

Here's to Your Student's Future!

A Parent's Guide to Transition Planning



Updated 2009

Produced by:
Rhode Island Parent Information Network
&
RI Department of Education
Office for Diverse Learners



Dear Parent or Guardian:

Are you the parent of a son or daughter who has special needs? So are we! All parents want to help their students plan for adult life and reach their dreams and goals. But sometimes our son's or daughter's special needs make planning for the future more difficult. We parents may need to work with many different people and agencies to bring together the supports our student will need to reach his or her goals. When it works well our planning pays off.

Transition planning is a way for students ages 14 to 21 and their families, school staff and service providers to prepare the student for life after high school. (For some students, transition planning may begin younger than age 14, if appropriate.) As Transition Coordinators for the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), we have created this *Transition Guide for Parents* to get you and your student started in that process.

We Can Help with Transition Planning

Transition Coordinators work as partners with Rhode Island's Regional Transition Centers. We can connect you with people and agencies that offer information and support for transition planning.

As parents of students with special needs, we understand many of the issues parents face – we have been in your shoes!

We can help you and your student:

- understand and be partners in the IEP/transition process;
- think about questions to ask teachers and school staff about your student's future;
- find your way through the school services and programs;
- find assistance with youth and adult supports and services, legal questions, and other issues; and
- share ideas and plans with other parents.

Call us anytime if you have questions, or if we can help you in any way. Look in this guide's resource section under "Regional Transition Centers," or call RIPIN at 401-270-0101, or toll free at 800-464-3399.

Here's to your student's future!

Sincerely,

RIPIN Transition Coordinators

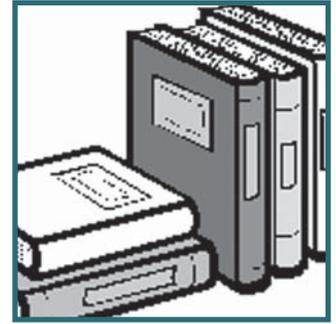


Table of Contents

What is Transition Planning?.....	1
The Role of Parents.....	9
College and Continuing Education.....	13
The World of Work.....	17
Community Living and Community Membership....	23
Financial and Legal Matters.....	38
Resources: People and Places to Call.....	42
Acknowledgements.....	46
Appendix: <i>Creating a Map</i>	48

What is Transition Planning?

Transition means making a change, or going from one place to another. For students with disabilities, transition means going from school to the adult world. It's important to plan early for this transition – beginning in the teen years – for a successful and rewarding future.

Transition Planning is part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.



Transition Planning means setting goals, planning and preparing for life after high school, making sure that the student's high school experiences give him or her the skills, connections, and experiences to succeed after high school.

Students, their parents and others explore questions like:

- Where and how do I want to live?
- How can I be part of my community?
- What do I want to do for a job?
- What kind of training or education will I need?
- What skills and experiences should I learn now, so that I can reach my dreams and succeed as an adult?
- What services and supports will I need after high school and who can provide them?

The Transition Plan: What the Law Says

Rhode Island law says that all students who receive special education services must have transition planning included in their IEP (Individualized Education Plan) beginning at age 14 (or younger if appropriate). The IEP must list the student's transition needs and a plan for "instruction and services" to meet those needs. The IEP /Transition Plan must be updated once a year.

Here's what the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** of 2004, which is the federal law governing special education, says about transition planning:

Each child with a disability must have included in their IEP:

Beginning not later than the first effective IEP when the child is 16, and updated annually, the IEP must include:

- Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate assessments related to training, education, employment and where appropriate, independent living skills.
- The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

Beginning at least 1 year before the child reaches age 18

- A statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under IDEA, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching age 18.

Upon graduating or exiting high school

- A Summary of Performance will be provided to students prior to leaving high school. This will include a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance and shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting postsecondary goals.

"Transition Services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability. It is designed to be within a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including:

- post secondary education
- vocational training
- integrated competitive employment (including supported employment)
- continuing and adult education
- adult services
- independent living
- community participation

The coordinated set of activities must be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include needed activities in the following areas:

- instruction
- community experiences
- the development of employment, and other post-school adult living objectives
- if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation

Simply Put, Transition Means...

Helping students and families think about life after high school and create long-term goals.

Planning the high school experience so that students gain the skills and connections they need to reach the goals.

The Transition Planning Team

Transition planning is a team process. The team includes the student, parents, teachers, adult service providers, and people from other community resources. They all work together to develop a Transition Plan that will meet the student's needs and wishes. At the IEP/transition meetings, team members decide who will carry out each transition activity.

The Transition Team's job is to:

- plan early - examine the results of transition and career assessments
- look at school and community options
- teach students to be their own advocates (stand up and speak up for themselves)
- help students to learn new skills or to get better at what they do
- provide "real-life" experiences
- assist students and families to find community agencies that can provide support services

You and your student's ideas are important at these meetings. Also, the school should have an interpreter for you if you do not speak English.

What's in a Transition Plan?

As you plan for transition, your team should think about:

Employment	Will the student need assistance while traveling in the community, planning recreation and leisure activities, and staying connected with friends?
Will the student work and is he or she prepared for work? What type of work will they do?	
Independent Living (if appropriate)	College/Continuing Education
Will the student live on his or her own someday? Is the student ready to manage his or her own personal affairs, finances, health, safety, and health care and be his or her own advocate?	Will the student be going on for further education or training and are they academically ready?

Transition Goals and Objectives

The IEP/Transition Plan should have individually designed goals and objectives (steps to reach those goals) for the appropriate transition areas.

The Transition Plan is imbedded in the IEP and includes:

- When the student expects to graduate with a regular high school diploma.
- The results of transition and career assessments including community and work experiences that have helped the student choose post-school goals.
- Measurable post-school goals for employment, further education and training and if appropriate, independent living.
- Present level of student performance related to the post-school goals.
- The transition services and program of study the student will need to reach their post-school goals.
- Specific special education goals, objectives and related services that support the post-school goals.

It's important to remember that you and your son or daughter know best what his or her dreams, goals and support needs are. Think first about what your student wants for his or her future. Then, work with the school, service providers and support agencies to find ways to reach those goals.

Be creative! Don't just settle for "what's on the menu" at a certain agency. Work with service providers to help build supports to meet your student's needs.

Your Transition IEP Checklist

Use this checklist to see whether or not your student's IEP meets the requirements of IDEA (the federal law covering education for students with disabilities) and RI Special Education Regulations:

- Did the team discuss when the student is expected to graduate with a regular diploma? If the student will not earn a regular diploma, what credential will the student exit with?
- Did the student take part in developing the Transition Plan and IEP? If not, did the team take other steps to make sure the student's interests and needs were considered in the plan?
- Were staff members of agencies which might be providing or paying for transition services invited to the IEP/transition meeting? If the invited agencies did not send any staff members, did the team take other steps to make sure those or the agencies took part?
- Did the team review transition and career assessments? Were career assessments initiated at age 14 and reviewed annually?
- Does the Transition/IEP include measurable post-school goals in:
 - employment
 - post secondary education and training
 - independent living (if appropriate)
- Does the transition/IEP describe the student's academic and functional performance related to the post-school goals?
- Are there transition services written into the transition/IEP that address what the student will need to reach their post-school goals?
- Is the program of study in the IEP one that will assist the student to reach the post-school goals?
- Are the annual goals and objectives designed to help the student reach the long-range goals?
- Was the need for assistive technology in transition considered?
- Did the IEP team meet again if the responsibilities of other agencies identified in the IEP were not met?
- For students turning 17, did the team talk about the transfer of rights to the student?
- Did the school arrange for an interpreter if you do not speak English?
- Did the school provide you with a summary of performance, if your child is graduating or exiting school?

A Transition Plan Timeline

You and your son or daughter may wish to think about many of the items below when you prepare transition plans with your IEP team. Not all of them may apply to your student, and there may be other areas important to you that are not listed here.

4 to 5 Years Before Leaving School

Your son or daughter might take these steps:

Community Living

- Think about where and how you would like to live, and supports you would need to do this.
- Begin learning skills you'll need for independent living.
- Look into assistive technology that can make it easier to have a job and be part of your community.
- Become more involved in your community and make new friends.
- Look into and learn to use public transportation (like buses).
- Look into driver's education when the time is right for you.
- Think about skills you'll need for taking care of your money (budgeting, savings, checking account).
- Get an identification card and learn when and how to give out personal information.
- Learn and practice personal care.

School and Work

- Know how you learn best and what accommodations you need to do well in school and at work.
- Explore your job and career interests and skills. Complete interest and career inventories, and think about other schooling or training you would need.
- Look into college or continuing education schools or programs, and their admission requirements.
- Start financial planning (financial aid for college or continuing education).
- Save samples of your best school work and achievements.
- Explore opportunities to volunteer in the community.
- Take part in informational interviews or job shadowing experiences.

Being Your Own Advocate

- Learn to make clear to others your interests, wishes, and needs.
- Be able to explain your abilities and disabilities and any accommodations you might need.
- Learn and practice how to make informed decisions.

Two to Three Years Before Leaving School

Your son or daughter might take these steps:

Community living

- ❑ Learn about community supports offered by community and state agencies.
- ❑ Invite adult service providers, friends, and others to the IEP/Transition meeting.
- ❑ Learn independent living skills, such as budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping.
- ❑ Figure out what personal assistant services you need, and how to manage these services.
- ❑ Choose health care providers and learn about sexuality and family planning.
- ❑ Visit a variety of adult support agencies. Ask questions about services they could provide or could create to meet your needs.

School and Work

- ❑ Match career interests and skills with vocational (job-related) courses and work experiences in the community.
- ❑ Seek summer employment (intern in your career interest area).
- ❑ Begin a resume and make changes to it as needed.
- ❑ Learn more about colleges and other adult education schools and programs, and the support services they offer. Make plans for accommodations to take college entrance exams and complete applications. Find out what options are available for financial aid and scholarships.
- ❑ Take part in job shadowing experiences that are offered.
- ❑ Apply to ORS (Office of Rehabilitation Services) and if appropriate the Division of Developmental Disabilities to see if you are eligible for services from them.

Supports

- ❑ Determine your need for income support and health care support like SSI (Supplemental Security Income), Independent Living Services and Medicaid.
- ❑ Work with your parents on setting up trusts, if needed.
- ❑ Practice how to communicate best with others at work, at school, with friends, and in the community.
- ❑ Make plans to be sure you will still have the assistive technology you need after you leave high school.

Being Your Own Advocate

- ❑ Look into the legal status of decision-making before you become a legal adult.
- ❑ Learn about the laws that affect the rights of people with disabilities, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Rehabilitation Act, etc.

One Year Before Leaving School

Community Living

- Make detailed plans for living on your own if that's your goal. Keep practicing your independent living skills.
- Learn to take care of your health care needs (make appointments, fill and take prescriptions, etc.).
- Make a list of people and agencies that can help you if problems come up.

Supports

- Make sure you have in place any income and health care support programs you might need (SSI, Independent Living Services, Medicaid).
- Build detailed plans of supports you will need with adult service agencies.
- Begin transitioning into your new adult service plan.

School and Work

- Choose and get a job, along with any supports needed.
- Learn to be on time for work, appointments, and social activities.
- Make plans for how you will get to school, work, etc. (bus, car, friends).
- Get copies of transcripts and other important records from your school before you graduate.
- Write your resume and get letters of recommendation from teachers before you graduate. These may be needed by adult service providers or colleges. Also, ask that they make these records available.
- Choose the college or adult education school or program you plan to go to and make plans with the school for accommodations.

Being Your Own Advocate

- Work on communication skills and self-advocacy skills (standing up for and speaking up for yourself).
- Become involved with advocacy and support groups.

The Role of Parents



Hannah is a busy, social teenager. She is involved in sports, chorus and a church youth group. As part of her IEP/Transition plan, Hannah is learning to use a communication board programmed with phrases like, “Do you live near me?” and “My phone number is...” She is also learning to socialize well with others. Hannah’s vocational activities at school include photocopying, delivering the newspaper to faculty, and selling candy with classmates at lunchtime.

Hannah’s mother, Claire, says that, “It’s important for parents to make sure that the students work towards their IEP goals at home as well as in school. Parents should give their sons and daughters responsibilities at home and in the community,” says Claire, “as much responsibility as they can handle.”

Parents need to act as coordinators, talking with all of the IEP/Transition team members, sharing information, and making sure they are all working toward the same goals. “The team members have a ‘snapshot’ of your child,” explains Claire, “but you and your student carry the history. As your child enters adult life, there will be a whole new set of people. You know what works for your child and what doesn’t.”



The Role of Parents

During your student's transition years, you might have to play many roles, including these:

Share What You Know About Your Student

You can share important information about your student's personal traits, interests, likes and dislikes. Be clear about your student's abilities at IEP meetings and transition planning meetings.



Be a Role Model

Let your student know that he or she can become as independent as possible. Give your student chores around the home, and focus on good grooming, physical fitness, and good social and communication skills.

Be a Case Manager

You will need to make sure that the goals of the transition plan are fully met. This can be hard if your student's need for services continue after his or her school years. It's likely you will have to work with many different people and agencies to get the adult services and supports your son or daughter needs.

Encourage Job and Career Exploration at School and at Home

You and your student's teachers need to talk with the student about the many career choices, and the rewards of work. Talk to your son or daughter about your own job and other jobs and careers, and have him or her explore hobbies which use skills and tools related to his or her job interests. Find out about School-to-Career, summer jobs, and other programs in your school and community.

Work for More and Better Supports

You and your student must keep working with service providers, employers, and policy makers to create more choices for students with special needs.

Let Your Son or Daughter Take Risks

You might have mixed feelings about your son or daughter becoming more independent-many parents do. You might know that letting go is the best thing, but it can be hard to let your student take the risks that go with independence. It helps to stay focused on your student's abilities.

Be a Financial Planner

Often when young people with disabilities work or get money from others, this can change their cash payments from programs like SSI. Talk to professionals about how your son or daughter's job, savings, and things like trusts and inheritance might affect this, and make plans for it.

How Can You Help Your Student Prepare for Transition

Listen to Your Student's Ideas, Goals and Dreams.

Focus on your student's interests and abilities rather than disabilities. Encourage and help your student explore his or her dreams and ideas, even if yours are different.

Help Your Student Learn the Skills that He or She Will Need As an Adult

Find ways for your student to be independent from a young age. Have your student practice self-help skills, and give him or her tasks around the house.

Give your student a chance to make choices and learn to make wise decisions.

Teach your student to be his or her own advocate.

Have your student practice social and communication skills needed for work, school, recreation, and friendships.

Help your student be part of the community. Look into after-school and recreational activities, chances to volunteer, and job options.

Work on IEP goals and objectives at home as well as at school.

Make the Most of the IEP Process

Begin planning early – at least by age 14.

Encourage your student to be a part of the planning process as much as possible. Make sure he or she is part of team meetings and the opportunity to provide input.

Ask your student's teacher about IEP planning tools, such as MAPS, COACH, etc.

Be Prepared for IEP Meetings

You can bring others to your student's IEP meeting (relative, friend, advocate, service provider). They can give moral support, help gather and share information and viewpoints, and even take notes. Talk with the special education director or your student's teacher about who you would like to invite.

Write down questions and ideas you have, both before and during the meeting. Have people explain anything that is not clear to you. Get answers to all your questions before the meeting ends. Or get a date when people will get back to you.

Think about the goals and objectives in the IEP/transition plan. Will they prepare your student for adult life, such as living and working in the community?

Do not feel pressured to make decisions on the spot.

Before you leave the meeting, make sure you know what will happen next, such as when you will get the written IEP and who the contact person is.

Become Involved in Your Student's School

One of the most important things a parent can do is get to know the school staff – both the regular and special education staff.

Find out about all school services, including regular education and after-school activities (such as sports and clubs). Get to know the people involved in the activities that interest your student.

Join the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO /PTA), the Special Education Local Advisory Committee (LAC), or the School Improvement Team. Share ideas with other parents about creating and getting access to inclusive programs and activities.

Start Planning Now for Adult Services and Supports

Learn about the different programs and services that are available for your student now and when he or she gets older.

Which will help him or her be independent and be part of the community?

Figure out what supports your student now gets that will need to be continued in the future. Find out what agencies can provide these supports.

Invite any agencies who might offer transition or adult services to your student to the IEP / transition planning meeting.

Begin financial planning for your student's adult life. At age 17, look into applying for SSI (Supplemental Security Income). Find out about Ticket to Work plans and other Social Security programs. Find out about how adult services will be paid for. Think about estate planning and guardianship issues.

Keep Good Records

Before the student leaves school, get copies of all high school transcripts, evaluations, tests, and reports.

Write down notes on each meeting and phone conversation, with the name of the agency, contact person and date. Keep a copy of all letters between you and agencies. Keep everything organized in file folders or three-ring notebooks.

Keep records of any on-the-job training reports or other work experiences the student has had. Get letters of recommendation from the employers, teachers, or job coaches.

Become an Advocate

Get to know the laws covering education and disability issues (ADA, IDEA, Rehabilitation Act). Also get to know your decision-makers and law-makers.

Student-Centered Planning

Planning for your student's transition to adult life should center around your student's own strengths, interests and dreams for his or her future. When an IEP team or other group meets to help your son and daughter plan, everyone should keep this in mind.

Student-Centered Planning in the IEP/Transition Process

High school students and their families should set the goals for transition planning. Here is the law:

- Both the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) support an empowered role for people with disabilities in transition planning. Both of these laws say this about transition services:

“The coordinated set of (transition) activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and the interests...”

- The Rehabilitation Act Amendments also require a statement from the student or young adult about how he or she was involved in developing his or her individual plan for employment.

Person-Centered Planning Tools

Person-centered planning (or in this case, student-centered planning) is planning that keeps team members focused on the student. It also empowers students and their families to become more assertive in their own planning. Some person-centered tools that can be used for IEP /Transition planning include:

- MAPS (Making Action Plans) (O'Brien & Forest, with Snow, J. & Hasbury, D., 1989)
- Lifestyle planning (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1987)
- Personal futures planning (Mount & Zwernick, 1988)
- Outcome-based planning (Steere, Wood, Pancsofar & Butterworth, 1990)
- Essential lifestyle planning (Smull & Harrison, 1992)

An example of the MAPS planning tool is included in the back of this guide. Although each of these planning tools is different, all of them share a common focus on the student's expression of his or her vision for the future and the development of supports needed for realizing this vision.

College and Continuing Education

Heather, a student at Rhode Island College, has had plans for her education and career since high school. But she's also kept her eyes open to possibilities beyond her original vision, which has enabled her to discover her strengths and talents.

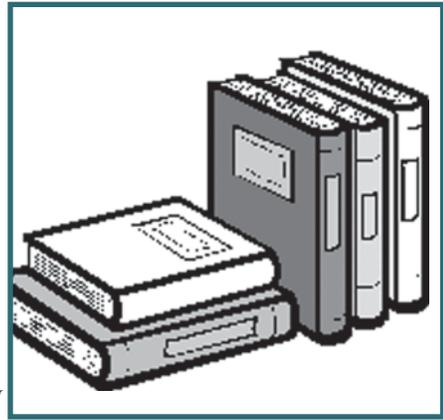
Heather's planning began in high school, with the support of her family, friends and her IEP resource teacher. With her teacher's help she planned and took classes in high school that would prepare her for college. "My resource teacher made sure I was going in the right direction," recalls Heather. "She said, 'You can do it, Heather. You might have to work ten times harder to get there but you will get there.'"

Heather first went to Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), where she majored in Human Services and graduated with an Associates Degree. She received support through CCRI's Access to Independence Program, which supports students who have disabilities. Heather received tutoring in math and science, and some accommodations in her test-taking schedule. She also took a class where students with disabilities learned study strategies and got information about services

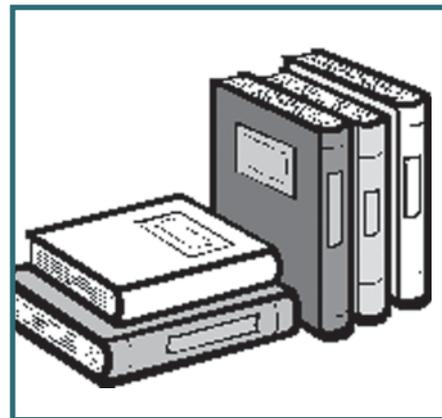
available to them. "When I realized how well I did at CCRI," she says, "I decided to transfer to Rhode Island College (RIC) to further my education." Heather also decided to change her career path from social worker to resource teacher, in part, because of the field experience she had in an elementary school classroom, as part of her studies at CCRI.

Heather has discovered qualities in herself that will help her succeed in her education and career. "I think I have a lot of determination, and a willingness to learn and build on what I know. I also have genuine compassion to help others. It's something I enjoy doing."

Heather's advice to other students who are thinking about continuing their education is: "If you have self-determination, support from family and friends, and a willingness to look for supports and services, the possibilities will be limitless."



College and Continuing Education



Many students with disabilities can and do go to college and other training programs after high school. The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect the rights of students with disabilities in these settings. If a student meets the academic and technical requirements to get into a particular college, then the college must make sure that the student gets an “equal educational opportunity.”

Important! In grade school and high school, the school district was responsible for finding and planning services for students with special needs. But in college, this is different:

What Your Student Should Know About Getting Accommodations

- Disclosing (telling the school about) a disability is your personal choice. But to get accommodations you will have to disclose your disability and provide proof (documentation). All colleges are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide support services to students with disabilities. Documentation is often a recent evaluation.
- **You, the student**, must give documentation and seek needed accommodations.
- You must take the step to tell instructors of your needs. No one will do this for you.
- You must be your own advocate to get needed accommodations and services.
- You have certain rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Know these rights!
- It is your choice – and your responsibility– to find the Office for Disability Services and to identify yourself to get support services provided by the college.
- The college must work with you to create a plan of support that will give you the same chance as other students to benefit from all of your courses or programs.
- The kind of supports or accommodations will depend on the nature of your disability. Some examples might be: taking fewer classes during the semester, remediation and tutoring, use of calculators or other assistive technology, books on tape, oral rather than written tests, interpreters, etc.

To learn more about the rights of college students with disabilities, see the US Department of Education guide *Students with Disabilities Preparing for Post Secondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities* (March 2007).

You and your student should make plans as early as eighth grade in order to have the most and best choices for continuing education. You will also need to know what different schools require.

Here are some questions to ask:

Which Courses Should be Chosen in High School?

Talk with your student about his or her future goals and interests. Talk with school guidance counselors about course options. Encourage your student to take the courses that will best help your student reach his or her goals.

What are the Different Types of Colleges?

- Four year colleges and universities. The student gets a Bachelor Degree after studying a certain area, like English or Science.
- Community colleges, trade schools, and technical schools. Students can usually earn an Associate Degree (2 years) or Certificate of Proficiency (1 year). The Associate Degree can often count toward the first 2 years of a 4-year degree.

What are the Entrance Requirements for College?

Ask your student's high school guidance counselor about what each college requires for admission. You can also write to the school's admissions office, or use a computer data base or the internet. Find out if your school or library has access to these resources.

What Support Services Does the College Offer?

Some colleges provide the minimum supports while others have more full- fledged support programs. Your student should talk with the Office of Disability Services for the colleges he or she is interested in to see if their supports will meet his or her needs. Find out what proof or "documentation" of disability they require for your student to qualify for services.

When Should my Student take College Entrance Exams?

Talk to your high school guidance counselor early on about these tests. Special education students qualify to take the ACT or SAT college entrance tests under special testing conditions. Because special testing is reported to the colleges, talk first with your student's school counselor or college consultant about whether your student's scores can and/or should be kept out of the application process.

When Does My Student Apply to Colleges?

Some special needs support programs in the colleges may require students to apply for them early. Talk to your guidance counselor during his or her sophomore year.

How Does My Student Find out about Financial Aid?

Your high school guidance department can tell you about state and federal financial aid loans, and scholarships given by private groups. Also, call the financial aid offices of the colleges you are interested in to find out about other financial aid available. If your student will be getting service from ORS (Office of Rehabilitation Services), find out about their financial aid resources. The internet is a good source of information on scholarships available to students with disabilities.

Planning for College and Continuing Education

This worksheet may help your student think about what school would make a good match with your student's goals, and what supports might be needed.

- Know Your Strengths
- What goal(s) do you hope to reach in college?
- Are you motivated even when things become difficult?
- What are the ways you cope with your frustrations?
- If needed, are you willing to put in long hours studying?
- What are your strong points?

Social relationships	Creativity
Verbal skills	General knowledge
Mechanical skills	Math
Art	Reading Sports
Music	Humor
Drama	Other areas
Problem solving	Written expression

- What classes are you best at in high school?
- Do you seek help when you have trouble learning something new?
- Do you manage your time so you can finish your schoolwork?

Know Your Challenges

- Is reading hard for you? What is your reading grade level? Do you do better when the material is read to you?
- Is math hard for you? Do you need a calculator to do math assignments?
- Do you have difficulty writing your ideas? Are there errors when you proof-read your papers? Have you ever used a tape recorder to dictate your work? Have you had experience using word processing?

- Do you have problems in understanding what others say? Do you tape classroom presentations when needed? Do you sit near the front of the room so you can watch the teacher's face and lips? Do you review your notes to be sure you understand the important ideas expressed in the lecture?
- How are your study skills? Do you have trouble organizing your time? How about your note-taking and outlining skills? Do you have difficulty using reference materials? Do you have trouble keeping your attention on what you are studying?
- What types of accommodations, including assistive technology, will you need?

Know About the School

- What is the address and contact person at the school's admissions office and special program office?
- What courses of study are offered?
- What are the admission requirements? These might include ACT and SAT scores, high school transcripts, grade point average, and any special considerations for students with disabilities.
- What are the costs? Think about tuition, disability services, room and board, and textbooks and supplies. Also, what financial aid can you apply for?
- Accessibility: Are the buildings, classrooms, dorms, doorways, walkways, restrooms, cafeterias, etc. accessible to you? Living accommodations: Are there single rooms? How many roommates? Library: Is it adequate? Within walking distance? When is it open? Does it have alternate formats (audio cassette, large print, braille, etc.)
- How many students with special needs are on campus? How many graduate?
Is this college really for you based on what you have found?

Know About the Services Provided by the School

- Know your rights to accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and know how to request them.
- Learn exactly which services you can get at the college, what proof is needed to qualify, who provides the services, and how you access them.
- Are health and medical services you need available on campus or nearby?

The World of Work

Kevin Goldberger has worked part-time as a stocker for Jamiel's shoe store for several years. His favorite part of the job is "working with the different people here," not to mention the employee discounts.

Kevin, a high school senior, has had many different work and volunteer experiences that can help him decide what career path to follow after high school. Many of these experiences reflect Kevin's interests. Because he enjoys meeting people, several of his jobs have been in stores and restaurants. He likes sports and has helped out with sports teams at his high school and a local university.

Kevin has gotten these work experiences in several different ways. As part of his school day during his sophomore and junior year, his high school provided for work experiences with a job coach in such places as a local restaurant and a hospital laundry and mail room.

Kevin also received vocational evaluation and job experiences through the Office of Rehabilitation Services. During three summers, Kevin tried out landscaping, delivering meals on wheels, helping out the Brown football team, and working at a

restaurant. Kevin has gotten other jobs through connections

with family and friends. For example, the owner of the shoe store was a family friend. While Kevin was at the store one day, he simply asked the store owner for a job. Since then, he's worked there two days a week.

At some jobs he's had the support of job coaches, but at Jamiel's it's not needed because of the "natural support" offered by the store owner and other employees. His employer has noticed "more maturity in Kevin, and he's become more organized. Kevin has good people skills."

Kevin is also learning the value of money. He is saving to go to college after high school, and then would like to perhaps work in a restaurant. Whatever Kevin decides to do, his work experiences have shown him that he has many choices, skills and talents to consider in deciding upon a career.



The World of Work

There are thousands of different jobs and careers. The challenge is to find a job where the skills and interests of the employee (the student) match the needs of the employer. People with disabilities have several options for working:

- A job in the community
- Supported employment (a job in the community with supports)
- Segregated options (such as workshops)



Because most of the choices available are regular jobs in the community, and because these are the choices that all people have (not just those with disabilities), ideally students should work toward that goal. To reach that goal, students and their families and school may need to go beyond existing services and create supports to meet their own needs.

Full-time work may not be the goal of some students; creating a variety of meaningful paid and unpaid experiences may help these students reach satisfying personal goals.

Supported employment is paid work in the community in which the worker has support from an employment training specialist, job coach, or vocational (job-related) instructor. Some people may need ongoing support, but usually the support is “phased out” over time. Often “natural supports” may be developed among co-workers and supervisors, through accommodations and other changes in routines.

Sheltered workshops are separate workplaces where only people with disabilities work, usually doing piecework. Some people may train in workshops and move into community jobs; it has been shown, however, that most people who train in workshops remain there.

These goals might help as a guide in looking for a job and job supports:

- Community-based, integrated work
- Meaningful work (the student wants to do it and thinks it is important)
- Treatment as a regular employee
- Allows choice and decision making
- Right to take risks and learn through experience
- Flexible supports, not inflexible programs
- Focus on careers, not just a job

Choosing a Job or Career

Help your student set a job or career goal, and aim high. Your student will then need a plan. He or she should think about assistance, schooling or training that may be needed. Many people can help with a job search: family and friends, and members of the transition team. You don’t need to have all the answers yourself.

Vocational Assessment

For students with special needs in Rhode Island, planning for a job or career after high school begins at age 14 with a vocational assessment. This assessment looks at a person's strengths and needs related to his or her job and career goals. In a vocational assessment, information is gathered about a student's:

- skills
- interests
- potential to learn
- job and career exploring experiences (volunteering, part-time or summer work, job shadowing, etc.)
- the student's language, culture and family
- assistive technology requirements

A vocational assessment may include:

- a review of school information and interviews with the student, family, and teachers (a Level I assessment)
- vocational evaluations – formal job-related testing (Level II)
- job and student performance analyses made on the job, or in work-like settings (Level III).

A vocational assessment is not a single test. It is a process of gathering information from many sources about a student's career-related skills, abilities and interests. This process happens over time. This information should be gathered and used by the IEP /Transition team for planning the student's annual goals.

Who must Provide Vocational Assessments?

The school district must provide vocational assessments needed to plan transition services. The school must complete a Level I assessment of all students with special needs beginning at age 14. The assessment results are reviewed at least once a year and further developed as needed. Be sure to ask your IEP team about plans for vocational assessment when your student is 14 years old.

By the time transition services begin, the school, family and student should know the results of Level I vocational assessments and be able to talk about the student's abilities, skills and interests at the IEP /transition meeting. Level II or III assessment's can then be planned if needed. The vocational assessment should give the IEP / Transition team information to build good career-related goals and objectives.

Vocational Assessment Checklist

These questions might help you decide if your student's vocational assessment really reflects his or her interests, abilities, and work potential:

The Assessment Process

- Have you and your student been active members of the planning team?
- If your student already has an interest in a certain career, does the assessment explore his or her skills in this area?
- Does the assessment include a variety of ways to gather information?
 - Written tests?
 - Oral tests?
 - Interviews with student, parent and teachers?
 - Review of past school records?
 - Student's interests, hobbies and community experiences?
 - Clinical testing (Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, etc.)?
 - Hands-on work experience, if needed?
- If the assessment includes tests:
 - Are they free of cultural bias?
 - Does your student speak the language in which the test(s) were given?
 - Do they provide accommodations he or she needs, including assistive technology?
 - Does the assessment look at how your student did only once on a certain task? Does it look at whether your student could get better with practice?

Planning with the Assessment Results

- Are assessment results reported in a format you can understand?
- Who is involved in looking at and planning with the assessment results? Your student, you and all members of the IEP team should participate.
- Do the assessment results give the team information about:
 - Your student's strong points?
 - Any aids or services your student needs to succeed?
 - Areas where your student needs extra help, or change in learning methods, materials or settings?
 - Your student's work-related skills and habits?
- Does the assessment open doors for your student, rather than close them?
- Does the assessment "fit" your son or daughter? Does it give you and the IEP team good information to develop your student's transition plan?

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) **(a division of the Department of Human services)**

ORS (the Office of Rehabilitation Services) is the state agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services for eligible persons with disabilities who are planning or looking for work. They also assist people with disabilities to live independently in their community.

You and your student may have already met an ORS Rehabilitation Counselor at your IEP /transition meeting. You can also call ORS directly to apply for services for your student.

While Your Student is Still in School, ORS Can:

- Give your student information and help him or her apply for ORS services.
- Tell your student if he or she is eligible for ORS services.
- Give information about careers and resources to you, your student and his or her school that might be helpful before and after leaving high school.
- Help you, your student and his or her school decide on goals for school, work and other life areas after graduation and what steps your student needs to take to reach those goals.
- Create an Individualized Plan for Employment with you and your student in which your student can identify his or her job and career goals and the services he or she needs to reach those goals.

Planning Together with ORS:

- Have your student apply for ORS services early enough to make a good Transition Plan (at least two years before leaving high school or earlier).
- Share information, ideas, questions, and wishes about your student's future with your ORS counselor.
- Keep in touch with your ORS counselor and follow through on the things your student has agreed to do. Let your Counselor know when things are going well and when you are having problems.

To reach ORS, ask your transition team or look under Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in the resource list at the end of this guide.

Supported Employment

Supported employment offers services and supports to people with significant disabilities to choose, get and keep jobs. The ORS or the DDD (Division of Developmental Disabilities) contract with agencies around the state to provide supported employment services.

Who is Eligible?

People can get supported employment services if they

- are age 18 or older,
- and have a disability that is a major barrier to gainful employment (a paid job).

How to get Supported Employment

If your student needs supported employment after high school, you should ask the DDD case manager and/ or ORS counselor who is part of your Transition Team these questions:

- Does he or she support the idea of your student working in the community?
- Will he or she work to have your student move directly into a job after high school, or first spend time in community rehabilitation program?
- How does he or she work with rehabilitation programs or other agencies to obtain supported employment for people with disabilities?

If the ORS counselor or case manager you are now working with is not helpful in finding supported employment, ask for a meeting with his or her supervisor.

Call or visit supported employment agencies to learn more about what they provide. Not every agency is right for every person.

For more information, talk to ORS and DDD. Their phone numbers are listed in the Resource section at the end of this guide.

If my student receives Social Security benefits, can he or she work?

Yes, the Social Security Administration is aware of how important working is for young adults and Social Security has many programs and incentives for students with disabilities to work. Rhode Island also has Social Security benefits planners available to assist you and your student in understanding the Social Security work incentives. (See legal section for more information).

Have You Thought About This? Employment

About the IEP Post-School Goals

- What are your student's job and career interests, skills and needs? Do the IEP /Transition Plan goals and objectives match these?
- Is your student in a vocational education plan and/ or program that meets his or her interests and abilities, with needed accommodations?
- Has your student been referred to the ORS (Office of Rehabilitation Services) to apply for job and career counseling and services?
- If your student is eligible for ORS, was the ORS Counselor invited to the IEP? If so, did she or he give input?
- Do the IEP (school plan) and Individual Plan for Employment show how the school and the vocational agency will work together?

About the Job

- What kind of work and activities does your student enjoy? Where does he or she want to work?
- Does the student need more education or training for the job or career?
- Does the job suit the student's work style (noisy, quiet, casual, formal)?
- What does the job pay? How much money does the student need to earn in order to support his or her lifestyle?
- Does the job have benefits (insurance, vacation, payment towards classes)?
- Will having a job affect SSI or other benefits or programs?
- How flexible are the hours for medical needs or other accommodations?
- Is the job challenging enough? Are there chances for raises and promotions?
- What kind of supervision, mentoring or job coaching is needed?
- Does the job offer any on the job training?
- What does the job require physically? How will the student's need for accommodations be met?
- Does your student know his or her rights under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)?

Community Living and Community Membership



Summit General Store is the hub of the village of Greene. Randy Sroka, who works at the store, is a well-known member of the community here, and most people who enter the store stop to talk with him.

Besides his job at the store, Randy is active in the community in many other ways. With the support of adult service agencies, Randy goes to the beach, movies, dancing, picnics, walks and swimming. He also has connections to this small, closeknit community through relatives and friends of the family. “He’s out and about all over the place,” explains his mother Jane, “People are always saying, I saw Randy today.”

Randy contributes to the community through his work and ability to connect with people and emphasize. “His big gift is his smile. He makes people feel good. He supports others,” says his employer, Rob Skaling.

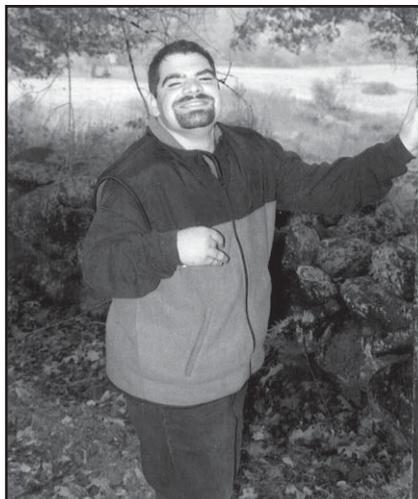
In planning for his adult life, a big goal for Randy was to become part of the community, which included planning for social activities, safety

concerns, personal care and support. In high school,

community experiences were part of his vocational assessment and general assessments. He practiced learning to cook and other independent living skills, and teamwork.

While Randy was still in high school, he and his parents worked with adult service agencies to plan services and develop relationships. “You need to learn to trust people,” says Jane.

Randy also spends time with his friends and girlfriend. He and his girlfriend go to events, movies, dancing and parties. With support from his family, friends and service providers, Randy is continuing to work on independent living skills, and strengthening his relationships in the community and with his girlfriend. “That’s very important,” says Jane, “since the biggest thing in life for all of us is to love.”



Community Living and Community Membership



Community living is about more than just where we live.

It is about:

- choosing how, where, and with whom we live
- having the supports to live as independently as possible
- being connected to others in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities
- feeling safe and comfortable in our homes and neighborhoods
- enjoying life, including recreation and how we spend our spare time.

So many students' hopes and dreams (and their parents' hopes and dreams for them) revolve around being as independent as possible, while also being a connected and valued member of the community. Here is where much of your creative thinking will come in, as well as the willingness to take some risks, and look beyond traditional options.

If you feel that existing services will not meet the needs of your student, or does not give your student a full range of choices, you have other options.

- Connect with other parents and see what they have done. For example:
- Did any of them buy a house for their son or daughter? Go in on a condominium with a roommate?
- How have they provided for estate planning?
- How do they find, develop and keep support staff?
- How do they pay for support staff (agency vouchers, their own money, etc)?
- Have they built upon the “natural supports” of family, friends or neighbors?
- Have they found different or creative options for jobs or activities?

If your student will someday live on his or her own without the support of others, has the transition plan addressed the skills he or she will need to do this? Has your student learned these skills? Your student will need to learn to:

- Manage finances
- Manage a home, repair and maintain a home or apartment
- Care for personal needs
- Buy and prepare food
- Buy and care for clothing
- Act as a responsible adult

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, transportation, access to public places like restaurants, hotels, shops theaters, parks, libraries, etc., and state and local government services and telecommunications. To learn more about the ADA and other civil rights laws, call the RI Governors Commission on Disabilities, listed in the Resource section.

Independent Living Centers

Independent living centers provide services directed by the person who has a disability. They offer many services to all people with disabilities, including:

- information and referral
- independent living skills training
- peer support
- individual and system advocacy

Also, for those who qualify, other independent living services consist of;

- personal care attendant program
- equipment recycling program – including hearing aide recycling, and
- funds for modifying homes and buying equipment

Agencies that can help your student with Independent Living supports include OSCIL (Ocean State Center for Independent Living) and PARI Independent Living Center. Their numbers are listed in the Resource Section at the end of this guide.

Housing

Rhode Islanders with disabilities and special needs have come up with many different housing options. To meet their personal lifestyles and needs, they might:

- own their own home.
- rent their own house, condominium, or apartment
- share a home or apartment with a family or a person without a disability
- live with their own family, with support and respite provided
- live in an in-law apartment that is attached to their family's home, but with its own entrance, kitchen, etc.
- live in a home or apartment with supports
- live in a group home with 24-hour support

These are just a few examples of living arrangements. There are many other possibilities. The key is for you and your student to plan what would best match his or her lifestyle, wishes and needs. Talk with other young adults and parents about their choices, and visit some of the living arrangements you are thinking of. It might also help to brainstorm with family and friends.

Most important, don't be afraid to dream. You can always look into ways to pay for your student's home once you've figured out the best option. Look into possible support through such agencies as independent living centers, adult community service agencies, residential agencies, RIHMFC (RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation), and HUD (Housing and Urban Development).

To find out more about housing, call the agencies listed in the Resource section at the end of this guide.

Some Community-Based Options

Here is a list of some of the living options for people with disabilities, and their definitions. Remember, while it's helpful for you to be aware of these traditional and nontraditional options, you don't have to choose from this list only.

Own Home – Living in one's own home, or that of one's family.

Shared Home/Apartment – Sharing a house or apartment with one or more unrelated people.

Independent Living – Living without residential support or supervision. This may include supports that are directed by the person with a disability, such as Personal Care Attendants (PCAs), peer supports, home modifications, or assistive technology.

Semi-Independent Living – Staff provides different levels of supervision.

Group Home – Staff provides care, supervision, and training for people with certain disabilities.

ICF-MRs (Intensive-Care Facilities for People with Mental Retardation) – Residential programs with 15 or fewer people that provides services 24 hours a day, seven days a week for people who need developmental nursing services and a planned program of active treatment.

Supervised Apartment/Home – Semi-independent living, where staff live in a separate unit in the same building or complex. The person may live alone or with roommates.

Adult Foster Care – A house or apartment owned or rented by a family with 1 to 3 people with disabilities living as foster family members.

Section 8 – A HUD (Housing and Urban Development) voucher program for people with low income that provides payments for rental property that is decided upon between the renter and the landlord.

Section 202 – A HUD program for people who are elderly or have a disability. It is open only to nonprofit, tax-exempt agencies. The rent cannot be more than 30% of the renter's income.

Personal Care Home – Staff assist with dressing, bathing, or other personal care, but no formal training is given to the participants.

Board and Care Home – Provides bedrooms, all meals and regular care or supervision. The level of assistance is less than that in skilled nursing care.

Community Supports

Family and Friends

The types of supports available around housing and independent living vary quite a bit. Families and friends may continue to play a major role in a student's life, but this role will change. The role of the family becomes less to guide the student in a certain direction (usually set by the parents) and more to assist the student to reach the level of independence that he or she chooses.

During the transition years, students may begin to rely more on the advice of friends and express their own choices. Other supports that parents and friends may have provided are now the student's responsibility. The parents may have decided how and what the student ate, or how he or she dressed in the younger years. As an adult, the student will decide these things, and will have to tell others his or her needs and wishes.

Natural Supports

Natural supports are supports that are already part of our lives, "naturally." For example, it is common for roommates to assist each other with things like cooking and housework. Friends and neighbors may also offer support in many other areas, such as loaning items or offering to fix something.

Community Membership

Being a member of the community means much more than just living in the community. It means taking an active part in community activities, developing friendships, giving something back to the community, and feeling that your contribution is valued.

As students move from school to adult life, they should think about their interests, and the changing options for their age group. Also, thanks to the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), all options in the community must now also be open to people with disabilities. Also, don't rule out certain activities because of your student's special needs. There are often ways to adapt an activity, with or without adaptive devices.

Making Inclusive Activities Work

Go with your student the first time if he or she or others are nervous. Or have a friend or volunteer go. Answer any questions or concerns they might have. Encourage everyone to get to know each other and work together.

Remember: the goals of inclusive recreation are not only to develop skills, but to make friends and have fun. Also, know that taking risks and challenging ourselves is the way we learn and grow.

Make changes to activities so that everyone can take part. Ask others in the group for ideas about this. Use volunteers for support if needed, or “buddy up” with other people taking part in the activity.

Friendship and Relationships

The most natural place for students to make friends is through school. See if your school has ways for your student to get involved and meet others with common interests. Look into social skills classes, buddy groups, after-school sports and clubs, and study groups.

If making friends is not easy for your son or daughter, you might call the local college, community group or church, and ask for the names of people who might wish to meet someone new, and help your student meet others.

Your student will need information to make good decisions about dating and sexuality. Some places to call are:
A trusted guidance or rehabilitation counselor or other professional

- Your student’s doctor
- Planned Parenthood
- Masters and Johnson Institute for specific questions or a telephone consultation with a staff member (see the resource listing at the end of this guide)

Recreation: Having Fun

Recreation helps people learn new things, gain a skill, meet new people, and have fun! It can be something one does alone (such as gardening, painting) or a group activity (such as basketball or aerobics).

Where to look for fun things to do:

First, talk to the student about his or her interests. Suggest new ideas that might match his or her interests.

Call the city/town recreation department (look under the name of the city, “Recreation Department” in the phone book). Also call the Chamber of Commerce or tourism office. Don’t just ask about “special” activities, ask about all activities.

The Providence Journal, local newspaper and magazine, and the RI Developmental Disabilities Council publish annual summer recreation guides.

Call the student activity and guidance centers of local colleges. They often have classes and activities for non-students, as well as mentor and buddy programs.

Call the YMCA; local gym; or Special Olympics for inclusive sports programs. Call churches; and chorus and theater groups.

Ask parents, teachers, professionals, friends, and neighbors for ideas.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to meet others with similar interests, and many volunteer activities also include social activities. Remember that volunteering does not mean doing something for free that others get paid to do.

Below are just a few ideas for volunteering. Also look in the newspaper for their “Volunteering” column, or call the Rhode Island Volunteer Center.

Ideas for Volunteering

public radio and television stations	animal shelters
homeless shelters	senior centers and nursing homes
community bands, choruses, orchestras hospitals	local schools and colleges
museums, historical societies	churches and synagogues
YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs	political campaigns
parks and recreation departments	community centers
day care centers	garden clubs
tourist information centers	theaters

Transportation

Transportation (ways to travel) is often a very big issue for students who have special needs and their families. So much of a person's success at work, in the community, and in living independently depends upon having access to transportation that is reliable and affordable. If your student needs training to learn how to get around the community, this should be addressed through the IEP process.

Some students will get a driver's license. Other students will need to learn to use public transportation. And still others must express to family members, friends, or support staff their needs and desires for transportation.

You and your student might think about these options:

- Taking driver's education and getting a license.
- Having access to a car or van, and perhaps adapting it.
- Applying to the Division of Motor Vehicles for a "handicapped parking permit."
- Using buses, trains, and other public transportation.
- Using the RIPTA Para transit Service if your student cannot use regular bus service.

Learning To Drive and Getting a License

Rhode Island law says that driver's education classes shall be available to any eligible person at two months before their 16th birthday or older. The law also says that the State will provide a separate program of instruction for special needs students whose IEP shows a need for this. Talk to your high school staff about driver education classes. Ask ORS about driver evaluation, if needed.

The Community College of Rhode Island provides a driver training program for students with physical disabilities to learn to drive their adapted cars or vans. See the Resource section under Colleges and Continuing Education. Accommodations requests should be made 30 days prior to the beginning of class. It's best to do it in writing!

Public Transportation

If your student plans to use the bus or train to travel to school, work, or around the community, he or she will need to know where the bus routes are, how to get information about times and routes, scheduling his or her time to catch the bus, and handling money for fares.

RIPTA (Rhode Island Public Transit Authority) provides accessible bus service for people with disabilities on all of RIPTA's routes. Also, if your student has a disability which keeps him or her from using RIPTA's regular buses or getting to a nearby bus stop, he or she might be able to use the RIPTA Paratransit service (also called the RIde program.) Your student may be able to get a bus pass for free or a lower rate. Para transit fares cost more than regular bus fares. Your student must apply to become eligible to use the RIde program.

For more information, go to www.ripta.com and review Fixed Routes, RIde Paratransit and Flex Zones.

See "Community Living" in the Resource section at the end of this guide.

Assistive Technology and Accommodations

Parents, teachers and school staff need to understand how assistive technology (AT) and accommodations can create more independence and inclusion for students with special needs at home, in school, at work and in the community. They must also teach students about their options and how to advocate for their own needs.

The student should learn about:

- what accommodations he or she might need.
- where to find them and how to get them.
- where to find funding for accommodations and AT.
- how to advocate for these services.
- how to maintain and repair devices when they break.
- where to go for more information and resources.

It is also very important that the student learn about:

- the laws that relate to AT and accommodations (such as the ADA, IDEA, Tech Act, and Rehabilitation Act, the Telecommunications Act and the RI Lemon Law).
- his or her rights and responsibilities under these different laws.

In the IEP process, an AT evaluation can be done by a knowledgeable service provider such as a vocational evaluator, an AT evaluator, an occupational therapist, or a physical therapist. It's important to think about having an evaluation early in the transition planning process, so that adult services agencies have this information when planning services.

There is a lot of information available on buying, adapting, and using assistive devices. Some devices are high tech. Others are simple items you can find at any store. Often it's best to first look into what's already out there. You might find what you need or something that will work well with small changes. Finally, if you cannot find the assistive device you need, it probably can be created.

The Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)

ATAP is a partnership of agencies that provide information and remove barriers to assistive technology and devices. ATAP can help you and your student:

- learn about and plan for assistive technology needs
- find out how you can get it, and possible funding for it
- understand your rights

ATAP agencies work together under the leadership of ORS (Office of Rehabilitation Services) in the RI Department of Human Services.

See the Resource section at the end of this guide for ATAP and other assistive technology resources.

Examples of Assistive Technology and Accommodations

Here are just a few examples of assistive technology and accommodations, to give you an idea of the range of possibilities. Of course, each student's needs depend on his or her abilities and challenges.

Mobility

- wheelchairs
- ramps, paving and curb cuts
- barrier-free pathways/halls and handrails
- electronic doors

Grasping

- lever doorknobs
- mouth and wrist switches
- dycem/scootguard
- Velcro, straps, and gripping gloves

Vision

- contrasting colors
- large print, braille, audio cassette
- sighted guides
- electronic reading devices
- voice output software

Hearing

- Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs or TTYs)
- assistive listening devices (e.g., FM/Loop/Infrared Systems)
- sign-language interpreters and oral interpreters
- Computer-Assisted Real-Time Transcribing (CART)
- captioned video and TV

Cognition (Learning and Understanding)

- verbal instruction and demonstration
- using pictures in signs and books
- computer-aided learning
- adapted rules
- natural supports (peer mentor, co-worker)

Communication

- picture symbols
- communication boards
- TDDs
- electronic communication devices

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

RI Department of MHRH

DDD is the state agency that oversees services and supports for adults (age 18 and older) with developmental disabilities and their families in Rhode Island. The Division pays for many different services and supports through community agencies or through vouchers that people with disabilities can use to buy the supports they need. Services and supports can include:

- supports needed to live in the community
- job-related services
- health care services
- transportation
- case management
- personal care and other services

Call the Division to see what services your student might be eligible for. Their number is listed in the Resources section at the back of this guide.

Who can Receive Services?

DDD provides services and supports to adults with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

DDD has defined “developmental disability” to mean a person who has a severe, chronic disability which:

- is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments,
- is manifested before the person is 22 years of age,
- is likely to continue indefinitely, and
- results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas:
 - Self-care
 - Understanding and use of language/communication
 - Learning
 - Mobility
 - Self-direction
 - Capacity for independent living
 - Economic self-sufficiency.
- reflects the person’s need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services which are life-long or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

Applying for Services from DDD

Call the Division’s Social Services Unit to apply (again, see the Resource list in the back of this guide). Whether you are eligible is based on a review of your application, information from any agency or professional who has given you services, proof of your developmental disability and an interview with you and your family, if needed.

Students who plan to stay in school until age 21 can apply at age 19. If your student plans to graduate before age 21, he or she should apply for DDD services one year before the planned graduation.

Have You Thought About This? Community Living

Choosing Housing Options

- What kind of housing does the student want? (such as a unit in an apartment complex, a multi-family or single-family house, an apartment in a house)
- How will the student pay for the living option he or she chooses? What kind of financial assistance will the student need?

Choosing living Arrangements

- What does your son or daughter want in his or her home?
 - Stay in his or her present home or having his or her own place.
 - Live near friends and/ or family.
 - Live near public transportation or have accessible parking.
 - Live near stores, community services, places of worship.
 - Live near work or school.
 - Have privacy or companionship; Private space and/or shared space.
 - Keep his or her own pets, furnishings and other personal items.
 - Feeling safe in his or her home and neighborhood.
 - Living alone, with one roommate, or several roommates.
 - Having many activities to do.
 - Having health care services close by.

Will your Student Need Assistance with Any of These Things?

- Getting around the house.
- Preparing meals, and/or sticking to dietary guidelines.
- Transportation.
- Housekeeping, home maintenance and lawn care.
- Medical care.
- Personal care.
- Meeting people and/ or overcoming loneliness.
- Taking care of money matters.
- Help in the community.

Living with Others

- What is your son or daughter looking for in a housemate (such as age, gender, non-smoker, with pets or no pets)?
- What household chores does he or she want to share (housework, cooking, shopping, driving, errands, trash removal, laundry, etc.)?
- Is he or she very neat, or more “loose” when it comes to housekeeping?
- How do the personal habits and lifestyles of potential roommates match?
- How would rent and living expenses be shared and paid for?

Have You Thought About This? Community Membership

Be sure to share this information and your ideas and questions on Community Membership with your planning team.

Activities and Relationships

- Has your student tried many different activities, such as classes, “hanging out” with friends at the movies or mall, independent activities (such as music lessons), or hobbies such as gardening or computer graphics?
- Which types of activities does your student like?
- How much money does your student have to spend on activities?
- Does he or she need transportation to activities?
- Will your student need any accommodations to take part?
- Does your student need to buy sports equipment or hobby supplies?
- Does he or she need assistance with finding and signing up for activities?
- If your student communicates in a way other than speaking, is he or she able to explain it to others?
- Does he or she need assistance in meeting people or developing relationships?
- Does your student know what he or she needs to know about dating and sex?

Volunteering

- Would your student rather do volunteer work with other people or alone?
- What kind of volunteer work does your student like? Does he or she like working with children or elderly people; office activities; outdoor activities?
- Is your student interested in a social issue that he or she could work on?

Voting & Citizenship

- Has your student registered to vote if he or she is 18 or older?
- Has he or she requested an absentee ballot, if needed?
- Does he or she know where and how to vote, and how to ask for assistance, if needed?
- Does your student know the laws he or she will need to follow as an adult?
- Does your student know where and how to get assistance when needed?
- Has your son signed up for selective service?

Have You Thought About This? Transportation

- What type of transportation will the student need? Where will your student be going (work, college, recreation)?
- Does he or she need to live where there is public transportation?
- What type of assistance will the student need on public transportation (Lift assistance in and out of vehicle? People to meet him/her at either end? Door-to-door service?)
- Will he or she be using the Paratransit service?
- Does the student need to practice using public transportation?
- Is the student eligible for financial assistance?
- Will the student drive his or her own car? How will the student get a car? What type of car will the student need? Will he or she need to get a car loan?
- Will the student be able to transfer into the car seat or will he or she need it removed or modified? What other special equipment will the student need for the car?
- Does the student know how to maintain a car?
- Who will teach the student to drive?

Accommodations and Assistive Technology

- Does the student know his or her strengths and challenges? Is the student able to describe his or her needs?
- Does the student know what to ask for in accommodations?
- Does the student understand and know how to use any assistive devices he or she needs?
- Does the student know where to have assistive devices repaired?
- Does the student have a back-up to assistive devices in case they break and are in the repair shop for a long time?
- Does the student understand his or her access needs for work? home? recreation?
- Does the student know about laws covering reasonable accommodation?
- Does the student know where to go for help if he or she is not getting reasonable accommodations?

Have You Thought About This? Health Care and Safety

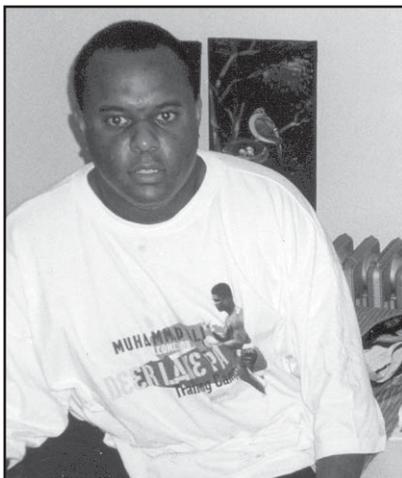
Health Care

- Has your student chosen and met with adult health care providers? Has he or she chosen specialists such as a gynecologist, internist, eye doctor, dentist?
- Has a meeting been arranged between his or her pediatric providers and the new adult providers?
- Has your student figured out which health care procedures he or she can do alone and which he or she will need assistance with?
- Has your student arranged for any home health care he or she needs?
- Does your student have health insurance? Do any potential jobs offer this benefit? Does he or she need Medicaid or Medicare?
- Has your student contacted the student health care office if going to college?
- How will your student get to and from medical appointments?
- Is he or she able to get prescriptions filled?
- Is your student able to tell teachers, employers and friends of his or her health needs and possible emergency plans?

Emergencies

- Have the local fire and rescue departments been told of any special medical equipment or possible emergency needs?
- Does your student know basic medical safety, such as having and using a first aid kit, and keeping doctors' phone numbers near the phone?
- Does your student know how to call 911? Does the student know his or her address and phone number?
- Does he or she need medic alert identification (bracelet/necklace)?
- Does he or she know what to do in case of fire at home, work and school? In case of an accident? If he or she is approached by strangers or feels unsafe?
- Does he or she have someone to call for assistance if needed (relative or close friend, abuse hotline)?

Financial and Legal Matters



Jacob Brown, age 25, lives at home in the midst of a warm, caring family, who provide him with both structure and independence. Being social and easygoing, Jake enjoys

being active in the community with work and social activities. With the support of his family and service providers, Jake is able to make choices about his life and be as independent as possible.

Joanne and her family have worked hard to put together both natural and paid supports to achieve Jake's dreams. But what about the future when Joanne will no longer be there for Jake? "You don't think of yourself as ever leaving your child," says Joanne, "but the reality is, you won't always be here. You know how hard you worked to get your child to this point, and you don't want to think about how this might change."

Jake, Joanne and the family often talk about plans for Jake's future. Joanne is thinking of many options for allowing Jake to stay in his home if something happens to her, such as having family

members move in with support from adult service

agencies, or having other adults with disabilities move into their home, while having Jake retain ownership. "In fact," says Joanne, "when I thought of purchasing our home, I considered layout and location in terms of others living with Jake, and things like access to buses and the community."

In planning for Jake's future, says Joanne, "It's crucial to start as early as possible. It's also important to involve family members and friends who might take over the supports. They can educate themselves along with the parents, so that they understand the expectations, and prepare for the changes in their own lives if they accept this responsibility."

Joanne knows that no matter how well they plan for Jake's future, life is unpredictable. "It's important to involve a lawyer because we need to ensure that Jacob's future is secure regardless of the changes in situations that might happen. We need to make sure that Jacob's rights and our wishes are followed through regardless of other people's ideas to the contrary. You hope things will happen as you've planned them, but you have to do what you can to make sure that what you want to happen will be a positive outcome."



Financial and Legal Matters



SSI: Supplemental Security Income

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) provides monthly payments to persons who have disabilities and have low income and few resources. You do not need to have worked to be eligible. You can be any age, single or married.

Many people who could get SSI benefits do not apply for them because they don't understand how SSI works. Or they might not get a job for fear of losing their benefits – this is not always true.

SSI is a complex program. Below is some information about SSI. It applies to people with disabilities who are: 18 or older; single; pay rent or pay toward living expenses at home, or who live away from the family home; are either in or out of school. Rules are slightly different for people who are blind; check with the SSI office.

IMPORTANT: Talk to the people at SSI to learn about how SSI can assist your student, and again any time your student's work or income changes.

SSI Income Support

SSI can provide income. This can help pay basic living expenses. It can also be very helpful:

- when making the transition from school to work;
- while you are looking for work, training for work or going to college or other adult education school; and
- while working at low-paying or part-time work.

SSI and Medicaid

If you qualify for SSI, you also get Medicaid, which pays for health care needs such as doctors' appointments, therapy, medications and other expenses.

Who can get SSI?

To get SSI, you must meet both disability and financial eligibility:

- 1. Disability Eligibility:** You must have a physical and/or mental impairment that keeps you from having "substantial gainful employment" (paid work) and is likely to last more than 12 months or result in death.
- 2. Financial Eligibility:** Two types of financial assets are looked at when you apply: **1. Income:** You must either be not working or earning less than a certain amount. **Ask your SSI office what the amount is.** Disability work-related expenses are deducted when figuring this amount. **2. Resources:** Your savings and other assets must be less than a certain amount. Savings and checking accounts, stocks and bonds and life insurance are some resources that are counted. Your home, personal belongings, and a car or van if needed to travel to work or for medical treatment are not counted. When you turn 18, your parent's income and resources are no longer counted.

Financial Work Incentives 1619a

Work incentives may allow you to earn money and still keep part of your SSI payments and your Medicaid benefits. As you work for pay, SSI payments will gradually be lowered. This will happen in a way that lets you make more money than if you just had SSI and didn't work at all.

SSI Health Work Incentive 1619b

Part-time and entry-level jobs often do not include any medical benefits. SSI lets you keep Medicaid while you work, until you make a certain amount of money (a threshold level that is set by SSI). To stay eligible for Medicaid, you must need it to keep working, and you must still meet all other SSI requirements.

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

You can deduct services or items that you pay for yourself, and that are directly related to your disability and to enabling you to work. They may include work-related attendant care services, travel costs, adaptive equipment, certain drugs or medical services, and certain other expenses.

Other Work Incentive Options Under Social Security:

Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS): A person must have a reasonable work goal and a plan approved by SSI. The cost of equipment, services, training or education needed to achieve the work goal may be deducted from earnings or other countable income.

Property Essential to Self-Support (PESS): Property used by a person for work, such as tools or equipment, is not counted as part of your assets.

The Student Earned Income Exclusion: Young adults under age 22 who are in school may exclude (not count) some of their earnings in the income limit.

Call Social Security to learn more about SSI and related programs. They are listed in the Resource section at the end of this guide.

Legal Issues

It's not always easy to plan for how your son's or daughter's needs will be taken care of if you should become very ill or are no longer here, but it is important. If you begin to think about issues such as estate planning and guardianship during the transition years, then you will feel assured that a plan is in place in case these things need to be decided quickly.

These issues are legal, complex and require a lot of thought and planning. It's important to talk with advocates and lawyers who are experts in these areas. See the resource listing at the end of this guide for legal resources.

Financial and Estate Planning

Now is the time to begin thinking about future financial planning for your son or daughter. This often involves setting up trust funds, estate planning, and other ways to save money for your son or daughter's future.

However, if parents are not careful, the money and assets they leave to their son or daughter could cause him or her to lose benefits such as SSI, Medicaid, or subsidized housing.

There are a number of ways to do estate planning, including trusts that are designed especially for people with disabilities. **Talk to a lawyer who has experience in estate planning for adult children with disabilities.**

- A few things to consider in developing an estate plan include:
- How independent is my son or daughter?
- Can my son or daughter earn a living and handle his or her own finances?
- Where does he or she want to live?
- What are my financial resources now (savings, life insurance, trust funds)?
- What do I think my financial resources will be over the next ten years?
- Will my son or daughter need government benefits such as SSI, subsidized housing, a personal care attendant, or Medicaid?
- How can I plan my estate to protect those benefits?
- Will a family member be designated to care for my son or daughter?
- Will my son or daughter need a guardian or conservator?

Guardianship

What is Guardianship?

Guardianship is the legal power to care for another person and manage his or her affairs. It takes away some of the person's rights (such as making health care decisions or managing money) and gives those rights to someone else.

Parents are not automatically their adult child's guardians. When people become adults (age 18 in RI) – including people with mental retardation and other disabilities – they get all the legal rights and responsibilities of any adult.

Only the courts can appoint a guardian. A court makes this decision based on the person's abilities to handle personal decisions, money, property and similar matters. The incapacity (or legal inability) to handle these matters is grounds for a guardianship, not mental retardation.

How Do I Decide if My Son or Daughter Needs A Guardian?

Appointing a guardian for someone is a serious matter. Doing this takes away some of the person's rights and independence. It also has the potential for abuse because of the power it gives one person over another.

However, there may be different reasons why a son or daughter might need a guardian. Some common reasons are:

- A person needs medical care or other services that a provider will not give unless the person's legal capacity to consent to (agree to) treatment or services is made clear.
- Parents or siblings cannot get important records or provide other help without guardianship, and the person is unable to give consent for the release of health and other records.
 - The person cannot manage his or her money or other assets. Guardianship is sometimes needed to ensure the assets are safe and used for the intended purposes.

There are many different types of guardianship, such as full guardianship and limited guardianship. There is also conservatorship. A conservator may have limited decision-making responsibility, based upon the person's needs and as decided by the court. A person under conservatorship is not considered legally incompetent (unable to make decisions).

Again, it is very important to talk with an experienced attorney and/or advocate about guardianship and other options before making legal decisions.

You can find more information from the Rhode Island Disability Law Center's *Guardianship and Alternatives to Guardianship* Booklet. Visit the RI Disability Law Center web site at www.ridlc.org.

People and Places to Call



People and Places to Call

For persons using teletypewriters: If no TTY number is listed, call Relay Rhode Island at: 800-745-5555 (TTY) or 800-745-6575 (Voice)

For General Information on Transition

Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

401-270-0101 or 800-464-3399 (in RI only)

www.ripin.org

Gives parents of children with disabilities information, training, referral, personalized support, and parent-to-parent networking.

RIPIN has Transition Coordinators assigned to each Regional Transition Center listed below.

Regional Transition Centers:

Supporting schools, families and communities in preparing students for adult life. Resource library, regional network of schools and agencies, trainings and information.

at East Bay Educational Collaborative

(Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Tiverton, and Warren)

Coordinator: Carolyn Aspinwall

401-245-2045 x303, aspinwac@ride.ri.net

RIPIN Transition Coordinator: **Diana Kriner**

800-464-3399, 401-270-0101 x177

kriner@ripin.org

at Northern Rhode Island Collaborative

(Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket Smithfield, and Woonsocket)

Coordinator: Jane Slade

401-721-0709 x103, jslade@nric-ri.org

RIPIN Transition Coordinator: **Elaine Burdett**

800-464-3399, 401-727-4144 x174

burdett@ripin.org

at Providence School Department

Coordinator: Nancy Stevenin

401-278-0520, nancy.stevenin@ppsd.org

The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College

401-456-8072, 401-456-8773 (TTY)

Gives information, training and technical assistance in: transition, assistive technology, employment, family support, informed consumer choice, inclusion and positive behavioral support.



RIPIN Transition Coordinator: **Victoria Rodriguez**

800-464-3399, 401-270-0101 x118

rodriguez@ripin.org

at Southern Rhode Island Collaborative

(Block Island, Charlestown, East Greenwich, Exeter, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, West Greenwich, and Westerly)

Coordinator: tbd

401-295-2888 x109 Fax 401-295-3232,

RIPIN Transition Coordinator: **Kathy Kuiper**

800-464-3399, 401-270-0101 x181

kuiper@ripin.org

at West Bay Collaborative

(Coventry, Cranston, Foster, Glocester, Scituate, Warwick, and West Warwick)

Coordinator: Therese Curran

401-941-8353 x124, curranwbc@aol.com

RIPIN Transition Coordinator: **Joan Vendetti**

800-464-3399, 401-270-0101 x176

vendetti@ripin.org

Important Statewide Agencies

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH), 401-462-3234, 401-462-6189 (TTY), www.mhrh.state.ri.us

Division of Integrated Mental Health Services (DMH), RI Department of MHRH, 401-462-2338, 401-462-0229 (TTY), www.mhrh.state.ri.us

Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), RI Department of Human Services (DHS), 401-421-7005, 401-421-7016 (TTY), www.ors.state.ri.us

RI Department of Education (RIDE), 401-222-4600, www.ride.ri.gov

The Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project (RITAP), 401-456-4600, www.ritap.org, *My Transition for Youth Project*

Resources for College and Continuing Education

RI Office of Higher Education, (401) 222-6560, www.ribghe.org

Student Support Services Offices at Rhode Island public colleges:

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)

Academic accommodations 401-825-2164

Access to Opportunities program 401-825-2305, 401-825-2369 (TTY)

Transitions to Employment program 401-825-2369, 401-825-2369 (TTY)

Rhode Island College (RIC), 401-456-8061 (Voice/TTY), www.ric.edu

University of Rhode Island (URI), www.uri.edu

Kingston 401-874-1000 (Voice/TTY)

Providence 401-277-5000 (Voice), (401) 277-5020 (TTY)

Heath Resource Center, 202-939-9320, 800-544-3284, www.health.gwu.edu

Suite 800, One Dupont Circle NW, Washington, DC 20036-1193

National Clearinghouse on education after high school for people with disabilities.

Resources for Employment

Job Accommodation Network, 800-526- 7234 (Voice/TTY)

Department of Labor and Training YouthWorks 411, www.dlt.ri.gov/youthworks411

Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), DHS, 401-421-7005, 401-421-7016 (TTY), www.ors.state.ri.us

Network RI, 401-401-462-8900, 401-462-8966 (TTY), www.networkri.org

RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities *For information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

401-462-0100, 401-462-0101 (TTY),

Resources for Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Information and Referral Hotline, 800-916-8324
401-463-0202 (TTY), www.techacces-ri.org

ATAP Project Director at ORS, 401-421-7005 x390, 401-421-7016 (TTY)

Resources for Community Living

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), MHRH, 401-462-3234, www.mhrh.state.ri.us

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) *For information on subsidized housing*
800-225-5342, 877-833-2483 (TDD)

Masters and Johnson *For information on sexuality issues*
636-532-9772, 1 Campbell Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63139, www.mastersandjohnson.com

Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), 401-738-1013, 401-738-1015 (TTY), www.oscil.org

PARI Center for Independent Living, 401-725-1966 (Voice/TTY), www.pari-ilc.org

RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (RIHMFC), 401-751-5566, 401-421-9799 (TTY),
www.rihousing.com

Resources for Transportation

RI Driver Education Program at Community College of RI, 401-825-1214, driveded@ccri.edu

Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), 401-781-9400, 800-662-5088, www.ripta.com

RIPTA Paratransit (The RIdE Program), 401-784-9553, 401-784-9599 (TTY)

Resources for Financial and Legal Issues

Social Security Administration Benefits Specialist *For information on SSI*
800-772-1213, www.ssa.gov

RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities *For information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*
401-462-0100, 462-0101 (TTY)

Rhode Island Disability Law Center *Legal assistance on a variety of disability-related civil rights issues -
Guardianship Guide* 401-831-3150, 800-733-5332, or 401-831-5335 (TTY)

Lawyer Referral Service, 401-421-7799, 401-421-1666 (TTY), www.ribar.com

Guides and Other Print Resources

To get these guides and other information, call the agency listed. Some items may be available in other languages and/or alternative formats.

Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, Rhode Island College, 600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Providence, RI 02908
401-456- 8072, 401-456-8773 (TTY), www.ric.edu/uap/home.html

How? A Step by Step Guide to Supported Employment

Getting the Most from Supported Employment Services, RI Directory RI Transition Resource Manual

Rhode Island Transitions -a quarterly newsletter on Transition

Rhode Island Parent Information Network, 401.270.0101, www.ripin.org

Rhode Island Parent Guidebook to Assistive Technology

Here's to Your Student's Future! A Parents Guide to Transition Planning

Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council, 401-464-3570 (Voice/TTY)

Rhode Island Summer Recreation Guide for Adults and Children

Volunteer Center of Rhode Island, 401-421-6547, www.vcri.org

Handbook for Teen Volunteers

Rhode Island Disability law Center, 401-831-3150, 401-831-5335 (TTY)

A Consumers Guide to Rhode Island State Vocational Rehabilitation Services

A Parents Guide to the Special Education Regulations

What You Should Know about Disability Work Incentives

Rhode Island legal Services, Providence 401-274-2652, 800-662-5034, 401-272-5335 (TTY), Newport 401-826-2264

Applying for Subsidized and Public Housing

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for their assistance in developing this guide:

The Rhode Island Transition, Independence, Employment (RITIE) Training and Publications Workgroup

Staff from the RI Parent Information Network, including Claire Rosenbaum, Jane Sroka, Kathleen Goldberger, Milagros Acevedo, Jeanne Behie, Joanne Brown, Elizabeth Priestly, Cheryl Collins, Sue Donovan, Andrew Sandlin, Patricia Gamache, and Amy Gray.

The following state agencies for their input:

Office of Rehabilitation Services, RI Department of Human Services

Office of Special Needs, RI Department of Education

Division of Developmental Disabilities, RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals

Division of Integrated Mental Health Services, RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals

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Alternative Format: This guide can be made available in alternative formats. For this service, please contact RIPIN at 401-727-4144 x152.

RITIE was funded by Grant #H158A600002-95 from the U.S. Department of Education, through the RI Department of Education and in partnership with the RI Department of Human Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services, the RI Parent Information Network and the RI Regional Transition Centers.

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Creating a MAP

A MAP (Making Action Plans) is used to create a vision for the future and plan ways for that vision to happen. It can be helpful in developing IEPs and Transition Plans. This activity will give you an idea of what MAPs are about. If you would like more information on completing a MAP, call your RIPIN Transition Coordinator listed in the Resource section of this guide.

With your son or daughter, write down your ideas for each of these 5 steps listed below. You might want to invite friends who know you and your student. Be creative!

History

- How would you describe your student's life up to now? You may want to include school and family highlights, important people and events, etc.

Dreams

- What are your student's hopes and dreams for his or her future?
- What are your dreams for your student's future?
- What goals would you like see your student reach in the coming year?
- After high school?

Fears

- What seems to stand in the way of your student's dreams?
- What do you not want to happen in your son's or daughter's life?
- What concerns you most about your son's or daughter's future?
- What barriers do you face in trying to help your son or daughter?
- Who is...?
- Who is your student? Describe him or her in as many ways as you can.
- What are his or her strengths, gifts, talents, likes, dislikes, skills, personal qualities, favorite activities and friends?

Needs

- Think about the dreams your son or daughter has, and think about who he or she is.
- What is needed to make these dreams come true?
- What would improve your son's or daughter's life?
- What steps can you take to meet your son's or daughter's needs?
- What can others do to support you in meeting your student's needs?

Once you've talked about and written your ideas about these areas, try to connect them with your student's IEP/Transition Plan.