

# SCHOOL DAYS TO PAY DAYS

An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities



**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

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An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

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# FOREWORD

As parents, we advocate passionately during our child's school years until we reach that critical turning point when the entitlement of school ends at age 22.

Our advocacy cannot end. As our children grow and become young adults, we must make sure they are prepared for the adult world that lies ahead. That preparation involves work experience. Schools are essential partners in the preparation for this next stage. Assessing and exploring interests, skill development and on-the-job work experience should be written into a young adult's transition plan at school.

Work provides important, ongoing benefits: it's a way to build skills, make friends, give purpose to life, provide a sense of identity and, of course, earn a paycheck. It's always challenging for young adults to find and keep jobs, and current economic conditions create additional hurdles. As you try to connect your child with work experiences, this booklet will assist you in understanding the roles of state and provider agencies, employment services, accommodations, benefits and much more.

As parents, we need to encourage work and internship experiences as well as explore our children's interests in extracurricular and weekend activities. Regular chores such as caring for the family pet, folding laundry and raking leaves are all practical ways of developing a strong work ethic. There are also plenty of ways to contribute to your local community. Food banks and animal rescue leagues are among the community sites often looking for volunteers to help out. There is no shortage of possibilities. Watch and listen for what your young adult responds to and use that information to help him or her experience a range of activities.

Expand your network and let people know your son or daughter is looking for work. Asking is the key to success: ask friends, family and neighbors about job leads. State and provider agencies are tasked with finding employment for hundreds of individuals. Our children are our priority. We need to actively advocate for them, sell their strengths and support their needs.

Finally, we must teach our young adults to talk about what they are good at. No one goes to a potential job site and declares what they cannot do. To succeed, we all must adopt a positive attitude and the ability to be flexible; we all must learn and grow. This will open the door to new possibilities.

Wonderful opportunities exist in your own community. Find them and your young adult will access a fulfilling path to this next phase of life.

*Susan Nadworny*  
*Chairperson*  
*Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change*



# INTRODUCTION

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The influence of parents on their children is both subtle and powerful. From the earliest age, parents set expectations for their children in all different areas – how they will learn in school, how they will perform on the sports field, and how they will get along with others. When it comes to setting expectations about work, parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities need to convey the expectation that their young adults can work, can contribute, and can find great satisfaction in being part of the world of work.

In Massachusetts and throughout the country, young people with intellectual disabilities are becoming increasingly more successful as they transition from school to work. They are finding new pathways to careers as well as staying employed throughout their adult working years. Although employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities still lag behind those compared to individuals without disabilities, it is clear that enormous barriers to employment are being overcome. It is far more common now to see students and young adults with disabilities in a wide range of jobs throughout the community than it was even a decade ago.

This booklet is designed to help families of young adults with intellectual disabilities get started with the school-to-work transition process; learn about the resources, services, and programs available for young adults with intellectual disabilities; and find inspiration in the many success stories of young adults who have secured fulfilling employment with appropriate supports.

## Read this booklet to learn what to do and when

As the parent of a young adult with disabilities, you may face concerns as you look beyond the school-age years to your young adult's future:

- How will my young adult spend his/her days when school ends?
- Given my young adult's disability, is he or she capable of working?
- Will my young adult lose important benefits if he or she enters the workforce?
- How will my young adult find and manage transportation to and from a job?

It is important to know that your son or daughter can have a meaningful and rewarding life after the supports and structure of secondary school end. You can take steps to make this happen by:

- Starting to plan early for a successful school-to-work transition
- Encouraging your young adult to develop practical skills and build confidence in his/her abilities
- Learning about available employment resources and supports
- Working with your young adult's school and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to get an employment plan in motion
- Advocating for your young adult as well as encouraging self-advocacy skills

## The Department of Developmental Services

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is the agency within the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services that is responsible for providing services and supports to Massachusetts' citizens with intellectual disabilities.

DDS created this booklet to provide helpful information to families of young adults with intellectual disabilities in their transition from school to work. The mission of the Department is to support individuals with intellectual disabilities to fully and meaningfully participate in their communities as valued members. The Department believes that:

- Employment is a valued role and expectation for all adults of working age in our society.
- It is important to raise expectations about the capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities as individuals who are and can be successfully employed in a range of jobs and work settings.
- Individuals with disabilities should be supported to pursue meaningful work that is a good match with their interests and abilities.
- Individual employment in the community is the preferred goal, working in a job where the person is hired by an employer and paid wages and benefits commensurate with other employees.

### Learning the language of work

Consider the language you learned during your child’s elementary and secondary school years. Expressions like IEP (Individualized Education Program), SPED (Special Education), mainstreaming, inclusion and pull-outs became commonplace in your vocabulary. Now it is time to learn another language as you plan for your young adult’s working life. This booklet includes and explains many new words and concepts, such as supported employment, person-centered planning, work incentives and One-Stop Career Centers. Welcome to this new language – this booklet will help you feel comfortable using it.

### Never stop advocating

Throughout elementary and secondary school, most parents of children with disabilities spend countless hours advocating for their children, reviewing their strengths and limitations, and requesting services that enable them to succeed in school. The advocacy skills you honed during those formative years will be extremely helpful as you and your young adult navigate the transition from school to work.

### DID YOU KNOW?

When young adults have work experiences while attending school, they are much more likely to find and keep a job after leaving school.

### ENTITLEMENT OR ELIGIBILITY?

When your young adult is still in school, the services s/he receives are an **entitlement**. Once out of school, even though s/he may be **eligible** for adult services, such as those provided by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), access to services depends on current state funding. This booklet will help guide you in making the most of the state programs, resources and supports that are available today.

### WORK IS THE “DIFFERENCE-MAKER”

Emily, Amy’s mother, says that work has been the “difference-maker” in Amy’s life. Since her first job in a grocery store at the typical age of 16, Amy has continued to discover her own interests and skills, trying a number of jobs. Currently she is working in a retail setting. Emily tells us, “Amy’s paycheck has given her the money to do the things she wants: live in her own apartment, buy the most current fashions, go out to eat and take wonderful vacations every year. Work provides a boost to Amy’s self-esteem and an answer to the often-asked question, “What do you do?” Work has also been the place where Amy has developed the most lasting and consistent relationships in her community.” In response to the question “Have there been challenging issues to deal with?” Emily admits, “Sure: transportation, finding the right job and earning enough money.” Is the end result of having a job worth tackling these issues? Amy’s answer is an unequivocal and resounding “Yes!” And her parents agree!

# GETTING STARTED

## Transition planning begins when your young adult is in middle school

When your young adult attends school, you have an invaluable opportunity to collaborate with school staff, alongside your child, to make sure all parties focus on employment goals and work preparedness; this type of teamwork leads to positive results when school ends. In this section, you'll learn about the following:

- Staying involved with the IEP process
- Supporting your son/daughter to take an active role in IEP meetings
- Preparing the Vision Statement that is part of the Transition Planning Form (TPF) for students aged 14 and older
- Building work skills into the Transition Planning Form
- Monitoring the Chapter 688 referral
- Encouraging employment-related activities to prepare for the transition to work

## The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The Individualized Education Program (IEP), familiar to most parents of children with disabilities, is an important planning document. Schools and families use the IEP to develop goals and objectives that support students in accessing all aspects of the curriculum, including academic and life skills. The team process of developing the IEP gives schools and families the opportunity to carefully plan for the student's needs, both present and future.

Schools are legally required to adhere to each IEP, so it is extremely important that families agree with the services listed on the IEP each year, and view it as a binding legal document. Some families choose to bring an advocate or friend to IEP meetings to serve as note-takers and add observations about the student. By age 14, students should also attend their IEP meetings, so that they can actively participate in presenting their own goals and preferences.

One important and “safe” way your young adult can take on responsibility and build leadership skills is through IEP meetings. Your young adult has the right to lead IEP meetings and should have the opportunity to talk about his or her goals for employment and adult life. Parents can help make this happen by talking with the IEP team leader, well in advance of meetings, to make sure that teachers and school staff work with your young adult to prepare for a more active role.

Here are some ideas about what your young adult could do at an IEP meeting:

- Introduce everyone
- State the purpose of the meeting, such as planning for the future or working toward a career goal
- Review the progress s/he has made since the last meeting
- Share his/her IEP Vision Statement
- Tell the team about his/her skills, hobbies, and job-related interests

## Transition Planning Form

For students age 14 and up, each school district is required to address the need for transition services in the Transition Planning Form (TPF). The TPF reflects the ongoing development of students, is maintained with the IEP, and is revisited annually. Included in the TPF is the student's post-secondary Vision Statement, which is a more focused version of the IEP Vision Statement. The TPF Vision Statement helps guide future planning and should describe the student's hopes and goals for post-secondary education/ training, employment, and adult living.

At the annual TPF review, parents and students have the right to ask for services that will build work skills and help the student explore career options. Transition services and activities to incorporate into the plan might include:

- *Career interest inventories* – these paper and pencil assessments can help the student identify work interests and preferences. The results of these assessments can help to create specific employment goals.
- *Job Shadowing* – the student follows an employee during a typical day on the job.
- *Mentoring* - the student is matched to an adult mentor who serves as an advisor and offers guidance.
- *Apprenticeship* – an adult professional teaches the student a specific trade.
- *Workplace visits and tours* – the student observes different work settings.
- *Career Fairs and Career Days* – local community members visit a school to share career experiences with an interested group of students.
- *Mock job interviews* and job clubs with fellow students.
- *After-school and summer job placements* arranged and supported by school staff.
- *Internships* – paid or unpaid work experience for students.
- *Community college enrollment as a high school student* – dual enrollment can ease the transition to post-secondary education and can help the student become part of a new community.

### VISION STATEMENT TIP

One way to approach creating the Vision Statement in the Transition Planning Form (TPF) is for parents and students to draft independent vision statements for the student. A teacher or guidance counselor could be enlisted to help the student with this exercise. These two Vision Statements, along with comments and contributions of others at the meeting, can form the basis of a discussion on post-secondary goals and the steps necessary to achieve them.

## FROM SCHOOL JOB TO PERMANENT JOB



Schools can help students gain work experience by placing them in afterschool or part-time jobs with community employers. At age 22, MARISSA was placed in a job at a Starbucks near her school. She stocked condiments and display shelves, washed counters and swept the floor. The staff at Starbucks came to know, like and consider Marissa an important part of their team. When she was preparing to end her placement because she was leaving school, the manager referred her to other local Starbucks managers. This led to a permanent, competitively paid job with benefits at a Starbucks nearby Marissa's home.

## Chapter 688 Referrals

At 22, students “age out” of the entitlement of special education services provided by the public school system, and they need to apply for adult services. In Massachusetts, there is a Turning 22 law for students who will require significant supports in adult life, often referred to as Chapter 688. **The law mandates that schools must complete the Chapter 688 Referral Form two years before the student exits school or turns 22 years of age, whichever is earlier.**

The Chapter 688 Referral is a simple one-page document that identifies services the student will need after leaving special education. By signing the form, parents give permission for the school to send records to appropriate adult disability service agencies, such as the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). With sufficient lead-time, these state agencies are better able to effectively plan employment services and supports for young adults who are eligible for them. DDS and other agencies are committed to working with families to ensure as smooth a transition to adult services as possible.

**It is important to note that the Chapter 688 referral must come from the school.** Parents should monitor that school staff are on schedule with making the Chapter 688 referral, that the referral is discussed at the IEP meeting, and the paperwork is submitted on time. It must be signed by the parent, legal guardian or student who is 18 years of age or older.

### CHAPTER 688 REFERRAL TIP

Sometimes schools are unsure of eligibility requirements at state agencies. When in doubt, tell the school to fill out the Chapter 688 referral and send it to the adult service agency the school thinks is most appropriate. The adult service agencies will take over from there. From time to time there may be changes in the referral procedure; check with your school for updates.

## Career Preparation While in School

Preparation for work and collaboration with school and state agencies improves the likelihood that students will move into employment and careers after high school; students with even the most difficult challenges have demonstrated that they can be successful moving from school to work or to more education. Furthermore, young adults with disabilities who pursue further education and/or job training end up exercising more control over job choice rather than simply “taking any job.” For these reasons, it is critical that schools help young adults get ready for employment by setting expectations and providing career preparation and work experiences.

### What young adults can do

With support, there are a number of ways your young adult can take an active role in identifying career goals and preparing for the world of work while in school:

- Talk to teachers, other adults and older siblings about work and getting involved in the community
- Participate in a range of career exploration and job seeking activities, with the guidance of school staff
- Choose high school courses that match work goals
- Learn employment-related skills
- Report what s/he liked or disliked about every work experience

- Explore and build on interests and hobbies through activities at school, at home, and in the community
- Practice “taking charge,” such as gathering information and making appointments
- Practice describing his/her abilities, disabilities and the services s/he is entitled to
- Take on increasing age-appropriate responsibility and build independent living skills

## Employment-Related Activities Outside of School

Outside of school, there are many ways to help your young adult develop employment-related skills and prepare for the world of work. Responsibilities and experiences at home and in the community can translate into job skills applied later in life.

### What families can do:

- Assign paid chores at home – not just everyday chores like setting the table, but the more occasional and larger responsibilities, like washing the car
- Ask school staff about activities your young adult can do at home that mirror and reinforce skills being taught at school
- Ask co-workers, relatives, and neighbors for ideas about where your young adult might volunteer or work
- Reflect on ways that further education might support career goals
- Involve your young adult in learning to use money as you bank, shop and pay for goods and services together
- Introduce your young adult to community resources like the YMCA and the public library, then create opportunities for social interactions there

## GETTING STARTED EARLY

Early parental involvement and advocacy can make a big difference in helping students acquire work experience. MIKE is 18 years old, has autism, and has been determined eligible for DDS adult services. He lives in Boston where he and his family are active members of their local community center. When Mike was 14, his mom started thinking ahead about jobs that Mike might enjoy doing. Using the family’s connections to the local community center, she suggested that Mike work as a volunteer, cleaning up the gym area, one day a week, after the “Toddler Time” program had ended. Mom helped Mike prepare



for the job by taking photos to teach him about the tasks he would be doing. Four months later, delighted with Mike’s performance, the center began paying Mike a \$10 hourly rate and increased him to two days a week. His school now provides transportation to the job as well as a job coach, and one of his classmates took a similar job at the center. An early start, creative thinking, proactive community networking, and a strong belief in her son’s capacity contributed to Mike flourishing on the job. Mike’s mom wants other parents of children with significant communication and behavioral challenges to know “we are not doomed for disaster – there is a lot of hope – so much more potential than we give them credit for.”

- Support your son/daughter in learning how to plan trips on public transit and becoming more independent with taking public transportation
- Look for times when your child can exercise leadership and build self-esteem, such as identifying and planning a weekend family outing
- Encourage and nurture your young adult's hobbies and interests, which can lead to job-related interests and skills
- Work with your DDS Service Coordinator to understand the choices for employment services and for day and support services in the area. (You will learn more about DDS Service Coordinators on page 13). Visit DDS-funded programs in your area and talk with staff members who provide these services. (Learn more about exploring employment service providers on page 13.)
- Talk to former students and their families who have already made the transition from school to work

## LOOKING FOR JOBS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

In addition to LINDSAY'S paid job as a greeter at a concert hall, this busy 23 year-old holds several volunteer positions outside her home. One of her volunteer positions is with the neighborhood YMCA her family has been using for years; she is a familiar face there with staff and community members. This connection provided an ideal opportunity to inquire about different responsibilities Lindsay could take on at a place she knows well. As a result, Lindsay is at the Y three days per week, helping out with a variety of tasks. Lindsay's mother encourages other families to seek out work opportunities (paid and/or volunteer) for their young adults at places they typically frequent.

## HAVING WORK EXPERIENCE WHILE STILL IN SCHOOL REALLY HELPS

NICOLE tells us, "When I was in school I did many different kinds of jobs like working in the library, at Dave's Pet Food City, at The Kid's Place and Wingate Nursing Home. My favorite job that I did was working at The Kid's Place, which is a daycare for children. I was able to play with the kids and assist the teachers in taking care of the children. In my last year of school my employment service provider started working with me so that I could try different jobs to find out what I wanted to do when I got out of school. I continued to volunteer at The Kid's Place throughout my school

year...I learned how to write up my resume and fill out applications... I went on many different interviews for many different jobs. I am still working at the first job where I was hired, pricing items, stocking shelves and dusting. I really love the people I work for there. My second job was at a pharmacy, stocking shelves, dusting shelves and some pricing. It wasn't my favorite job but I did it for one year until I finally had the opportunity to find a new second job in a daycare center. I work there 13 hours per week. It is a great job and I love working there with the kids."

*"My husband and I are committed to teaching Nicole how to be independent. We hope that someday she will feel comfortable enough to venture out on her own with confidence and minimal supports, and have a life filled with choices and opportunity."*



## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY... MANY WAYS

SHERRY ELANDER, a Special Education Teacher at the high school in Westfield, is proof positive of the many innovative ways school systems can help students successfully move from school to employment. Her motto “Begin with the end in mind” embodies her proactive approach. Sherry suggests combining a number of strategies for transition planning:

### Person-centered planning, connections and networking

Sherry says, “We have had to get creative. We do person-centered planning with students, giving us the chance to look outside the box, see students from differing perspectives, and hear from people they have identified as wanting to help them achieve their dreams. Connections and networking have helped us maximize our resources.”



### Career planning and exploration

Actual job experiences in the community (such as job shadowing, structured internships) can make a huge difference. They expose students to the realities of a job; some learn that the job they thought they wanted is not well-suited to their interests or abilities. In such cases, students realize there is a mismatch without having someone else make the decision for them. Students may also identify new interests.

### Teaching students self-advocacy skills

Sherry emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to speak up for themselves, to participate in IEP meetings, to develop Vision Statements, and clarify the accommodations they need.

### School-to-family communication is vital

“When thinking about how the school should work with a family, I truly believe it is an equal partnership.... we must involve students as well as family at each step.” Sherry stays connected to families by serving as school liaison to the Special Ed Advisory Council, facilitating planning meetings held in students’ homes, visiting potential adult service employment providers with students and families, and hosting an annual pot-luck dinner to celebrate successes with families.

### Monthly transition team meetings

Sherry gathers representatives from various state agencies and adult service providers to come together at monthly transition meetings to share opportunities and ideas. “Interagency involvement is the key that unlocks not only the door to post-graduate success, but to achieving one’s dream.”

## PERSON-CENTERED CAREER PLANNING: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT CAN HELP

Person-centered planning (PCP) is a process designed to assist an individual in planning for his/her future. Often it involves bringing together a group of people who know the individual well. They share their experiences and knowledge of the individual to develop a more complete picture of him/her. This picture becomes the basis for developing an employment plan, controlled by the individual and based on his/her interests, needs and preferences. It is a process of brainstorming and exploration, and is useful in helping set direction and establishing concrete steps for moving ahead. Consult the Resource Section for publications and links on the topic.

# PLANNING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

The most important way to begin to help a young adult plan for a meaningful future is to have expectations (as you – and school staff – would have for any young adult) and to get involved. Schools, students, families and state agencies each have a role to play in planning beyond high school.

When helping your young adult prepare for the world of work, reflect back to your own early work history:

- What were your first real work experiences and what did you learn from them?
- How did you go about figuring out what you wanted to do for work?
- What volunteer or other experiences helped you learn about what it is like to have a job?
- Who helped you?
- What connections did you make and how did you network?
- What were the important work skills you learned as a young adult (for example, punctuality and reliability)?

Recalling your own early work experiences will help you focus on the basic skills that are essential for your young adult when entering the labor market/workplace.

## College: A New Possibility

Up until recently, young adults with intellectual disabilities have not had many chances to attend college, nor has it been an option that families considered. This is changing; opportunities are being created for young adults to reap the many benefits of postsecondary education. Like all people, young adults attend college for many reasons. Some want to participate in a new community and build their social skills, others want to pursue an area of interest, others want to explore career options and develop marketable skills, and others attend college for all of these reasons. Community colleges and adult education programs often provide helpful programming for young adults with intellectual disabilities, offering classes for credit or audit, and welcoming aides to attend classes alongside the young adult. Some young adults attend community college while still enrolled in high school which eases the transition to post-secondary education and employment.



## **INCLUSIVE CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PROGRAM**

Within Massachusetts, the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) Program for students with disabilities enables students to participate in the college experience while still in high school. The purpose of this state-funded pilot grant program is to form partnerships between public high schools and state institutions of higher education. Through ICE, students ages 18-22 with severe disabilities have the opportunity to enroll in credit or non-credit courses alongside students without disabilities. Higher education and public school partners work together to facilitate student success in navigating the academic and social life of a college campus.

Eligible students receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and are not expected to graduate with a standard diploma or pass MCAS. For dedicated students, ICE will lead to outcomes such as competitive employment, increased youth development and self-determination.

An involved special educator remarks, “The benefits of participating in this program go beyond academic learning. In addition to taking courses based on personal interest or career goals, students enjoy all of the community and social privileges accorded to the college’s students, such as student activities, government, special events, fitness center, etc. They gain a higher level of independence, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-advocacy, intercommunication skills, independent living skills, social skills, and ability to navigate the transportation system.”

Now in its third year, there are six partnerships across the state. Access to this program is limited as it currently serves less than 100 students statewide. Check with your young adult’s school to see whether an ICE program is available and might be an option for him or her.

## **WEBSITES FOR COLLEGE PLANNING**

### **[www.ThinkCollege.net](http://www.ThinkCollege.net)**

Here you will find materials on topics such as person-centered planning, differences between high school and college, strategies for being successful in college, funding, and sample schedules. It also includes a database that lists colleges across the country that support youth with intellectual disabilities, as well as discussion boards, a listserv, many additional web links, publications, and documents about the inclusion of students with significant disabilities in postsecondary education.

### **[www.going-to-college.org](http://www.going-to-college.org)**

This website contains information about living college life with a disability. It’s designed for high school students and provides video clips, activities and additional resources that can help students get a head start with college planning.

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT: THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

ANDREW is 21 years old and participates in the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) Program. Supported by his educational coach, he has taken 14 courses at a nearby community college since 2007. His class history includes: Intro to Wellness, Intro to Classical Music, Classical Piano 1, 2 & 3, Yoga, Painting, Acting, Dance, Career Exploration/ Resumé Writing and Advanced Photography/Videography. His piano professor remarks:

“Initially I was unsure about the curriculum in Classical Music, but Drew showed his abilities as a college student through his participation in class and his strong work ethic. Playing piano has strengthened many of Drew’s skills...motor, verbal, communication, ability to track when reading. I have always believed that students with disabilities can overcome their challenges through their personal desire to learn and self-determination.”

How does this college community connection tie into Andrew’s future? Look at what he has gained:

- Sticking to a schedule
- Managing transportation
- Initiating communication through email and cell phone
- Organizing items he needs for class
- Expanding conversation skills
- Interacting appropriately with friends and professors
- Knowing when to be quiet and when to speak
- Building a working knowledge of music and camera equipment
- Developing reciprocal friendships

In addition, Andrew is busy building his career. He has worked at a grocery store for the past three summers, and is also employed as a local photographer. One goal he has is to own his own business called “Drew’s Designs,” where he can sell his photos, paintings, and woodworking. With the combination of his energy, enthusiasm, and meaningful activities, his potential for success and life choices looks very promising!



### DID YOU KNOW:

A recently published study from the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston shows that youth with intellectual disabilities who participated in postsecondary education were 26% more likely to exit a vocational rehabilitation program with employment and earned a 73% higher weekly income.

*From “Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities” at [www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=267](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=267)*

## How Does DDS Support Young Adults with Employment Planning?

Every day the Department of Developmental Services provides specialized services and supports to approximately 32,000 adults with intellectual disabilities and children with developmental disabilities across diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups.

It is important to remember that eligibility criteria for the Department’s adult services are different from eligibility criteria for its children’s services. Young adults need to re-apply to DDS during their 17th year, before turning 18, which is when the eligibility requirements change. Families can learn more about adult eligibility for DDS services, including criteria and the application process, by consulting the Department’s publication “The Road Forward” (see box on page 13).

Once the school has submitted the 688 referral form, the student has been found eligible to receive DDS services as an adult and has turned age 18, the local DDS area office will assign a staff member called a **Transition Coordinator** to work with each young adult. (Some families may have experience working with a DDS Children’s Service Coordinator who may continue to be helpful to the family.) The Transition Coordinator is your primary link to information and assistance from DDS during the transition from school to adult life.

The Transition Coordinator arranges and chairs a meeting or meetings in order to develop the **Individual Transition Plan** (ITP). The ITP is the document that specifies the types of supports requested for the young adult finishing high school and leaving special education. The ITP meeting is typically held one year before the young adult finishes school, and usually involves the student, family members, school personnel, and other individuals who know the student well.

The purpose of the ITP meeting is to develop a plan that addresses the interests, skills and needs of the young adult. The ITP does not contain specific goals and objectives, or identify specific provider agencies. The ITP functions as more of a “blueprint” of the student’s requested support needs. **Supports identified in the ITP are not guaranteed and do not create an entitlement; they are subject to prioritization and funding availability.** DDS uses a standardized approach to determine an individual’s need and priority for service. Funding resources are appropriated each year through the state budget process; therefore, the amount of funding available to young adults can vary.

### CONSIDER ALL RESOURCES

Being creative and resourceful are essential ingredients in planning for the future. Even once eligibility for DDS services, or another state agency, is in place, funding realities can mean that all desired services/ supports might not be available. It will be important to consider all resources for putting together a package of services and supports. Other sources of state help might be the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and One-Stop Centers. Additional possibilities to consider include connections and resources in your own community, what your own family can do, and any typical and natural supports available.

### GET STARTED EARLY

It is important that families begin the process of applying for DDS eligibility when young adults are still in school to facilitate a seamless transition from school services to DDS services.

### TAKE NOTE

The ITP, which the DDS Transition Coordinator develops, is a different plan and document from the TPF, which the school develops. It can be confusing because they have similar names.

In addition to the Individual Transition Plan, the DDS Transition Coordinator helps families learn about the services and supports that the Department provides to adults. This includes an array of possibilities: service coordination, individual and family support, employment support, transportation and residential support. Typically, the Department provides employment services and supports through a network of qualified **Employment Service Providers**. There are about 100 employment service providers throughout Massachusetts, allowing each young adult a choice in finding a program that is a good match, based on his/her needs and the availability of DDS funding. See the following section to learn more about what employment service providers offer, how to find them and how to decide the best match for your son or daughter.

## What if My Young Adult Is No Longer In School?

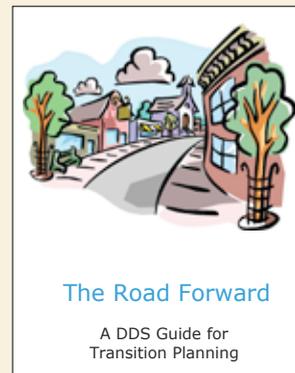
Assuming your son/daughter:

- Has left high school
- Has had an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) written with the help of the school and DDS Transition Coordinator
- Has been found eligible for DDS adult services

The DDS area office will next assign a **Service Coordinator** to your family. And, just like the school assembled a team of professionals for IEP meetings, the Service Coordinator will assemble a team who will work together to develop an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for your young adult. The ISP team may be made up of representatives from adult service programs, such as employment service providers, additional involved professionals and others you and your young adult choose to invite. The Service Coordinator will provide information about different services in your area and help make referrals to a DDS-funded employment service provider, based on the plan that has been developed for your young adult and the funding that is available. The ISP, like an IEP, is an on-going process of establishing goals for your young adult and identifying supports, assessments and strategies that will help him/her reach those goals.

### ABOUT DDS FOR TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

More information about employment services and supports is also available in **The Road Forward**, a DDS publication for families of transition-age youth. The first



half of the guide provides introductory information on topics such as ITPs, eligibility for DDS services, and services and public benefits provided by state agencies. A resource section in the second half contains brief descriptions and contact information for state and private organizations that provide services and supports for youth entering adulthood. Each DDS area office has customized this section for families to highlight the organizations that provide these services in their local area. Families can request a copy of **The Road Forward** through their Transition Coordinator or by calling the area office. A generic copy is also available on the DDS website [www.mass.gov/dds](http://www.mass.gov/dds) in the **Turning 22 Section** of Publications. Click on “More” to see the expanded list of publications.

## What are Employment Service Providers?

Employment service providers are organizations that contract with DDS and other state agencies to offer a range of employment services for young adults with intellectual disabilities. When comparing employment service providers, families will find that some specialize in job placement and support while others specialize in comprehensive planning and assessment, and others do it all. Since employment services providers vary in a number of ways, it is important that families and job seekers are actively involved in deciding which employment service provider and type of program is the best fit. People with disabilities and their families have more say in the services they receive than they may realize.

Here is a list of the types of services offered by employment service provider programs to assist young adults in finding jobs:

- Development of a career plan to identify a job search direction and a job-finding process, created with input from the young adult and his/her family
- Assessment of skills and interests
- Arranging job try-outs and job-shadowing experiences
- Time-limited job skills training, such as computer skills training
- Help with developing a resume
- Job development assistance, including locating and talking to employers about jobs and the hiring process
- Job coach assistance in the workplace, which focuses on learning job tasks, adjusting to job requirements and ensuring a stable, ongoing employment experience
- Follow-up support to the worker and employer
- Assistance in arranging accommodations that may be needed on the job
- Travel-training assistance and/or help with arranging transportation
- Information and guidance on the impact of earning an income on public benefits

## OUT OF SCHOOL AND THEN WHAT?

MATT attended a residential school. By age 22, he was out of school and living in a group home but had no job. His interests included construction work and electronics. His employment service provider and Service Coordinator at DDS both had a pre-existing relationship with a nearby Sheraton Hotel and knew of job opportunities at the hotel. With their support, Matt interviewed for a job in the engineering and maintenance department at the hotel and was offered a job that same day. He started painting and repair work at 25 hours per week and now works 30 hours per week. He benefits from a supportive crew of six co-workers who supervise him and help him to keep on task. His crew gave him a tool set for a birthday gift that he faithfully brings to work each day. Matt's favorite part of the day is lunchtime when he can sit outside with the "guys," chat and laugh. His job coach no longer stays with him at the job but maintains regular check-ins with Matt's supervisor.



The types of employment services available to your young adult will depend on the steps s/he has already taken:

- If your son or daughter obtained a job while in school, then the focus of services will be on job coaching and ongoing support services to enable continued success on the job.
- If your son or daughter is just beginning his/her employment search, then services will most likely start with an assessment of interests, skills and abilities, followed by the development of a career plan, and help in finding and keeping a job.

## Employment Models to Consider

Not all employment service programs are alike; they vary in size, types and variety of services offered, qualifications of staff, range of people served, and most importantly, quality of results.

One of the ways in which employment service programs differ is based on the employment model they use. **Individual job placement** is the most typical employment model. This is an integrated, individual job placement where a young adult is working in a regular job in the community, hired and paid directly by the business, and earning similar wages and benefits as other employees. In these situations, young adults receive individualized support as needed by a staff member from the provider program, including job coaching and related supports. These services supplement natural supports that exist in the workplace. The intensity of support provided to the individual worker on the job generally decreases as s/he develops skills and becomes more independent.

## A SEAMLESS TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Even before he had graduated from high school in Pittsfield, BRIAN started a job he loved, thanks to thoughtful and thorough pre-planning at his high school and collaboration with a local employment provider and the DDS area office. Brian became a gardener at Hancock Shaker Village. How did the transition from school to work go so smoothly? It started when the high school and DDS developed an Individual Transition Plan for Brian at age 19. Brian had not enjoyed the culinary arts and clerical courses he had taken at school and was anxious to find a career that suited him. The high school and DDS arranged a full vocational evaluation for Brian, which was conducted by a local employment service provider. When horticulture emerged as an area of great interest from the evaluation, arrangements were made for Brian to take double classes in the subject. The fit was right! From there, the provider used its established relationship with Hancock Shaker Village to arrange a position for Brian in its garden department. Furthermore, Brian's team worked it out so that he could start his job before graduation, and the transition was seamless. Central to Brian's success was having an employment provider who started working with him while he was still in school. Gone were Brian's anxieties about working, replaced by a genuine satisfaction with his gardening position.



Some young adults may benefit from experiences in a **group job placement**. In this employment model, the employment service provider makes arrangements for a number of workers with disabilities to meet a need at a community business. The workers are under the supervision of the service provider program and most often are paid by the provider organization. An example of a group placement would be members of a stocking crew at a department store or members of a custodial maintenance crew at an office building. Group placement options can also include employment provider- run businesses, such as landscaping or a catering service.

Some young adults start out with a supported individual job, while others start in a group placement and then move into individual jobs. Group job placements can function as a transitional service to help facilitate a young adult's movement into an integrated, individual job placement. This opportunity can provide young adults the chance to explore career interests, different types of work and work settings, and develop work skills, work habits and independence that may be important to succeed in an individual job.

A small but growing number of young adults are starting their own businesses with the support of employment service providers. This **self-employment** model requires careful thinking, planning and support; for young adults with a particular set of skills and interests, it can be the right approach. For further information on self-employment, check out [www.start-up-usa.biz/](http://www.start-up-usa.biz/).

### Learning about employment service providers

In order to know which employment service provider program to advocate for, start by understanding the alternatives.

- Think about how relatively important each of the following is to your young adult: wages and benefits, safety/security, fun people to work with, location, and potential for promotions and growth. Pay attention to how well you think the program will take these into account as they work with your young adult.
- Visit and interview a variety of employment service providers. DDS and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (See page 19) staff can supply you with a list. Other families are also a great resource.

## CHOOSING THE PROVIDER THAT FEELS RIGHT FOR YOU

At 24, MARISSA enjoys her part-time job at Starbucks, for which she receives competitive wages and benefits. Marissa also works part-time at a Social Security office where she does filing, bookkeeping and data entry. She receives supports through an employment service provider in the Worcester area, which include transportation and a job coach. To augment Marissa's work schedule, she spends one day a week on community outings with other individuals who also receive services from this provider. Before Marissa got started with this particular service, her mother took a look at a few employment service provider programs. One didn't offer the kinds of services and activities she thought were important for Marissa. Another didn't feel family-friendly. She settled on a provider which had a particular expertise in serving individuals with behavioral and communication issues, which is exactly what Marissa needed.

- When visiting different providers, inquire about the following issues:
  - ◊ *Basic program offerings.* What employment model(s) do they use: group placement only, or individual job placement? What services do they offer besides finding employment for people with disabilities? How many people do they serve, with what types of disabilities and which ages?
  - ◊ *How they work with individuals.* What is the typical process for providing services? How do they help people figure out the kind of job they want? What is their success record and, on average, how long does it take to find an individual a job? What happens when a person does not succeed on a job?
  - ◊ *Staffing.* What kind of qualifications does staff have? What is staff turnover like? What are caseload sizes?

### STEPPING STONES TO THE RIGHT JOB

It is not unusual for a young adult to have a few jobs before finding one that is the right fit. Each job is an important learning experience and acts as a stepping stone to the next. Once the young adult secures a job that s/he likes, s/he will likely become increasingly independent, have co-workers who provide support and a supervisor to approach with questions or needs for accommodations.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Experience has shown that when certain principles are followed while supporting young adults in their employment efforts, the most meaningful and successful outcomes are achieved. These principles are sometimes referred to as “best practices” in community employment services and include:

- Focusing on individual jobs in the community, paid directly by the employer
- Using a “person-centered planning” approach, where job placement is based on the individual’s interests, needs and preferences, and the individual is supported to take control of his/her job planning process
- Emphasizing “job matching” – searching for employment that closely matches what the job seeker wants, is good at doing, and where he or she will fit in and be comfortable
- Thinking broadly about where the individual can work, not limiting ideas to traditional workplaces such as supermarkets and fast food chains
- Taking advantage of personal networks – tapping into job seeker, family and staff contacts to gather information, resources and potential job leads
- Using “natural supports,” including job orientations, trainings and mentors, to meet the needs of the young adult on the job
- Fading out paid staff supports as the young adult becomes more settled, comfortable and independent in the workplace

Exploring employment programs in your area will give you information on the services and related resources your son/daughter may receive, and will give you a sense of which provider is the best match. You will be in a well-informed position to discuss and plan with your DDS Service Coordinator.

When shopping around for an employment service provider, be sure to inquire if the providers best-suited to your young adult have current openings and, if not, how long it would be before an opening would become available.

**A complete checklist of questions to compare employment service providers is included in Appendix B of this booklet.**

## SELF-DIRECTION—DEVELOPING AND MANAGING YOUR OWN SERVICES

To support LINDSAY in her job as a concert greeter and in her volunteer positions, Lindsay's family chose to hire their own staff for transportation, job coaching and job-related activities. Some young adults and their families have found that tailoring a plan to individual situations provides families with greater flexibility, choice and control in services. In these situations, the young adult and his/her parents take the lead in making plans, and based on the amount of funding allocated by DDS, hire and manage their own staff, such as job coaches. Payment for staff goes through a fiscal management service which DDS arranges. This arrangement is called an ISO (Intermediary Service Organization). Families can ask their DDS Service Coordinator for more information about this option.



## OTHER EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Planning for your young adult's employment raises many questions about job supports, benefits, transportation, accommodations and schedules. Addressing these topics during the planning process is a way to ensure that the transition to work is as smooth as possible.

- Can my young adult get support from both DDS and MRC (Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission)?
- How will working affect his/her public benefits, such as Social Security?
- What will s/he do about transportation to and from work?
- What types of support and/or accommodations will s/he need at the job site and how will s/he get them?
- Will my young adult be treated with equality in the workplace?
- If my young adult is working part-time, what will s/he do in non-work hours?

### Can My Young Adult Get Support from Both DDS and MRC?

It is not uncommon for students upon graduation or leaving school to receive complementary employment services from **both** DDS and MRC. MRC services tend to be time-limited and typically do not include long-term on-the-job supports. However, DDS can fund long-term, on-going support services after MRC has provided other job placement services through its vocational program. An example of such collaboration is where MRC might pay for an initial job assessment, job development and placement costs while DDS would pay for ongoing job support costs.

#### WHAT IS THE MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION (MRC)?

Also known as the Vocational Rehabilitation agency (VR), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) is the state agency whose primary focus is to assist individuals with a significant disability(ies) to become competitively employed. MRC services can include vocational counseling, evaluation and assessment, guidance and assistance in job placement, time-limited job coaching, training programs, technology services, and van and home modifications.

#### WHAT IS THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND (MCB)?

MCB is a separate state VR agency for persons who are legally blind. Persons with visual impairments should contact MCB rather than MRC to access the specialized services MCB provides.

### MULTIPLE RESOURCES AT WORK

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission played a critical role in providing vocational evaluation services and other counseling and placement assistance to help MATT find a job that matched his interests and skills. Once he secured his job at the Sheraton Hotel, he still needed the ongoing support of a job coach. This is where DDS came in, providing regular job coaching. Over time, Matt's coworkers pitched in, helping with supervision and making sure that Matt stays on task. DDS continues to fund ongoing support through his employment service provider, who checks in regularly with Matt's supervisor.

## One-Stop Career Centers: Another Employment Resource

One-Stop Career Centers are part of the general workforce development system. They are designed to provide a full range of assistance to any job seeker who is looking for work. Services available through One-Stops may include job search workshops on such topics as resume writing, job interviewing, and computer /Internet use; information about training programs; career library of books, periodicals, and business publications; and local job postings. Centers have computer stations along with fax and copy machines for members to use for their job search. Many centers also hold job fairs and on-site recruitment events where employers interview applicants for open positions. Career counseling is also available. Most offerings are free of charge, and more than one One-Stop can be used to access services.

Center staff is available to help job seekers across services, but the Centers are designed to be fairly self-directed. Individuals with intellectual disabilities may find it useful to bring someone with them to help navigate the Center's activities. This could be vocational staff from school, an employment provider staff person, a parent, friend or mentor. The Centers often work in collaboration with DDS and MRC-funded employment service providers. Many providers, as well as state agency staff, have built relationships with One-Stops in an effort to maximize the mutual benefits to be had by all, and to promote access to the rich resources these Centers offer. To find out about the One-Stop Career Center nearest to you, go to [www.servicelocator.org/](http://www.servicelocator.org/) or <http://tinyurl.com/n552vz>. See the Resource Section on One-Stop Career Centers for more details.

## Social Security Benefits and Health Insurance

Did you know that:

- A Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient can make up to \$36,133<sup>1</sup> per year without losing MassHealth Standard coverage?
- Massachusetts has an exemplary public health insurance program called CommonHealth for some individuals with disabilities who do not qualify for MassHealth Standard?
- A person receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Childhood Disability Benefit (CDB) benefits has nine "trial work months" during which they will still get a full benefit check regardless of how much money is earned?
- An SSI or SSDI /CDB recipient can deduct the costs of disability-related work expenses (such as transportation and personal care assistance) from the gross income that Social Security counts when they calculate the amount of the recipient's monthly checks? This is called an Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE).
- Many young adults who are in school can keep some or all of their annual work earnings, up to \$6,600<sup>1</sup>, without losing money from their SSI check. This is called the Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE).

### How does working impact benefits?

Learning how wages affect benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSI, SSDI) and health insurance from Medicaid/MassHealth and Medicare is very important. The best place to get individualized help with benefits planning is to contact a benefits planning counselor through BenePLAN or Project IMPACT. These free programs, available to those who receive SSI, SSDI and/or Child Disability Benefits

<sup>1</sup>These amounts are revised every year by the Social Security Administration.

(CDB), are funded through the Social Security Administration's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program. When you call BenePLAN or Project IMPACT, a benefits planning counselor will help you understand the impact of earned income on your young adult's benefits. (Contact information is located in the Resource Section of this booklet.)

### Work Incentive Programs

There are a number of work incentives offered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that can help young adults give "work a try" while keeping their benefits. Already mentioned have been Trial Work Months, IRWE, and SEIE. Two additional work incentive programs are the **Ticket to Work Program** and the **Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)** program.

The Ticket to Work program provides SSI and SSDI recipients greater choice in obtaining employment-related services. At age 18 (or older), recipients of SSI/SSDI benefits receive a letter in the mail informing them of their "ticket to work" and how and where to use the program. The letter explains that the person can contact any organization in their area that has been designated by SSA as a provider under this program.

**When this letter comes in the mail, don't ignore it.** Bring it to the attention of your DDS or MRC coordinator/counselor to ask how it might help with employment planning for your young adult. A WIPA benefits specialist can also help explain how the Ticket to Work might be used. For more information about Ticket to Work, visit [www.yourtickettowork.com/](http://www.yourtickettowork.com/).

The PASS program is another work incentive. When participating in this program, an SSI recipient aged 15 or older can set aside money, including SSDI and other Social Security benefits, to apply toward a vocational goal. These set-aside funds will not be counted during eligibility determination and calculation of SSI cash benefits. There is an application process for this program. Again, a WIPA benefits planning counselor may be helpful.



*Going to Work: A Guide to Social Security Benefits and Employment for Young People with Disabilities* is a helpful resource for understanding and learning about how benefits are affected by paid employment. You will find easy-to-understand information about the programs mentioned in this booklet. Available online at <http://tinyurl.com/nv5cev>, the document can also be obtained by calling the Institute for Community Inclusion at 617-287-4300.

### PUTTING WORK INCENTIVES TO WORK

MARISSA received SSI while working at Starbucks for her last two years of school, earning a competitive wage. Since she was receiving SSI, it was important to report to the Social Security Administration (SSA) that her Starbucks job was documented in her IEP and she was therefore entitled to the Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE). Even though Marissa's mother, Barbara, informed SSA in a timely manner, Marissa received a letter from SSA asking her to pay the government back because she had been earning job wages. **It is not unusual for families to receive this type of letter from SSA and they should not be alarmed.** Barbara again provided documentation to SSA that Marissa's employment program was written into her IEP, showed proof of wages, and the problem was resolved. Marissa's experience serves as a good reminder to keep records and copies of any communication with SSA.

## Transportation To and From Work

Planning for transportation is an essential part of the job planning process. Job seekers, families, DDS, employment service providers and employers need to work together right from the beginning to identify transportation options.

Young adults and their families need to determine reliable, safe and economic ways to commute to and from work. Families can turn to their DDS Service Coordinator and employment provider for direction and help. Here is a list of transportation issues to consider:



- Are any public transportation routes accessible?  
If so, are they available on the days and hours the young adult will be travelling to and from work?
- Is para-transit available? Para-transit is a service available within 3/4 mile of existing public transportation, more commonly known as The RIDE in the Boston area and Dial-A-Bat in the Brockton area.
- Are transportation services available from the employment service provider, the employer or DDS?
- Is carpooling or shared-ride transportation an option?
- How long will the commute take?
- What will the costs be, whether by private or public transportation?
- Are there health, behavior or risk issues that should be considered when selecting the means of transportation?
- Will the individual be able to use public transportation or other shared transit with proper training and support?

When planning transportation, “thinking outside the box” can result in a creative solution. For example, maybe your town’s Elder Services program can be helpful. Or perhaps your town’s taxi company might negotiate a special discounted rate. Consider approaching relatives, co-workers and neighbors about carpooling options. Public transportation and vanpools are additional options that can be explored. Employers may also help with shuttle services, identifying carpooling options or other arrangements.

Para-transit systems, a product of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), constitute another travel option. Para-transit service is for people who are elderly or have disabilities that prevent them from riding on fixed route buses and trains. This service provides shared-ride, curb-to-curb van transportation. In Massachusetts, public transportation is coordinated by Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs). Each of the sixteen RTAs in the state maintains a fixed-route system and manages para-transit programs for their region. RTAs must provide para-transit service throughout their regions within 3/4 mile of a fixed route. Many communities, along with their

RTAs, have developed local coordinated transportation plans that offer unique programs for residents, addressing local transportation challenges. Contact your local RTA to find out about the transportation services in your town. Information is also available in the resource section at the back of this publication.

The Department of Developmental Services collaborates with the **Massachusetts Human Service Transportation Office (HST)** to coordinate transportation services to adults enrolled in day habilitation, day service, employment and residential support programs overseen by the DDS. This is a “closed-request system,” meaning that the request must come from the DDS Service Coordinator through a formal process called a Transportation Request. The DDS Service Coordinator completes a Transportation Request Form (TRF) and submits it to the HST office. After reviewing the form and checking availability with contracted transportation vendors, the HST offices will let the Service Coordinator know if there is an available seat and funding to accommodate the transportation request.

Additional transportation resources to investigate are:

- American Public Transportation Association has a website containing all available public transportation resources by state and county. The site includes links to bus, train, ferry and para-transit information, and can be reached at [www.publictransportation.org/systems](http://www.publictransportation.org/systems).
- MassRides is a comprehensive transportation resource for people travelling in and around the Commonwealth. MassRides maintains a database of thousands of commuters and connects those who share similar commutes and are interested in carpooling or vanpooling to work. Visit [www.commute.com](http://www.commute.com) for more information.

## LEARNING TO USE THE VAN INDEPENDENTLY AND SAFELY

NICOLE’S mother shares their experiences with transportation issues. “Nicole cannot drive so learning to take para-transit transportation was vital. She was very apprehensive about doing this and we worried that if she couldn’t adjust to taking the van, it would inhibit her ability to work. With the help of our employment service provider and many close friends and family, she was taught how to deal with this new challenge. Again, one step at a time. She has risen to the challenge and takes the vans to all of her jobs, handles her own tickets and has learned to deal with some of the difficulties and imperfections of the public transportation system.” Nicole shares her own feelings. “My biggest challenge was learning to take para-transit transportation. I had to learn how to figure out the tickets I needed. I also had to learn to deal with different drivers and the many, many mistakes that the van makes. I had to learn how to call the office and find out when and where my van was.”

Similarly, when LINDSAY was still in school, her teachers developed a program so she would become proficient in taking a taxi or para-transit to work. Learning to safely and comfortably ride taxis was written into her IEP in her last two years of school. She started the training by taking her rides with an aide. Then her mother made use of Lindsay’s cell phone as an assistive device; the phone alarm went off to indicate when to go outside to get to her ride. Lindsay learned to always ask the driver, “Are you the taxi for Lindsay?” to ensure she was getting into the right vehicle.

## Accommodations on the Job

Identifying and arranging necessary accommodations and supports is a key part of assisting people with disabilities to find and keep employment – and is legally reinforced by the Americans with Disabilities Act. A job accommodation means that a job, workplace or way a job is done is modified to help the person with a disability do his/her job. A job accommodation can also allow a person to enjoy the benefits that other employees at a job site enjoy such as participating in holiday parties at accessible locations. There are several general types of job accommodations:

- Job restructuring, such as a change in work schedule or a decrease in the number of job duties
- Assistive devices, which include items such as an electronic stapler, non-skid material, and a mechanical reacher
- Training/teaching methods, such as an extended orientation period or an audio version of a training manual
- Personal assistant to help with work-related aspects of a job, such as a “mentor” to go to with questions or a co-worker to assist with reading
- Modification to the building, such as ramps, electronic door opener and flashing lights

“Assistive technology” (AT) is a term you may hear mentioned when planning accommodations for the workplace. Assistive technology is an item, device or piece of equipment that is used to help the person with a disability perform a task. AT can range from relatively simple, low cost and low-tech items available from a hardware store (such as a piece of Velcro to help hold something down), to highly sophisticated and costly technology. Examples of high-tech AT items are specialized computer devices available from special vendors. Your employment service provider will help identify and develop accommodations needed for the individual work situation. DDS, MRC, MCB and/or employers may help to pay for needed accommodations.

No one knows your young adult’s needs better than you. You can be a tremendous help to the professional employment team in predicting and planning the resources and supports that your son or daughter will need on the job.

## WORKSITE ACCOMMODATIONS

A wide range of items and devices are readily available to minimize limitations and barriers at work, and enable employees with disabilities to do their jobs efficiently and productively. Most are simple to put into place, do not cost a lot of money and can be found at your local hardware or office supply store. Resourcefulness and creativity can lead to solutions for many of the challenges that may arise at a job. The following examples represent no-tech to high-tech accommodations.

### No-Tech

- Name stamp for signature
- Masking tape to mark fill-line on trash can
- Color-coded stickers to organize files
- Photo/picture sequencing book to order duties or task steps
- Cardboard jig to guide folding of T-shirts
- Sunglasses to minimize stimulation & sensitivity to light

### Low-Tech

- Alarm watch or timer to help pace tasks
- Talking calculator with large keys
- Spell check on computers
- Vibrating beeper that provides prompts without drawing attention
- Hands-free speaker telephone
- Music with earphones to minimize distractions

### High-Tech

- Screen reading computer software (computer reads aloud printed words)
- Speech recognition computer software (computer types spoken words)
- Alternative keyboards (makes typing easier for people with hand strength and fine motor control issues)
- Voice output communication devices (allows nonverbal people to communicate using words)
- Personal data assistants (PDAs can provide visual schedules and directions)
- TTY or text telephone for those who can’t hear

## A CELL PHONE AS AN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEVICE

Cell phones, with all their many functions, have become a way of life for today's young adults. Families, schools and job coaches can make the most of cell phones and young adults' comfort level in using them in different ways. For example, some have used the alarm system that is built into a cell phone to ring out reminders about when an employee needs to perform various tasks on the job, helping her/him to stay on schedule. A cell phone is a great example of how a "typical device" can be used as a simple assistive tool and make an important difference in an individual's independence and success on the job.

## JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)

This federally-funded program provides information and consultation on job accommodations. JAN consultants are available by phone to assist in identifying potential accommodations; they have instant access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date information about different approaches, devices, and strategies. JAN's website has a searchable online database (SOAR) which can also be used to research accommodation options.

Accommodation Information  
(Voice/TTY): 800-526-7234  
ADA Information (Voice/TTY):  
800-232-9675  
Fax: 304-293-5407  
Email: [jan@icdi.wvu.edu](mailto:jan@icdi.wvu.edu)  
Website: <http://jan.wvu.edu>

## Equality at the Workplace

It is an employer's responsibility to treat all employees with equality. This means that employees with intellectual disabilities should receive all of the same benefits as co-workers. If you ever feel that your young adult is not being treated equally, talk to your employment provider or DDS Service Coordinator. People with disabilities have the protection of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and can receive accommodations that help them perform their jobs if their disability has been disclosed.

## How Do I Plan My Young Adult's Week When S/he is Working Part-Time?

Young adults who work part-time need, as do all working people, additional activities for a fulfilling weekly schedule. Some young adults, due to the nature or level of their disability, require supervision or need to be engaged in supervised programming in addition to their work schedule. These individuals can develop skills through volunteer work, community events, recreational outings and other daytime activities.

The mix of activities throughout the day will be based on the young adult's level of independence and support needs. It is important for families to focus on how they can increase the individual's independence, both in and outside the home and how to best integrate their son/daughter into the community. Some of the factors to think about are if and how the individual can be home alone and be safe when s/he is not working, when other adult family members are available to provide necessary supervision in the home and what community-based programs are available and of interest to the individual. A weekly schedule should consist of a healthy mix of work, learning, and fun; options can be discussed with your DDS Service Coordinator.

## PLANNING A LIFE: START BY PLANNING A WEEK

LINDSAY'S week is a combination of part-time paid work and volunteer work experiences. Her mother, Robin, recommends that families think about **all** aspects and components of the week, including when parents need to be at work, transportation arrangements, and social/recreational activities. Robin suggests planning the whole week, day-by-day, hour-by-hour, to make sure everything is in place. She and her husband helped fill Lindsay's weekly schedule by hiring a college student one day a week who engages Lindsay in activities at the student's college while Robin and her husband are at work.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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As we prepared this booklet, we heard over and over again from families who were deeply concerned about the direction their young adults' lives would take when they finished school. We also heard many encouraging stories about positive results that came from involved parents who collaborated with schools and providers, set expectations for their young adults, and supported them in the achievement of their goals. These families expressed tremendous pride in their sons and daughters who experienced success in different work situations.

John Anton, Chairperson of Mass Advocates Standing Strong (MASS), a self-advocacy organization for adults with disabilities, shares his personal experience of both the positive rewards of employment and the critical role that families play in making work a reality. "Having a job is fulfilling and gives you respect and independence. It is an important way to make a contribution. Employment builds confidence and gives you the chance to network with other people and have a better social life. Families can make a difference by believing in the person and supporting their goal of working. They can help their family member figure out what they like to do, what they are good at, and practical things like getting to work on time."



With expectations, effort, patience and teamwork, the journey to a career can be a positive one. Along the way, we hope you will rely on the messages, guidance and resources in this booklet. Our intention is that the case vignettes of families of young adults with intellectual disabilities will inspire you to be proactive, seek out collaborations, and create opportunities for your young adult. For additional inspiration, we encourage you to visit the Real Life Job Success Stories websites listed in the beginning of the Resource section of this booklet.

As Sherry Elander, a special education teacher who helped many youth realize their employment dreams, points out, "A new day has dawned, with new opportunities and practices having replaced what used to be." Building on that hope, Nicole's mother reminds us, "Parents who are coming upon "Turning 22" with your child, fear not. It is a turning point for both you and your child and there truly is...life after 22."

# RESOURCES

## REAL LIFE JOB SUCCESS STORIES

### REAL PEOPLE, REAL JOBS

[www.realworkstories.org](http://www.realworkstories.org)

This site highlights the employment successes of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through the use of innovative employment support practices, these individuals are earning money, forming networks and contributing to their communities. Learn more about these people and the promising practices that led to their successes.

### PEOPLE WORKING WIKISPACE

[www.peopleworking.wikispaces.com](http://www.peopleworking.wikispaces.com)

This website describes itself as “designed to celebrate the success of people with significant developmental disabilities who are working in paid jobs throughout the Pacific Northwest and beyond. These individuals have forged valuable relationships and roles with their coworkers, employers, and community members, and possess solid workplace skills.” Included are more than 150 stories, complete with pictures; a tutorial about how to use the site; and opportunities to blog and discuss. The site also contains a video featuring three employers and supported employees.

## STATE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

### MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES (DDS)

Massachusetts has a comprehensive system of specialized services and supports to give individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunities to live the way they choose. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is the state agency that manages and oversees this service system. The types of specialized services and supports include day supports, employment supports, residential supports, family supports, respite, and transportation.

500 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02118  
Voice: (617) 727-5608 • Fax: (617) 624-7577  
TTY: (617) 624-7783  
Info@state.ma.us  
[www.mass.gov/DDS](http://www.mass.gov/DDS)

DDS' publication *The Road Forward* is written for families of transition-age youth. It addresses the following topics: Individualized Transition Plans, eligibility for DDS services, and benefits and services provided by state agencies. The resource section has been customized for each region of the state. Families can request a copy from their Children's Service or Transition Coordinator or by calling the area office. A generic copy is also available on the DDS website [www.mass.gov/DDS](http://www.mass.gov/DDS). (On the right hand side of the page, click on “Publications” and go to the Turning 22 Section.)

### MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND (MCB)

MCB provides the highest quality rehabilitation and social services for blind individuals, leading to independence and full community participation. It provides a wide range of social and rehabilitation services to legally blind Massachusetts residents of all ages. Services and programs of MCB include: Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Social Services, Assistive Technology and Rehabilitation Teaching.

48 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116  
617-727-5550  
[www.mass.gov/mcb](http://www.mass.gov/mcb)

### MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION (MRC)

MRC assists individuals with disabilities to live and work independently. This state agency promotes dignity for individuals with disabilities through employment, education, training, advocacy, assistive technology, and independent community living. MRC is responsible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to help individuals find or return to work; Community Services, such as assistance in living independently in the home; Information, Referral and Peer Counseling; and Independent Living Programs for individuals turning 22.

27 Wormwood Street, Boston, MA 02110  
617-204-3600  
[www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc)

For an excellent general article about Vocational Rehabilitation – what it is and how to apply – consult the following article:

Getting the Most from the Public Vocational Rehabilitation System  
[www.tinyurl.com/noqppa](http://www.tinyurl.com/noqppa)

**ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS**

One-Stop Career Centers are designed to provide a full range of assistance to all job seekers under one roof. Established under the federal government's Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Centers offer training referrals, career counseling, job search workshops, job listings, and other employment-related services. Services are provided to individuals with and without disabilities. *One-Stop Centers: A Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities* is a helpful guide available online at [www.tinyurl.com/kjttbp](http://www.tinyurl.com/kjttbp). To find your local One-Stop Career Center, go to [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org) or [www.tinyurl.com/n552vz](http://www.tinyurl.com/n552vz).

**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS (WIB)**

Workforce Investment Boards were created to implement the WIA, and they also oversee the One-Stop Career Centers. Under Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), employment services are available for young people. These include Youth Services funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) for young people aged 14 to 21. These services primarily consist of after-school and summer employment-related programs, as well as assistance for young people who have left school and need employment assistance. Details can be found at [www.tinyurl.com/lgyv5r](http://www.tinyurl.com/lgyv5r).

Another option from the workforce development system is Connecting Activities, a school-to-work initiative that operates in many schools throughout the state ([www.doe.mass.edu/connect](http://www.doe.mass.edu/connect)).

WIA Youth Services and Connecting Activities are both administered by local Workforce Investment Boards; these WIBs may also administer other services for young people. To learn more about these programs in your area, contact your local WIB, and ask to speak to the staff person responsible for youth services. A listing of WIBs is available at [www.massworkforce.com/region-map.php](http://www.massworkforce.com/region-map.php)

**GENERAL EMPLOYMENT-RELATED INFORMATION****FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) in Massachusetts provides information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. FCSN offers a number of services, programs and trainings for families, including a monthly e-newsletter and an annual conference.

FCSN's Parent Training and Information Center (found under the "Education & Special Needs" link at the top of their home web page) provides a number of publications and tip sheets on the topic of transition, including employment. There is also information about FCSN's training offerings on transition.

1135 Tremont Street Suite 420  
Boston, MA 02120  
Phone: (617) 236-7210 • MA Toll-Free: (800) 331-0688  
Fax: (617) 572-2094  
[www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org)

**NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON WORKFORCE DISABILITY/YOUTH**

NCWD/Youth seeks to improve services to youth with disabilities by identifying proven quality workforce development strategies. It is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development policy and practice. NCWD/Youth has a resource-rich website for professionals as well as for parents.

Institute for Educational Leadership  
4455 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20008  
Telephone: 1-877-871-0744 • TTY: 877-871-0665  
[www.ncwd-youth.info/](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/)

**PACER CENTER, INC.**

The mission of the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. PACER provides information, resources, and consultation to parents of young adults with disabilities, aged 14 to 21, and the professionals who work with them on transition-related topics, including employment.

8161 Normandale Blvd.  
Bloomington, MN 55437  
USA: 888-248-0822 • TTY: 952-838-0190 • Fax: 952-838-0199  
[www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) (Use the search function to find topics related to transition and employment or go directly to PACER's publications page for a listing of products, books, articles and fact sheets at [www.pacer.org/publications/transition.asp](http://www.pacer.org/publications/transition.asp))

## CAREER PLANNING

### PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

Person-centered planning is an approach that gives individuals a chance to share their dreams for the future while incorporating the active involvement and support of others. The individual works with a facilitator to identify important people in his/her life who come together as part of a planning group; they then share their ideas and help to shape the individual's future plans. Together, the individual and the planning group answer questions and develop a vision of "positive possibilities" for the individual's future. The group leaves with action steps that can be taken to move in the direction of the person's vision. (See sidebar at right for publications and resources)

### CAREER EXPLORATION AND ASSESSMENT

Career exploration involves gathering information about an individual's skills, interests, personal characteristics and work environments that will lead to the best job match. Research on specific careers and employers can also help to map out a job search and identify business contacts. Visit the following websites for assistance with these activities.

#### **AMERICA'S CAREER INFONET**

This site includes a wealth of information on job trends, wages, and national and local labor markets.

[www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)

#### **O\*NET ONLINE**

This online database describes a wide variety of occupations, required skills, and earning potential.

[www.online.onetcenter.org/](http://www.online.onetcenter.org/)

#### **YES! YOUR EMPLOYMENT SELECTIONS**

This is a job preference program using online videos. For a 3-month unlimited access cost of \$20, this program allows youth with limited or no reading skills to watch videos of 120 different jobs, listen to a narrator describe key tasks in each job, and select preferred ones. With the help of a parent or teacher to facilitate, the result is identification of the best-matched job, strengths and weaknesses and training priorities.

[www.yesjobsearch.com](http://www.yesjobsearch.com)

### PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING PUBLICATIONS

The Institute for Community Inclusion at The University of Massachusetts Boston provides the following publications and resources to help individuals, families and support providers understand and utilize person-centered planning methods for finding employment for individuals with disabilities:

#### **Starting with Me: A Guide to Person-Centered Planning for Job Seekers**

A person-centered approach can help individuals with disabilities make satisfying job choices. This document guides job seekers through a three-stage career development process that includes assessing their interests, researching the job market, and marketing themselves to potential employers.

[www.tinyurl.com/dxu3fu](http://www.tinyurl.com/dxu3fu)

#### **More Than Just a Job: Person-Centered Career Planning**

Sometimes people think that person-centered career planning has to involve a big meeting, or is only for people with the most significant disabilities. This publication lays out the principles of listening to job seekers to help them shape and achieve their career goals.

[www.tinyurl.com/d7feaw](http://www.tinyurl.com/d7feaw)

#### **The Most Important Member: Facilitating the Focus Person's Participation in Person-Centered Planning**

This article summarizes research that explored the participation of young people in person-centered planning, and gives specific recommendations to assist facilitators in maximizing student participation.

[www.tinyurl.com/dfthpo](http://www.tinyurl.com/dfthpo)

#### **Building Authentic Visions: How to Support the Focus Person in Person-Centered Planning**

This publication summarizes research on team behavior during a planning session that increased or decreased participation of the focus person. Recommendations challenge team members to think about how their own behavior influences the focus person's participation.

[www.tinyurl.com/crz58l](http://www.tinyurl.com/crz58l)

## POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

### WWW.THINKCOLLEGE.NET

This is a website for transition-age students with intellectual disabilities, their parents and the professionals who work with them. The site has a database of colleges across the country that support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities, as well as resource materials on person-centered planning, funding options, and the differences between high school and college. Discussion boards, a listserv and publications are also available.

### WWW.GOING-TO-COLLEGE.ORG/

This site contains information about living college life with a disability. It is designed for high school students and provides video clips, activities and additional resources that can help students get a head start in planning for college.

## TRANSITION PLANNING

The following two publications are handbooks of information and resources for students with disabilities transitioning from school to the community:

### **A Student's Guide to Planning for Life after High School**

[www.tinyurl.com/cq17ur](http://www.tinyurl.com/cq17ur)

### **Dare to Dream: A Guide to Planning Your Future**

[www.tinyurl.com/yfb9s2w](http://www.tinyurl.com/yfb9s2w)

### WWW.YOUTHHOOD.ORG

The primary purpose of the Youthhood website is to help young adults plan for life after high school. By providing a concrete, familiar "place" for youth to begin the process of self-identity and future planning, this site offers a variety of tools for youth and the adults who work with them.

### ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

A handbook written for students, school counselors, teachers, and parents to help in planning for education after school.

[www.tinyurl.com/co8r6e](http://www.tinyurl.com/co8r6e)

## ACCOMMODATIONS

### JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)

This federally-funded program provides information and consultation on job accommodations. JAN consultants are available by phone to assist in identifying potential accommodations; they have instant access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date information about different approaches, devices, and strategies. JAN's website has a searchable online database (SOAR) which can also be used to research accommodation options. JAN also offers a variety of fact sheets and publications about the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

West Virginia University

Morgantown, WV 26506-6080

Accommodation Information (Voice/TTY):

800-526-7234

ADA Information (Voice/TTY):

800-232-9675

Fax: 304-293-5407

jan@icdi.wvu.edu

<http://jan.wvu.edu>

### ABLEDATA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION

ABLEDATA provides objective information on assistive technology and rehabilitation equipment available from domestic and international sources to consumers, organizations, professionals, and caregivers within the United States. This site presents a comprehensive range of devices that are available, and also includes general information and news about topics related to assistive technology.

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 930

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 800-227-0216 or 301-608-8998

Fax: 301-608-8958 • TTY: 301-608-8912

abledata@macrointernational.com

[www.abledata.com/](http://www.abledata.com/)

## SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

It is essential for youth and young adults with disabilities to develop advocacy and leadership skills in order to understand the rights, responsibilities and choices in their lives. Opportunities exist both in school and upon entering the adult service world for individuals to determine and direct their career development - from assessing interests and goals to researching employment opportunities to starting a new job. Increasing a sense of empowerment often contributes to employment success. The following are resources for more information:

### NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION (NASET)

[www.nasetalliance.org](http://www.nasetalliance.org)

### NATIONAL CENTER ON SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRANSITION (NCSET)

[www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org)

### SELF-DETERMINATION RESOURCE WEBSITE

[www.selfdeterminationak.org/index.html](http://www.selfdeterminationak.org/index.html)

### THE RIOT E-NEWSLETTER FOR SELF-ADVOCATES

This e-newsletter makes readers laugh and feel good about life. It includes timely themes and covers topics such as dating, health and everyday fun.

[www.hsri.org/leaders/theriot](http://www.hsri.org/leaders/theriot)

### Publication: "Self-Determination: A Fundamental Ingredient of Employment Support"

[www.tinyurl.com/coq4ts](http://www.tinyurl.com/coq4ts)

If you are interested in learning more about self-advocacy or want to become involved, contact:

### MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES STANDING STRONG (MASS)

500 Harrison Avenue #230

Boston, MA 02118

1-866-426-2253 (toll-free in Massachusetts)

(617) 624-7791

Mass1998@earthlink.net

[www.massadvocatesstandingstrong.org/](http://www.massadvocatesstandingstrong.org/)

## DISABILITY AND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS/WORK INCENTIVES

People with disabilities often perceive employment-related regulations for Social Security benefits as insurmountable barriers to working. However, many people misunderstand the impact of employment on individual benefits. By learning accurate information on Social Security Administration (SSA) requirements, along with learning about work incentive programs that make it easier to go to work, people with disabilities can feel more confident in their employment search.

### SOCIAL SECURITY NATIONAL WEBSITE

The Social Security Administration has a comprehensive and user-friendly website, with extensive information, publications and forms available. Specific sections are dedicated to disability issues. Each of the regional agencies has its own website, which can be accessed through [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

Employment Support Programs:

[www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)

The Office of Disability Home Page:

[www.ssa.gov/disability](http://www.ssa.gov/disability)

### Social Security National Toll-Free Number

Voice: (800) 772-1213 • TTY: (800) 325-0778

Call between 7AM and 7PM any business day.

Note: Be prepared with specific questions and/or ask to speak with someone who specializes in disability benefits.

### Social Security National Office Mailing Address

Social Security Administration

Office of Public Inquiries

6401 Security Blvd.

Room 4-C 5 Annex

Baltimore, MD 21235

### GOING TO WORK: A GUIDE TO SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AND EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

is a resource to learn about how benefits are affected by working. It is available online and is downloadable at [www.tinyurl.com/nv5cev](http://www.tinyurl.com/nv5cev). It can also be obtained from the Institute for Community Inclusion's Publication Office at 617-287-4300.

SSA has funded a national network of Work Incentives Planning and Assistance programs. WIPA programs provide counseling to help individuals understand the impact of work on their benefits. Individuals who receive SSI, SSDI, and/or CDB benefits can get these services free of charge from the Massachusetts programs listed below.

### PROJECT IMPACT

Statewide Employment Services  
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission  
Voice: 617-204-3854/800-734-7475  
TTY: 617-204-3834  
[www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc) (then click “Benefit Programs”)  
Serves the counties of Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, Plymouth, Suffolk, Essex, and Norfolk.

### BENEPLAN

Center for Health Policy and Research  
University of Massachusetts Medical School  
Voice: 508-856-2659/  
877-937-9675 (877-YES-WORK)  
[www.beneplan.org](http://www.beneplan.org)  
Serves the counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Middlesex, and Worcester.

## TRANSPORTATION

### AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION

The website for the Association contains all available public transportation resources by state and county. It includes links to bus, train, ferry and para-transit information.

[www.publictransportation.org/systems](http://www.publictransportation.org/systems)

### MASSRIDES

A comprehensive transportation resource for people traveling in and around the state. MassRides maintains a database of thousands of commuters and connects those who share similar commutes and are interested in carpooling or vanpooling to work.

[www.commute.com](http://www.commute.com)

### PROJECT ACTION

This is a national program that fosters accessible transportation services for people with disabilities. It is administered by the National Easter Seal Society and funded by the Federal Transit Administration.  
700 Thirteenth Street, N.W., Suite 200

Washington, DC 20005

Voice: (800) 659-6428

[www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org)

In Massachusetts, public transportation, including para-transit programs, is coordinated by 16 Regional Transit Authorities:

### REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITIES (RTA)

BRTA—Berkshire Regional Transit Authority  
Pittsfield • (413) 499-2782 • TTY (413) 448-2108

BAT—Brockton Area Transit Authority  
Brockton • (508) 588-1000 • TTY (508) 580-0873

CATA—Cape Ann Transit Authority  
Gloucester • (978) 283-7916

CCRTA—Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority  
Dennis • (800) 352-7155 • TTY (508) 385-4163

FRTA - Franklin Regional Transit Authority  
Greenfield • (413) 774-2262 (voice/TTY)

GATRA—Greater Attleboro-Taunton  
Regional Transit Authority  
Attleboro • (800) 483-2500 • TTY (508) 824-7439

LRTA—Lowell Regional Transit Authority  
Lowell • (978) 452-6161 • TTY (800) 439-2370

MART—Montachusett Regional Transit Authority  
Fitchburg • (800) 922-5636 (voice/TTY)

MBTA—Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
Boston • (617) 222-3200 • TTY (617) 222-5146  
Office for Transportation Access/The Ride  
(800) 533-6282 • TTY (617) 222-5415

MWRTA—MetroWest Regional Transit Authority  
Framingham • (888) 996-9782 (voice/TTY)

MVRTA—Merrimack Valley  
Regional Transit Authority  
Haverhill • (978) 469-6878 (voice/TTY)

NRTA—Nantucket Regional Transit Authority  
Nantucket • (508) 325-5971 • TTY (508) 325-7516

PVRTA—Pioneer Valley Transit Authority  
Springfield • (413) 781-7882 • TTY (866) 707-1656

SRTA—Southeastern Regional Transit Authority  
New Bedford • (508) 997-6767 • TTY (508) 999-5810

VTA—Martha’s Vineyard Transit Authority  
Edgartown • (508) 693-9440 • TTY (508) 693-4633

WRTA—Worcester Regional Transit Authority  
Worcester • (508) 791-9782 • TTY (508) 797-5560

**[www.matransit.com](http://www.matransit.com) provides an overview, maps, and contact information for all the RTAs.**

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## **APPRENTICESHIP**

A structured training opportunity conducted in partnership with an employer or industry that prepares an individual for a specific trade or occupation.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

A law passed in 1990 that protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, and mandates accessible public accommodations, government services, transportation and telecommunications.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

Any item, device, or piece of equipment used to increase, maintain, or improve an individual's capacity on the job.

## **CHAPTER 688 REFERRAL (ALSO KNOWN AS "TURNING 22 LAW")**

A legal form submitted by the school to identify the adult services a student will need after leaving special education.

## **CHILDHOOD DISABILITY BENEFIT (CDB)**

A Social Security Administration (SSA) benefit for people 18 years of age or older, determined by SSA to have become disabled before age 22, whose parents qualify for benefits and are either deceased or receiving retirement or disability benefits; typically includes Medicare.

## **COMMONHEALTH**

A Massachusetts health coverage program for people with disabilities at any income level above the cutoff for MassHealth Standard (Medicaid). Members pay a monthly premium that increases as their income goes up.

## **DDS TRANSITION COORDINATOR (SOMETIMES CALLED "688 COORDINATOR")**

The TC is the student's primary link to DDS during the transition from special education to adult life. The TC facilitates development of an Individual Transition Plan (ITP), and helps individuals and families understand what DDS and other agencies offer.

## **DDS SERVICE COORDINATOR**

Once the Individual Transition Plan has been written and the young adult has left school, the SC replaces the Transition Coordinator as the primary link to DDS. The SC facilitates development of an Individual Service Plan (ISP) and provides ongoing information and assistance regarding services and supports.

## **EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Typically, private and non-profit community-based organizations that provide direct vocational services to adults with disabilities. These services are often paid for by state agencies such as DDS but families can also pay for them on their own.

## **IMPAIRMENT RELATED WORK EXPENSE (IRWE)**

A Social Security work incentive allowing an SSI or SSDI recipient to deduct the cost of disability-related items and services s/he relies on for work (such as personal care assistants or transportation), from the gross income that Social Security counts when they calculate the amount of the individual's monthly check.

## **INCLUSIVE CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT (ICE)**

Massachusetts state-funded pilot grant program, which enables students with severe disabilities, aged 18-22, to participate in integrated college experiences while still in high school.

## **INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PLAN (ISP)**

An ongoing DDS planning document for young adults no longer in school, the ISP specifies individual goals, services and supports, as well as strategies that promote achievement of the goals. The ISP is updated annually.

## **INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN (ITP)**

Facilitated by the DDS Transition Coordinator, this document specifies vocational, residential, and support services requested by the student/family when the student leaves special education.

**INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)**

A written plan, mandated by law and updated annually, developed by the student, parents, and the school's special education team. The IEP specifies the student's services, goals and objectives, and methods to obtain these goals.

**INTEREST INVENTORY**

A test or tool that attempts to match one's personality and interests with a work environment and/or career.

**INTERNSHIPS**

Paid or unpaid work experiences for students.

**JOB COACH**

An employment staff person who assists the worker with a disability to adjust and maintain stability at their job. Roles of the job coach can include job skills training; developing accommodations; arranging natural supports; and working with the individual, supervisors and coworkers to resolve issues, promote effective communication and ensure social inclusion.

**JOB SHADOWING**

Designed to increase career awareness, students learn about a job by spending time observing an employee in an occupation of interest, where they get to witness firsthand the work environment, skills, and behavior involved in that setting.

**MASSHEALTH STANDARD (MEDICAID)**

Joint federal-state comprehensive health benefits program, automatically giving full coverage to SSI recipients.

**MEDICARE**

Federal health insurance program, typically connected with SSDI and CDB, in which beneficiaries pay deductibles and co-fees.

**MENTORING**

A career exploration experience where a student is matched with an employee and forms a relationship which supports learning about a career or job of interest. Mentors can also be coworkers at a new job who help to support the initial orientation and training needs of the novice employee.

**NATURAL SUPPORTS**

The resources that are available to all employees in a workplace, such as job orientations, trainings and mentors. Examples include an employer's human resource department providing extra help during orientation and training, or a coworker providing a ride to or from the job.

**ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS**

Coordinated by the US Department of Labor, these Centers are designed to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers. The Centers offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, a career library, job search workshops, computer workstations and more.

**PARA-TRANSIT**

Shared-ride, curb-to-curb transportation (often vans) for people who are elderly or have disabilities that prevent them from riding on fixed route buses and trains.

**PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SELF-SUPPORT (PASS)**

A Social Security work incentive that allows a person with a disability to set aside income and/or resources to reach a work goal. This helps to reduce the amount that Social Security deducts from an SSI check based on an individual's earned income.

**PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING**

A planning process that focuses on the individual and his/her interests, strengths, and needs. Emphasis is placed on the process being controlled by the individual with a disability. This individual often invites people from his/her personal network along with service providers to help develop a plan for the future.

**REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (RTA)**

Located across Massachusetts, 16 RTAs are charged with maintaining a fixed route public transportation system and managing the para-transit programs for their region. For example, Boston's MBTA has a large system of bus, subway and streetcar routes but also manages its RIDE program.

**SELF-ADVOCACY**

Individuals with disabilities speaking and/or acting for themselves to advocate for their own rights and needs. Self-advocacy groups for persons with developmental disabilities are growing across the US.

**SELF-DETERMINATION**

Individuals having control over those aspects of life that are important to them, such as the services they receive, their career choices and goals, where they live, and which community activities they are involved with.

**STUDENT EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION (SEIE)**

A Social Security work incentive that allows qualified young people who are in school to keep some or all of their earnings without losing money from their SSI checks.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)**

Social Security Administration (SSA) benefit for people determined by SSA to be disabled and who have low incomes and low resources; typically includes MassHealth Standard (Medicaid).

**SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE (SSDI)**

Social Security Administration (SSA) benefit for people determined by SSA to be disabled and who either: a) have previously worked and paid Social Security taxes (FICA) for enough years to qualify, or b) have a retired or deceased parent who has paid into the system; typically includes Medicare.

**SOCIAL SECURITY WORK INCENTIVES**

Special programs that make it possible for recipients of SSI and/or SSDI to work and still receive monthly payments and health insurance benefits. These options provide those who want to work with a “safety net” while they are adjusting to the job; this minimizes the risk of losing financial stability.

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

Competitive employment for individuals with disabilities in integrated work settings with ongoing training and support provided on and/or off the job site as needed and requested by the worker with a disability or the employer.

**TICKET TO WORK**

A Social Security Program created in 1999. It is designed to give recipients aged 18 to 64 who receive SSDI and/or SSI greater choice in getting the employment-related services they need. The goal is for them to earn enough money from working so they will no longer need Social Security cash benefits.

**TRANSITION PLANNING FORM (TPF)**

Maintained with the IEP beginning at age 14, schools must use this form to plan for the student's need for transition services. The TPF includes the student's post-secondary Vision Statement.

**VISION STATEMENT**

An important component of IEP and TPF documentation, this statement addresses student preferences and interests, desired outcomes in adult living, and post-secondary and working environments over a five-year period.

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)**

A state agency that aims to help restore or develop the working ability of individuals with disabilities. VR provides counseling, training, placement, and referrals to other agencies. In Massachusetts, the VR agencies are Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB).

**WORK INCENTIVES PLANNING & ASSISTANCE (WIPA)**

Programs funded by Social Security to help individuals understand the impact of earned income on public benefits, including SSI, SSDI, Medicare, Medicaid, housing, TANF, and food stamps. In Massachusetts, the two WIPA programs are Project IMPACT, and BenePLAN.

**WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that enables an employee with a disability to perform job duties, and/or to participate in other work-related events or activities.

## APPENDIX A: Employment Planning List

This chart summarizes the major steps and guidance provided in this publication with suggestions about when to start, and continue, the employment planning process. Of course, what you do and when will depend on your own circumstances. For each step, we have also included a reference to the page in this booklet where you can read more about what to do and why. To help keep on track, we recommend that you keep a copy of this chart in an accessible location.

IEP AND FUTURE PLANNING	WHEN TO START	WHERE TO LEARN MORE
Student takes increasingly active role in IEP meetings	Age 14 and on	page 3
Parent(s) and student separately prepare Vision Statement for IEP, including employment goals.	Age 14 and on	page 4
Transition Planning Form completed	Age 14 and on	page 4
Make sure courses taken match career interests and goals	Age 14 and on	page 5
Explore opportunities for a person-centered planning approach	Age 16 and on	page 8
<b>VOCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL</b>		
Explore opportunities to gain work-related experience	Age 14 and on	page 4
Learn about the “world of work”: career fairs, career days, job shadowing, partnerships, job clubs	Age 14 and on	page 4
Identify career interests through formal assessments	Age 14 and on	page 4
Explore opportunities to have real work experiences	Age 16 and on	page 4
<b>VOCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT HOME</b>		
Parents/guardians communicate expectations about a future with employment	Age 6 and on	page 1
Parents/guardians assign paid chores	Age 8 and on	page 6
Encourage increasing responsibility and independence	Age 12 and on	page 6
Promote and nurture hobbies and interests	Age 6 and on	page 7
Look for opportunities to learn about and work with money	Age 8 and up	page 6
Interact with community organizations	Age 8 and up	page 6

CHAPTER 688	WHEN TO START	WHERE TO LEARN MORE
Discuss 688 referral at IEP meeting; sign forms	2 years before student leaves school	page 5
Be sure school submits referral	2 years before student leaves school	page 5
ROLE OF DDS		
Once determined eligible, start working with assigned DDS Transition Coordinator (TC)	Age 18 until student leaves school	page 12
With help from DDS, investigate available employment service provider choices	Age 18 and on	page 13
With help from DDS, investigate impact of work on disability benefits	Age 18 and on	page 20
AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL		
Begin working with DDS's assigned Service Coordinator (SC)	When student leaves school	page 13
Work with SC and others to develop Individualized Service Program (ISP)	Ongoing	page 13
Select employment service provider after investigating choices	As Needed	page 13
Continue person-centered career development planning process	Ongoing	page 8
Work with employment service provider, DDS (and MRC) for assessments and job placement	Ongoing	page 14
Work together with employment service provider, employer, family, SC to plan for transportation to and from work	As Needed	page 22
Work together with employment service provider, employer, family, SC to plan for needed accommodations on the job	As Needed	page 24
WHEN JOB IS PART-TIME		
Work with SC to decide on weekly mix of activities and programs	As Needed	page 25

## APPENDIX B: Finding The Right Employment Service Program

### STEP ONE:

#### Figure Out What You Want And Need

Start by identifying what's important to your young adult. Think about jobs or community experiences s/he has held in the past and what services worked and didn't work. Other issues to address include:

- Does my young adult need help figuring out the types of jobs and careers s/he would like and be good at?
- Will his/her support needs change over time? Are there times when more help will be needed?
- What's most important? Pay and benefits? Fun people to work with? Safety and security? Location? Job satisfaction? Potential for promotions and growth?
- Will help be needed to manage benefits, such as Social Security and MassHealth?
- Will job coaching services be needed on the job, how often and for how long?
- Will help be needed to identify activities for when s/he is not working?

### STEP TWO:

#### Gather Information

Get the information you need to make a good decision about the services that will be best for your young adult and your family. Here are some suggestions for gathering information:

- Talk to friends, families, and teachers who may be familiar with employment services.
- Ask DDS and MRC/MCB for a list of provider organizations in your local area.
- Find out if DDS and MRC/MCB have information and statistics on how successful programs have been in helping people find and keep jobs.
- Read annual reports and other written material from the service providers.
- Contact local self-advocacy and family advocacy groups for recommendations (see resource section).
- Ask others for ideas and recommendations, getting a variety of viewpoints. Remember, what is important to others may not be important to you, and vice versa.

### STEP THREE:

#### Investigate Employment Programs: What To Ask? What To Observe?

Visit and interview a variety of employment service provider programs and ask for consumer and family references. When you are visiting, pay attention to the general feeling you get about the program and staff when you are there. Is it a welcoming environment? Do you feel comfortable and respected? Take time to make some observations about the program: is it in a location which feels part of the community? Does the program have a supportive approach to providing employment assistance or is it more of a "take charge," authoritative approach?

Below are questions to ask when you visit the provider. You don't have to ask all of the questions but we hope the issues they address will help focus you during your visit. How your questions and concerns are answered will also help you compare various programs.

### **Learn about the organization and the basic services it offers:**

- How long have they been in business?
- Which employers do they work with?
- Does the organization offer a variety of services besides finding employment for people with disabilities or is the focus strictly on finding employment?
- Does the program offer individual placements? Are group placements used?
- If group placement is the approach, do these placements pay at least minimum wage?
- Are workers on the employers' payroll, or are workers paid by the provider?
- Do workers have access to the benefits that all employees receive?
- Who does the program serve; how many; what kind of disability; ages?
- How many people did the program assist in finding jobs in the last year? How many were successfully hired? For what types of jobs? How long have they been on these jobs?
- On average, how long does it take to find an individual a job?
- Does the organization support people on the job during non-traditional hours (evenings, weekends)?
- Can the program provide recommendations from people who have previously received services from them?

### **Learn about how the program works with individuals:**

- What is the program's typical process for providing services to an individual? How are services tailored to individual needs?
- How does the program help people figure out what kind of job the individual wants?
- How much are the employees (placed by the program) earning? How many hours are they working? Do they receive benefits such as vacation, health insurance?
- Have employees advanced or been promoted in their careers/jobs?
- What happens when a person does not succeed on a job? Will the program help the individual a second or third time to get a job? Will there be ongoing support?
- What opportunities exist for individuals to exercise control and choice over the services they receive?
- Does the program emphasize the use of existing "natural supports" from employers and the community, or do program staff typically provide the majority of supports?

### **Learn about the program's staff:**

- What kind of qualifications does staff have?
- What is staff turnover like?
- How long has the director been there?
- What is staff-to-individual ratio? What are staff caseload sizes?

**APPENDIX C****People with Intellectual Disabilities in Jobs Across Massachusetts**

Assembler	Travel Specialist	Building Services Aide
Housekeeper	Utility Worker	Stock Maintenance Worker
File Clerk	Stadium Groundskeeper	Inspection Prep Technician
Packager	Machine Operator	Quality Control Inspector
Telemarketer	Storeroom Clerk	Loom Cleaner
Bus Monitor	Theatre Attendant	Ticket Taker
Laborer	Car Washer	Nursery Worker
Microfilm Technician	Medical Records Clerk	Lawn Care Worker
Hair Salon Assistant	Receptionist	Redemption Center Sorter
Truck Driver	Banquet Room Set-up Person	Data Entry Clerk
Stock Person	Food Vendor	Shipping and Receiving Worker
Taxi Cab Detailer	Postal Clerk	Dietary Aide
Painter's Assistant	Library Assistant	Recycler
Dishwasher	Small Engine Repair Person	Bagger
Security Guard	Maintenance Worker	Delivery Assistant
Production Worker	Landscape Assistant	Groundskeeper
Teacher's Aide	Service Clerk	Restaurant Set-up Person
Janitor	Bike Mechanic	Bus person
Stable Hand	Carpenter's Assistant	Cafeteria Worker
Funeral Home Usher	Mailroom Clerk	Field Hand
Greeter	Office Assistant	Printer's Assistant
Dog Groomer's Assistant	Kitchen Aide	Radio Dispatcher
Retail Florist	Laundry Attendant	Sales Clerk
Child Care Assistant	Artist	Food Handler
Locker Room Attendant	Wet Hand Sander	Pet Sitter
Grill Cook	Equipment Assembler	

# SCHOOL DAYS TO PAY DAYS

## An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

This publication was written by staff from the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. It is informed and enriched by the experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities, family members, school personnel, employment providers and others, who are all committed to creating a workforce that includes individuals with intellectual disabilities. As part of Work Without Limits, this publication is one of many tools designed to provide individuals and family members with the information and resources they need to achieve their employment goals.

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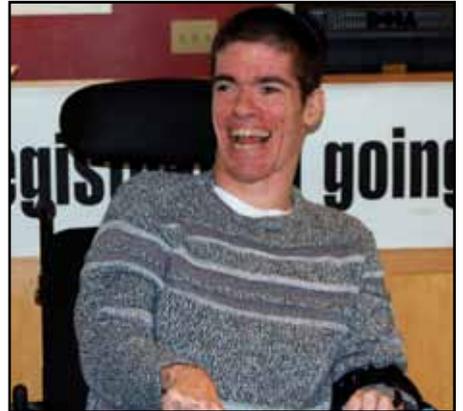
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