

Key Component – Thinking about the Future



What youth knows what they want to do when they grow up? Many youth do not even know what they want to do next week or next year, let alone after high school. It can be difficult to think about growing up. Assisting youth to develop goals helps them think about their future. Developing goals early in high school helps to focus what their high school experiences will be.

There are a variety of tools that can assist youth in figuring out their goals for life after high school and assess their skills, preferences and needs. A school’s guidance counselor is a valuable resource to youth and families. A component of a comprehensive guidance program is career development. This includes helping youth learn to set goals, determine interests, explore career opportunities, and even learn valuable career skills. Ask the school’s guidance counselor what programming and resources they have to support the career development of your child.

CAREER/EMPLOYMENT

There are many tools, formal and informal, that can assist in helping youth develop career/employment goals.

Interest Inventories & Career Exploration

- o These focus on the youth’s interests and preferences and do not evaluate their work related skills. Often they are checklists or questionnaires that look at what the youth likes to do and what general types of careers might suit them. Some also ask questions about the aspects or components of a job that are of value to them. For instance, is it important to them that they have a flexible schedule or that their job is highly structured? Both interest and functional skills need to be considered when exploring career options as part of transition planning.



Transition Planning Tips!!

- o Many schools have on-line and computer based programs that help youth explore their interests and work values. Ask the school’s guidance counselor what tools they have to help youth explore their interests.
- o Ask if the school has a School to Career Program. School to Career programs provide students with work-based learning experiences



Transition Planning Tips!!

- such as informational interviews, job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships. These opportunities enable students to explore career options while applying their academic experience in the workplace.
- o Job shadowing, internships and volunteer experiences are important tools in helping youth determine their career and employment interests. These experiences (and supports to assist youth to be successful in these experiences) can be included as a Transition Service in the IEP. For more information on Transition Services, please see **Key Component – Writing the Transition Plan in the IEP.**
 - o Bridges www.bridges.com is one site where youth can explore interests, careers and find out what their basic work related skills are. It also has a lot of tools to assist families in helping their youth explore employment and careers. The New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF) allows families access to the site using the site ID 0105779 and Password - higher
 - o The Kuder Career Planning System is another site that has a variety of tools and resources. www.nhheaf.kuder.com. The New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF) allows families access to the site using the following access codes:
 - Career Search with Person Match – i775865xqa
 - Kuder Skills Assessment – s775864xqa
 - Work Values Inventory – v775866xqa
 - o O*Net <http://online.onetcenter.org/> is a data base of occupational information and provides comprehensive information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations.
 - o LDonline www.ldonline.org/indepth/transition also has a wealth of information, tools and resources to assist youth and families with the transition from school to work.

For more career/employment resources, see Appendix E.



Vocational Assessments

Career and vocational assessments will evaluate the functional employment skills, or the work related skill set, that a youth has. These types of assessments are often the first things we think of when we start talking about transition for youth with disabilities. They can provide valuable information about the youth's work related skills and potential jobs that match those skills, but should not be the only source of information used in developing the transition plan. Tests and assessments cannot provide the intrinsic motivation that comes from goals based on youth's interests, desires and dreams for their life after high school. Ask youth about what they want and their interests. Learn from them.



Under IDEA 2004, a Vocational Evaluation may be considered as part of the transition planning process and may be a Transition Service in the IEP. For more information on Transition Services, please see **Key Component - Writing the Transition Plan in the IEP.**

According to IDEA 2004, a youth’s Measurable Post-Secondary Goal(s) must be based on age appropriate assessments and take into account their strengths, preferences and interests. Age appropriate assessments include the tools we discuss in this section, as well as more informal ways of gathering information like through conversations. For more information on post secondary-goals, please see **Key Component – Writing the Transition Plan in the IEP.**



COLLEGE/POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Many youth, including youth with disabilities know that they want to go on to post-secondary education. However, many times they are not sure about whether to seek a four-year degree, two year degree or a technical program, how to find entrance requirements for programs, how to fund their education, or even if they are prepared for the rigors of furthering their education.

We often think of the ACT or SAT as college assessments, however, they are not. The ACT and SAT are used for entrance purposes and not truly for assisting youth in figuring out their college readiness, needs or preferences. The PSAT, typically taken in the junior year of high school, helps prepare a youth for the SAT, but it too is not a college readiness or preference test.



Transition Planning Tips!!



- o Accommodations (such as extended time) on the PSAT and SAT are available for youth with disabilities. Youth should speak to their guidance counselor or case manager to find out more information about what accommodations are available and how to arrange for them.
- o Bridges www.bridges.com is one web site where youth can explore colleges, compare programs and prepare for the SATs. It also has a lot of tools to assist families in helping their youth explore and fund college. The New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF) allows families to access this site using the site ID 0105779 and Password higher.
- o NHHEAF www.nhheaf.org also has a wide variety of resources and tools for parents, youth and professionals including college planning seminars, college search tips and loan and financial aid information.



Transition Planning Tips!!

- o College is for all youth, even youth with cognitive disabilities. Think College www.thinkcollege.net is a great resource for exploring college programs for youth with intellectual disabilities.
- o Some youth with disabilities may need a “flex year” or a summer program to help them transition to college life. HEATH www.heath.gwu.edu has a list of pre-college programs, resources on financial aid specifically for youth with disabilities and a wealth of other college information.
- o The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Project NETS and Education Quest Foundation have developed a handbook titled, *College Planning for Student with Disabilities – a supplement to the College Prep Handbook*. Down load it here: <http://www.educationquest.org/swd.asp>
- o There are no IEPs in college! Special education eligibility ends upon graduation from high school with a regular high school diploma or when the youth reaches 21, whichever comes first. College students may receive protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, but the accommodations look very different than in high school and require self disclosure. For more information on rights and responsibilities after high school, check out **Key Component—What Else Do I Need to Know?**
- o The Postsecondary Innovative Transition Technology Project (Post-ITT) provides resources and training for high school students with disability who are considering college. They have a parent section that includes activities and training materials to assist parents in developing self-advocacy skills in their children. <http://www.postitt.org/parentcourse/index.shtml>
- o LDonline www.ldonline.org/indepth/transtion also has a wealth of information, tools and resources to assist youth and families with college planning.

For more college planning resources, see Appendix E.



INDEPENDENT LIVING

We also cannot forget the importance of independent living skills in setting goals for life after high school. Regardless of whether youth are planning to go to college or directly enter the work force after high school, these important skills are going to come into play. Independent living skills go beyond cooking and cleaning. We are also talking about budgeting, time management, communication skills, understanding health care needs and transportation. While not as prevalent, there are some tools to assist in setting independent living goals and assessing skills and needs.



Transition Planning Tips!!

- o Youthhood www.youthhood.org is a site designed for youth (but has a section for “adults”) that offers a lot of tips, tools and advice for planning for life after high school including health, community participation and living on your own.
- o Granite State Independent Living www.gsil.org has a variety of tools and resources including information on housing, transportation and peer support groups.
- o **Don’t underestimate the power of conversations!** Information can not simply just come from assessments. Some of the most beneficial and real information comes from casual conversations with youth where they don’t even realize they are talking about their goals and future. Talking with youth about their interests can lead to conversations about how to turn that interest into future employment.



HOW THIS CAN WORK!

Tom is a young man with cognitive delays. The team knew a functional vocational evaluation was not going to give them a solution to his employment future, so his case manager discussed his interests with him . Tom truly loved popcorn. He loved the noise it made while popping, the smell and of course, eating it. What kind of a future could a love of popcorn have? Well, the IEP team brought in a representative from the local Area Agency that would be providing him assistance after graduation. Together they brainstormed and decided to see how he would do selling popcorn. He subsequently began selling popcorn at lunch and school sporting events. The school provided an aide to assist him. They used this as an opportunity to teach money, safety and communication skills. After high school, the adult service agency assisted him in accessing benefits that eventually led to the purchase of his own pop corn machine. He also hired his own assistant to help with transportation and other business related matters. He is now the proud owner of a pop corn making business that sells at various fairs, sporting and community events. And this all came from a conversation about his interests and a little creativity from his team.