

Transition to Adulthood Checklist

A guide for parents of young people with disabilities



Starting in Early Childhood

- **Talk about work.** Share your expectations of future education and employment. Talk about what work is and about different kinds of jobs and work opportunities. Ask questions about your child's interests, dreams and career ideas. Encourage youth to learn about different careers by job shadowing with parents, family and friends.
- **Find opportunities to help out around the house.** Have your child help with chores around the house and take part in neighborhood jobs, like delivering newspapers and mowing lawns. This will help instill self-confidence and help teach them about money and budgeting.
- **Promote skill building and independence.** Self-advocacy skills can be taught by giving the youth choices, like what to wear or how to spend allowance money. Daily living skills, such as good hygiene and learning how to prepare meals are important skills that can be taught starting at a young age.
- **Help your child have a voice.** Effective communication and self-advocacy skills are essential and will serve your child well throughout their life. This includes being sure your child understands their disability and strengths as much as possible, and knows what accommodations and supports will be needed to be successful as an adult.

Starting in Middle School

- Examine interests, skills and preferences, based on work and volunteer experience.
- Learn about education and training requirements in career area of interest.
- Seek out volunteer opportunities. Youth will learn new job skills and expand their network by volunteering for an organization that appeals to their interests. Don't forget to ask for letters of reference!

By age 14

- DVR staff should attend IEP meetings starting at age 14. Include your child at the IEP meeting to talk about his or her career goals.

What does the research say about successful transition to adulthood?

- High parental expectations of employment and work experience while in high school are the top two predictors of post high school success.
- Research indicates that higher levels of communication, self-feeding, self-dressing, ability to get to places, household responsibilities and participation in community activities are associated with higher rates of competitive employment.
- Career awareness training, computer skills, having had a job while still in high school, participating in either a post-secondary vocational school or 4-year college/university program, were all associated with competitive employment.



Starting in High School

- Find work-based experiences through an after school/summer job and/or internship.
- Develop a career portfolio, including a resume and letters of reference.
- Develop transportation plans for getting to and from college and/or work.
- Explore independent or supported living options, as appropriate.

By age 16

- Set IEP postsecondary goals. These should include future education/training, employment and independent living goals.
- Begin the DVR employment process at least 2 years before graduation. Having documentation of the disability and knowing what the career goal is will help move things along.
- Begin thinking about which of the three New Mexico graduation options is appropriate for your student: the standard graduation option, the career readiness graduation option, or the ability alternative.
- Begin thinking about whether a certificate of transition, which is for students who have completed 4 years of high school but need more time to work on transition goals and objectives, would be appropriate for your student. With this certificate, special education services may continue until the end of the school year in which the student turns 22.

One year before leaving school

If the student plans to attend college, apply to the college and contact the college's Disability Resource Center to set up accommodations

Before age 18

- Prepare paperwork to apply for guardianship or conservatorship if necessary, and explore alternatives to guardianship that may meet your child's needs
- Prepare for the transition from having a pediatrician to an adult physician
- Add name to residential placement waitlists, if needed

At age 18

- Apply for SSI
- Apply for Medicaid. If not eligible for Medicaid, look into health insurance options for when your child will no longer be covered by the parents'/guardians' plan or by a college health plan
- Register to vote.

Partners for Employment is a Family & Community Partnerships Division program at the University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability, part of the UNM Health Sciences Center. Partners for Employment provides training and resources to advance inclusive employment practices in New Mexico.

