

## Disability Connection Newsletter – March

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Posted on [March 19, 2014](#)



March 2014

### Disability Connection: 10 Ways to Make a Smooth Transition to Adulthood

1. **Choose a Career.** It is a question that everyone faces when figuring out the next step after high school – what do I want to do? There are many different ways to choose a possible career path. For example, take a self-assessment, like the [“What’s My Major?” Quiz](#) from Loyola University of Chicago or CareerOneStop’s [Skills Profiler](#), to help you identify jobs based on your interests and skills. You can also read the digital version of [Careers & the Disabled](#) or use the U.S. Department of Labor’s [My Next Move](#) tool for ideas. Check out this [Career Planning Guide](#) from the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, or if you are planning to go to college, visit [The College Board](#) to read articles on how to choose the right major, including [10 Questions to Ask Yourself](#). You can also work with your guidance counselor to decide whether you want to go to a [two-year or four-year college or trade and technical school](#). Consider factors such as classroom size, cost of attendance and the type of degree or certification you will need for your future job.
2. **Find a Supportive College.** If you decide college is the best choice for your future, it’s important to look at more than just school spirit or a convenient location. Does your financial aid package make it affordable? Can you get the accommodations you will need on campus? Will career services help you find a job once you graduate? Take a minute to think about these questions and other [things you should consider](#). Then, use the [College Navigator](#) to compare schools. You can also browse more than 200 [college programs for students with intellectual disabilities](#) on the [Think College](#) website. Some comprehensive transition and postsecondary (CTP) programs even offer [federal student aid](#) to help students with

intellectual disabilities cover the cost of attendance. Once you have made a decision, contact your school's Disability Support Services to learn about accommodations and supports that are available. Check out NPR's [10 Tips for College Students with Disabilities](#) or [Going to College](#), a website that features advice from other college students with disabilities who have successfully made the transition.

3. **Parents and Caregivers Matter.** Parents and caregivers are often a key influence, providing youth with disabilities the solid foundation they need to succeed during different phases of their lives. The [DO-IT \(Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology\)](#) program lists resources for parents of youth with disabilities on a variety of topics to assist them in preparing their children for college and careers. In addition, the PACER Center has compiled a series of [Transition Parent Briefs](#) to help families be active and supportive partners as their children make the transition into adulthood. Topics include building work skills, helping youth with mental health needs and the role of parents in dropout prevention, among others. [Parent centers](#), such as Parent Training and Information Centers or Community Parent Resource Centers, are also a good source of information and support. Visit the [Center for Parent Information and Resources](#) website to [find a parent center](#) in your state.
4. **Take Advantage of Mentorship.** Mentoring has many benefits for youth with disabilities, such as teaching new skills and increasing motivation and confidence. Check out the following resources to get started! The [National Youth Leadership Network](#) is a peer-led nonprofit organization that promotes community leadership among youth with disabilities, ages 16 to 28. Membership is free. [Partners for Youth with Disabilities \(PYD\)](#) offers one-to-one and group mentoring to motivate youth with disabilities, ages 6 to 24, to reach their personal, educational and career goals. In addition, PYD's [National Center for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities](#) provides customized trainings to organizations interested in creating their own disability inclusion programs. [Cultivating Leadership: Mentoring Youth with Disabilities](#) is an ODEP resource that provides an overview of the basics of mentoring relationships, which can include academic and career guidance, as well as interpersonal and problem-solving skills.
5. **Brush up on Your Soft Skills.** There's more to professional life than simply learning how to do your job. That's why the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) created the [Skills to Pay the Bills – Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](#) toolkit. The curriculum, which includes materials and a [video series](#), teaches six workforce readiness skills, including communication; enthusiasm and attitude; teamwork; networking; problem solving and critical thinking; and professionalism. You can download a [PDF version of the toolkit](#) or order a [hard copy](#). Parents and caregivers, who want to provide a little extra coaching and work on these skills as a family, may enjoy the [National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth's \(NCWD/Youth\) InfoBrief](#) on the topic.
6. **Take Control of Your Health Care.** All youth with special health care needs eventually move from a pediatric to an adult health care system. Fortunately, there are number of resources available to help you and your family transition successfully. Visit [GotTransition.org](#) to get connected to resources for youth, families and providers. You may also want to read [A Youth Guide to Transition from Pediatric to Adult Health Care](#). This comprehensive resource, developed by the [North Carolina Division of Public Health](#) and the [Alliance of Disability Advocates](#), includes helpful case studies and information on the ages and stages of

transition, roles and responsibilities of health care providers, as well as how to manage your own health care. For a more interactive learning experience, visit [Healthy Transitions](#) , a website that helps youth with developmental disabilities, ages 14 to 25, foster self-determination through new [skills](#) , [videos](#) and [tools](#) .

7. **Get Connected to Resources for Success.** Whether you decide to go to college, attend a vocational school or start working after high school graduation, you need the right tools to help you on your journey to independence and self-sufficiency. The ODEP Youth Team, in partnership with the [NCWD/Youth](#) , has created a number of resources for youth in transition. These include [Youth in Action! Leading Your Transition Planning](#) , which provides a blueprint to help you plan and take charge of your future; [Guideposts for Success](#) , which are based on [six key principles](#) , to help you and your family through the transition process; and [The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities](#) , which helps you make informed decisions on whether to disclose your disability and the impact your choice may have on your education, employment or social life.
8. **Try an Internship.** Work experience gives everyone the opportunity to learn and practice life skills. [Internships: The On-ramp to Employment](#) is a comprehensive guide for students with disabilities on how to get internships and make the most of them. Topics include interviewing, preparing for the first day, work skills and personal assistance services. A section of the [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#) website is devoted to information for teens on [volunteering and paid internships](#) . An About.com article, [Transitioning to Adulthood – Employment](#) , contains practical advice on what to put on a résumé when you have limited work experience. In addition, Disability.gov's [Guide to Employment](#) includes a section for [high school and college students](#) on where to start their job search, as well as other sections on [interviewing and résumé tips](#), [job training programs](#), [workplace accommodations](#) and [how working affects Social Security disability benefits](#).
9. **How Personal Assistance Services Can Help.** Many people with disabilities use [Personal Assistance Services](#) to accomplish daily living activities, such as bathing, dressing, cooking or running errands, so that they can remain independent. PAS are typically provided by a hired worker, commonly called a "personal care attendant." Read this [guest blog](#) by Dr. Raymond Glazier to learn more. [A Step-by-Step Guide to Training and Managing Personal Assistants](#) contains practical tips on hiring and supervising a personal assistant. Another publication, [Making the Move to Managing Your Own Personal Assistance Services](#) , offers sample worksheets, questions and charts to help youth with disabilities develop the skills needed for increased independence, as well as personal and professional growth. [Workplace Personal Assistance Services \(WPAS\)](#) help employees with disabilities perform work-related tasks. Examples include the use of a reader for business documents or a sign language interpreter for company meetings. WPAS may also include personal care-related assistance, such as helping an employee to the restroom or assisting him or her with eating or drinking.
10. **Think about Your Benefits.** Many young people with disabilities may be unaware that they are entitled to certain benefits once they turn 18. The [Benefits for Youth in Transition Fact Sheet](#) is a helpful resource that explains the major [Social Security Administration](#) benefit programs and how they relate to youth transitioning into adulthood. Young people with disabilities that transition out of foster care can apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) up to 90 days

before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. For more information about the requirements, visit the [SSA website](#) . For people with disabilities who are at least 18-years-old and receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or SSI benefits, Social Security's [Ticket to Work](#) program may be a worthwhile option. Through this program, you can get a good job, save money and become financially independent, while still keeping your health care coverage for a period of time while you work. Sign up for a [Work Incentive Seminar Event webinar](#) to learn more.

Don't forget to like Disability.gov on [Facebook](#) , follow us on [Twitter](#) and use #disabilityconnection to talk to us about this newsletter. You can also read [Disability.Blog](#) to learn about helpful programs in your community.

Read [past issues](#) of the *Disability Connection* newsletter.



# EMPOWERING PARENTS

***"Be creative, be brave, and make up your own solutions."***

*~ Madlyn Tombs, Pastor*



Parents of people with disabilities have had to call upon creative resources throughout the life of their child. "Inventing the future" usually requires parents and their son or daughter to look beyond "the system", beyond conventional answers, and requires them to consider anything that works.

Adolescence is a time of independence, a time when young adults begin to take more responsibility for meeting their own needs. Many young adults with disabilities begin to "strike out on their own" and seek less interference and involvement from their parents. Greater independence means higher risk. Risk taking is an essential component of adolescence and an important component of gaining independence.

When young adults with disabilities move from the school system into the community, their parents experience the same feelings that all parents do when it is time to "let go" and allow their kids to try things on their own. Letting sons and daughters with disabilities "try their own wings" can be more frightening because they have usually been more dependent on others.

Some parents are afraid their sons and daughters can't make it without them. Others fear transition because change involves risk and they're afraid their young adult may fail in some new task, be injured, or treated poorly. No parent wants to expose a young person to risk, especially one who has a higher than average chance of failing. Yet most parents know that risk-taking is essential for the long-term development of social and personal competence.

The passage from childhood to adulthood for all of us involves the 'dignity of risk' – the right to make mistakes and learn from them."

Parents' fears about physical or emotional harm are real, but protecting young people from reasonable risks robs them of an opportunity to become as independent as possible as they transition to adulthood.

The negative consequences of shielding young adults from taking risks can be more damaging than the consequences of an occasional mistake or failure. To prepare for the independence all adolescents strive for, opportunities to practice should be given prior to adolescence. A child may want to spend 2 weeks away at camp, which might terrify parents. Allowing the child to spend weekends camping with friends or spending a few nights away from home visiting a relative could gradually increase confidence in her or his independence. Breaking a desired goal into smaller steps helps build confidence and supports families as they enter this tough transition to independence.

While young adults are preparing to transition into the community, parents' need for support and information may be as great or greater than they were when their child's disability was first diagnosed. The support of other parents who are facing the same decisions and risks can be very valuable.

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*If your child has special needs, so do you! We can help!*

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## LETTING GO

Although it is especially difficult for you to allow and encourage your youth with disabilities to strike out on their own, it is easier when preparations have been made in advance. You will be less traumatized if you view "letting go" as a process and use transition planning to provide an approach that lays adequate groundwork for successful independence.

As your youth moves towards adulthood and independence, you can encourage them to make choices and discipline yourself not to interfere. Even if you are afraid they may fail at some new task or be treated poorly by others, you must recognize that reasonable risk-taking is essential for their personal growth, ultimate well-being, and long-term happiness.

The goals and objectives of the transition IEP can include specifics that address concerns about their ability to function safely on their own. When the transition plan is being developed or reviewed, you have the opportunity and obligation to make certain those concerns are addressed. As the plan is implemented and monitored, you can assess their progress as they: make choices; experience consequences; evaluate outcomes and apply what they learned to new circumstances.

When you let your youth make choices, you may experience feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity that match the emotional turmoil that came when they were first diagnosed with a disability. You may find it valuable to turn to other parents who are facing the challenges of transition for encouragement and support. You will find renewed strength when you share your feelings with others who understand your fears and hopes. You can sympathize and reassure one another when difficulties arise and celebrate together when positive accomplishments are made.

As you loosen your grip, you embark on a new leg of your journey in experiences with disabilities. It does not need to weaken the parent-child relationship but will change it to some degree. The love that once moved you to protect your youth will now motivate you to support, encourage, and respect them as they maximize their efforts toward independence.

***We don't have a clue as to what people's limits are. All the tests, stopwatches, and  
finish lines in the world can't measure human potential.  
When someone is pursuing their dream, they'll go beyond what seem to be their limitations.  
The potential that exists within us is limitless and largely untapped.  
Robert J Kriegel & Louis Patler***

***"If It Ain't Broke...Break It!"***

*This content is taken from the Utah Parent Center handbook:  
From NO Where to KNOW Where: A Parent Handbook for the Transition to Adult Life.*

**YOUTHHOOD.ORG**



LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT. YOUTHHOOD.ORG CAN MAKE IT GREAT.

## WHAT IS THE YOUTHHOOD?

It's a dynamic Web site young adults can use to plan for life after high school. It's unique because it's:

- ▶ Curriculum and research based
- ▶ Interactive and personalized
- ▶ Directed to young adults
- ▶ Flexible and useful in any setting
- ▶ Fun
- ▶ Free

The Youthhood provides a holistic, Web-based curriculum that teachers, community service providers, parents, and mentors can use with young adults to develop skills, increase knowledge, and implement a personal life plan that will help young adults achieve their dreams.

**CHECK IT OUT AT [WWW.YOUTHHOOD.ORG](http://WWW.YOUTHHOOD.ORG)**  
**AND BECOME PART OF THE YOUTHHOOD COMMUNITY!**



Youthhood.org is a product of the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition ([ncset.org](http://ncset.org)), supported through cooperative agreement #HR326J000005 with the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.