

LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

for students with developmental disabilities



TIP SHEET

It's never too early to start planning for your child's transition from high school to adulthood. Below are some tips for parents and family members to help guide their children toward success, independence, and fulfillment in life after graduation.

HELP YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- **Take your child's interests and preferences into account** while planning for future employment. They should count just as much as any other evaluation done by the school or job training programs.
- **Provide your child with work-based learning opportunities** that will allow him/her to explore and experience different available opportunities in the working world. For example, your child could shadow a family member or friend at work, volunteer in the community, or find an internship.
- **Take advantage of your child's school assignments** by showing him/her how certain lessons apply to the adult world. For instance, you can use your child's math skills assignments to talk about money management.
- **Don't go it alone!** When you attend team meetings, bring others with you who can best advocate for and support you and your child, such as a Medicaid Service Coordinator, or even a parent who has been through this process before. Reach out to adult service agencies such as the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) or Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR).

HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT

- **Allow your child to make their own choices** and encourage them to express their own preferences as early as possible.
- **Help set your child up** with the accommodations and structure necessary to best promote his/her independence. This may include travel training, assistive technology, housing, a job coach provide through supported employment.
- **Don't shy away from discussing the challenges that come with disability.** Admit that problems exist, and be sure to offer solutions, positive encouragement, and support. Strike a healthy balance between being a protective parent and a parent who allows their child to take reasonable risks.
- **Help your child learn about his/her disability** and how to communicate any needs they might have in connection with it.
- **Encourage your child to become a major player on his/her planning team.** Prepare your child early on to participate in his/her own educational and employment planning and decision-making, and teach them about their rights and responsibilities as adults and individuals with disabilities.

