

Planning for Your Transition from High School to Adult Life

A workbook to help you decide what you want your life to look like after graduation ...



And to help you outline the steps so you can make it happen!

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About the Rural Institute

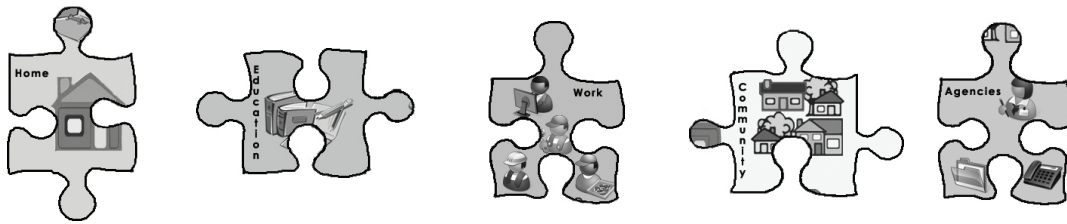
The Rural Institute: Center for Excellence in Disability Education, Research, and Service, is one of sixty-four Centers for Excellence in Disability Education across the nation. It is an inter-disciplinary organization that promotes full participation in rural life for individuals with disabilities. The Rural Institute accomplishes this goal by developing and disseminating innovations in teaching, research, community supports, and policy advocacy.

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Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the funding organizations. These are a few of the many projects at The Rural Institute. This publication does not encompass all of the projects and activities currently underway at The Rural Institute as a whole.

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The purpose of this workbook is to help youth to take the lead in planning for their adult lives. The workbook shares important information, encourages youth to begin thinking about life after high school, and offers ideas they can use to plan routes to reach their goals. This is not a workbook parents, educators or others should hand to young adults and ask them to complete on their own. Rather, it should be used as a guide for conversations, either one-to-one or in groups, between adults and between young people. The workbook includes suggested activities, but don't be limited to these - be creative!

Note to Teachers:

You might want to photocopy the “activity” pages of this workbook and keep the extra copies in a binder. This way, you can use the workbook with multiple students.



Transition from school to adult life: It's never too early to start planning



While graduation from high school is a natural life event for many teenagers, for students with disabilities this requires more planning, negotiation, and decision making. Your choices about where you want to live and work and whether or not you want to continue your education are a bit more challenging if you will need continued support or accommodations. High school is the last time you will be “entitled” to receive services. So make the most of your time there. Have a plan for when you graduate and connect with new supports or service agencies before you graduate from high school.

IDEA 2004, the law that directs schools about helping you plan for your adult life, states that Transition Planning must be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) which covers the time period when you turn 16. That means that your IEP team will want to know what your goals are for after you leave high school. For example, where do you want to live? Who do you want to live with? Do you plan to rent an apartment or buy a home? What will you do for work? What will you do for fun? What places or events will you want to go to in your community? How will you get around?

These post-school goals will help you and your team decide what classes you should take and what things would be helpful to teach you to prepare you for the adult life that you want. Even though the IEP doesn't start talking about life after school until you are 15 or 16, you and your family need to start thinking about your future much earlier. Parents don't usually wait until their kids are 16 to talk to them about getting a job and supporting themselves after high school - start talking and thinking NOW about what you want your life to be like once you no longer attend high school. Encourage your parents to have high expectations for you. Have high expectations for yourself.

Once Transition starts being discussed at your IEP meetings, you need to be invited to the meetings so you can add your input. It is your life after all! This workbook

is meant to help you think about Transition and what you want to do, what you need to learn in school, and what supports you might need to live, work and play as independently as possible. For you to direct your future at your IEP meetings it will help if you think about this ahead of time and go to your meetings prepared.

To prepare for your first Transition Planning meeting, think about all your strengths... the things you are good at. If you need help, ask your family, friends, and teachers what they think you are good at. Make a list and bring it with you to your meeting. Also make a list of things you like to do, your interests. Most importantly, spend some time thinking about what you want your day to look like the day after you graduate from high school. Fill out this workbook and bring it to your Transition Planning meeting to make sure that your IEP team knows what your thoughts are about your future.

There are four steps to planning your transition from high school to adult life.

STEP ONE: ANSWER THE QUESTION, “WHAT IS MY DAY GOING TO LOOK LIKE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?”

STEP TWO: ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW.

STEP THREE: MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU COULD LEARN TO DO, OR WHAT STEPS YOU COULD TAKE TO GET CLOSER TO THESE GOALS BEFORE YOU GRADUATE.

STEP FOUR: THINK ABOUT WHO CAN HELP YOU MEET YOUR GOALS AND CONTINUE SETTING NEW ONES.

This workbook will help you take these steps one at a time.

My Timeline

Fill in the blanks below with a pencil. Cut along the dotted lines and put your timeline in a place where you will see it often. Update the timeline each year.

My Timeline

Today's Date: _____

Date I will graduate: _____

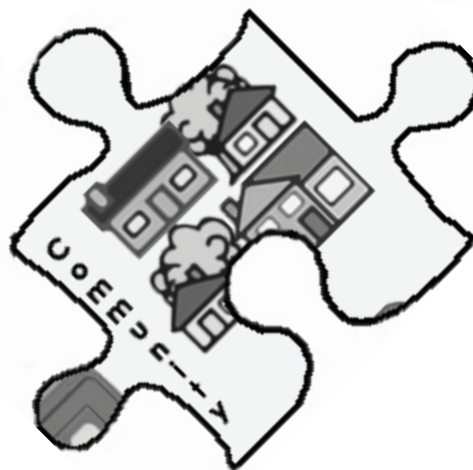
I have _____ year(s) to work toward
how I want my life to look after graduation.

Things I should do this year:





What do I want
my life to look like
after high school?



STEP ONE: ANSWER THE QUESTION, “WHAT IS MY DAY GOING TO LOOK LIKE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?”

The following pages list questions for you to answer. Your answers will help you plan what your days may look like after high school. You can write your answers in the spaces provided below or there is a page following each set of questions for either drawing pictures or pasting pictures cut out of magazines that show your answers.

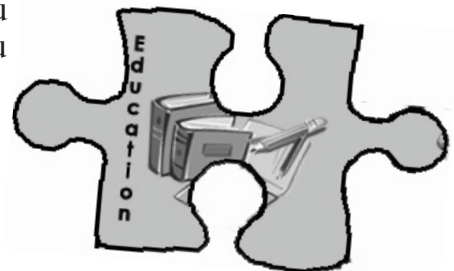
EDUCATION/TRAINING

Would you like to attend college? If so, why? What would you like to learn? Would you like to participate in a degree program, audit classes, or take classes that are of particular interest to you?

Would you like to learn a trade such as construction? Welding? Auto mechanics? Cooking or food preparation?

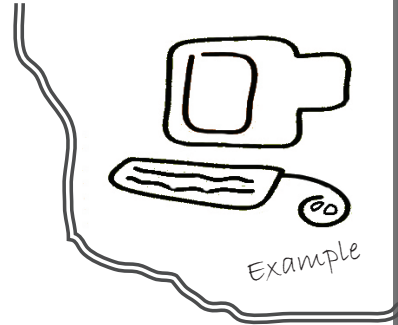
What about an apprenticeship program where you work alongside someone who knows how to do the things you want to learn and they teach you as you help them? (There are formal apprenticeship programs or informal opportunities in your community.) What types of things might you like to learn through an apprenticeship program?

If you think on-the-job training might be a good way to learn a new job, have you thought about supported employment services? With supported employment, a person called a job coach helps you find and learn a job in the community. Once you learn the job and you and your employer feel comfortable that you can do the job on your own, the job coach won't be with you at the job anymore.



Education/Training

(If it helps you to draw or paste pictures that show what additional education or training you want after graduation, do that here.)



WORK/EMPLOYMENT *(Authors' Note: Anyone can work in their community regardless of the severity of their disability. Employment may look different for each of us.)*

Do you plan to work after graduation?

What type of work will you do?

How many hours a day are you likely to work?

What type of help might you need to find a job? Apply for the job? Learn and do the job? Keep the job?

Will you own your own business?



Work/Employment

(If it helps you to draw or paste pictures that show what kind of job you want after graduation, do that here.)

Example



HOME

Where will you live after you graduate from high school?

Will you live with your family? Friends? Or do you plan to live alone?

Do you want to live in town where you are close to stores and neighbors or do you want to live out in the country with more space?

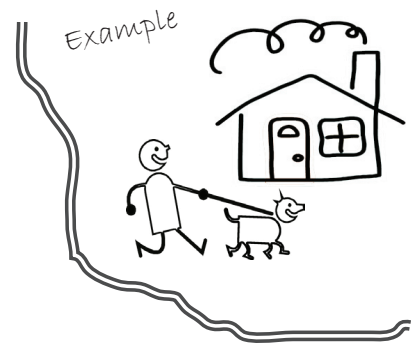
What type of help might you need to live in the community?

Will you rent an apartment or a house? Own a house or condo?



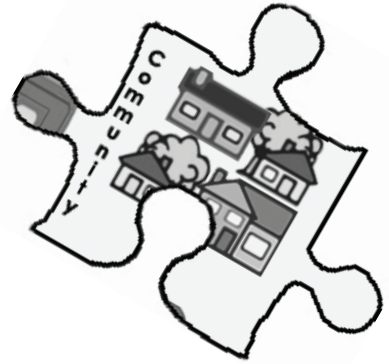
Home

(If it helps you to draw or paste pictures that show where you want to live after graduation, do that here.)



COMMUNITY

Make a list of where you want to go and what you want to do in your community.



What would help you do more of these activities and get to these places?

How will you get around? Is there a bus system where you live? Will you drive, ride your bike, carpool with friends, or walk to where you want to go?

Where will you go for fun?

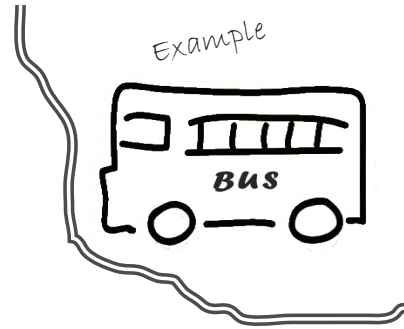
What services will you access? (For example, grocery stores, recreation opportunities, restaurants, doctor's offices, and banks.)

Will you want to have a volunteer position or help out in your community?

Will you vote?

Community

(If it helps you to draw or paste pictures that show what things you want to do in your community and how you will get to the places you want to go after graduation, do that here.)



Create Day Timers

Here is another exercise to help you think about what life will look like after you graduate. For this exercise, you will fill out two day timer pages. The first page is for a day when you are **still in school**. Write down what you do all day, including things like where and when you eat your meals, how you get to school, what your classes are, what you do for fun after school and in the evenings, etc.

Example of Current Day Timer

June 08, (<i>This Year</i>)	
Monday	
6 am	
7 am	Wake up to alarm and get ready for school
8 am	Applied English
9 am	Science
10 am	Health/P.E.
11 am	Lunch with friends at school
12 pm	Math
1 pm	Study Hall
2 pm	Choir
3 pm	Ride bus home
4 pm	Make Snack Walk to YMCA for swimming lessons
5 pm	Ride home from YMCA with mom and eat dinner
6 pm	
	7pm - 8pm Chores
	8pm - 9pm Watch a movie with my family
	9pm - 10pm Go to bed at 10.

Now it's your turn. Fill out this day timer page by writing down what you do all day right now, while you are still in school. Your page will probably look pretty full since you spend much of your day in classes

June 08, (*This Year*)

Monday

6 am

7 am

8 am

9 am

10 am

11am

12 pm

1 pm

2 pm

3 pm

4 pm

5 pm

6 pm

7pm – 8pm

8pm – 9pm

9pm – 10pm

This day timer page is for a day **after you've graduated**. Write down what you want your day to look like when you're finished with high school.

Example of Day Timer for After Graduation

June 09, (<i>The Year You Graduate</i>)	
Monday	
6 am	
7 am	Get up, shower, and have breakfast
8 am	Leave home and walk to work Work at Farmers State Bank
9 am	
10 am	
11 am	
12 pm	Walk home, prepare and eat lunch
1 pm	Walk to gym Work out at gym
2 pm	Do errands (grocery store, post office, bank)
3 pm	
4 pm	Head home, do chores around the house, make dinner
5 pm	Eat, clean up the kitchen, make lunch for the next work day
6 pm	Call friends, take a walk, play computer games, listen to music
	7pm - 8pm
	8pm - 9pm Watch TV
	9pm - 10pm Go to bed at 10.

Now it's your turn. Fill out this day timer page by writing down what you'd like to be doing after you've graduated. Try to have your day be as full as it was when you attended school.

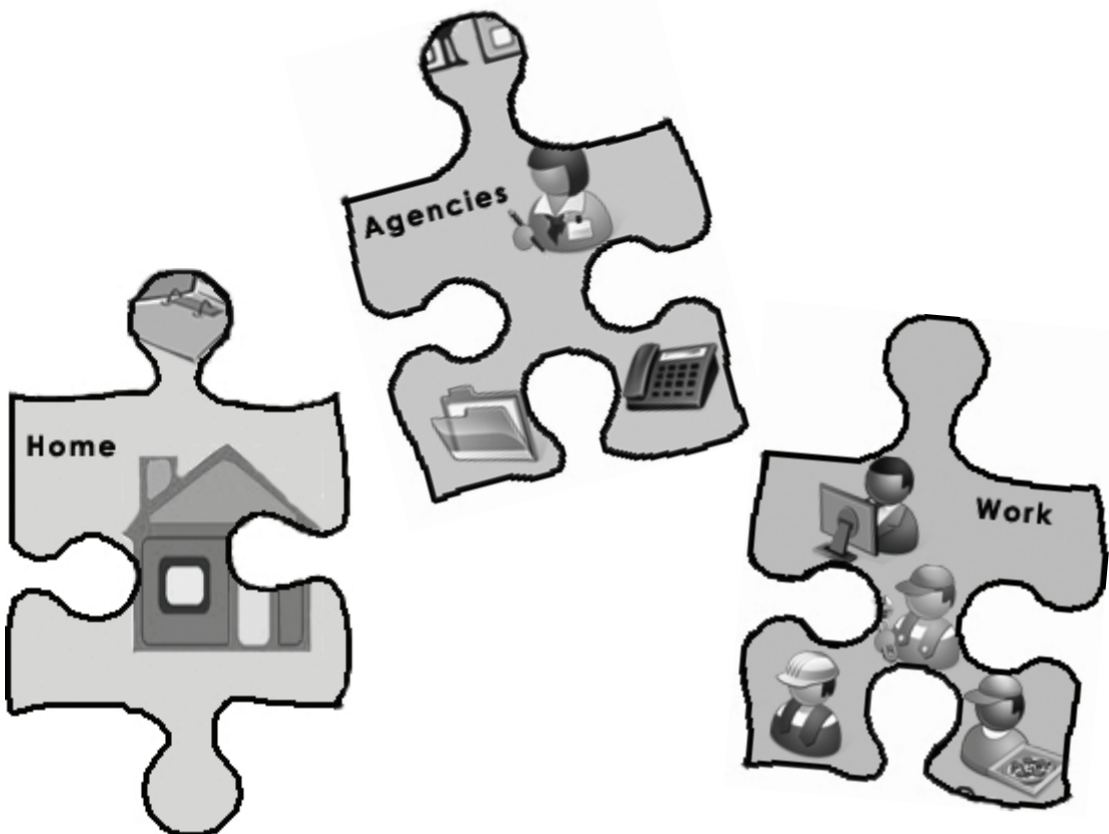
June 09, *(The Year You Graduate)*

Monday

6 am	
7 am	
8 am	
9 am	
10 am	
11am	
12 pm	
1 pm	
2 pm	
3 pm	
4 pm	
5 pm	
6 pm	
	7pm – 8pm
	8pm – 9pm
	9pm – 10pm



**What do I do now?
How much help and support
do people give me now?
What are my skills and
abilities today?**



STEP TWO: ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW.

To help you think about what you need to learn to do for yourself before you graduate from high school, think about what you do now and how much support you are getting. You don't need to be totally independent to work, live, or play in your community, but there might be skills you can learn, supports you can use, or a way to do things differently so you can participate as much as you are able.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

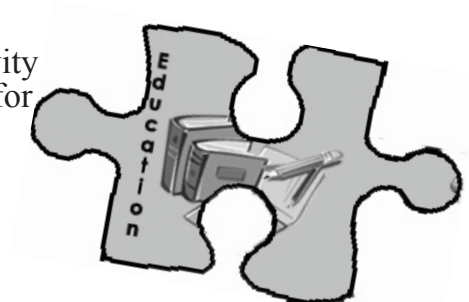
What are your academic skills (for example, reading, writing, math, using computers, etc.)?

What accommodations or help do you use to participate at school? (Examples of accommodations include taped books and lectures, large print, oral tests and reports, extended times for tests and assignments, a paraprofessional to remind you what to do, a peer mentor who helps you in class, etc.)

What things do you get help doing at school?

If you don't read or do math, what strategies do you use to get these things done?

If you have people who provide support to you in an activity or class (like a paraeducator or an aide), what do they do for you?



WORK/EMPLOYMENT

What work experiences have you had in school? In the community? At home?

What chores and responsibilities do you have at home?

What are you good at doing?

What do you need help with when you are working or doing your chores?

What's the best way to teach you a new job so you can do it well and as independently as possible?





List all the chores, in-school jobs and community jobs that you have tried. For each one, indicate what you liked best and least about that job. Talk about what types of help you received to do that job.

Chores/Jobs	What I liked best	What I liked least	Help I received



Here is an activity a parent, other family member, or teacher can do with you. Ask that person to take pictures of you doing different work tasks that you have tried before (for example, shelving library books, feeding the dog, vacuuming your room, selling Girl Scout cookies to a neighbor, drilling holes for a curtain rod, fixing the motor on your scooter, making bread...) Tell that person what you liked and disliked about each task and have them write down what you say. Tell them what you did well and what you needed help doing with each task and have them write that down, too.

Task	What I liked best	What I liked least	What I did well	Help I received

HOME

When you are at home, what kinds of things do you do?

What do you do on the weekends, during the summer, or on other days when you don't have school?

What's the best way to help you learn new things around the house (like cooking, laundry, yard work, etc.)?

Are there any safety issues for you at home? (For example, would you need help getting out of the house in case of a fire or do you need someone close by when you're bathing in case you have a seizure?)

Do you use the phone? Who do you call?

Do you spend time at home by yourself?

Do you remember to take your medication each day? Does anyone help you take your medication (for example, open the bottles, count the pills, give you the insulin injection, etc.)?





Write down your typical routine for a school day from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. Put a + next to the actions you do by yourself and put a * next to the actions that someone helps you with.

School Day Daily Routine

[illegible]



Write down your typical routine for a weekend day or school vacation day, from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. Put a + next to the actions you do by yourself and put a * next to the actions that someone helps you with.

Weekend or School Vacation Day Daily Routine

[illegible]

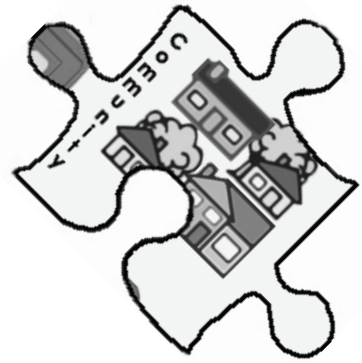


Have someone take photos or a videotape of you completing the chores and other responsibilities you have at home. If someone helps you with these chores and responsibilities, describe how they help or ask them to describe how they help. (For example, do they remind you it is time to do the chore? Check your work to see if it is right? Physically help you?)

Chore/Responsibility	Who helps?	How do they help?

COMMUNITY

Where do you go for fun in your community?



Where else do you go in your community (for example, the doctor, grocery store, hardware store, restaurant, etc.)?

Who helps you go shopping at the grocery store, access the local gym, go to your favorite restaurant, or visit the doctor? How do they help you?

How do you communicate with people in your community? (For example, through a sign language interpreter, using a communication device, writing notes when people don't understand you, or by using eye movements and gestures, etc.)

How do you get to where you want to go?

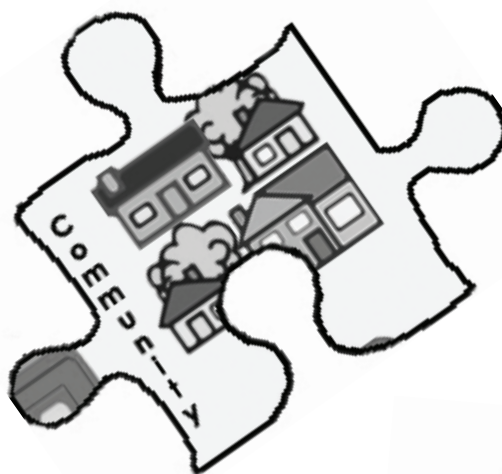


Draw or paste a picture of your house in the middle of this page. Around your house, draw or paste pictures of all the places where you go now in your community. If there are other places where you would like to go but you haven't yet, draw or paste pictures of them and put a circle around each one of them. You might want to do this activity on a piece of flipchart paper or large dry erase board instead so you will have more room.

[illegible]



How do I get from where
I am now to where I want to be
when I graduate.



STEP THREE: MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU COULD LEARN TO DO, OR WHAT STEPS YOU COULD TAKE TO GET CLOSER TO THESE GOALS BEFORE YOU GRADUATE.

Think back to the first two steps you took in this workbook. You started by creating a vision of what you want your life to look like after graduation and then you painted a picture of where you are today.

Next it's time to think about what you might need to learn or practice or experience to get from where you are now to the life you want to have after high school. This might include steps like trying new things at work and at home, volunteering in your community, visiting an adult developmental disabilities agency or an Independent Living Center, learning to use technology that will help you participate more fully, or gathering information about different housing options. On the path to your vision, there will be steps that you will need to take, but there will also be steps your parents, your teachers, and/or other people providing services to you will need to take.





EDUCATION: What skills do you need to learn to complete your high school course work and gain skills for adulthood (academic and life skills that will help you get ready to meet your adult goals)?

Here are some activities that can help you get ready for adult living. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Learn to follow a schedule or to use a checklist to remind you what to do next instead of having someone tell you what is next.
- ☐ Learn about safety in the community and at home so you can do more things on your own.
- ☐ Practice explaining how you learn best and what you need for accommodations or help.
- ☐ Explore technology that will help you read and write more easily.
- ☐ Visit a local college. Pick up a course catalog. Meet with the Disability Services for Students to see what supports are offered.
- ☐ Google your state's Job Corps Programs and read about the various courses of study they offer.
- ☐ Choose someone in the community who works in a job that you are interested in. Interview them about how they learned to do that job. What kind of training did they receive? Where did they get the training? Are there other places you could get the same kind of training?



EMPLOYMENT: What things help you learn how to do something new? What help do you need to get a job? For example, do you need someone with you when you learn a new task? Do written instructions help? Is it better if you can see a model or example of what you're supposed to do? Would it

be helpful if you could practice completing job applications and job interviews with someone you trust or would it be best for someone to represent you to an employer and create a one-of-a-kind job for you?

Here are some activities that can help you prepare for having a job in your community. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Increase your chores and responsibilities at home.
- ☐ Sample various job types through volunteering or work experiences.
- ☐ Get a paid job.
- ☐ Visit an agency in your community that provides supported employment to adults.
- ☐ Visit agencies that can help you find a job such as: Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation or Workforce.
- ☐ Meet with adult agencies such as Developmental Disabilities or Mental Health to explore what they provide for employment supports.
- ☐ Participate in job experiences in the community (a community-based work assessment) to determine what environments, supports, and tasks will help you to be most successful.
- ☐ Visit your assistive technology center to see if they have any ideas about gadgets or strategies that can help you work more independently.
- ☐ Learn about Customized Employment.



COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES: What skills do you need to learn to participate in your community as independently and actively as possible? What skills do you need to learn so you can access the businesses, services, and recreational opportunities you want and need to access? Are there other things that would help you participate more in your community?

Here are some activities that can help you prepare for an active community life. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Learn to shop for meals or learn to use a shopping service.
- ☐ Learn to make purchases or come up with strategies that you can use to shop by yourself without learning math. (For example, use a debit card, write a check, charge groceries, etc.)
- ☐ Attend a class at the YMCA.
- ☐ Learn to go to a movie with a friend or by yourself.
- ☐ Join a community interest group.
- ☐ Visit your local Independent Living Center and ask about peer mentors, classes or self-advocacy groups.
- ☐ Come up with strategies to make yourself understood to unfamiliar people.
- ☐ Practice asking about whether or not a hotel, restaurant or business is accessible.
- ☐ Find a list of non-profit agencies in your community that need volunteers.
- ☐ Find out how to register to vote.
- ☐ If you aren't going to drive, learn various ways to get to where you want to go (calling a friend or coworker and asking for a ride, walking safely in your community, taking the bus, etc.).



POST-SCHOOL ADULT LIVING: What do you need to learn to live as independently as possible? What services, supports, or technology would help you live as independently as possible?

Here are some activities that can help you prepare to live as independently as possible. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Think about the daily activities where you rely on someone else for help. Now think about ways you could be more independent in each of these activities.
- ☐ Take a first-time home buyer's class.
- ☐ Learn about HUD and Section 8 housing.
- ☐ Find out how to rent an apartment.
- ☐ Visit a friend who lives on their own and interview them about what kinds of things they needed to learn to do so.
- ☐ Explore group living options such as: an apartment with friends or people who would provide some support to you in exchange for rent, group homes and supported living.
- ☐ Inquire about services through Developmental Disabilities if you will need ongoing support to live in the community.
- ☐ Apply for SSI.
- ☐ Learn to manage your own doctors' appointments and medications.
- ☐ Learn money management and budgeting.
- ☐ Open a checking account.
- ☐ If people are concerned about you living in the community by yourself, think about all the strategies you could learn that would help you live more independently and safely in the home of your choice. Visit your assistive technology center to help you think of options.
- ☐ Explore the possibility of having someone provide support to you in your own home.



RELATED SERVICES: What related services will you continue to need after graduation? Examples might include: orientation and mobility assistance, help with obtaining and learning to use a new piece of technology, counseling, using public transportation or arranging rides to work, physical therapy, nursing services, personal care...

Here are some activities that can help you plan for the services you will need after you graduate. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Research what physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy services are available in your area for adults. Find out who provides these services.
- ☐ Learn how to hire and direct your own personal care attendant.
- ☐ Make a list of all the activities your family helps you with now that a personal care attendant would need to provide in a new situation, such as college.
- ☐ Meet with Vocational Rehabilitation to ask about funding for services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, blind, and/or who use technology.
- ☐ Connect with Personal Care Services if you need medical assistance at home.



DAILY LIVING SKILLS: What daily living activities (like paying bills, cleaning and maintaining a house, preparing meals, doing laundry, and taking care of your personal hygiene) do you need to learn how to do? What daily living activities will you continue to need help with after you graduate?

Here are some activities that can help you learn and practice daily living skills. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.

- ☐ Have your parents go through their monthly bills with you and show you how they pay each bill.
- ☐ Develop a household budget showing what your expenses might be after you graduate and how much income you will need to meet those expenses.
- ☐ Learn how to fix a leaky faucet.
- ☐ Help paint something like a fence, porch or bedroom.
- ☐ Do your own laundry each week.
- ☐ Plan and cook a meal for your family once a week.
- ☐ Search the Internet for simple recipes you might want to try.
- ☐ Practice keeping yourself clean and brushing your teeth twice a day.

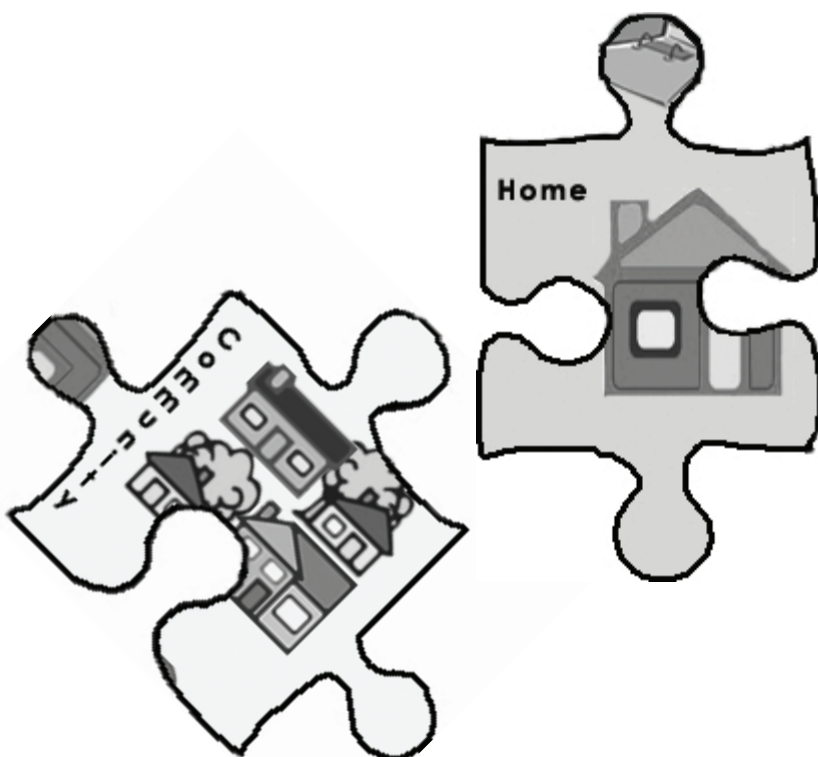
FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL EVALUATION: This can be formal or informal. It is a strategy used to get an idea of what someone's skills, abilities and support needs are in terms of employment. A functional vocational evaluation can be performed by the school or by an employment vendor in the community. The process should help you understand what environments and supports work best for you and identify different tasks that you could do in the community. This assessment should **NOT** determine whether or not you are ready to work in the community. It should describe the conditions (including supports) that will enable you to be most successful in a community job.

Your IEP team will discuss whether or not you would benefit from a Functional Vocational Evaluation.





**What agencies can help me get to
where I want to be
after graduation?**



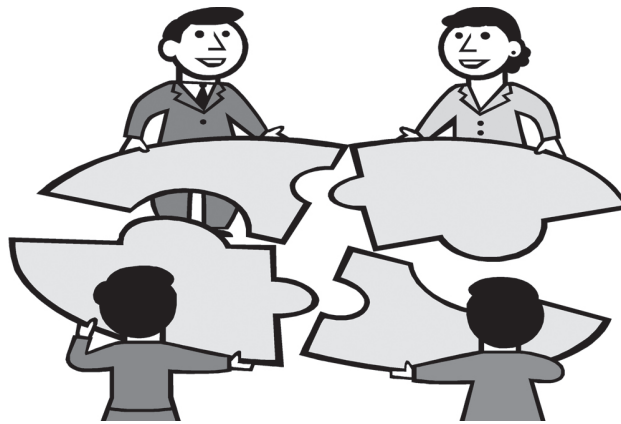
STEP FOUR: THINK ABOUT WHO CAN HELP YOU MEET YOUR GOALS AND CONTINUE SETTING NEW ONES.

A big part of planning for your life after high school is thinking about what services and supports you might need once you graduate. For example, what kind of supports might you need to get the job that you want? To live as independently as possible in your community? To lead an active life?

The people who help you at school are not usually the same people who will help you after you graduate. A major part of Transition Planning is connecting you and your family with adult agencies who might provide or pay for services as you are finishing high school and after you exit high school.

The school is required to help you and your family identify and connect with the appropriate agencies.

Many times, adult agency representatives will be invited to your IEP meeting or information from the agencies will be shared at your meeting. It is up to you and your family to follow through with each agency, to apply for their services, and to complete their eligibility processes. Your transition from high school will be smoother if you connect with the agencies that will help you after graduation **BEFORE** you exit school.



Important differences between schools and adult agencies:

1. If you are a student with a disability and you qualify for special education services, the schools must provide you with those services. This is called an **entitlement**. Once you exit high school, services are provided by adult agencies. You have to apply for the services and even if you apply and meet all the qualifications, you may not receive the services or may not receive them right away. This is because adult services are based on **eligibility and availability**.
2. There are **waiting lists** for some adult services. Even if you qualify for services as an adult, you may have to wait until an agency can serve you, or you might have to find other ways to get the help you need.

3. In schools, most services that you need are coordinated by one person, your special education teacher or case manager. After graduation, you or a family member might need to ***coordinate your own services***. (Sometimes a Developmental Disabilities or Mental Health case manager can help with this but not always.)
4. ***Eligibility requirements may be different*** for children and for adults. They may also be different for people who are still in school and those who are finished with school.



Which agencies or services could help me to reach my goals?

There are many different agencies, programs and services that might be able to help you reach your goals. The following pages will tell you about some of the resources available. You can also talk to your parents, the parents of other young people with disabilities, teachers, people providing you services right now, and adults with disabilities who are successfully living in your community...they might have other ideas for you. The Internet can be another source of information. You can do a "Google" search for specific topics like "accessible housing" or "customized employment for people with disabilities." Here is a website that will give you information and contact numbers for various adult service agencies in Montana:

<http://Pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition>

Many disability services are deficit-based. This means that when you apply for these services, you will often be asked to describe what you cannot do well or at all. You may also be asked about what supports help you function at home, at school, and in your community.

Learn what the application forms are looking for and how eligibility for particular services is determined. You might want to have someone from school, your case manager, or a peer mentor from the local Independent Living Center help you complete the paperwork.

Informal or creative support: Sometimes you may choose not to use an agency to help you or there might be a long wait to get help from that agency. Get creative! Could a friend help you get to work? Could you exchange free or reduced rent for someone to live with you and provide some help? Could a co-worker help you punch in on the computerized system at work?





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about adult agencies. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take.

- ☐ Get to know who the adult agencies are in your community. Learn about their eligibility requirements.
- ☐ Ask your teacher to invite agency representatives to join your IEP team as early as possible.
- ☐ If your school hosts a Transition Fair, Transition Forum, or other meeting where families and students can be introduced to agencies, GO! Ask questions and gather information.
- ☐ Ask your school for agency information (brochures, pamphlets, business cards, etc.) so you can learn more about which agencies might be helpful to you.
- ☐ Apply for adult services as early as you can and definitely BEFORE you exit school.
- ☐ Talk to young adults who have graduated from high school already and have information and ideas to share.

Montana Developmental Disabilities Program

If you have a cognitive delay, cerebral palsy, autism or epilepsy, you might qualify for assistance through the **Montana Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP)**. DDP services help you live and work in the community. A Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will help coordinate and oversee your services.

- ◆ Child and Family Services are provided from birth through age 21. (You can apply at any age.)
- ◆ Apply for adult Developmental Disabilities (DD) services at age 16. Once you have been determined eligible, you can ask to have your name put on waiting lists for various types of services.
- ◆ At age 17½, if you are already enrolled with DDP, you can put your name on the list to receive Community Supports. The Community Supports program provides an annual budget of up to \$7,800 (in 2008) that you can use to pay for items or services you need. Examples could include transportation, having someone coach you at a job, having a person help you learn to get around the community on your own...whatever will help you live as independently as possible. Many people choose to use Community Support money while they wait for other services.
- ◆ House Bill 195 was passed in the 2007 regular session of the Montana Legislature. House Bill 195 provides a limited number of young adults who were already determined to be eligible for Montana DDP services, and who graduated from high school before turning 19, funds to access employment services. Ask your adult DD case manager about this program or similar options.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Montana's Developmental Disabilities Program. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about what services are provided by DDP. For information about DD services visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/developmental_disabilities_services/
- ☐ Write down the name and phone number of the local DDP contact person.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit the local DDP office.
- ☐ Ask a DDP representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Invite a DDP representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Complete an application for DDP services.
- ☐ Interview a person who receives DDP services.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview a DDP representative and learn more about their services.

Montana Mental Health Services

If you have a mental health impairment, explore **Montana Mental Health Services**. These might include case management, counseling, Comprehensive School and Community Treatment, day treatment, and employment and residential supports.

- ◆ Children's Mental Health services are available to youth under age 18 who meet the definition for having a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED).
- ◆ Adult Mental Health services are available to individuals 18 and older who meet the definition for having a Severe and Disabling Mental Illness (SDMI).
- ◆ At age 16, ask your Mental Health case manager to help you look into and apply for adult Mental Health services and case management.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Montana's Mental Health Services. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about what adult Mental Health services are available in Montana. For information about adult Mental Health services visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/mental_health_services/
- ☐ Write down the name and phone number of the local Mental Health contact person.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit the local Mental Health office.
- ☐ Ask a Mental Health representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Invite a Mental Health representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Complete an application for Mental Health services.
- ☐ Interview an adult who receives Mental Health services.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview a Mental Health representative and learn more about their adult services.

Social Security Administration

Social Security has two financial assistance programs available to youth and adults with disabilities. The most common Social Security financial program for youth is Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which comes with Medicaid health care coverage in Montana.

- ◆ You can apply for SSI at any age but the eligibility for children under age 18 is based on the resources and income of their parents.
- ◆ At age 18, young adults can apply for SSI and only their income and resources are counted.
- ◆ Youth who have been receiving SSI must reapply and be determined eligible as adults when they reach 18.
- ◆ Work incentives such as PASS plans (Plans for Achieving Self-Support) can shelter money for employment supports or anything an SSI recipient needs to become more self-sufficient. (People receiving SSI may qualify for a Social Security PASS if their resources or income reduce their SSI check. People have used PASS plans to pay for cars, equipment, job coaching, and other goods and services to help them reach a vocational goal and become more self-sufficient.)

Two agencies that can help you with Social Security questions or with work incentives are:

- ◆ **WIPAs (Work Incentives Planning Assistance agencies)**, which are resources in most every state that can provide you with information about Social Security work incentives.
- ◆ **PABSS (Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security)**, which can provide help with issues related to your Social Security benefits or with writing a PASS plan.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Social Security. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about SSI and work incentives. For information about SSI and work incentives visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/social_security/
- ☐ Print out the current fact sheets on SSI:
 - Paychecks and SSI Benefits
 - SSA Work Incentives 2008
 - SSI and SSDI: Similarities and Differences
 - Changes in SSI and SSDI for 2008
 - Identifying Students Eligible for SSI PASS Plans at IEP Meetings
 - SSI & Children Turning 18
 - SSI Benefits & Children with Disabilities
 - SGA & TWP (Substantial Gainful Activity and Trial Work Period)
 - Weighing the Risks: Some Tools for Benefits Analysis & Planning for SSI & SSDI Recipients
 - Property Essential for Self-Support (PESS): A Self-Employment Resource that SSI Doesn't Count

They can be found at: <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/training/publications.asp>

- ☐ Write down the address and phone number of the nearest Social Security office.
- ☐ Write down the address and phone number for the nearest WIPA and PABSS offices.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit the nearest Social Security office.
- ☐ Ask a Social Security representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Complete an application for SSI.
- ☐ Talk to your school psychologist to find out if your specific disability label will qualify you for SSI and Medicaid as an adult.
- ☐ Make a list of ways that a PASS plan could help you work.

Housing

If you want to rent an apartment or buy a home, there are numerous **housing assistance** programs that might help you pay the rent or the mortgage.

- ◆ **Section 8** is a program that provides assistance for housing based on income. To find out information or to apply for this program, you should contact your local housing authority. Section 8 often has a waiting list so applying early is important.
- ◆ The **State of Montana Housing** website (<http://www.mtfinanceonline.com/housing.asp>) provides links and information on housing options offered within Montana.
- ◆ **homeWORD** (<http://www.homeword.org/>) is an organization that helps people with disabilities find affordable housing in Montana.
- ◆ The **Montana Home Choice Coalition** (<http://www3.aware-inc.org/awareinc/montanahomechoice/MHCC.asp?Title=8>) is a group of citizens who work together in providing housing options for people with disabilities. Their website provides information about renting, fair housing laws, home ownership and assistance with being homeless.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about financial supports for housing. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about different housing assistance programs. For information about housing assistance visit the following website:
<http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/housing/>
- ☐ Write down the address and phone number of the local Housing Authority office.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit the local Housing Authority office.
- ☐ Print out information about housing assistance programs you think you might qualify for and bring it with you to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Invite a Housing Authority representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Complete an application for Section 8 rental assistance.
- ☐ Interview someone who uses a Section 8 rental voucher.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview a Housing Authority representative and learn more about their services.

Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

Independent Living Centers can serve as a resource for people of any age with disabilities. Resources available at Montana ILCs include: peer mentoring programs; assistance with information and referral; individual and systems advocacy; independent living skill training; advocacy and information regarding Social Security benefits; and information about the Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF), a self-advocacy program for youth with disabilities.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Independent Living Centers. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about ILCs. For information on ILCs visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/independent_living_centers/
- ☐ Write down the address and phone number of the nearest ILC.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit your local ILC so you can explore resources and make connections.
- ☐ Ask an ILC representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Invite an ILC representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview an ILC representative and learn more about their services.

Work/Employment

There are several agencies that can help you find a job. Each has its own application process and eligibility requirements.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and **Tribal VR** provide a broad range of services to youth and adults with physical or mental disabilities that prevent them from getting or keeping a job, and who want to work and need VR services to get work. Services may include evaluation, job training, job development, rehabilitation technology or help getting a college education.

- ◆ Apply the spring before your exit year of school or earlier if you can commit to working while you are still in school.
- ◆ If you have a 504 plan instead of an IEP, you may still qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation or Tribal VR services.

Job Service can help youth locate jobs beginning at age 16.

Workforce Youth Services are provided to qualifying young people ages 14-21. If you are eligible, you may receive help identifying job openings or finding a job. Sometimes Workforce pays wages so you can try out a job. Many of these services are provided by HRDC (Human Resource Development Council) offices in your local community.

The **military** offers a variety of educational and career options.

- ◆ If you are planning to apply to the military, check the entrance requirements for the branch you are interested in (Army, Navy, Marines, etc.) because they are different for each branch.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about employment programs and services. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Read about what employment services are available in Montana. For information about employment services visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/employment_services/
- ☐ Write down the name and phone number of the local VR contact person.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit the local Job Service, Workforce office, or One-stop Career Center.
- ☐ Ask a VR representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Invite a VR representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Complete an application for VR services.
- ☐ Complete an application for Workforce Youth Services.
- ☐ Register at Job Service.
- ☐ Interview an adult who receives VR services.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview a VR representative and learn more about their services.

Education

When you graduate from high school, you may decide to continue your **education**. You can do this in a variety of ways, like attending a college, university, technical or trade school; completing an apprenticeship; or going to Job Corps. Job Corps serves students ages 16-24 in residential career training programs and provides technical training in a variety of trades (culinary arts, mechanics, welding, etc.).

- ◆ By your junior year, contact Disability Services for Students at the university or college of your choice to inquire about services and how to best prepare yourself for post-secondary education.
- ◆ Before determining your classes for high school, become familiar with classes that the college of your choice requires you take before admission (these are called “prerequisites”). Try to complete these courses during high school if you can.
- ◆ By your junior year of high school, request accommodations for the ACT/SAT exams. (Many colleges and universities will require you to take one of these exams and earn a certain score to be considered for admission to their school.)
- ◆ Talk to the assistive technology center or college to find out what type of technology, accommodations and support strategies are typical in college environments. Begin using them in high school.
- ◆ Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to fund some of your school tuition or supports.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about educational opportunities you might want to pursue after high school. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Research trade schools and apprenticeship programs as an alternative to college. For information on some trade schools and apprenticeship programs in Montana visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/post_secondary_education/
- ☐ Read about what student financial aid programs are available.
- ☐ Write down the name and phone number of the Disability Services for Students contact person at the university or college you plan to attend.
- ☐ Make an appointment to visit a college, trade school or Job Corps (or if there isn't a college, trade school, or Job Corps facility near you, research the programs online).
- ☐ Ask an apprenticeship program representative to visit your school and meet with interested students.
- ☐ Invite a Job Corps representative to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ Complete an application for the college/university/trade school/technical school of your choice.
- ☐ Ask about taking one class at a time if you aren't interested in getting a degree.
- ☐ Complete an application for Job Corps.
- ☐ Interview a college student with a disability at the university you plan to attend.
- ☐ Use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview the Disability Services for Students representative at the university or college you want to attend.

Self-Advocacy Organizations

Self-Advocacy Organizations are groups for people with disabilities run by people with disabilities. These organizations educate people about Disability History, Disability Culture, individual rights and responsibilities, and how to be assertive and ask for what you want and need. There are many different self-advocacy groups out there. Explore as many as you can to decide which ones fit with your values, beliefs, needs and interests. Here are a few to get you started:

- ◆ **ADAPT** is an organization “fighting so people with disabilities can live in the community with real supports instead of being locked away in nursing homes and other institutions” (taken from the ADAPT website).
- ◆ **PEOPLE FIRST** is a self-governing, self-directing, self-advocacy organization for individuals with a developmental disability.
- ◆ **SABE (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered)** works to make sure people with disabilities are treated as equals.
- ◆ **CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)** provides resources and advocacy information for individuals with AD/HD and their families.
- ◆ The **Montana chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)** allows you to connect with other Montanans who receive mental health services.





Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about self-advocacy organizations you might want to join. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:

- ☐ Search the Internet to learn about other self-advocacy organizations. For information on some of the self-advocacy organizations out there visit the following website:
http://pluk.mt.typepad.com/transition/advocacy_organizations/
- ☐ Research at least three self-advocacy organizations that interest you.
- ☐ Invite a self-advocate you trust to your next IEP meeting.
- ☐ If you think it would be helpful, use the Interview Guide on pages 66-67 of this workbook to interview a self-advocacy organization representative from the group you want to join.

- 1. What services do you provide?**
- 2. Who is eligible for your services?**
- 3. At what age can I apply for services?**
- 4. Who initiates the application?**
- 5. Can I custom tailor my services if what I need or want isn't exactly what you provide?**
- 6. Are your services time-limited?**

**7. Are there waiting lists for your services? If yes, how long is the average wait?
How do you move up on the list (by date of application, level of need, etc.)?**

8. Are there other ways (besides waiting for an opening) to access your services?

**9. Will you provide the services to me or do you contract with local providers?
If you contract with local providers, who are the providers in my area?**

10. How do I choose the provider I want?

11. Can I change services or providers down the road if I choose?

12. Can a provider say that they don't want to serve me?

Transfer of Rights at Age 18

When you turn 18, you will automatically become your own legal guardian unless someone petitions the court on your behalf to state that you need assistance with certain decisions or activities. During the IEP meeting a year before you turn 18, your special education case manager will explain that at 18, you will have the right to sign your IEP and determine who can attend your IEP meetings unless someone has been appointed your legal guardian.

Do you need a legal guardian? This is a question you must explore with your family. What things do you need help doing? Are there ways for you to get that help without giving up the right to make your own decisions?

Sometimes people need assistance in one area more than another. For example, you might need help applying for a loan and managing your finances but be quite capable of making your own decisions about your IEP and signing off that you agree or disagree with IEP team decisions. In this case, maybe your parents could help you open a bank account that would require co-signatures for all checks (that means you and someone else you trust would have to sign each check you wanted to write). If you ever needed to apply for a loan, your parents or case manager could help you complete the loan application.

Sometimes people need help for a short period of time and then can return to making their own decisions. An example might be if you were very sick in the hospital and were not able to make decisions by yourself. A temporary medical guardianship would allow someone you trust (like your mom or dad) to make important medical decisions on your behalf until you were feeling well enough to make the decisions on your own again. There are lots of options for receiving the help you need without having someone appointed to be your full guardian.





There are lots of activities to help you explore alternatives to guardianship. Here are just a few...put checkmarks in the boxes next to the activities you will try.

- ☐ Visit the following web page for an explanation of alternatives to guardianship:
http://www.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Partner_vol5_iss3.pdf
- ☐ Have a conversation with your parents. Ask them what they are most worried about when they think about you living on your own and working in the community. Talk about what scares you, too. Then brainstorm ways you can address those fears. For example, if your parents are afraid you'll forget to pay your bills and you'll lose your apartment, it might make sense to open a bank account and set it up so that your bills are automatically paid from the account every month.
- ☐ Ask your parents to read about a Medical Power of Attorney and talk about it with you.
- ☐ Think about whether or not you want your parents to attend your IEP meetings once you turn 18. Have an open, honest discussion with them so you can compare the benefits of having them at the meeting against any negatives from having them there.
- ☐ Talk about alternatives to guardianship with self-advocates from groups like ADAPT and your local Independent Living Center.
- ☐ Start your research early. Remember, this is YOUR LIFE. Take the lead in planning and preparing for it!

We wish you all the best as you fit your transition puzzle pieces together. When you finish, may you find the picture of a rich, rewarding, meaningful life in the community where you choose to live...a life that includes education, employment, housing, recreational activities, community involvement, social connections, and the supports you need to do all the things you want and need to do.

