

**Integrated transition planning** for youth with disabilities is a path to living a full, meaningful and connected life as a community member. It means planning for what will change as your child becomes an adult. We know that every child is different, so every idea might not be right for your family. This fact sheet will help you start planning for your child's transition to adult life.



## Pieces of the Transition Puzzle

- **Home:** Will my child live at home or move out?
- **Education:** Does special education offer school and community opportunities to meet my child's skills and interests?
- **Post-Secondary Education:** Does my child want to go to college or technical school?
- **Employment:** What type of work does my child want to do?
- **Community:** Are there supports available that can lead to a full and meaningful life?
- **Health:** Can my child deal with his/her own health care and insurance needs?



## Start Early

Give your child and your family enough time to plan. Youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities may need extra time to learn the skills necessary for a more independent life. Start by sharing your child's and family's dreams for the future with school staff, health providers and community professionals. You and your child, and those who provide support, will turn these dreams into reality by working together.



## Imagine the Best Life

Set high expectations. Your confidence will guide your child to live the best possible life. Always keep an open mind when working with your child. Surround your family with people who also have high expectations for your child. Let go of limitations and think about your child's strengths and skills.



## Advocate, Advocate and Advocate Some More

If transition planning is not going well, you and your child may need to step out of your comfort zone. Are all the people who support your child working together to meet your child's goals? Is anyone missing from the transition team? Sharing your child's hopes and dreams with others will help them meet these goals. Learn to advocate for what you need if you feel stuck or unsupported. Learn more on our [Family Leadership](#) page.



## Resources for an Integrated Transition

- [What's After High School?](#) is an on-demand training that gives an overview of the transition process from a family's perspective.
- [Transition Resource Guide](#) has tips and resources to plan for adulthood and life after high school.
- [The Transition Road Map](#) guides you along the road through transition with suggestions and resources. It's useful for youth ages 12 to 16.
- [Transition Action Guide for Post School Planning](#) improves communication, coordination and services for students transitioning from school to work or post-secondary education.
- [Health Care Transition Timeline](#) has tips for children to manage their health care and insurance coverage needs independently.



## Integrated Transition Pathway

Preparing for an integrated transition to adulthood can begin **at any age**, even elementary school!

Starting early is the key to a smooth transition. To support younger children to prepare for transition:

- Talk with them about their hopes and dreams and help them think about what they want to do “when they grow up.”
- Encourage them to explore their interests and participate in a variety of experiences that support those interests.
- Invite them to be part of their IEP meetings, especially to talk about what they are currently doing.
- Help them learn and practice self-advocacy skills, including understanding their disability or health condition and if/how they might want to explain it to others.
- Teach them to build independence, social skills and the best ways to communicate.



## Early Transition (Ages 14-17)

- At age 14, special education laws require formal transition planning to be included in the IEP. You will begin using the [Post-Secondary Transition](#) Plan (PTP).
- Age 14 is when doctors usually like to see patients on their own for at least part of the visit. Teens can start to make their own appointments and refill their own prescriptions.
- Your child might want to share their hopes and dreams for their future with their health providers.
- Two years before school exit, you can connect with the [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) (DVR) to prepare for work in the community. Ask the IEP team to invite the DVR counselor to a meeting to talk about DVR services. If you would like, DVR services can begin as early as age 14.
- Learn about legal options and tools like [Supported Decision-Making Agreements](#) and [Guardianship](#) if your child will need help with decision-making after they turn 18. If your child needs help, have a plan in place by the time they turn 18.



## Active Transition (Ages 17 and 18)

- Public benefits move from children’s services to adult services at age 18. If your child uses the Children’s Long-Term Support (CLTS) waiver, talk with your child’s support and service coordinator about continuing access to Medicaid and long-term support waiver programs. For adults, these programs are called Family Care or IRIS.
- If your child doesn’t have a service coordinator, you can contact your county’s Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for help applying to Medicaid and long-term support programs when your child is age 17 ½ or older. They can also give you information about applying or re-applying for Social Security benefits.



## Transition After Age 18

- Transition doesn’t stop at age 18. Changes will continue throughout your adult child’s life.
- Continue to help your adult child identify resources and people to support them to live a healthy, safe, connected, integrated and meaningful life!



Learn more on the Family Voices website’s [Resource Library](#).

