



Alabama's Transition Engagement Series

2 Helping Parents Navigate the Transition Process: A Handbook for Family Engagement



Developed by the Alabama Parent Education Center (APEC)



Stakeholders - Family - Agencies - Educators - Communities

Individualized Student-Centered Planning - Integrated Community Experiences - Interagency Collaboration

TRANSITION IN ALABAMA

Improving Post-School Outcomes For Students

Contents

Contents	1
A Parent’s Message of Hope	3
Introduction	4
Families are Important Partners in Transition	4
What is Transition	4
Building Self-Advocacy in Your Child.....	5
Person-Centered Planning	5
Transition Timeline	6
Age of Majority	7
Transition Assessment	7
Selecting an Appropriate Course Pathway	11
Education After High School	13
Funding to Support Education or Training After High School.....	14
Employment.....	14
Importance of Employment.....	14
Preparing Your Child for Employment	15
Know Your Laws, Rights, and Responsibilities	17
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	17
Alabama Administrative Code	17
Americans with Disabilities Act.....	17
The Rehabilitation Act of 1973	17
The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)	18
Social Security Programs.....	18
Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act	18
How Transition is Done	19
A Full Life After School	20
Recreation.....	20
Friendship	20
Self-advocacy	20
Safety	21
Independent living skills.....	21

Housing	22
Transportation	22
Health.....	22
Insurance.....	23
Mental Health	23
Adolescent and Personal Health.....	23
Internet Safety and Social Networking	24
Emergency Planning.....	24
Planning for Your Adult Child’s Future.....	26
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	26
Financial Eligibility under SSI.....	26
Disability Determination	26
Tips for SSI:.....	27
Special Needs Trusts	27
Wills.....	28
Protections for Vulnerable Adults.....	28
Guardianship.....	28
Power of Attorney.....	29
Advanced Health Care Directives.....	29
Representative Payee	29
Circle of Support	29
Connecting to Adult Services	30
Getting Familiar with Adult Services.....	30
Getting Familiar with a School, College, or University.....	31
Resources.....	32
Conclusion.....	34

A Parent's Message of Hope

I love my child and see all that is wonderful and unique about her. I see beyond her disability and embrace her many strengths and abilities. I dream and hope about all the wonderful and great things awaiting in her future. I see my child's future as bright, happy, and successful, and I want what is best for her. I want her to have the opportunities and supports to experience all that she dreams possible. I have hopes for my child. I hope that she won't be afraid to take risks in life because she is afraid of failure. I hope that she embraces failure as an opportunity to better understand herself and become her best self. I hope that she will embrace education as her opportunity to explore and expand her knowledge and know that education will ultimately enable her the opportunity for future life success. I hope that she understands and loves herself before she loves someone else. I hope that she shares her experiences and gives back to the world. I hope that she develops a responsible sense of fight to speak both for herself and for those without a voice. I hope that she has a life without regrets. I hope that she truly knows happiness. I hope that she embraces all that is possible. I hope that she sees herself beyond her disability. I hope that others see her many abilities beyond her disability. I hope to help her develop an understanding of her disability. I hope to support her in knowing that her disability will not define or limit her, but rather enable her to understand that there are many diverse ways to achieve and succeed and that paths to success are not always paved. I hope she understands that she can pave her own path. I hope that she will understand and seek all that is possible.

I hope that every parent can see and appreciate all that is wonderful in each of his or her children.

Jeana Winter, Katie's Mom

Introduction

The opportunity to acquire a quality education is one of the best advantages a young person could ask for. A quality education lays a foundation and provides opportunities for a lifetime of success and that is why we send children to school so that they can make the most of that opportunity. Education will prepare them for a successful independent future as valued, productive members of society.

For youth with disabilities, additional planning is needed as they leave high school to prepare and execute a successful launch into adult life. This handbook will serve as a means to assist parents to work collaboratively with schools and service providers to prepare youth to meet their educational, vocational, and independent goals as they exit high school. This handbook will focus on the successful movement of youth with disabilities from school to the next stage of adult life. Not all students will have the same goals and outcomes, but all students should have goals for the future. This handbook is designed to assist families in developing an understanding of each element involved in transition and how to access available community resources ensuring each youth's smooth and successful transition.

Families are Important Partners in Transition

Families play an important and vital role in the transition journey with their children. Families help their children visualize their own hopes and dreams for the future. Transition is about having choices and other options as well as acquiring the skills needed to be successful as adults in the community.

It is never too early to begin thinking about transition. Parents of children with disabilities should begin thinking about transition as early as possible. For many parents, transition planning is a conversation that happens during the teenage years or once a child enters high school. The formal process may begin in high school; however, transition skill building occurs best throughout a child's life, long before the formal process begins. Parents and youth should begin as early as possible building a vision of their future based on the child's interests and strengths. Many families often feel like transition sneaks up on them, leaving them unprepared to deal with a new world of adult services and not equipped to make many of the important decisions that are required. Parents who begin thinking about transition early will probably feel better prepared to help their youth achieve his or her goals.

What is Transition

Prior to the ninth grade, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a student with a disability will focus on the student's educational and functional needs and what services the school will provide to help the student make educational progress. In the ninth

grade a student's IEP changes to include long-range planning to include services to meet goals for a student's life after high school. Transition must be addressed within the Individualized Education Program before the youth turns sixteen years old. During this transition planning process, the student's functional and educational needs will continue to be met.

Building Self-Advocacy in Your Child

In a perfect world, every family would begin building skills within their child to be his or her own best advocate before formal transition planning begins. Sometimes we just don't know how or where to begin. As parents, we often speak for our child and his or her interests because that is what we know to do to ensure our child's needs are met. The idea of transition can often seem overwhelming for many families. However, it is never too late to begin assisting your child or youth to become an effective advocate for themselves. Begin where you are.

In transition planning you begin by planning ***with your child, not for your child***. Help your child to begin to think and talk or communicate about his or her own needs, visions, and options for his or her future. Now that your child has reached transition age, this is the time to help them to advocate for themselves and his or her interests. These are skills that your child will need long after leaving high school and into their adult life. Allow and encourage your child to be fully involved in decision making on a daily basis and in his or her IEP. Ask them questions about what they want in every situation and give them time to communicate his or her desires. Ask your child about what they want now, in five years, and in ten years. Teach them to continue to voice his or her desires in every situation.

Self-advocacy is a skill that can be acquired in time. The more opportunities your child has to voice his or her desires and be heard the better self-advocate they will become. You don't have to teach them everything all at once. Self-advocacy can begin in small steps. For instance, allow your child to decide what time they want to wake up in the morning, or what they want to eat for a meal. Starting with small decision-making can lay a firm foundation of advocacy. The more your child can express his or her desires the more confident they will become. The more confident as a self-advocate your child becomes, the more independent they will be in his or her adult life.

Person-Centered Planning

Part of the self-advocacy building process should include a process called person-centered planning. It is a process that can help individuals with disabilities shape his or her own lives. This process helps youth think about his or her needs and what is important to them and should include family members, service providers, teachers, friends, and community members that have an interest in your child's well-being and can contribute and support those desires through formal and informal supports and suggestions. Ideally, person-centered planning is a facilitated process that involves the

people your child trusts and feels close to. The process can help your child to paint a picture of who they are with a majority of the input coming from the individual with a disability, not others. Once your youth begins understanding who they are, they can develop a picture of how the world connects to them. Person-centered planning is a chance for your child to discuss things like:

- ❖ Where they hope to live,
- ❖ How they want to spend their days,
- ❖ Who they want to spend their time with,
- ❖ If they want to go to college,
- ❖ What type of jobs or work they want to do,
- ❖ What their hobbies and passions are.

Each of these discussion points allows your youth to express his or her interests. Each question ideally leads to more discussion, more questions, and ultimately more discussions. Because the process has many people involved, they can all contribute support and perspectives to help your child accomplish his or her desires.

At the early stages of person-centered planning your child will think where they are and that may not be in the long-term. For instance they may express his or her desires to play video games. That may be their passion today, but do not let these answers discourage you, as they are what your child wants right now. Person-centered planning is an ongoing process, and can give key insight into where your child has skills, needs development, and needs supports. Ideally, this can be an annual ongoing process.

During the process, make sure you write down what your child expresses as his or her desires. Use the notes to create a plan to help them accomplish those real time goals. Later, revisit the plan and determine what progress your child has made. This process and plan can help your child demonstrate their growth and change over time. Remember, it is all about them; the youth, his or her desires, and his or her growth.

Transition Timeline

As a parent you can support your child in preparing for transition early in your child's life. Here is a list of skills and suggested timelines to support your youth in his or her transition.

- During **Childhood** help your child use his or her abilities by giving them some tasks or chores that match their skills and development.
- **Ages 10 to 12 years old:** Talk with your child about careers and see if you and your child can find a neighborhood job or volunteer opportunity.
- **Age 14 or 8th grade:** Help your child to choose an educational diploma pathway. Select appropriate coursework that will enable your youth to meet his or her educational or vocational goals after high school.

- **Age 14 to 16 years:** Help your child to work with school staff to plan life after high school.
- **Age 14 to 18 years:** Start medical transition. Encourage your child to take an active role at his or her doctor's visits.
- **Ages 14 to 21:** Help your child to begin exercising self-advocacy skills in his or her own IEP meetings. Encourage them to actively participate and even facilitate or lead his or her IEP meetings.
- At **age 16**, make an appointment with an Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services counselor and get familiar with services and supports your youth may need to support them in adult life. Invite the counselor to your child's IEP meeting.
- The year your child turns **17 years old**, get ready to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid if necessary.
- At **age 17** consider whether legal issues like guardianship are needed for your youth and consult an attorney if needed.
- **3 months prior to your child's 18th birthday** apply for Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as necessary.
- The **last year of high school**, request a full and complete evaluation to use for college, technical school or adult services. Help your child to make community connections with adult service providers.

Age of Majority

Parents have a significant impact upon their children long into their child's adult life. However, there is a point where youth are legally recognized as adults. In Alabama, that age is 19 years old. At the age of 19, youth are expected to take responsibility and make decisions for his or her own future. This also includes educational decision making. For students with disabilities, all special education decision-making rights are transferred from the parent to the youth at the age of 19. An exception extends to students with significant cognitive disabilities and or guardianships. If a student has an appointed guardian then that individual is the decision maker regarding educational decisions in the IEP. The age of majority is explained in the special education parental rights notice provided at least annually. The student should be an informed participant in his or her IEP prior to the age of 19. Parents are encouraged to include his or her child in his or her IEP planning process from an early age. Students may not be comfortable making all their own educational decisions without their parents being involved. Students are encouraged to invite his or her parents to continue to participate.

Transition Assessment

Transition assessments are the tools schools and IEP teams use to determine how a student functions related to education, future work, and independent living. The

assessment process helps to determine what postsecondary goals are necessary to support your child from where they are now, to where they will be in the future. Transition assessments play a big role in the planning process because they provide information that will help the IEP team to develop a transition plan for a productive adult life.

Every child is unique. When planning for adult life, your child's natural abilities, preferences, strengths, and interests will provide the basis of what the IEP will implement as transition goals.

Transition assessments can include both formal and informal testing. What we know is that no single assessment or test can give a complete picture of what your child's needs, strengths, and interests are. Schools are encouraged to use a variety of types of tests and assessments to collect information about your child's current level of functioning, strengths, and needs as they relate to adult life. When thinking about transition testing and measurement, the IEP team will use testing that:

- Will give **useful information** about the student in **key areas** of transition planning,
- Provide information about the student's **current level of functioning**,
- Identify your child's **needed accommodations** to support his or her success,
- Provide a **base of information** for **writing measurable annual IEP goals and postsecondary goals**.

Transition testing should also include and provide data that helps the IEP team to determine needs in the four key transition planning areas:

1. **Education:** These tests should provide information about how your child performs academically. They can include classroom based assignments, grade level and school assessments, formal academic testing in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, and observations made by teachers, parents, employers, and others.
2. **Employment:** These tests will provide information about your child's employability or his or her ability to work. They can include vocational inventories, functional skill assessments, assessments in the work environment, interviews, and work skill tests that give information on the ability to complete tasks or take criticism, be punctual, and maintain his or her personal appearance.
3. **Training:** These tests can include military aptitude, self-determination scales, and vocational readiness.
4. **Independent Living:** These tests measure daily living skills, assistive technology needs, and independent living skills that your child may have or need to acquire.

Formal assessments are standardized tools given by trained personnel, such as school psychologist, psychometrists, or special education teachers. Examples of formal test used can include:

- ✓ Curriculum-based assessments,
- ✓ Transition skill inventories,
- ✓ Learning style assessments,
- ✓ Work samples, and
- ✓ Interest inventories.

Informal assessments lack the reliability of formal testing but can provide valuable information to help the IEP team plan for the transition of your youth into adult life. These types of measures can include:

- ✓ Observations and checklists,
- ✓ Career exploration activities,
- ✓ Student self-evaluations,
- ✓ Interest surveys,
- ✓ Academic data, including previous testing.

Transition testing is a key base of information to help you, your child, and the IEP team to prepare to support your child in building key skills to be productive after high school. You, as the parent, and your child can prepare to contribute to this assessment process by thinking about what you know best about your child. You will want to work with your child to answer key questions and contribute to the planning process. Think about the following questions and bring them to the table when you plan with the IEP team:

- What are my child's strengths?
- What is my child interested in doing now and in the future?
- What is my child good at?
- What areas does my child struggle in?
- What are my child's academic goals?
- What are my child's job goals?
- How will my child live independently outside of my home?
- What supports will my child need to live outside of my home?
- What gaps exist between what my child wants to do and the skills they currently have?

Your child can and should actively participate in his or her own transition planning and testing process. They are, of course, the most important participant in the planning of their future. Each student's participation will look different based on his or her abilities; however, every effort should be made by the IEP team to allow and promote active

participation of the student in his or her own planning. Your child can prepare for the transition planning process by:

- ❖ Developing an ***understanding of their disability*** and its impact on their learning, living, and employment,
- ❖ Developing a ***vision of their future*** and what they want it to be,
- ❖ Being ***able to discuss*** their strengths, abilities, preferences, and needs,
- ❖ Understanding ***accommodations in the school and work environment*** and how to ask for them,
- ❖ Developing ***self-advocacy*** skills,
- ❖ Developing and using ***appropriate social skills***,
- ❖ Developing and using ***appropriate study skills, test taking, and time management strategies***,
- ❖ ***Maintaining personal information*** like their health needs and medical records,
- ❖ Maintaining their ***job histories*** and skills and updating a resume,
- ❖ Learning about their ***civil rights and laws*** that provide protections in employment, education, and community living.

Selecting an Appropriate Course Pathway

As a student enters high school they will select classes within a course pathway that will prepare them to meet graduation course requirements and enter the adult world. There are three pathways to graduation in Alabama. They are the:

- **General Education Pathway** that includes courses to complete the regular diploma,
- **Essential Life Skills Pathway** that includes courses to complete work based skills, and the
- **Alternate Achievement Pathway** which includes courses that are aligned to alternate achievement standards that are less rigorous and functional for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

Each pathway has course credit requirements that must be successfully completed. These required courses will include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and elective courses. Each pathway requires completion of a minimum of 24 hours of coursework to successfully exit high school with a diploma.

The courses your child chooses should be directly aligned to what his or her future goals in employment, independent living, and postsecondary education are after high school. Your school district may offer courses beyond the required courses listed in the following charts. Some coursework may also include opportunities for Advanced Placement (AP), College (IBE) or Career Technical Credits (CTE).

The decision about which course pathway your child chooses will prepare them for where they are going and what they are going to do after they leave high school. The decision about pathways should be a joint discussion with your child, your guidance counselor, and your child's IEP team. When discussing pathways and course selection keep in mind what your child will be doing after they leave high school and **ensure that they are taking the correct course pathway for his or her life after high school.**

The following chart will show the courses available under each diploma pathway.

General Pathway

***Essentials Pathway**

****Alternate Achievement Standards Pathway**

Credits

Core Curriculum Area of Study		General Pathway	*Essentials Pathway	**Alternate Achievement Standards Pathway	Credits
		English	English 9 or any AP/IB/Postsecondary Equivalent Courses	English Essentials 9	AAS English 9
	English 10 or any AP/IB/Postsecondary Equivalent Courses	English Essentials 10	AAS English 10	1.0	
	English 11 or any AP/IB/Postsecondary Equivalent Courses	English Essentials 11	AAS English 11	1.0	
	English 12 or any AP/IB/Postsecondary Equivalent Courses	English Essentials 12	AAS English 12	1.0	
Mathematics	Algebra I	Refer to "Essentials Pathway Math Sequence Options" document for possible course progressions. Link to document: http://www.alsde.edu/sec/ses/Standards/Essentials%20Pathway%20Math%20Sequence%20Options.pdf	AAS Math 9	1.0	
	Geometry		AAS Math 10	1.0	
	Algebra II with Trig or Algebra II or CTE/IB/Postsecondary equivalent courses		AAS Math 11	1.0	
	Additional course(s) to complete the four credits in mathematics must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study Mathematics</i> or CTE/AP/Postsecondary Equivalent courses		AAS Math 12	1.0	
Science	Biology	Essentials: Biology	AAS Science 9	1.0	
	Physical Science	Essentials: Physical Science	AAS Science 10	1.0	
	The third credit may be used to meet both the science and CTE requirement and must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Science</i> or CTE/AP/Postsecondary Equivalent courses	Essentials: Earth and Space Science	AAS Science 11	1.0	
	The fourth credit may be used to meet both the science and CTE requirement and must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Science</i> or CTE/AP/Postsecondary Equivalent courses	Essentials: Environmental Science or Essentials: Human Anatomy and Physiology	AAS Science 12	1.0	
Social Studies	World History	Essentials I: World History	AAS Social Studies 9	1.0	
	U.S. History 10	Essentials II: U.S. History to 1877	AAS Social Studies 10	1.0	
	U.S. History 11	Essentials III: U.S. History from 1877	AAS Social Studies 11	1.0	
	Government/Economics or AP/IB/Postsecondary Equivalent courses	Essentials IV: Economics; Essentials IV: U.S. Government	AAS Social Studies 12	1.0	
<i>Other Requirements</i>					
Physical Education	LIFE PE	LIFE PE	LIFE PE	1.0	
Health Education	Health Education	Health Education	AAS Life Skills 9 (must be aligned to Health for one semester)	0.5	
Career Preparedness	Career Preparedness (includes: Career and Academic Planning, Computer Applications, and Financial Literacy)	Career Preparedness	AAS Life Skills 10 (must be aligned with components of Career Preparedness)	1.0	
CTE and/or World Language and/or Arts	Students choose from CTE, Arts Education, and/or World Language courses and are encouraged to complete a course sequence	Two CTE courses in a sequence; Workforce Essentials or Transition Services II	AAS Prevocational, AAS Vocational, and AAS Community-based Instruction	3.0	
Electives	Electives	Minimum of one credit of Cooperative Education/Work-Based Learning or Essentials Career Preparation; Other electives	AAS Life Skills 11; AAS Life Skills 12; AAS Elective	2.5	
Total Credits Required for Graduation				24	

Education After High School

If your youth is considering continuing their education after high school, there are many options in educational environments depending on what your child wants to do in his or her adult life. The key to selecting an appropriate school to attend is to help your youth select a school or educational program that aligns to their career goals. There are a variety of programs offered at different types of postsecondary schools. The following chart will give you an overview of each type of school you may be considering.

	Technical College or Vocational School	Community or Junior College	Four Year College or Liberal Arts College	University
<i>Focus of Program</i>	Specialized training for a particular occupation	Two-year degree in career area or academic courses for transfer	Four-year degree; general academic courses plus focus on major	Four-year degree plus graduate programs
<i>Length of Program</i>	Nine months to two years	Two years	Four years	Four years or more
<i>Admission Requirements</i>	Public schools usually have open enrollment to high school graduates or GED. Private schools usually require a high school diploma or GED and may have additional requirements.	Public schools usually have open enrollment to high school graduates. GPA, ACT, SAT or other scores may also be considered.	GPA, class rank, SAT or ACT scores. Applicants may be asked to conduct an interview, write an essay, or both. Other requirements may also be required for consideration.	GPA, class rank, SAT or ACT scores. Applicants may be asked to conduct an interview, write an essay, or both. Other requirements may also be required for consideration.
<i>Document Awarded Upon Completion of Program</i>	Diploma, certificate, license, or an Associate's Degree	Certificate or an Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree; some offer Associate's and Master's Degrees	Associate, Bachelor, Master, Doctoral, and/or Professional Degrees

Funding to Support Education or Training After High School

Funding education and training beyond high school can be a challenge for many families. If your child will attend training or education beyond high school, you should consider the way you will fund further education. There are many funding streams that support education including scholarships from foundations. The most common form of funding is through the U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) program. It is the largest provider of financial aid in the nation. They help manage and provide funding through grants, loans, and work-study programs to students attending college or career schools.

Employment

Getting a job is a rite of passage for most youth and young adults. Jobs, work, and careers help to define who we are as valuable members of society. You will want to assist your child in seeking meaningful competitive employment that is satisfying for them. Unfortunately, statistically the national unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is significantly higher than for people without disabilities. Many individuals with disabilities lose jobs they have worked hard to get because of issues with punctuality, attendance, not following through with responsibilities, not following instructions, or personality conflicts. The better prepared your youth is for employment, the greater the chance of employment success. Planning for future employment should begin well in advance of when your child is ready to seek employment. Your child's IEP transition plans can include goals related to employment. The earlier you begin to prepare your child for employment, the greater his or her chance of becoming successfully employed. Early planning helps to prepare your child to build the skills and attitude necessary for job success. By setting early expectations at home, you can prepare your child for the world of work by helping them take direction, work well with others, respect their commitment to the job, and be flexible within the workplace.

Importance of Employment

Getting a job for a young adult with a disability is very important and can provide many benefits. A job can get the person out of the house and can help them to combat isolation from others, loneliness, and depression. A place of employment can be a great place to interact with other people and make friends. A job can provide the person with income. It can further help a young person to develop social skills and responsibility. Employment can provide a young person with a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and structure to their everyday life. Most importantly, a job can encourage independence.

Preparing Your Child for Employment

As a family, you can be a primary teacher for helping your child to develop soft skills early that are necessary to acquire job. You can start early by teaching children soft skills they will need in a job environment. Soft skills can be things like: the importance of being on time, having a good attitude, following through with responsibilities, and the ability to follow instructions. Once your child acquires good soft skills, they can be used throughout your child's life and can be carried from job to job.

Helping your child develop job skills is about focusing on his or her strengths, natural abilities, and interests, not their challenges. This will give you a sense of what type of work might be a good match for your son or daughter. Think about whether or not your child enjoys being around people. Is your child more motivated and successful when doing repetitive tasks or a variety of tasks? Think about how your child communicates with others. The skills and preferences your child has can be matched in a job environment. The greater the match, the more likely your youth will be satisfied and successful on his or her job.

Setting up responsibility in your home can benefit your young child with a disability throughout his or her life and prepare them for skills needed on a job. Use routine chores as a means to help develop responsibility. You can assign your child daily jobs like cleaning his or her room, picking up clothes, sorting laundry, looking up recipes to plan dinner, feeding pets, vacuuming; the list is endless. Think about things your child can learn to do successfully with practice and encourage them to continue doing those tasks daily. Make sure that you reward them for completed chores consistently. Your child may have difficulty understanding the concept of money, so you can draw the connection between completed chores and rewards through chores. Make sure you set high expectations over time to encourage your child to strive for more and to gain the confidence they need to be successful. Utilizing a chore chart can help you to consistently acknowledge when a chore or job is completed by your child and issue the reward for that work. This type of chart can help your child develop needed organizational skills.

Provide many opportunities for community and job skills exposure both inside your home and within your community. Volunteer opportunities can be a great way to introduce your child to various job environments and types of jobs. Volunteering may not be a long term solution to paid employment, but it can provide opportunities to learn about types of jobs in real environments. Volunteer opportunities can also help your child to establish a job history that they can utilize as they apply for jobs.

You can help your child to find his or her first job by **networking**. Think about all the people you know first. The relationships you have with others can open the door for opportunities for your job-seeking child. Start by making a list of all the people you

know socially, through your work or volunteer work, and the businesses you frequent. Visit those people and places and let them know that your son or daughter is seeking employment. They may have a job or know someone who does. Sometimes the relationships you have can open doors better than any want ads. You can further help your child by assisting them to:

- **Develop his or her first resume:** Every job seeker needs a resume. Your child can be creative about what he or she wants to include, such as work, volunteer experience, hobbies, and skills they are proud of.
- **Application:** Your child can practice completing job applications at home. Simply help them complete one, if needed.
- **The interview:** You can help your child to develop these skills by simply role-playing a job interview situation. Encourage your child to focus on his or her strengths, not challenges, and avoid offering too much personal information during an interview. Talk about appropriate interview behaviors such as eye contact, handshaking, and speaking clearly. Practice these basic skills over and over with your child so that they become confident in executing them in the interview. Finally, make sure you talk with your child about appropriate clothing for the interview and help them prepare and dress.

Your child's IEP can be a great starting point for helping you to support your child in developing employment skills and relevant goals. The IEP team will be instrumental in supporting your child in the development of workplace skills. Work with the team to develop relevant transition goals such as:

- Completing job applications,
- Developing job interview skills,
- Good grooming and personal hygiene,
- Timeliness and punctuality,
- Taking direction,
- Development of basic social skills, and
- Appropriate workplace skills.

The IEP team can further assist you in making community connections through supporting organizations like the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). They provide support through job assessment, coaching, and other job related supports. Your IEP team may include a job counselor from ADRS. Ask your IEP team to invite an ADRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to be a part of your child's IEP team.

Know Your Laws, Rights, and Responsibilities

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how Alabama and all states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and his or her families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B.

Alabama Administrative Code

The Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) is Alabama's law that ensures that Alabama's children with qualifying disabilities receive special education and related services as guaranteed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADAA) is the most comprehensive federal civil rights law protecting the rights of people with disabilities. It provides protections ensuring access to employment, state and local government programs and services, and telecommunications. It also requires that public spaces, businesses, and transportation be accessible to people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law that provides protections and services for people with disabilities. It has different Sections that provide both services and supports for individuals with disabilities. The following list describes the sections and supports provided by the Act:

- **Section 501** provides protections against discrimination in hiring practices,
- **Section 502** created the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB) to enforce standards set by the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968,
- **Section 503** prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of physical or mental disability by businesses with federal contracts or their subcontractors,
- **Section 504** prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability in programs receiving federal funds,
- **Section 508** addresses issues related to access to communication and computer technology.

In addition, Amendments of 1978 to the Rehabilitation Act also provided:

- **Title VII** comprehensive services for independent living such as information and referral, job counseling, job placement, health, education, recreation, and social services,
- **Centers for Independent Living**, are community-based, cross disability, non-residential private nonprofit agencies designed and operated by people with disabilities providing an array of independent living services,
- **Independent Living Services** for older blind individuals,
- **Protection and Advocacy** of Individual Rights, a system in each state designed to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities, and also
- **Vocational rehabilitation service** grants to Native American tribes.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

WIOA is a federal law that ensures that the nation's public workforce development system is strengthened. This law specifically provides supports and focuses to provide services that support individuals with significant barriers to employment including individuals with disabilities. This law provides services and supports to help place individuals with significant barriers to employment into high quality jobs and careers and helps employers to hire and retain skilled workers. WIOA's Title IV amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Social Security Programs

The Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability programs are the largest of Federal programs that provide assistance to people with disabilities. These two programs are different but provide supplemental funds to individuals with disabilities who meet medical criteria and qualify for benefits under these programs.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pays benefits to you, the individual, and certain members of your family if you are "insured", meaning that you have worked long enough and paid Social Security taxes.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) pays benefits to individuals based on financial need.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act

This federal law provides that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of, and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of community life. This law established that each state have a Council that oversees these activities within each state.

How Transition is Done

Transition is the period when a youth with a disability begins focusing on his or her life after high school and receives formal supports and services within their Individualized Education Program (IEP) to get there. It involves planning that focuses on what the student's goals, hopes, dreams, and interests will be. Through the IEP transition process, a youth will receive supports and services that enable them to identify his or her needs and gain specific skills to accomplish their goals. The youth's IEP is the cornerstone that drives and documents the transition process through high school.

The IEP outlines the special education and related services that a student receives from his or her school system. The IEP provides a written record of the goals, services and supports for a student made by the IEP team. During transition planning "measurable postsecondary goals" will support what the youth plans to do after high school. These goals will be written for the following areas:

- **Employment:** What type of employment or job interests the student? In what setting will the work take place? Work settings can occur in many environments for instance; paid and competitive, with or without supports, unpaid and volunteer.
- **Postsecondary Education and Training:** Will the student pursue education beyond high school and in what type of setting? Students may consider the military, two or four year colleges or universities, vocational or technical schools, trade schools, or apprenticeships.
- **Independent Living:** Where will the student live and what supports will they need? How will the student travel to one place or another? Will the student require supports to live independently in the community or at home? Will the student need help with managing his or her money or finances? What health supports does the student need including healthcare and how will they access them? What recreation and leisure opportunities can be accessed by the student in the community?

These goals and processes are results-oriented and should be based upon transition assessment and evaluation. It is important that the youth be actively involved in his or her own planning because it is their life. As part of the transition planning process, the IEP team, may introduce new members from adult services into the transition planning process. Adult service agencies provide many supports that can enable a student to successfully meet his or her goals in adult life. Not all students end up working or doing exactly what they planned after high school. Transition years are a time to dream and have high expectations. The goals of the IEP transition plan will help a student to explore his or her interests and fulfill their dreams. These goals will establish concrete plans for a student to achieve his or her desired goals. A youth's goals may change, and that's ok. The IEP team will review the education and transition goals annually and revise them to meet their student's evolving needs.

A Full Life After School

A good transition plan includes information, training, and tools that will assist a youth to access a full and inclusive life. As parents, you want your children to live full lives, while remaining safe and productive. Transition planning includes preparing your child to make responsible choices while living his or her own full life. Young adults with disabilities can be successful if they are given access to appropriate information, tools, and training. Helping your young adult access and participate in meaningful community activities will better prepare them for full lives after high school.

Recreation

Staying as active as possible, is not only healthy but also provides a good path to socialization. There are many community-based programs throughout the state of Alabama through recreation departments and organizations specifically designed to support individuals with disabilities. Tour programs and facilities of interest and assist your child with enrolling in appropriate programs.

Friendship

Once your child leaves high school, his or her friends and peer groups they have been accustomed to will likely disperse. Finding, making, and keeping new friends can be a challenge. Having opportunities to make and keep new friends is an important part of a satisfying social life. There are many disability and community based organizations that support peer relationships for adults with disabilities. Adult service agencies may also include organizations, clubs, and classes that support ways for adults with disabilities to connect with each other. Always encourage your young adult to participate fully in his or her community. Having a job, taking a class, or participating in a community program can open doors to the formation of new friendships.

Individuals with disabilities are at greater risk for abuse and exploitation within his or her lifetime. Because of this vulnerability, they are more likely to be taken advantage of financially, sexually, or in other ways. Your child's drive to be accepted and have friends can compromise a young person's judgement. As a parent, you can help your youth by assisting them in the development of responsible friendships. Help your young adult understand the potential risks of hanging out with others who may be involved in unsafe activities.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself and make decisions about your own life. Many of today's rights and accommodations for individuals with disabilities resulted from hard work and advocacy of those with disabilities. As young adults leave his or her schools and homes and enter the world it is important that they develop their own strong self-advocacy skills. The development of a strong voice to express his or

her wants needs and desires, and to access needed supports and services is critical to success. Learning to become a strong self-advocate is a lifelong process. It is never too early to help your child develop these critical skills. Prior to school transition age, work with your child's IEP team to develop goals to support the development of self-advocacy skills. Help your child connect with strong self-advocacy groups in your community.

Safety

Young adults with disabilities have varying levels of independence. Some rely on others, while some live independently. Whatever your child's level of independence, you can help them learn to make safe choices by practicing strategies through role-playing, social stories, and watching and discussing TV shows or movies. Be open and honest with your child about your concerns. Open conversations involve you and your child asking questions, listening, and providing honest appropriate answers. Be willing to listen to your child's point of view. One way to help your child alleviate fears and concerns is to create a safety plan. Tips for safety can include:

- Keeping up with your **youth's interests**, including what they like to do and his or her preferred places to go,
- Develop **clear expectations** of what is a reasonable time to come home,
- Have a transportation **back-up plan**,
- Discuss **places that are safe** to go and those to avoid,
- Create a **going out checklist** (keys, charged cell phone, wallet, and leave names and phone numbers of people you will be with, and location where you are going),
- Discuss what to do in an **emergency**,
- Agree on a phone **check in time**,
- Have a **back-up person** to call if you, the parents, are unavailable,
- Review the importance of **making good choices and staying safe**.

Independent living skills

Many families worry about what will happen to their young adults with disabilities should the parents become unable to care for them. Some young adults will have independent living goals in his or her transition plans. Regardless of their level of independence in the future, children should learn to care for themselves to the greatest extent possible. This may include working on toileting skills, self-care and hygiene, learning to cook, doing laundry, washing dishes, or maintaining his or her home. Youth with disabilities should be given ample opportunities to develop independent living and self-care skills as part of his or her transition plan. Families should work with their child's IEP team to develop opportunities for training in the school environment. Additionally, families can support the development of independent living skills in early childhood by implementing

chores in the home. Remember, it's not critical that they do the skills perfectly, but rather that they have ample opportunities to practice his or her independent self-care skills.

Housing

Housing for adults with disabilities is a major concern for many families. As parents age, we may become less able to provide the daily care needed by our young adults with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities should be afforded the same opportunities to experience independent living through many options, as others without disabilities. The reality is that individuals with disabilities may need accommodations and supports which can sometimes limit choices in housing options. There are many independent living options for you to consider that can support individuals with disabilities. These can include:

- **Shared living:** living with a roommate or another family,
- **Supported living:** independent living with supports and supervision based on need, and
- **Group homes:** more than two individuals with disabilities live in a home with supports and supervision.

As you explore housing options and supports with your youth or young adult, be prepared to be creative and supportive. Explore opportunities and think outside the box. Remember, the ultimate goal is safety, but independent living is a strong possibility for all with appropriate supports.

Transportation

No matter where you live, transportation is a must. The question is how your youth or young adult will get safely where they need to go. You can explore options like driving, taking a transit bus, accessing available public transportation, ordering a private transport service like UBER, walking, or even sharing a ride.

Health

Transition involves moving from pediatric care to adult medical care services and providers. As parents, it is important that we take a step back and allow young adults to be the decision makers in his or her own health care. You can assist your child in medical transitioning to adult medical services by asking the pediatricians for a referral to adult practices. If possible, set up informal appointments to meet with potential adult providers. Provide opportunities for your young adult to take part in the interview process to be sure that they are comfortable with the potential physician or provider.

Insurance

Public and private health insurance is available for adults at the age of 18. Healthcare reform has allowed young adults to be covered on his or her parent's policies up to the age of 26. Many young adults with disabilities may already be in a Medicaid program, but may end at the age of 19. Planning for transition to a new health plan is a must. Young people eligible for SSI, will in most cases, be eligible for Medicaid. For young adults who do not qualify for SSI or adult services, finding coverage can be a challenge. Public and private health insurance is offered in a variety of plans.

Mental Health

Many teens and young adults suffer from some form of mental illness, especially depression and anxiety. Some mental health disorders often become evident during the adolescent years. If your adolescent begins developing any unusual challenging behaviors during his or her teen years, you should ask for a referral for a psychological evaluation. Psychological evaluations can often be done by request through your child's IEP. When young adults have physical or cognitive differences, deficits in social skills, and are diagnosed with a mental illness, adjusting to changes in their bodies and in social relationships can be complicated. It is a good idea to be proactive and get your supports and services lined up during puberty.

Adolescent and Personal Health

Talking about adolescence, hormones, and changing bodies with your youth can be uncomfortable, but it is a parental responsibility. It is an important skill in the development of independence, self-care, self-respect, and respect for others. Parents can help in this area of development by modeling responsible relationship skills. Conversations should include information about public and private touch and parts of the body. These skills can be taught at an early age. Be **clear and direct** in discussing the names and purposes of body parts. Create house rules for respect and privacy like:

- Closing bathroom doors,
- No nudity in public parts of the house,
- Respecting personal space,
- Knock before you open a door,
- Do not touch others personal belongings without permission.

Youth with disabilities must develop a sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior for themselves and others when in the community. This sense is the foundation for the prevention of abuse. Parents can teach their youth to interact appropriately in relationships. Understanding terms, words, and touching is critical in developing appropriate relationship skills. Role-playing, scripts, and social stories can help parents as they practice with their children. As parents, it is important to remember that we all

make mistakes in our lives. Youth with disabilities are no different in this regard. Adolescence is a natural time to take risks. Balancing the need to protect your child and allowing them to take risks and fail is challenging for families. You must speak clearly and directly with young adults about lessons and mistakes. Other children may easily make connections between behavior and consequences, but the teen with a disability may not. As your child grows older, parents should be prepared to openly discuss the physical changes in your teen's body and prepare them to manage those changes.

Internet Safety and Social Networking

The internet is a powerful and useful tool to help your child find resources and information. Today's youth use the internet and social applications to connect with others and form friendships. However, the internet can also be a place where many harmful activities including bullying, predatory actions, victimizations, and threats to safety may occur. Children and youth with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to such harmful activities on the internet. As parents, you can minimize harmful risks to your child by:

- ✓ Using **parental controls** to restrict access to unsafe sites,
- ✓ Teaching your child **safe navigational skills** that include safety concerns, friending rules, and red flags,
- ✓ Making sure the **rules of internet usage** are clear and repeated often. Post the rules of internet usage in your home near where your child may access the internet,
- ✓ Navigating sites together to **practice responses** to various scenarios that may arise on the internet,
- ✓ Keeping your child's **passwords** and check their unsupervised internet activity,
- ✓ **Monitoring** who your child chats with or socializes with on the internet,
- ✓ **Limiting time** and access as appropriate.

Emergency Planning

Planning for emergencies is critical. The importance of planning for emergencies or disasters cannot be overstated, particularly for a family who has a child with a disability. Emergencies can include natural or man-made disasters like power outages, floods and storms, and emergency situations. As a parent, you want to prepare your child to know what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. As a family, you want to be prepared to exist in isolation for up to two weeks without access to food, water, electricity, and medicine. Every family should be prepared and have an emergency plan of action. You will want necessary food, water, and medical supplies including medication to last up to a few weeks. Consider preparing an emergency notebook

where you keep all critical information about your child with a disability in one location. This notebook can include:

- ✓ The **daily needs** of your child with a disability,
- ✓ List of **medications and dosage** information,
- ✓ Emergency **contact numbers** of family members and care providers,
- ✓ **Contact information** for community support organizations.

You want to help your child be prepared for an emergency situation. You can support the development of your youth's emergency preparation skills by:

- Helping your child practice **ways to communicate needs** to safety and emergency personnel or service providers,
- Developing an **explanation card about your child** and his or her disability that can assist them to communicate with others in the community,
- Role-playing **appropriate behaviors and language** for them to use if stopped by the police,
- Making sure you **know your rights** as a parent or legal guardian and your child knows theirs,
- Preparing an **in-home emergency contact sheet** and guide available to emergency personnel or service providers,
- **Introducing your child to local emergency personnel** including police and fire fighters. Discuss with emergency personnel your child's disability and his or her needs; these efforts will better prepare emergency personnel to approach your child in an emergency situation so that everyone stays safe and secure.

Planning for Your Adult Child's Future

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a monthly cash benefit for people with disabilities. SSI is intended for individuals with no income or resources. Because many adults with disabilities fall into that category, it is worth looking into whether or not your child is eligible to receive SSI. To qualify for SSI, your child must (1) meet the financial criteria, and (2) be considered disabled under Social Security rules.

Financial Eligibility under SSI

If your child is under 18, your income and resources will be considered in determining eligibility. Once your child turns 18, your income and resources are no longer taken into account, even if your child continues living in your home. At all times, however, your child's own income and resources will affect eligibility for SSI. Local Social Security field offices process and intake information and determine your child's financial eligibility. The amount your child will receive in a monthly allowance will depend on several factors:

Employment: If your child receives SSI and gets a part-time job, their monthly cash benefit will be reduced accordingly. Your child (or you) must submit pay-stubs to the Social Security Administration and inform them of any changes in hours worked or if your child leaves the job. Failing to keep the SSA informed may result in your child having to pay back a portion of the allowance.

Rent: The amount of the allowance your child receives will be adjusted if he or she is living at home and receiving free room and board. In that case, you can check with your local SSA Field Office for guidelines on charging rent so that your child may receive the maximum cash benefit. If your child has an out-of-home living arrangement and pays rent, he or she will receive the maximum benefit.

Resources: Resources that add up to more than \$2,000.00 (such as a bank account, savings bonds, stock shares etc.) will disqualify your child. In this case, you may decide to spend down to the allowable limit, convert assets into non-countable resources for SSI purposes, or use the assets to create a special needs trust. Transferring resources to another individual is not permitted.

Disability Determination

Once financial eligibility has been established, Disability Determination Services will examine evidence of your child's disability according to Social Security Rules. The type of evidence used to make this determination may include functional reports completed by parents or caregivers, special education records and teacher questionnaires,

employer questionnaires, and medical records. New evaluations and testing may also be required.

Tips for SSI:

- ✓ When applying for benefits, **be cooperative and respond** to letters and phone calls.
- ✓ Understand that the process for applying for benefits can be **time consuming**.
- ✓ Social Security needs **documented evidence** in order to render a favorable decision. Help Social Security get the evidence they need to make determinations.
- ✓ **Complete all documents and questionnaires** that Social Security asks you to complete, and return them promptly.
- ✓ **Contact third parties** that have been asked to provide information and encourage them to process records and complete questionnaires promptly.
- ✓ If your child is in school, encourage your child's school to **submit special education records and teacher questionnaires promptly** to avoid a delay in processing the claim. Keep school schedules, including closures and vacations, in mind when applying for benefits. If the school is closed for holidays or summer the paperwork may not be completed on time.
- ✓ To maintain benefits, **stay on top of further requests** for information or documentation for periodic reviews.
- ✓ Consider **charging room and board** to your adult child who receives SSI while they live at home to maximize benefit amount. Be sure to keep accurate records of payments of room and board including copies of cancelled checks.
- ✓ Consider **establishing a Special Needs Trust** in order to help your child qualify and maintain eligibility for benefits. Seek **legal advice** to be sure the documents meet legal requirements.

Special Needs Trusts

The limit on allowable resources of SSI and Medicaid presents a problem for many parents of children with disabilities. If parents wish to leave money for their children for his or her future, they cannot do so without jeopardizing their benefits. Creating a Special Needs Trust can protect the child's assets while not affecting his or her benefit levels.

A Special Needs Trust is a legal document that provides protection in two ways. First, it allows parents, or others such as grandparents, to leave funds for their child without having the funds counted against SSI or Medicaid eligibility. In a Third-Party Special Needs Trust, parents and other family members can add to the trust at any time and without a dollar limit. Second, the Trust provides a safety mechanism for the adult child by having Trustees become responsible for the day-to-day decisions on spending the

money. Trustees have a legal responsibility to comply with the terms of the Trust and act on behalf of the person with a disability.

Wills

Every adult should have a will, but it is really important for parents of children with disabilities. Whether your child is a minor or an adult under legal guardianship, your will is a place where you can appoint your successor (who will takeover). Finding the right person to take over guardianship of your child will require attentive thought and discussion. The person you choose, whether it is a family member, an attorney, or others, will need a lot of information about your child. Consider preparing an information packet for the potential guardian to keep now, and update it as needed.

Wills can redirect any possible source of inheritance away from your child in his or her Special Needs Trust. Remember, in the event that your son or daughter receives more than \$2,000 in assets, he or she may lose SSI, Medicaid, or other related benefits.

Protections for Vulnerable Adults

For some children with disabilities, they reach the age of majority (age 19) before they are able to look out for his or her own affairs. There are several legal safeguards we can put into place to protect their interest and well-being. Because these are legal documents, it is a good idea to seek advice of an attorney on setting these safeguards up for your child.

Guardianship

Once children turn 19, they are responsible for his or her own financial, medical, and legal decisions. They are able to sign legally binding contracts and make decisions on where they live or whether or not to go to school. If you feel your child cannot make good decisions on their own or without assistance, you may wish to become the child's legal guardian. However, adult children under guardianship lose some rights and independence, so you should carefully consider all options before you make the decision to seek legal guardianship.

Involuntary guardianship: You will need to consider an involuntary guardianship when your adult child is either unwilling to accept guardianship or does not have a clear understanding or the capacity to pursue a voluntary guardianship. When you seek guardianship over your child, you must be prepared to explain what alternatives you have considered and whether your child only needs help in making decision in some areas like financial decisions.

Process for Involuntary Guardianship:

- **File petition** in probate court in the county where your child lives.
- **Pay the petition fee or request a waiver** if you cannot afford it.

- The Judge will order an **evaluation** of your child.
- The Judge will **appoint an attorney** to represent your child's wishes. Your child is responsible for legal fees, unless the attorney agrees to provide services pro bono (free of charge).
- If necessary, the Judge will appoint a **Guardian-ad-litem** to determine what is in the best interest of your child and report findings to the court. The determination may or may not coincide with your child's wishes.
- A **hearing** will take place and the judge will determine if your child is in need of guardianship.
- As guardian, you will be required to submit **yearly reports** to the court.

Power of Attorney

Power of Attorney allows you, the trusted "agent", to conduct business on behalf of your child. A Power of Attorney can grant you broad power, allowing you to handle the adult child's banking, buying and selling, bill paying and other personal affairs. You would show the Power of Attorney at banks, schools, mortgage companies, and others in order to handle your child's transactions. A Power of Attorney may also be narrow in focus and have a time limit.

Advanced Health Care Directives

This document allows you to make health care related decisions for your adult child. An Advanced Health Care Directive may also be broad or very specific.

Representative Payee

Your adult child can request that you receive and manage government assistance funds on his or her behalf. This is a common arrangement with SSI checks. You must maintain these funds separate from your own finances. Another party, such as a caregiver or attorney may also be appointed the Payee. Annual reporting may be required.

Circle of Support

You and your child should create a Circle of Support composed of people including friends, family, and anyone else who shares your vision for your child's future and chooses to be a part of it.

Connecting to Adult Services

Transition of your child with disabilities into adult life will involve interacting with new service providers that you may be unfamiliar with. There are many different agencies, programs, and services that your young adult may access to assist them in reaching his or her goals. People and services provided to your child through the education system will not be the same providers who will support your youth in their adult life. Your IEP transition plan should include connecting you and your child to adult services that can assist your youth in the future. Either you or your child's IEP team should invite adult service providers to your child's transition IEPs to assist in the coordination of services into adult life. To support and assist your youth in connecting with adult service agencies, you can learn about new services and agencies. Many adult agencies provide services differently than agencies who have provided previous services to your child. There are important differences between school services and adult agencies:

1. If your child is a student with a disability and they qualify for special education services, the schools must provide your child with those services. This is called an **entitlement**. Once your youth exits high school, services are provided by adult agencies. Your young adult will be required to apply for those services. Even if your child qualifies for services and meets all the qualifications, you may not receive the services or may not receive them right away. This is because adult services are based on **eligibility and availability**.
2. There may be **waiting lists** for some adult services. Even if your child qualifies for services as an adult, they may have to wait until an agency can serve your child, or you may have to find other ways to get the help you need to support your young adult while waiting.
3. In schools, most services that your child needs are coordinated by one person, his or her special education teacher or case manager. After graduation, you or your young adult may need to **coordinate their own services**. Some adult service agencies may provide case managers or others to provide this coordination.
4. **Eligibility requirements may be different** for children than for adults. They may also be different for people who are still in school and those who have completed or exited high school.

Getting Familiar with Adult Services

To become familiar with adult agencies and their supports and services, you can use the following questions:

1. What services do you provide?
2. Who is eligible for your services?
3. At what age can services be applied for?
4. Who initiates the application for your services?
5. Can your services be customized to fit my youth's needs or wants?

6. Are the services your agency provides time-limited?
7. Are there waiting lists for your services? If yes, how long is the average wait? How do you move up on the list?
8. Are there other ways (besides waiting for an opening) to access your services?
9. Will your agency provide the services or do you contract with local providers? If you contract with local providers, who are the providers in my area?
10. How does one choose the provider they want?
11. Can a person change services or providers in the future if they choose?
12. Can a provider say they do not want to provide services to anyone?

Getting Familiar with a School, College, or University

If your youth with a disability is considering continuing his or her education beyond high school, here are some steps they can use to familiarize themselves with supports of that program or institution:

- Research colleges and programs that provide supports to individuals with disabilities.
- Read about what financial options are available through the program or school.
- Write down the name, phone number, and email of the Disability Services for students contact person at the college or school your youth would be considering attending.
- Make an appointment to visit the school.
- Invite a representative of the school to visit your child at his or her high school.
- Complete an application for the school of your child's choice.
- Ask about the course requirements and time required to remain an active student.
- Interview a student with a disability who attends the school your child is interested in.

Resources

Alabama Parent Education Center (APEC) is a parent training and information center. APEC provides training, information, and support for parents, youth with disabilities, educators, and professionals serving families of children with disabilities ages birth through 26 years old. www.alabamaparentcenter.com . APEC can be contacted at 866-532-7660 or 334-567-2252.

Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) is part of the nation's federally funded protection and advocacy (P&A) system. ADAP provides legal services to Alabamians with disabilities to protect, promote, and expand their rights. ADAP is part of the National Disabilities Rights Network (NDRN). <http://adap.ua.edu/> ADAP can provide technical assistance by calling 205-348-4928.

Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is the agency that provides support to schools and parents on the implementation of the Alabama Administrative Code. This includes transition under the IDEA. www.alsde.edu . Special Education Services division can be contacted at 334-242-8114.

Information and technical assistance on the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. www.ada.gov The U.S. Department of Justice provides information about the ADA through a toll-free phone line 800-514-0301 (voice) or 800-514-0383 (TTY).

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) is Alabama's state agency providing services to children and adults with disabilities through a continuum of service delivery systems including early intervention, children's rehabilitation services, and adult services. <http://www.rehab.alabama.gov/>

Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) is Alabama's state council who's mission is to support independence, advocacy, productivity, and inclusion for Alabamians with developmental disabilities. <http://acdd.org/>

Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) is Alabama's state agency providing efforts and services that support the health and well-being of those impacted by mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse and addiction. <http://www.mh.alabama.gov/>

Centers for Independent Living <http://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory>

FAFSA is the nation's website for applying for federal student aid. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>

Family Voices of Alabama provides tools and support for families to make informed decisions regarding health care and health services.

<http://www.familyvoicesal.org/index.php>

Affordable Colleges is a website that provides many useful resources about affordable college opportunities and funding scholarships for students with disabilities.

<http://www.affordablecolleges.com/resources/scholarships-students-with-disabilities/>

Think College <http://www.thinkcollege.net/> is a website that provides useful tools to select a college for students with intellectual disabilities.

A **Full Life Ahead Foundation** www.fulllifeahead.org The foundation exists to provide, hope, knowledge, encouragement, and connections for families who have a teen or a young adult with a disability.

People First of Alabama <https://peoplefirstofalabama.wordpress.com/> People First is a group of individuals with developmental disabilities living in Alabama communities dedicated to making their dreams happen through self-advocacy and self-determination. They promote decision making and planning for each individual with developmental disabilities to make informed choices in their own lives.

Person-Centered Planning Education Site provides many useful tools and training resources that can assist in the development of good person-centered plans.

<http://www.personcenteredplanning.org/>

Social Security <https://www.ssa.gov/>

211 Connects Alabama Dialing 2-1-1 will connect callers to an operator that maintains a comprehensive database of services within Alabama and local communities. They facilitate access to public services for people with disabilities, the elderly, and low income. <http://www.211connectsalabama.org/>

Conclusion

For youth with disabilities, the transition to adult life is an exciting time when they are able to explore their interests. It is also a time to dream and support the development of hope and independence. It is a time to connect with the supports that can make all of these dreams a possibility. This handbook was developed to help you assist your youth with navigating the transition process. Every student's journey through transition is as unique as they are. Some youth will require minimal academic or community supports while others might rely on specialized curriculum, supports, and community partnerships. The time you invest in supporting your child in transition will be well worth the effort once your young adult moves into a successful adult life.