Begin Early

Success begins with planning and skill building while in high school or even earlier. All students should begin planning for college at an early age. Tips to consider:

- Help your student to see how the skills that are being developed will lead to success in college and lifelong learning. For example, if you are teaching your student about how and when to disclose having a disability, point out that proper disclosure of the disability will help in receiving the accommodations needed in college or employment.
- Involve your IEP team as much as possible during the junior high and high school years to target and teach the skills that will be needed to be successful with lifelong learning goals.
- Know about the series of events that need to take place for your student to attend a college or university programs.

Resources:

College Planning Timeline: https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/TCTP%20timeline_portrait_F3.pdf

Think College Interactive Family Planning Modules: <https://thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn/families-0>

Develop a Vision

Share the vision that further education is possible for your youth! One of the best

gifts we can give our children with disabilities as parents is to have high expectations. Do not underestimate the abilities of people with disabilities. Tips to consider:

- Communicate that despite the presence of a disability, going to college or pursuing lifelong learning is an option. Start talking about going to college and lifelong learning when your son or daughter is young.
- Talk about specific colleges and programs. Help the student create a vision of attending college.
- Help the student see that college is a way of exploring his or her own interests and reaching goals. When the vision belongs to the student and the student is motivated, great things can happen.

Resources:

Watch *Rethinking College*, the film by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) about college students with intellectual disability. This film was made by [Think College](https://thinkcollege.net/resources/rethinking-college), a national project based at the ICI.: <https://thinkcollege.net/resources/rethinking-college>

Enlist the School Team

School team members can be your best partners in helping your student prepare for lifelong learning. Share the student's vision with everyone on the IEP team.

Tips to consider:

- The student's vision should become part of the measurable post-secondary goals on the IEP.
- IEP team members can help develop a school program that will prepare the student with the skills needed to achieve goals for lifelong learning. For example, a student who plans to attend a university and who struggles with organization could have an IEP goal to write all homework assignments in a planner daily with 80% accuracy over a three week trial period. The special education team could then support the student in achieving this goal.
- The IEP team should consider graduation and diploma options and have a plan in place for how the student can choose courses and achieve graduation goals.
- School counselors can be a great help in exploring college options and requirements, contacting disability service centers at the college or university, finding funding options and much more.
- Students may be able to start taking college level courses while still in

high school.

- Students with IEPs and Section 504 plans should have equal access and opportunities to take rigorous college preparation courses such as honors classes, AP classes, Technical Education classes, Concurrent Enrollment Classes and other rigorous courses available to all students in the school. Explore all the options available at your school.

Resources:

Ideas for Transition Goals for IEP Teams to Consider: <https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/Transition%20Plan%20Goal%20Areas%20Tables-%20Karla%20Wade.pdf>

UPC Transition to Adult Life Handbook: <http://www.utahparentcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/From-No-Where-to-Know-Where-Transition-to-Adult-Handbook-20131.pdf>

Article on Graduation Requirements and Diploma options for students with disabilities. <https://www.dol.gov/odep/ietoolkit/publications/375.pdf>

Enlist Service Providers

Be sure to find out what other service providers involved in the IEP process, can bring to your student. Also consider how others in the student's circle of support could help. Tips to consider.

- A DSPD support coordinator might be able to arrange needed supports for the student.
- The vocational rehabilitation counselor might help with identifying strengths for vocational training and may be able to help with funding of education that will lead to employment.
- Talk to close family members and friends to see what kinds of support they can offer your student during the transition from high school to other types of learning. Sometimes it can help youth to hear things from the perspective of someone other than Mom and Dad.
- If you are having trouble locating other resources and supports, don't hesitate to call the Utah Parent Center for support and help.

Resources:

Services for People With Disabilities (DSPD): <https://dspd.utah.gov/>

What is Vocational Rehabilitation?: <http://www.utahparentcenter.org/wp-content/>

[uploads/2016/07/What-is-Vocational-Rehabilitation.pdf](#)

Make your Young Adult Responsible

To the extent possible, put your student in charge. Give him or her opportunities to make choices, solve problems, take responsibility and experience the consequences. If youth never have opportunities to practice these skills in the real world, then they will never learn how to do these things in a responsible way. As adults they will be choosing the options they want to pursue, so as parents we must ensure they gain the skills needed while they are young. Consider these tips:

- Any independent living skills youth learn while still in school will help them to succeed. Even simple things like giving them responsibilities and choices around the house will help these skills develop.
- Letting youth speak for themselves and participate in the IEP process is another great way to help foster these skills.
- As youth look at education programs for after high school, make sure they have the option of choosing the classes that really reflect their interests, desires and goals. If they are not sure what they want, there are many interest inventories to help them figure out their interests and preferences and what types of programs and classes might be a good fit for them. Some of them are designed for students with disabilities. Find out what is available at your student's school. This could be brought during transition planning.
- Parents often have safety concerns regarding their young adult with disabilities as they learn to become more independent. Many young adults for example need to learn basic things like safely using public transportation or basic uses of money in order to be safe in different types of settings. Utilize resources like the Independent Living Centers to help your young adult learn needed independent living skills. Your IEP team can also support your young adult work towards important safety goals.

Resources:

Utah futures, a website that assists youth and their families to do their own planning: <https://www.utahfutures.org/>

Making My Way Through College, A Student Planning Guide: <https://www.lorainccc.edu/disability-services/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2016/06/Making-My-Way-through-College-FINAL-1.pdf>

Utah's Independent Living Centers offers a variety of classes and other services to help young adults and adults with disabilities to learn independent living skills.

For a list of all the Centers, visit: <http://www.utahparentcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Independent-Living-Centers-of-Utah.pdf>

Enjoy the Ride

Lifelong learning is exciting, so enjoy the ride. Enjoy seeing your son or daughter grow and accomplish things you may not have dreamed of. Sure there will be ups and downs—that is normal for all of us. Your role as a parent will be different, but that does not mean you will be any less important in the life of your young adult. Sometimes it may seem scary as you approach the unknown, but you and your young adult will embark on a new journey in life that will be full of adventure and new learning horizons. Take in the journey and enjoy the ride!

Resources:

The Changing Roles of Families Video and Article: <https://thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn/families/families-changing-role-families>