

Integrated transition planning 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. Every child is different, so every idea might not be right for your family. This fact sheet will help you start planning for employment as an important piece of your child's life.



GET STARTED

1. In middle school or earlier begin observing your child's interests. Pay attention to what brings them joy. Encourage your child to share what makes their day a good day.
2. Build their skills around your home early—Can they help with dishes, do laundry, keep track of their own schedule, or take responsibility for medication refills?
3. Early in your child's high school years, start exploring work and career options. **Advocate** with your child's school team to make sure that everyone supports your efforts. This is also a good time for your child to try volunteering. It builds skills and lets young adults explore different tasks and work environments.
4. Think about the skills your child has and the areas that can be expanded before finishing high school. Your child's school team can brainstorm ideas with you and assess current and emerging skills. This can be done at an IEP meeting or you can request a meeting to focus on employment.
5. Don't set limits! Have high expectations and think broadly about your child's future including their employment. Let your child surprise you! Studies show that high parent expectations are the **number one predictor** of success for youth with disabilities after high school.



Why is this Important?

Research tells us that students who have at least two paid work experiences during high school are **five times more likely** to have jobs after finishing high school.

Plan for Your Child's Workday

To develop job goals, talk with your child and their school team about the following:

- Your child's skills, experiences, interests, special talents, and personality traits
- The types of people they like to be around
- The best environments for your child like a quiet space or a busy spot.
- The best times of day and the right number of hours for them to be successful.

Gain Work Experience

Ask your child's school team to focus on employment **early**. Wisconsin transition law directs schools to start employment planning with youth with disabilities at **age 14**. Request that their IEP include job exploration, internships, and work at school or in the community. Use your connections with local businesses, community groups, your house of faith, friends, and extended family to find work experiences.

How Can DVR Help?

Ask the school team to connect with the **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**. DVR services can start **at least** two years before your child exits school. Remind school to invite the DVR counselor to IEP meetings to help explore interests and goals for employment. DVR connects your child to employment service providers, job sites, internships, and courses to support future employment.

Supports for Success

What will your child need to make their work experience successful? It is important to plan for these needs, including support for their health and/or mental health needs.

- Transportation to their job—Long-term support programs can pay for transportation if needed.
- Equipment, technology or other accommodations to fully participate in the job.
- Help with personal care needs, like using the bathroom or eating during their workday. These support costs can be covered by long-term care.
- A job coach or other support from a vocational rehabilitation agency.

Tip for Families



Young adults with significant needs may qualify for intensive job supports from a Supported Employment Agency. These costs be covered by long-term care or initially by DVR.



HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ADULT SERVICES OR LONG-TERM SUPPORTS?

Contact your county's **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** if you have questions about programs and services for adults with disabilities. The ADRC will work with your child beginning at age 17 ½.

Workshops, Sub-minimum Wage Jobs and Day Services

Wisconsin schools and vocational programs follow state and federal laws to support youth with disabilities to find work in the community. The **Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act** prevents youth from taking sub-minimum wage jobs in workshops. Instead, schools and vocational agencies support students to find jobs in their community, with customized employment options that meet the needs of their disabilities.

Day Services

Community-based and facility-based day services can be **wrap-around** options for youth who work part-time but need a full day of support. Day services can offer recreation and leisure activities to support meaningful participation in their community.

Will My Child's Income Affect Their Benefits?

When your child transitions from school to paid employment it may raise concerns about the effect of their income on their public benefits. However, most public assistance programs, including SSI, have **job incentive programs**. One example is the **Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)**.

To learn about **Work Incentives Benefits Counseling** go to eri-wi.org/programs/wipa. Your child may be eligible for free benefits counseling. This can be added to their service plan with Family Care or IRIS, or it can be part of their DVR services.



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- **Before Age 18** offers practical ideas and resources for teens, including a **Transition Resource Guide** and **Family Advocacy Training on Employment**.
- **CLTS—You Can Work** explains employment supports for youth on Children's Long-Term Supports.
- **Employment Resources Inc** has resources to learn about jobs, skills and benefits counseling.
- **Explore Work** is a training that explores a youth's talents and interests.
- **Pacer's National Center on Transition and Employment** offers resources to learn about work.
- **Transition Guide to Post-Secondary Planning and Employment** is the U.S. Department of Education's guidance and requirements on post-transition life.



Learn more on the Family Voices website's **Resource Library**.

