

How Can Parents Help with Transition?

There are many ways that parents can help to make sure that their child's transition is as smooth as possible.

Set Realistic Goals: Include your child in setting goals for the future, and make sure that their school program prepares him/her to meet those goals. All students need to gain as many independent working and living skills as possible.

Encourage Gradual Independence: Parents are not always going to be around. Begin to encourage independent travel, self-care activities, money management, and decision making now. A person with disabilities may always need support, but each thing that he/she can do alone is a great gain.

Gather Information About Transition Issues: Decisions will have to be made about such matters as guardianship, sex education, sexual responsibility, driving, etc... based upon the person's level of independence and competency, family values, and resources available to help with each issue.

Familiarize Yourself With the Adult Service System: Parents need to become informed about the available programs and entrance criteria for each one. Getting a person's name on the appropriate waiting list is sometimes of critical importance.

Build Self-Esteem: Your child does have a future. Teach him/her skills that you would teach any child who is getting ready to go out in the world such as doing laundry, prepare simple meals, or sew on a button. Because you have confidence, he/she will have confidence too.

Encourage Social Integration: Everyone needs friends. Young people with disabilities cannot afford to be isolated from non-disabled persons their age. Call your local community resources for recreational opportunities.

Provide Real Experiences: Persons with disabilities need experience in work situations. This should be addressed at an ARD meeting and incorporated into the IEP. Parents should also look for ways to provide work experiences outside of school.

Encourage Good Grooming and Work Habits: Take time to emphasize the importance of appropriate dress, good grooming skills, punctuality, reliability, and hard work.

Foster the Acceptance of Criticism: Teenagers can be sensitive to the mildest criticism. Young people must learn to cope with the standards of the workplace and with unfair criticism. Practicing acceptable responses to criticism needs to begin early.

Provide Opportunities to Manage Money: Teenagers should be paid for their work. Gradually introduce money management. Encourage shopping using their own money. Those who are able should be doing their own budgeting as well.

From the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc., www.cpacinc.org



The contents of this factsheet were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, H328M120025 (PEN), H328M120026 (TEAM), & H328M120027 (PATH). However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Greg Knollman.



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