

Jobs, People, Places & Things

(An employment primer for transition)

'Tis labor indeed that puts the difference of value on everything.

John Locke (1632-1704)

There are a number of tools and strategies that are useful in addressing employment issues in the transition process. To get the most out of them, it's important to understand the basics. In this section we address the basics: answers to the most frequently asked questions from students and parents, specific strategies for making sure that transition plans include employment goals, ways to build skills and behaviors that lead to employment and basic employment terms that come up often in discussions about employment.

Why do people work?

You hear a lot of answers:

- To make money.
- To do something interesting.
- To meet people, have friends and be able to do things.
- To keep learning.
- To afford vacations and retirement.
- Because it is better than sitting at home.
- Because the world values people who work.

Why do YOU want to work? Whatever your answer, if working is important to you, it's important for you to know that there's a job out there—just for you! Your dream of working may seem like a long way off—but keep your eye on the prize. **YOU CAN DO IT!**

Finding, getting and keeping a job isn't all that easy for anyone. Millions of people—including high-paid big company executives—get help finding jobs. It's a similar process for a student with a disability. It's WHO you know and WHAT you can do. Asking for help is typical and there are many community resources.

The real issue is: **DO YOU WANT TO WORK?**

If the answer is **YES!**—then let's go for it!

Including work in transition planning:

7th & 8th Grade:

- Your school goals should include things to help you be more independent in several areas such as: communication, social skills, self-help, using basic reading and math skills and being included in regular classes and/or activities.
- Begin thinking ahead about work.
- What can you start doing now that will help you know more about working?

By age 14:

- Your transition plan should be part of your IEP.
- Find out now about requirements for graduating, leaving or exiting school and begin thinking about where you want to be before you leave school. **It is very important that you and the IEP team define your graduation goals related to work!**
- Describe what you would like to happen before you leave school. (Do you want to have a job? Do you want to have tried three different jobs? Do you want to have held a job for six months?)



EMPLOYMENT LINGO

As you begin to talk about work in your Transition meetings, there are some terms it will be helpful to know and understand.

Full- and part-time employment:

This means paid employment in a community job. Full time means about 40 hours a week while part time means anything less than that. For example: 20 hours a week, 2 days a week, 5 hours a week, etc.

Supported employment:

Supported employment is a way for people who have disabilities to get and keep real jobs. Supported employment is a real job, in the community, with pay—and also with support. A job coach or employment specialist helps you find the job, learn the job, learn how to work with co-workers and supervisors and gives you support on the job—as long as you need it. Supported employment helps find the best job for you based on what you are interested in and what you can and like to do.

Volunteer work

This is work without pay at a place where other people in the community also volunteer. A volunteer job may be a good way for you to learn about things you like to do and add to your experience while you wait for a paying job, but you do not have to do volunteer work before you get a paying job.

Job vs. career

A career is something you choose for life or at least for many years. A job is more short time, perhaps a month, a year, three years. For some people a job, turns into their career.

Resume

A list of the jobs, classes and/or other training you have had to give an employer a picture of your skills and experiences.

Beginning around 9th grade and by age 16:

- Begin identifying job interests and abilities
- Participate in activities such as career exploration, job sampling, volunteering, job training.
- Begin to collect information on job skills, references and training to help you write a resume.
- Begin work related assessments and interest inventories.
- Find out about or research different jobs and/or careers.

Grades 10, 11 and 12 and through age 21:

- Participate in job internships, job shadowing, work experiences and training sites.
- Gear school classes and activities to things that will help you when you go to work.
- Make a list of jobs or job tasks that you think will work best for you based on what you have learned about yourself.
- Begin planning for long-term support. Contact adult service providers who can help you with work once you leave school. Adult service providers that can help support you in getting a job or keeping your job are: Texas Rehabilitation Commission, Mental Health/Mental Retardation Centers or private supported employment providers. Your school transition counselors should help you with this.

By age 18 contact Social Security Administration (SSA) to find out what benefits you are eligible for.

- Contact a benefits planner to develop a plan for long-term financial support.
- Go to work!

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