

# Frequently Asked Questions for Parent Providers

## **WHAT IS TRANSITION PLANNING, and WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?**

Transition planning is a partnership involving students with disabilities, their families, school personnel, local community and adult service representatives, employers, and interested others. The purpose is to assist the student to identify opportunities and experiences during their school years to help prepare them for life as an adult. Transition planning should be an integral component of the student's IEP, focusing on their present and future needs. Planning for the future should help the IEP team design functional instructional programs that reflect the student's interest and needs for life as an adult in the areas of employment, community living and community involvement, postsecondary education, leisure activities, and the development of friendships. Effective transition services should enable the student to help manage his/her future.

## **WHY IS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE IEP PROCESS IMPORTANT?**

No one understands their child's needs more than a parent does. Parents bring their family values, culture, and dreams to the IEP table. One of the guiding principles of family/educator partnerships is the importance of sharing a vision for the student's success. From the preschool years through young adulthood, parents and educators play critical roles in helping students with disabilities identify and describe what they want to accomplish as they grow and make plans for their lives. This vision is part dream and part goal: something to aim for and yet something achievable. Transition planning is a vehicle for implementing that vision. By embracing the student's dream, parents and educators can help the student with a disability turn that vision into a reality.

### **Parental involvement:**

- Is mandated by law
- Assists the multidisciplinary team in determining needed services
- Provides the family perspective
- Brings information unobtainable from other sources
- Shares responsibility
- Prepares families for postsecondary realities
- Accesses important community liaisons
- Can assist in preparing the student for participation in the IEP process

- Can assist the student to develop self-determination skills by helping the student to know and value themselves, learn to plan, learn to act on their plans, and experience successful outcomes
- Can advocate for developing and initiating new programs and community alternatives and activities

### **WHEN IS THE BEST TIME FOR PARENTS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE?**

The sooner the better. One of the most rewarding parental responsibilities is teaching independence and decision making. Instilling a sense of pride, self-worth and drive into a child's life, early on, will go a long way in ensuring a successful transition. Futures planning should be an ongoing discussion item during the IEP process beginning in the elementary grades.

### **ONE YEAR BEFORE LEAVING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE STUDENT SHOULD:**

- Apply for financial support programs (Supplemental Security Income, Independent Living Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Personal Assistant Services)
- Identify postsecondary school that he/she plans to attend and arrange for accommodations
- Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying necessary accommodations at post-secondary and work environments
- Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed
- Take responsibility to arrive on time to work, appointments, and social activities
- Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions, etc.)
- Register to vote
- Register for the selective service (if male)

## **WHAT ARE SOME AREAS THAT PARENTS NEED TO BE TALKING ABOUT WITH THEIR SON OR DAUGHTER?**

Broaden your thinking about your son or daughter's future by exploring a wide range of scenarios that support his or her interests and dreams. Talk with your son or daughter about:

- Gaining skills in self-determination and advocating for themselves
- Obtaining employment after high school
- Living independently
- Financial planning
- Searching and accessing community resources, transportation and health care services
- Exploring leisure and recreation activities
- Gathering information and training in personal relationships
- Gathering information about health and legal issues
- Attending post-secondary education

## **WHAT ARE SOME SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR PARENTS?**

- Discussions with their son or daughter
- Publications related to adults with disabilities
- Educational professionals
- Peer support groups
- Social service agencies (Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security, etc.)

- Advocacy organizations
- Health care providers

## **WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON STATE?**

In Washington, a major provider of services and support for people with disabilities is the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Under this department, there are services that provide supports to people with disabilities such as: employment, places to live, ways to pay for food, and health coverage.

### **Agencies in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS):**

- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** — Offers vocational assessment and counseling, and rehabilitation planning and services, to achieve job placement. This agency also provides an Independent Living Program (ILP) designed for people with disabilities who want to increase their independence. The ILP may assist with attendant care management, counseling and advocacy, living arrangements, and skill training.
- **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**— Offers a wide range of services and supports to eligible individuals. Such services include employment training and placement; assistance in accessing the community and participation in leisure activities; residential options which include minimal support to full 24-hour support for people with severe challenges to live in the community; family support through respite care; and early childhood services for children 0-3 including therapeutic services for the eligible child in a center-based or home-based program.
- **Division of Mental Health**— Offers diagnostic services, residential programs which provide a range of support to citizens in order to remain in their own homes and function in the community, job training and placement, and individual and group therapy.
- **Aging and Adult Administration**— Offers community residential resources focused on allowing citizens to remain in their own homes with appropriate medical and physical care. Among these, chore services are one of the most important resources funded through

this agency. In addition, the agency provides adult family home placement and monitoring for citizens who cannot remain in their own homes, as well as respite care.

- **Division of Children and Family Services**—Offers protection to children who are identified as at-risk, counseling for children and their families to preserve the integrity of the family unit, and foster care placement. Eligibility is based on identified need for services.
- **The Economic Services Administration**—Offers monthly grants for basic living requirements, Medicaid, food stamps, employment referral services to the Department of Employment Security, and other job training and placement resources through local Community Service Offices.
- **Department of Services for the Blind**—A state agency that provides training and placement of visually impaired and/or blind adults. Consultations for parents of blind children are available through child and family program. This program assists in transition of high school students into vocational rehabilitation services of the agency: counseling, guidance, adaptive skill training, vocational exploration, academic and vocational tuition assistance, job development, and accommodation relevant to employment.

### **Other State and Federal Agency Resources**

**Department of Employment Security**—Offers employment and training programs, and job placement services for people who are unemployed. Services are available to all citizens including those who have disabilities.

**Community and Technical Colleges**—Offer technical education and skill training for careers requiring other than a baccalaureate degree for entry into a profession and for career enhancement. Many programs include people with disabilities.

**Social Security Administration**—A federal agency that offers financial assistance for people with disabilities to achieve an independent life style. Eligibility depends on severity of disability. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are two of the major programs. Transition students who have a disability are most likely to benefit from SSI. Each program has its own eligibility criteria. SSI is a federally administered income assistance program. It provides monthly cash payments in accordance with uniform, nationwide eligibility requirements. The purpose is to assist eligible individuals in

maintaining a minimum standard of living by providing cash benefits and work incentives. The work incentives strengthen the program and reduce economic barriers to employment. The incentives are: special cash benefits, medical benefits, impairment-related work expenses (IRWE), and plans for achieving self-support (PASS). The PASS and IRWE incentives permit individuals who receive SSI to earn outside income (with limits established) and continue to receive payments and/or medical insurance coverage.

## **WHAT LEGISLATION IS IMPORTANT TO THE TRANSITION PROCESS?**

### **The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ensures that people with disabilities, including students, have equal access to employment, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications. To provide access, reasonable accommodations must be made in employment; new public transit vehicles must be accessible or par transit service provided; auxiliary aids and services must be provided by businesses and public services to enable a person with a disability to use and enjoy the goods and services available to the public, and telephone companies must offer telecommunications devices for the deaf or similar devices. The ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require postsecondary training institutions to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified students to ensure their access to postsecondary training.

### **The Rehabilitation Act (Amendments of 1986, 1992, 1993, 1998)**

The purposes of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are to empower individuals with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society through comprehensive and coordinated state-of-the-art programs of vocational rehabilitation, independent living centers and services; research, training, demonstration projects, and the guarantee of equal opportunity. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was re-authorized in 1992 and 1998. The amendments adopted the IDEA definition of transition services and required state rehabilitation agencies to establish policies and procedures to facilitate the transition of youth with disabilities from school to the rehabilitation service system. The vocational rehabilitation division established in each state by the Rehabilitation Act provides vocational rehabilitation services to interested and eligible individuals who (1) have the presence of a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for that person; and (2) the individual requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

## **The Education Reform Act**

This is a Washington State law that has new and more rigorous standards of learning based on four broad student-learning goals to help prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. The new goal of the Education Reform Act is to provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. The goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for all students to develop the knowledge and skills essential to:

- Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings
- Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics, social, physical and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness.
- Think analytically, logically, and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems.
- Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities. It is this fourth goal that forms the basis for the state's school-to-work system for all students, including students with disabilities.

## **Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999**

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program is an employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in going to work. The Ticket Program is part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 – legislation designed to remove many of the barriers that previously influenced people's decisions about going to work because of the concerns over losing health care coverage. The goal of the Ticket Program is to increase opportunities and choices for Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment, vocational rehabilitation (VR), and other support services from public and private providers, employers, and other organizations. Under the Ticket Program, the Social Security Administration provides disability beneficiaries with a Ticket they may use to obtain the services and jobs they need from a new universe of organizations called Employment Networks (ENs).

The Ticket to Work Program and Youth in Transition - there are almost one million youth under the age of 18 that are receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits from the Social Security Administration. Approximately 70 percent of these individuals will be future Ticket recipients once they reach 18 years of age.

The Ticket To Work Program can help to ensure the successful transition of youth with disabilities from school to work and adulthood through the provision of employability services, supports, and incentives. The Ticket To Work Program serves individuals ages 18 to 64. Youth aged 18 - 21 being served by secondary education institutions can benefit from the Ticket To Work Program. Secondary education institutions have an opportunity to enhance existing funding by becoming a Ticket to Work Employment Network.

## **Resources**

U.S. Social Security Administration: <http://ssa.gov>

*Working Together*

<https://www.longview.k12.wa.us/student%20learning/Transition%20Resource%20Notebook/Chapters/04-School.pdf>