

Transition to Adulthood: Employment

General Information:

If you are 14 years of age or older, it is a good time to begin thinking and talking about goals for how you will spend your day after leaving high school. If you have a disability, the options for life after high school are not that different from others your age. However, you may need extra time and support to make the transition from school to community life a success.

Using the IEP to plan and prepare for employment

If you have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), public schools are required by law (starting at age 14) to include and carry out a transition plan. This plan includes a “coordinated set of activities” that helps prepare you for life after high school. It is important that you actively take part in the IEP process. If your goal is employment, IEP goals and activities should help you:

- Express yourself (self advocacy) and explain your needs (accommodations).
- Take care of your own health.
- Learn and master skills you will need to take care of yourself and live on your own as an adult.
- Learn and practice work-related behaviors that help you find and keep a job.
- Find employment agencies, services, and resources in your community.

What are my employment options?

It is important to remember that **all** people can work when the right help is in place. Many work place choices are offered for people with disabilities. Some common ones include:

- **Volunteer work** helps to improve work skills, identify interests and talents, and provides chances for socializing. Volunteering does not always lead to paid employment.
- **Competitive employment** means working in a job that an employer is filling. You compete with all other job applicants for the job and are *paid and receive benefits typically provided for that job*.
- **Customized employment** means working at a job an employer creates for you that matches their unmet needs with your skills and abilities. You are not competing with other applicants for the job.
- **Self employment (or Micro-Enterprise)** means owning and operating your own business. Usually this is done with support from an adult service agency.

- **Facility-based employment (Sheltered Employment)** means working in a community group setting under close supervision. Employees are paid based on piece rate or productivity.

Who can help me reach my employment goals?

Most counties in Wisconsin have employment agencies designed to provide supports and services that help adults with special needs meet their employment goals. These agencies will help you:

- Gather information about your interests, skills, abilities and needs.
- Develop job skills.
- Search for jobs in the community.
- By providing on-the-job training and support as you learn your job.
- Understand how your benefits may be affected by employment if you receive SSI or SSDI (benefits counseling).

For more information about employment:

- Contact your local Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children/resourcecenters/index.htm>
- Request Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction's publication *Opening Doors to Employment: Planning for Life after High School* from your teacher or download it for free at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/tranopndrs-employmt.pdf>
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR): <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dvr/>
- Helping Students with Cognitive Disabilities Find and Keep Employment: <http://www.nichcy.org/InformationResources/Documents/NICHCY%20PUBS/TA3.pdf>
- Waisman Center Healthy & Ready to Work Fact Sheets: I Want to Work!: <http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/hrtw/YFS.pdf>
- Wisconsin Employment Agencies and Services by County: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/service_providers.pdf

If you do not have a computer or internet access, computer stations are available in The Daniel M. Soref Family Resource Center on the first floor of Children's Hospital or at your local public library.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.