

# Transition guidelines: preparing for life after high school

## **Four to five years before leaving school**

### **HEALTH CARE**

- Start to learn the names of your medications, side effects, what time you take them and why you take them.
- Know which medications you are allergic to or other allergies that you have and your body's reactions to them.
- Keep the above medical information on a card and with you at all times.
- Develop a clear understanding of your disability or medical condition and how to manage it without help from your parents.
- Become responsible for taking medication without help from an adult.
- Know who to call in case of an emergency and carry that information with you.
- Spend a portion of your doctor's appointments with your parents outside of the room.

### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Take classes at school that will teach you skills such as how to manage your money, do your own laundry, shop for groceries and cook for yourself.
- Become a self-advocate. Learn how to speak up for yourself.
- Learn about your personal safety issues and needs.
- Start building relationships in order to develop natural supports. *Natural supports are unpaid, interested people who assist with participation in community activities.* (This is called inclusion.)
- Determine your options for transportation, assistive technology, nursing services, mobility training and recreational needs. Explore services available to meet these needs.
- Contact agencies that can help support you as you learn how to become an adult. For ideas, visit the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative Web site at <http://www.wsti.org/wsti.cfm> and click on Point of Entry Manual.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Vocational exploration is an ongoing process that must begin early!

- Become a community volunteer. Volunteer work is valuable for personal growth and enhances a resume
- Ask you parents, relatives and family friends if you can shadow them at work.
- Explore your career possibilities. Use the Internet or go to your school's career center or library to learn about different jobs. Consider a "futures planning" meeting.
- Tour a business to see what kind of work they do and jobs they offer.
- Talk to adults about what they do for work.

### **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

- Develop a clear understanding of your disability and how it affects your learning. To help you remember, your parent or caregiver can create a fact sheet about you.
- Attend and participate in your Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.
- Use a calendar or a planner to help you develop good time management and study skills.
- Take college admission requirements into consideration when planning high school course work.
- Investigate assistive technology tools such as keyboards and communication devices

# **Transition guidelines: preparing for life after high school**

## **Two to three years before leaving school**

### **HEALTH CARE**

- Know the side effects of your medicines and what you should do if they occur. A side effect is a reaction that your body may have to a medicine. This information should be written down, laminated and kept with the young adult in a backpack or medical alert bracelet, as well as with the Guardian.
- Learn how to get your medicines filled independently.
- Learn how to order and take care of any special equipment or medical supplies you use as well as you can.
- Make your own doctors' appointments and keep track of them on your calendar.
- Learn how to get to your doctor's office by yourself.
- Meet alone with your doctor, nurses and other healthcare providers. Write down any questions you have ahead of time. Talk with your providers about any topics that concern you.
- Talk to your doctors about how and when you should start seeing a doctor who sees adults.
- Talk with other parents, guardians, or young adults with disabilities or health care needs like yours. Ask them about their experiences with transition to adult health care.
- Learn if you are able (eligible) to hire a personal care worker. Know how to hire one if you are. If you have only had a family member assist with your personal care, it may take some time to feel comfortable using a trained professional caregiver.

### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Ask for a current psychological evaluation/therapy report from your high school, which will be helpful when applying for SSI
- Gather information about special needs trust funds before turning 18. A child or adult who uses Medicaid or Medicare can become ineligible for coverage if his or her assets and income are above \$2000. Trust funds are a way to keep Medicaid eligibility if you have an inheritance.
- Gather information about Guardianship. Guardianship gives a parent or other adult the legal right to be responsible for your needs after you turn 18. This process can be started six months before you turn 18.
- If needed, begin to gather medical, academic and psychological reports that will be needed for your Social Security application. Eligibility begins at age 18 and you must apply six months before you turn 18.
- Work on developing independent living skills and learn about opportunities and waiting lists in your county.
- Work on developing self advocacy skills and ways to learn how to speak up for yourself

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Vocational exploration is a process that must begin early! Call the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) at (800) 442-3477 or (888) 877-5939 (TTY) to ask for an application and apply for DVR four semesters before graduating from high school. Your DVR representative can be invited to be a part of your Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team.

- Plan to try a work or volunteer experience.

- Volunteer work is valuable for personal growth and enhances a resume.
- Attend career fairs or classes at your high school or community to see what your interests are and the skills needed to do the job.
- Attend transition fairs to learn about resources and to connect with community agencies.
- Ask your high school to help you look into jobs that are of interest to you. Visit the Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site at [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).
- Find your career interests by taking tests or surveys offered by your high school or on the Internet.

## **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

- Tell your teachers what you need and want to learn about.
- Obtain a free copy of *Opening Doors to Postsecondary Education and Training* by visiting <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/tranopndrs.pdf>
- Gather information about your education options after high school.
- Take classes related to your career goals.
- Visit college campuses.
- Go to college fairs.
- Set a career goal.
- Ask the school or college you plan to attend about the paperwork that students with disabilities need to fill out before starting school.
- Take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) with accommodations (if needed) if you plan to attend a 4-year school
- Participate in paid or volunteer work experience
- Tell your high school IEP or Special Education teacher if you plan to go to college.
- Contact the State DVR office for an application (four semesters before graduating). If your employment goals require post-secondary education or assistive technology, you may be eligible for financial assistance

# Transition guidelines: preparing for life after high school

## One year before leaving school

*Bolded items are time-specific*

### HEALTH CARE

- Ask your doctor's office to mail copies of medical tests or reports to your home. Ask for a short written summary of your health condition and treatment plan. Keep all of this information together in a folder or notebook.
- Carry your insurance card and other important health care information with you at all times.
- Make sure you know your insurance carrier and how to get a referral if you need one.
- Keep a list of addresses and telephone numbers of all your doctors and nurses.
- Meet and talk with the new adult doctor before you switch to find out if it's a good match.
- A Release of Information form should be signed to transfer your medical records to your new adult doctors and/or healthcare providers
- Think about signing a Release of Information form that will allow your parents to talk to your doctors when you turn 18.
- Think about appointing a medical decision-maker to make health care decisions for you should you become unable to do so. This is called an Advanced Directive. It is not needed if someone becomes your guardian when you turn 18.
- A parent or other caregiver should apply for guardianship six months before you turn 18 if you are unable to make any medical or financial decisions for yourself.

### ADULT SERVICES

- Once you leave school the financial resources and eligibility requirements change for adult programs. Most programs have a waiting list. If you are able to pay for your services then you may not need to wait for county funding.
- Check with the Milwaukee County Office for Persons with Disabilities for financial support.
- **Apply for Milwaukee County Long-Term Support Services. Begin the application process six months before turning 18 or the last semester before leaving school, whichever is later.**
- Tour Day Services programs such as Goodwill Industries and Curative Care Network. Day Services are ways for you to develop recreational and pre-employment interests and skills. If a young adult is eligible and receiving funding from Long-Term Support Services, (Community Integration Program - CIP) that funding can be used for day services programs. For ideas, visit the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative Web site at <http://www.wsti.org/> and click on Resource Directory, then Select a County.

### EMPLOYMENT

Follow up with your Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor

- Participate in Co-Op (school/employment) program with your high school if it is offered.
- **Support Services (age 18)** for independent living/day services/prevocational/employment. You may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income –Exceptional Expense Supplement (SSI-E) if criteria are met.
- **If appropriate, apply for Social Security Income (SSI)**
- **Call this toll free number to find out where to apply for Social Security Programs: 1-800-772-1213**

## **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

- Continue to practice and develop your self advocacy skills and ways to speak up for yourself. At the college level you will be responsible for accessing services by yourself.
- Contact the Disability Services office at the school you plan to attend to talk about your needs and the services available.
- Ask your high school to complete an updated psychological evaluation. You will need a current evaluation for academic accommodations after high school. It can be made part of your Transition Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Follow up with your Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor who is a part of your Transition IEP.
- Apply for admission to the school(s) you wish to attend early in your senior year. Include letters of recommendation. Your high school counselor can help with the application process.
- Apply for federal financial aid Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA online) and scholarships.