



TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION: EXPLORING NEXT STEPS IN EMPLOYMENT OR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

With funding from NYS' Family to Family Health Care Information Center, the information included in this publication has been developed to assist families and youth with special health care needs and disabilities.

Taking responsibility, and being able to advocate for one's own future education and employment will be different for each person. For everyone, ***self-direction and autonomy*** are desired outcomes.

For parents caring for a child and advocating for their child's needs and education, it is a shift to be guiding a teen or young adult as they move through adolescence towards more independence. Crucial to this is ***respecting and supporting an individual's decisions*** regarding their future employment or education.

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Parent to Parent of NYS supports and connects families of individuals with disabilities and special health care needs.

Every day, the organization hears from caring families and the professionals who support them. For more information about health care and transition to adulthood or for assistance with other issues impacting families, please contact us. Contact information is included at the end of this booklet.

Janice Fitzgerald, Executive Director

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TIPS FOR STUDENTS CONSIDERING COLLEGE, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING, OR TRADE SCHOOL

As a young adult with chronic health care needs or a disability explores attending college, post-secondary education or training, or a trade school, it is important to realize that it is you, the student, who must take the lead to request support and assistance. ***Colleges, post-secondary education or training programs, and trade schools communicate with students, not with parents and caregivers.*** This is part of maturing and being responsible for one's own needs. Using the last years of high school to prepare for this transition will help ensure success.

The following are tips to get ready for next steps.

- Actively participate in Committee on Special Education (CSE) and 504 Plan meetings.
 - ✓ If you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), make sure it is getting you where you want to go.
 - ✓ If you have a 504 Plan due to a medically documented mental or physical condition (not a learning disability) that affects your learning, make sure it includes specific classroom and testing accommodations designed to assist you to perform to the best of your ability. A 504 Plan is enacted by the school to ensure that your learning is affected as minimally as possible by your particular medical disorder.
- Build a team using available resources. Ask the team to help you get where you want to go.
- Make sure that by age 15 your IEP includes a transitional goal of attending college or a post-secondary education or training program, or a trade school, and the activities needed to reach this goal.
- Consider making a referral to New York State's Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) office no later than the first semester of your junior year in high school. ACCES-VR will need time to determine if you are eligible and can benefit from ACCES-VR services. *Important Note: ACCES-VR was formerly known as VESID.*
- Add your ACCES-VR counselor to your team.

- Understand the requirements of the diploma type you are seeking (IEP, Local, or Regents). Be sure that the high school program is preparing you for the necessary college admission, post-secondary education or training program, or trade school requirements. Ask your guidance counselor to help with this.

Preparing to Go to College

- Prepare for college entrance exams by taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and the PLAN Test (ACT preparation).
- The high school guidance office should be able to provide information about requesting reasonable accommodations needed to take college entrance exams (SAT,ACT) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Plan ahead, as documentation of the specific accommodation is required by the testing service up to one year in advance. The testing service may deny the accommodation if documentation is not sufficient to support the request. File the request early so there is time to appeal a decision if needed.
- Explore possible college curriculums and career options and the requirements for pursuing a particular course of study. Guidance counselors should be able to assist.
- Be realistic about the demands of college because services for students with disabilities vary widely. Seek a college that best fits your needs.
- Ask questions such as: What services are available to students with disabilities? With reasonable accommodations is it possible to be successful? If necessary, is additional time allowed to complete the degree, program, or trade training of my choice?

Deciding on a College, Post-secondary Education or Training Program, or Trade School

- Visit the site before applying. A visit in person will give a better perspective of the campus or building.
- Use the visit to a campus or building as an opportunity to foster peer relationships. Connections can help develop peer support and assistance. Ask current students questions such as: "What do you like about the college or program?"; "What has been the hardest adjustment?".

- Schedule an appointment to visit the office that oversees assistance for students with disabilities at the college, program or trade school being considered. Ask questions about accessibility, reasonable accommodations, documents required to substantiate a disability and the need for academic adjustments, health services, and student life activities. Two important questions to ask: "When is staff responsible for handling the needs of a student with a disability available?"; and "Is backup staff available?".

Seeking Reasonable Accommodations

- Decide what to disclose about your disability and the need for accommodations. This may be shared at the time of visits, on applications, or after acceptance. Provide clear and concise information. Documentation may include an IEP, a 504 Plan, the Student Exit Summary; relevant medical, psychological, and academic reports; and, anything else that explains your specific needs as related to your disability.
- Examine individual situations to determine the approach that is in your best interest and what the administration needs to know to arrange reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments. Remember that it takes time to put modifications and assistive technology into place and it is your responsibility to provide necessary documentation in a timely manner.
- If you are disclosing information related to your disability, you must self-identify to appropriate personnel and professors or instructors. Each institution has a process for this. Keep copies of your disclosure attestation, the records provided to document your disability, and your requests for reasonable accommodations.
- Stay in contact with the office that oversees accommodations for students with disabilities and let them know what is working successfully. Seek assistance early if any accommodations are not working.
- For those with chronic medical conditions, make key people (e.g., Residence Advisor, roommate, professor, instructor, classmate, on-site nurse) aware of your medical condition and your needs during an emergency.
- Consider carrying a portable health document that includes important health and medical information.
- Based on your medical condition, identify a local physician and, if necessary, a vendor for medical equipment and supplies. Arrange for personal care assistance and/or visiting nursing services through a local agency. Your current physician may be able to help with a referral to a physician where you are attending school.

Helpful links:

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/> Heath Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center. An online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities.

<http://www.thinkcollege.net/> Doors to colleges are opening for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in many different ways all over the country. This website is designed to share what is currently going on, provide resources and strategies

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html> Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

<http://www.transitiontocollege.net/resources.html>

This website is sponsored by the Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC) project, which is coordinated by TransCen, Inc.

<http://healthytransitionsny.org/site/view/152>

HealthyTransitionsNY.org teaches skills and provides tools for care coordination, keeping a health summary, and setting priorities during the transition process. It features video vignettes that demonstrate health transition skills and interactive tools that foster self determination and collaboration.



FACTS TO BE AWARE OF WHEN CONSIDERING COLLEGE, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING OR TRADE SCHOOL

Facts for Students with Disabilities or Chronic Health Care Needs

Congratulations on choosing to continue your education or training! For high school students with disabilities or chronic health care needs there is a lot to consider when making plans to go to college, to a post-secondary education or training program or to a trade school.

WHAT CHANGES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides for individualized, special education plans, does not apply to post-secondary institutions (colleges, universities, education and training programs, trade schools, etc.).
- There are no Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings after high school.
- There is no requirement that post-secondary institutions provide a "free, appropriate public education." This eliminates the institution's obligation to identify students with disabilities. It places the burden of identifying as a person with a disability on the student, including achieving eligibility for and requesting appropriate accommodations.
- The role of parents/guardians legally changes when a student reaches adulthood (legally at age 18).

WHAT LEGAL PROTECTIONS DO EXIST?

- Most post-secondary institutions are obligated under Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that for qualified individuals there is no discrimination on the basis of disability and there is access to all programs, activities and services. These institutions are not required to make modifications or provide accommodations that would create an undue burden on the institution, limit or lower essential requirements, or result in a fundamental alteration of programs, activities and services offered to all.
- The Family Educational Records Privacy Act (FERPA), provides privacy protections at the post-secondary level, even if the student is still a minor. However, under the law, access to information may be granted to parents who document that a student of any age remains a dependent for income tax purposes, or if matters of health and safety are involved, or if a student under the age of 21 commits an alcohol or drug infraction.

A Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) allows a person with a disability to set aside otherwise countable income and/or resources for a specific period of time in order to achieve a work goal.

<http://www.passplan.org/>

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN?

- Students must meet all academic admission, program, and class requirements.
- To access disability related supports and assistance, students must self-disclose and document their disability (at their own cost if necessary).
- Students, not parents, must request and advocate for reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments.
- Colleges are not required to provide personal services to a student. Some institutions and programs may be able to provide these services (often for a fee). This is a crucial issue when comparing the disability-related services available at various colleges, education/training programs and trade schools.
- Students must take responsibility for their own needs related to learning and achieving success.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Check out Parent to Parent's Tip Sheet: "Tips for Students Considering College, Post-Secondary Education, Training or Trade School"

Additional Resources

Joint Guidance on the Application of FERPA and HIPAA to Student Health Records

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-hippa-guidance.pdf>

Going to College: A Website for Teens with Disabilities <http://www.going-to-college.org/>

Transition: Students with Disabilities Preparing for Post-Secondary Education

http://www.ccdanet.org/ecp/resources/transition_postsec_edu/

For Parents: Help your Young Adult Learn to Access Accommodations after High School

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c165.pdf>

Rutgers University - Guide to Disability Laws & College

<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/plans.html>

Auxiliary Aids and Services for Post-Secondary Students with Disabilities

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability-Disability Disclosure

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/topic/disability-disclosure>

The Why, When, What, and How of Disclosure in an Academic Setting, After High School

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/www/wh.htm>



FOSTERING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

Disability Awareness

Now, more than ever people are realizing the importance of respecting the individuality of all people who work for you or with you. The work environment, including offices, cubicles, work stations, conference rooms, elevators, the cafeteria, the courtyard, and washrooms, are places to model, learn and teach disability awareness and etiquette. When we model respect in everyday interactions, employers, and employees see this and learn to value and admire all people for who they are and what they contribute to the job and the company.

The messages that leaders and co-workers convey play an important role in how everyone reacts. The fast pace of today's society, including the media and social networking, bombards everyone with multiple messages. All employers and employees have the potential to model pro-active disability awareness messages for other employees and each other.

Establishing respectful and trusting relationships is fundamental to achieving an appropriate workplace environment for all. People without the experience of living or working with a person with a disability, may not have a frame of reference and may find it awkward or uncomfortable being with a person with disabilities, special health care needs, or who needs accommodations. As an employer and co-worker, creating equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities or chronic health care needs based on respect and understanding is an essential ingredient for their success.

Guiding Principles: Showing Respect and Building Trust

Be Prepared: Prepare for an upcoming project or assignment. If there will be a person with a disability or chronic health care need working for you or with you, prior to the first day of the project or assignment, arrange to meet with the person and their advocate or aide, as appropriate. The discussion should include the person's needs based on the disability, health care, and medical routines, and any accommodations required. Throughout the project or assignment, do the same when a new person with a disability or chronic health care need comes on board.

Maintain Confidentiality: Individuals with disabilities need to be assured that information will only be discussed in appropriate settings with the people who need the information and shared only as necessary.

Acknowledge the Disability: Do not act as if a disability does not exist. Ask clarifying questions. Do whatever you can to limit a person's feelings of isolation and stigma. Treat the person with respect and dignity and expect that others do the same. Define needed support based on the disability but omit the diagnosis (unless absolutely necessary) or "label."

Ask Questions with Sensitivity: Ask only those questions that lead to a greater understanding of the person and the issues related to the disability. Provide assurances to the person that limitations due to the disability are not misunderstood. Listen carefully to statements about medical needs and continue to respect and address stated needs as these arise.

Use "Person First" Language: Language is a powerful tool. Identity is a person's name, not his or her disability. For example, do not identify a person as "the diabetic." Instead, as necessary, refer to the person as "a worker with diabetes." A person's disability does not identify who she is, what she can do, and what she needs. Using "person first" language is a subtle but powerful way to shift the focus from the disability to the employee. Speak about the person first, not the disability or barriers. Place the focus on abilities and achievements.

Use Positive Language: Avoid negative and limiting terms such as “handicapped bathroom” or “confined to a wheelchair.” Use enabling and empowering language, such as “accessible bathroom” and “the person uses a wheelchair.” Set the tone in the workplace and convey a positive message about the acceptance and treatment of employees with disabilities.

Clarify Expectations: Ensure that an employee with a disability is aware of the expectations of the job, including required tasks and responsibilities. Work with the person to provide appropriate consideration to any modifications and accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Provide Adequate Personal Space: Individuals with disabilities who use medical equipment or devices should be given the same personal space as those without disabilities. Mobility or medical equipment are part of the personal body space of the individual who uses it. Respect the need for personal space. Be respectful of a person’s privacy. Expect this of all who interact daily with the employee.

Respect Decisions: How much and when to disclose a disability is up to the person and should be respected by all. The employee and employer should decide how peer awareness and involvement might enhance or detract from the person’s success in the work environment.

Be Aware of Multiple Service Systems: Individuals with disabilities and their families interact with multiple service systems, professionals and agencies. Navigating these systems, with varying terminologies and requirements, can be overwhelming and confusing. Be aware that each system places numerous and conflicting requests and demands upon individuals, multiplying stress levels and anxieties. Keep this in mind when placing expectations on an employee and those that provide support.

Seek Out Proper Medical Advice: Individuals with disabilities and chronic health care needs often have complex medical issues. Assume that specific regimens have been implemented for good reason. Offering your own advice, while well intentioned, can add undue stress and feelings of being misunderstood. Ask questions and enlist the help of trained professionals when medical issues arise.

Offer Objective Observations: Be conscious of what is happening to a person during the entire work day. Communication with on-site medical staff, other professionals, family members, and advocates leads to better care and prevention of complications that could jeopardize completion of the work and alter a person’s employment goals.

Additional Resources

United Spinal Association, 60th Anniversary Special Edition, "Disability Etiquette" Tips On Interacting With People With Disabilities, by Judy Cohen, illustrations by Yvette Silver. www.unitedspinal.org

From University of Northern Iowa: Disability Etiquette
<http://www.uni.edu/equity/DisabilityEtiquette.shtml>



THE WORLD OF WORK

Points for Students to Consider

For all young people, finding and holding a job are important goals for life after completing high school. In general, a career is considered the pursuit of a lifelong ambition and generally requires education and special training. A job is an activity through which a person can earn money. A job may or may not require further education and specialized training.

Some questions people have when considering a career or a job include: *Why do I want to pursue this career or work? Am I qualified to pursue this career or perform this work? If not, what education and training do I need to become qualified? Who can help me be successful? What will success look like for me? Where is the job? How far is the job from my home? What transportation is needed and is it available? What days will I work? How many hours will I work?*

For a young adult with a disability, there are additional areas to consider before building a career, exploring employment opportunities, or taking a job. To achieve success and prepare for the world of work, it is important to ask the following questions and consider particular strategies. Ask questions related to **expectations, reasonable accommodations, disclosure of a disability, special considerations, disability benefits, employee assistance and employment legal rights.**

This guide poses questions and provides strategies to prepare for the world of work, based on individual needs.

1. EXPECTATIONS

How does being a person with a disability affect success in a particular career or job?

- To assess whether success will be possible in a field, learn about the essential functions and required work tasks of the career or job.
- Think about accommodations necessary to perform any of the expected career building skills, job functions, and tasks.
- Decide if any aspects of the career or job cannot be completed, even with accommodations. If so, this may not be the right field to consider.

- Seek out advice about this career or job from professionals such as vocational rehabilitation counselors, occupational therapists, successful people in the field, or staff at an Independent Living Center (ILC).
- Shadow people who are employed in this career or job. This can usually be arranged by a guidance counselor or vocational rehabilitation counselor.
- Ask an employer in the field for an informational interview. This is a step that can be completed before applying for a job. It is an opportunity to ask questions specific to the job expectations. Discussion can include accommodations that the prospective employer is willing to make with a focus on the abilities needed to do the job.

2. REASONABLE ACCOMODATIONS

Reasonable accommodations are considered for individuals who are otherwise qualified to do the job. This means that a person must still have the skills and credentials necessary (diplomas, certifications, training, experience, etc.) to perform all the essential parts of the job in a high quality way within a reasonable amount of time.

What are reasonable accommodations in the workplace?

- A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done. An accommodation enables a qualified individual with a disability to engage in an equal employment opportunity.
- Examples of reasonable accommodation include interpreter services, screen reading software, a quiet location, flexible work hours, additional lighting, having an authorized personal or health assistant at the workplace for a specific need, or assistive equipment such as a different mouse or keyboard.
- Employers are not required to provide accommodations that they consider and document as unreasonable or imposing an undue hardship on the company. These may include accommodations that may possibly interfere with their essential business practices, pose a threat to safety of the person or others, compromise their code of ethics, or may be too costly or burdensome.
- Most accommodations are low or no cost. Employers are required to provide accommodations and pay for them if there is a cost. If you need a particular accommodation, be prepared to discuss it with the employer. You may consider this type of statement "I believe I need an accommodation." Have information about what you need, the cost, and a source for the accommodation (how it can be obtained).

- State vocational rehabilitation agencies may assist in defraying the cost of equipment or work needed to provide reasonable accommodation and information on where and how it can be obtained. This can be discussed with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. A web link to the New York State Education Department, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) is provided at the end of this guide.

Who can be provided reasonable accommodations?

- Reasonable accommodations are provided for people with disabilities who meet eligibility as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), are otherwise qualified for the job, and indicate to the employer a need for an accommodation to perform the essential functions of the job. The request is the responsibility of the job seeker or employee.
- If the job cannot be performed successfully without accommodation, and a disability is not visible, disclosing the disability should be considered. During disclosure, the focus should only be on limitations that are directly related to the job tasks.
- The ADA considers disability as a condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as seeing, learning, walking, speaking, or caring for oneself, and/ or major bodily functions such as breathing, processing nutrition, the immune system, etc.
- A condition that is episodic and/or controlled, such as epilepsy, is also considered a disability if, when active, the substantially limiting standard (as described above) is met.
- An employer has the right to request appropriate documentation of a person's disability to substantiate the need for reasonable accommodation. This is discussed in more detail later in this guide.

3. DISCLOSURE OF A DISABILITY

Disclosure is deciding when, how and what to tell others about a disability. This is a very important decision, especially when considering safety issues for a person with a substantial disability or a severe health condition.

What is necessary to tell an employer about a disability that affects the completion of tasks related to the job?

- A successful way to disclose a disability is to write a script. Have it reviewed by a professional with knowledge of disability and employment issues. Then, practice delivery. It is not necessary to share a diagnosis. Focus on how the disability may impact the ability to do the job. Include information on the type of accommodation

necessary to be productive, where the accommodation may be obtained, and what the cost would be. Being well prepared and versed regarding accommodation needs will impress prospective employers.

- Employers are not allowed by law to ask about a person's disability; however, without disclosure, an employer is not expected to provide accommodations if requested by the employee.
- Employers can state that they are actively looking for a qualified person with a disability to perform a job. This is done by some organizations that are specifically targeting persons who meet certain disability definitions and severity levels. In these cases, disclosure is necessary.
- A person with a disability has the right to request or provide reasonable accommodations for a job interview or an employment test. This also requires disclosure of the disability.
- If disclosure is chosen, an employer must be given a reasonable amount of time to arrange reasonable accommodations.
- If problems arise with performing duties due to a disability that has not been previously disclosed, it may lead to a poor performance evaluation. This can be avoided through disability disclosure and appropriate reasonable accommodations.

What documentation of a disability is needed to support reasonable accommodations in the workplace?

- Provide an employer with medical documentation to support a request for reasonable accommodations specific to job tasks; do not provide more documentation than is necessary.
- An employer is allowed to request medical documentation related to the need for a disability accommodation based on the workplace and job requirements, but not anything else (i.e., they cannot request a full medical history).
- An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan may not be sufficient documentation or appropriate to share with an employer. It may be necessary to obtain additional evaluations and documentation of needs specific to the workplace demands.
- There is no legal protocol for requesting accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are meant to be granted on a case by case basis. The bottom line is that an employer is made aware of the need for an accommodation and is provided with appropriate medical documentation.

- Depending on the situation, a disability disclosure may not be necessary. Explaining a needed accommodation for a medical condition and how the accommodation would ensure performance of the essential functions of the job may be enough.

4. **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

How is a skilled nursing, personal care or mental health support need managed in the workplace?

- When starting a job, identifying and conveying what is needed must be explained clearly and concisely.
- Evaluate medical care routines and personal care requirements and their impact upon employment. For example, is there a need for skilled nursing services, a personal care attendant, a place to store medications, or extra breaks to manage medical treatments?
- Employee Assistance Programs, mental health workers, or vocational counselors should be consulted when determining appropriate accommodations for mental health conditions. They should be retained to help manage and cope with day to day job expectations.

5. **DISABILITY BENEFITS**

Do disability benefits continue while on the job?

Consult with benefits planning specialists or work incentive counselors to determine any impact employment may have on Social Security Incentives (SSI) or Medicaid benefits. They have information on programs designed to coordinate employment benefits with government benefits and can help to ensure that benefits and entitlements continue, as appropriate, while on the job. NYS OPWDD operates Revenue Support Field Offices (RSFOs) that can help answer questions about working and benefits (www.opwdd.ny.gov).

- Tax credits and hiring and work incentive programs may be available to employees and employers.
- One incentive program is the Medicaid Buy-In for Working Persons with Disabilities. To find out about this and other work incentive programs, call the NY Makes Work Pay Hotline at 1-888-224-3272.

6. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

Where can I go when I have a problem or need help in the workplace?

- Start by having a conversation with an immediate supervisor regarding a problem or need in the workplace.
- It may be helpful to discuss the situation with a vocational rehabilitation counselor, supported employment counselor, or job coach.
- If the problem is with a supervisor or cannot be resolved by a supervisor, ask to meet with the company's human resources department, employee assistance program, or, if available, a disability program specialist to help resolve the problem.
- In some situations, it may be best to go outside a system for help. Each situation is different. Talking with a trusted friend, relative, or advisor may be a way to get ideas about how to approach the situation.

7. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS, LEGAL RIGHTS

What rights to equal opportunity are available under the law?

- There are both federal and state laws that protect rights. For federal laws, go to the Americans with Disabilities Act (and the amendments of 2008), Section 504 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the appeals processes. For state laws, consult with a local office of the NYS Division of Human Rights.
- These laws do not allow discrimination due to a person's disability throughout the entire employment process. Employers must have fair hiring practices and provide equal opportunity to all for advancement, promotions, pay raises, training, benefits, and related activities.

What happens if rights are denied?

- If rights are denied, a complaint should be filed with the proper authorities depending on the employment situation. For help with this process, contact a local Disability Law Project, Legal Aid Society, Independent Living Center or other protection and advocacy programs. Most provide their services for free or at a low cost.

Additional Resources

New York State Education Department, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)
<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>

Your Employment Rights as an Individual with a Disability from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:
<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/ada18.html>

Your rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act—a fact sheet by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/factsheets/504.pdf>

Benefits Planning for Youth with Disabilities:

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/quick-reference-guide/benefits-planning>

School to Work topics at Disability.gov:

http://www.disability.gov/employment/youth_programs/school_to_work

Advising Youth with Disabilities on Disclosure—Office of Disability

Employment Policy: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/advising.htm>

Youth, Disclosure and the Workplace:

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/ydw.htm>

Healthy and Ready to Work – Information Links for Youth:

<http://www.hrtw.org/youth/infoport.html>

Youth Advisory Committee for the National Council on Disability—Self-Empowerment for Young People Fact Sheet:

<http://www.nyln.org/Clearinghouse/Documents/Self-Empowerment%20Fact%20Sheet.doc>

Americans with Disabilities Act:

www.eeoc.gov

Reasonable accommodation ideas for a variety of disabilities:

www.jan.wvu.edu

Independent Living Centers (ILCs):

<http://www.nysilc.org/directory.htm>

New York Makes Work Pay Hot Line 1-888-224-3272

www.nymakesworkpay.org

The Center for Employment Excellence, NYS OPWDD 866-946-9733

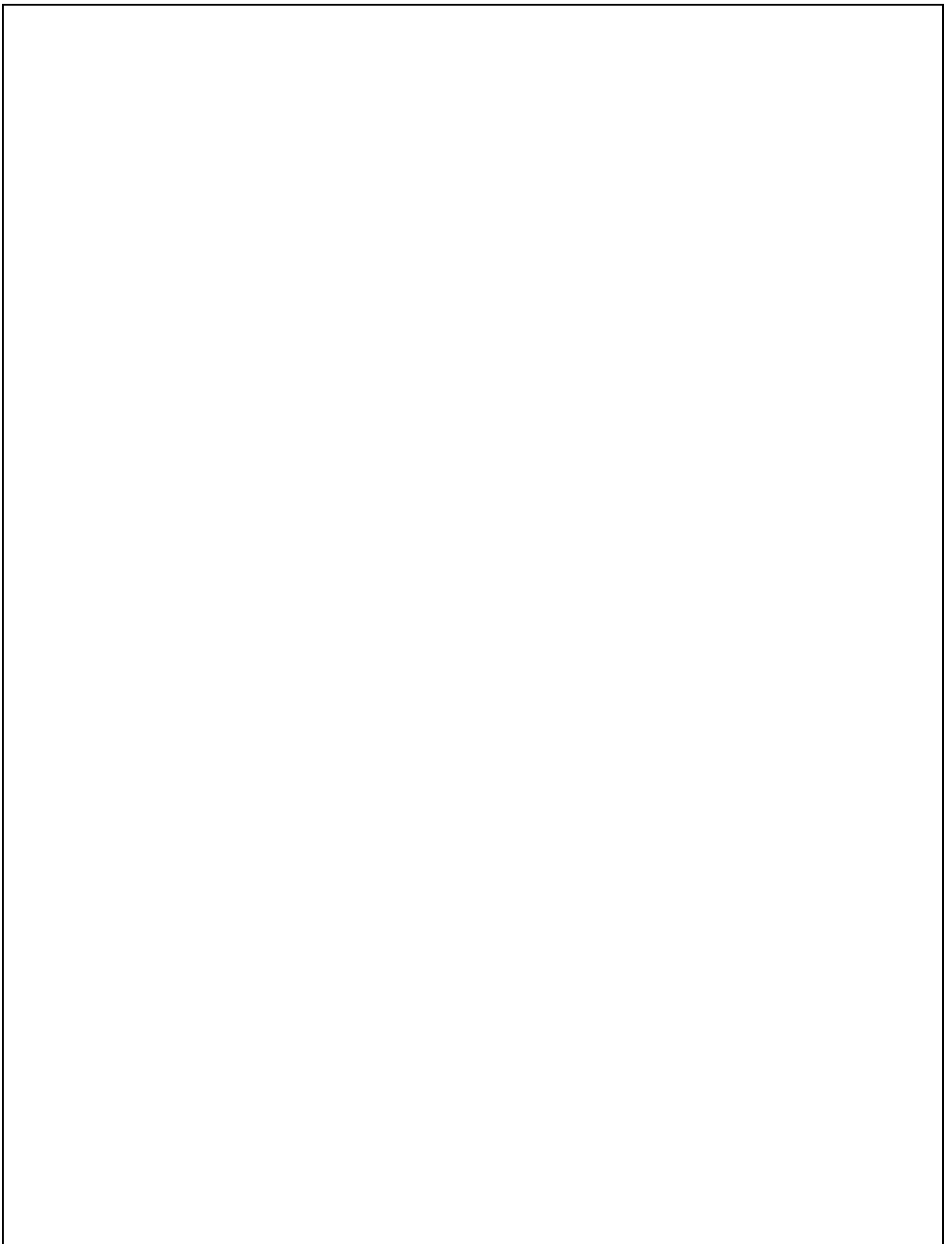
centerforemploymentexcellence@opwdd.ny.gov

OPWDD Revenue Support Field Offices:

http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/document/medicaid/hp_rsfo.jsp

Portable Health Record:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/0972.pdf>





What is Supported Employment?

Your child has decided they would like to enter the world of work. Although certainly an exciting time, you as caregiver, are likely to have questions and concerns about what this means for your son or daughter: *What is supported employment? What is the role of a job coach?*

Your friends at **New York State APSE**--the New York Chapter of a growing national non-profit membership organization, and the *only* national organization with an *exclusive focus* on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities--and **Parent to Parent of New York State**--a statewide not-for-profit organization with a mission to support and connect families of individuals with special needs--have designed this tip sheet to help you through what can be a complex process. We appreciate all that you do and view you as an essential partner in your child's pathway to employment.

For caregivers, the process of *letting go* can be a difficult one. Primary caregivers have been crucial in helping a person with disabilities reach this important move to employment. It is important for caregivers to realize that there are no special education laws and regulations to stand behind in the world of employment. Different skills are needed, including open and proactive communication.

By opening up to the dignity of risk, we offer the opportunity to foster success, despite some bumps in the road along the way.

We strive for that balance between fostering dependence by offering too much support, and fostering independence by offering needed supports, but no more than is needed: *This* is the essence of supported employment, and the support team includes parents, caregivers and family members, support providers and employers. While taking into consideration input from the entire support team, the eventual responsibility of the supported employment professional is to foster collaboration among the agency, the employer, and the supported employee.

APSE holds certain standards for professionals working in the field of supported employment (*Ethical Guidelines for Professionals in Supported Employment*). Quality programs and providers will follow these guidelines. If you feel that your provider is *not* adhering to these standards, you have a right to ask questions!

What is Supported Employment?

Supported Employment is paid competitive employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support for individuals with the most severe disabilities (i.e., mental health, intellectual disabilities, significant learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury, deafness and blindness, and extreme mobility impairments) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to obtain, perform, and retain their job. Supported Employment provides assistance such as job placement and job coaching, assistance in interacting with employers, on-site assistive technology training, and individualized job training.

What is a Job Coach?

A job coach is a person who is hired by a job placement agency to provide specialized on- and off-site training to assist the employee with a disability in learning and performing the job and adjusting to the work environment. Different agencies use different titles for this position (e.g., Employment Consultant, Employment Specialist).

Job Coaches facilitate the job seeking process of people with disabilities to find paid employment in the open market. They provide knowledge, networking contacts, encouragement and resilience when seeking a job, accepting a job and keeping a job. When necessary, job coaches also can “carve out” or “customize” a job in a workplace; they find tasks at the site that can be successfully accomplished by the employee, and create a new job out of these elements. This often results in a “win, win” situation for both the employer and employee.

Four Key Stages:

Assessment and Needs Analysis

The Job Coach will carry out a Needs Assessment with the job seeker to identify skills, interests and ambitions, with a view to identifying the type of work one would like to do. This phase may also include updating resumes and writing cover letters. It may also include work experience for job sampling/testing purposes.

Job Development & Job Search

The Job Coach offers supports in identifying suitable job options where one’s skills, interests and talents match the requirements of the job. This involves but is not limited to arranging mock interviews; searching for jobs in newspapers, on the internet, and at recruitment agencies; and by visiting possible employers (job shadowing). Depending upon the disability and individual preferences surrounding one’s diagnosis, the job coach and job seeker may engage in conversation about the merits of disclosing one’s disability to potential employers.

Employment with Job Coach Support

The Job Coach supports the new employee in becoming and remaining a competent worker. The various tasks involved in the job are examined and accommodations requested, if required. Help is given to develop technical and social skills, again, only if required. Supports may take place both on- and off-site.

Ongoing Support (*Extended Services/Follow Along*)

The amount of support often will decrease over time as the employee adapts to the job and the workplace. Job retention and integration are essential features of Supported Employment. Help is offered to the participant to facilitate communication on the job; for example, ask questions, ask for time off, inquire about task enlargement, training, or promotion.

Other Considerations

As individual agencies may maintain differing philosophies regarding the provision of supported employment supports and services, we encourage parents to take the time to interview more than one agency to determine whether their philosophy is a “fit” for you and your family.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities often will need ongoing 1:1 support to succeed at work. This does not mean they cannot benefit from paid employment and add value to the workplace. Yet often it is not feasible for traditional supported employment agencies to provide this level of support.

An option for individuals needing continuing 1:1 support is to pursue a self-directed plan, in which a program can be designed around the person’s needs.

When exploring job possibilities (*job development*), a helpful Job Coach will:

- Meet with the job seeker on a regular basis.
- Ask about their goals, dreams, and aspirations.
- Spend time with and get to know the job seeker (*assessment*).
- Include family and other partners in the process, while still prioritizing job seeker preferences.
- Contact employers.
- Offer help with resume preparation.
- Conduct mock interviews.
- Stress and discuss with sensitivity the importance of proper work attire and good hygiene (*first impressions*).
- Offer support before, during, or after a job interview; this may include sitting in on a job interview.
- Allow the job seeker to speak for themselves.
- Offer honest, objective input on which jobs may or may not be available in the current job market and/or geographic area.

While supporting the supported employee on the job, a helpful Job Coach will:

- *Supplement* any training already provided by the employer.
- As much as possible, allow coworkers to provide training and support (*natural supports*).
- Facilitate direct communication between the employee and his/her coworker.
- Observe supported employee interactions with coworkers, for later discussion if needed.
- Help the employee learn the culture of the work environment.
- Adjust job coaching to the individual’s learning style. For example, some may learn best with verbal prompting, others with a written task list.
- Try fading from the employee’s immediate work area, and off-site as appropriate. The goal of supported employment is to foster independence on the job.

For more information on Supported Employment, please visit the NYS APSE website: www.nysapse.org, where you can find useful information, links to the National APSE website, and regional contact information.

For more information on Parent to Parent of NYS go to www.ptopnnys.org

Contact Parent to Parent of NYS

www.ptopnys.org

Regional offices:

BRONX

*c/o Bronx-Lebanon Hospital
1665 Morris Ave, # 1D
Bronx, NY 10457
347-590-2921
Fax 212-229-3146*

CAPITAL REGION

*500 Balltown Road
Schenectady, NY 12304
1-800-305-8817
518-381-4350
Fax 518-393-9607*

CENTRAL NY

*Exceptional Family Resources
1820 Lemoyne Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13208
1-800-305-8815,
315- 478-1462,x 322
Fax 315-478-1467*

FINGER LAKES

*The Advocacy Center
590 South Avenue
Averill Court
Rochester, NY 14620
1-800-650-4967, 585-546-1700 ext. 242
Fax 585-223-2481*

HUDSON VALLEY

*WIHD / Cedarwood Hall
Valhalla, NY 10595
1-800-305-8816,
914-493-2635
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LONG ISLAND

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*P.O. Box 1296
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SOUTHERN TIER

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Watkins Glen, NY 14891
1-800-971-1588
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STATEN ISLAND

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