

What You Can Do At Home to Prepare Your Teen for Post- Secondary Learning, Work, and Independent Living

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Part One: **WORK**

Obstacles to work readiness associated with academic problems:

- **Reading**- difficulty reading memos, emails, manuals, etc.
- **Writing**- problems filling out applications, composing reports, answering emails, etc.
- **Math**- difficulty calculating pay, making change, etc.

Common deficits that impact work readiness:

- **Language processing** can result in misunderstood directions
- **Memory problems** can lead to forgotten meetings, missed deadlines
- **Disorganization** may lead to losing items of importance
- **Social skills deficits** can lead to difficulties being hired, maintaining relationships with co-workers, being considered for promotions

HINT #1: Become aware of disability laws - the ADA and Section 504

- Must be *otherwise qualified* for position
- Must be able to perform the *essential functions* of the job
- Employer is only required to provide *reasonable accommodations* if employee self-discloses and if doesn't cause *undue hardship* to do so

In order to take full advantage of legal safeguards, individual with disability must:

- Be aware he has a disability and understand it
- Have written documentation validating diagnosis
- Know s/he qualifies for civil rights protection
- Be able to identify and self-advocate for accommodations
- Be willing to self-identify

HINT #2: Learn about available modifications

- To workspace
- To instructions
- To supervision
- To work schedules
- To equipment related to the position
- To materials
- To job tasks

HINT #3: Get Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) involved!

- VR representatives should
 - Provide information regarding available services
 - Identify students who are eligible for their services
 - Attend transition planning portion of IEP team meeting and help plan work-related goals and services

HINT #4: Take critical steps toward employment:

1. Developing self-awareness
2. Developing self-acceptance
3. Developing understanding of why people work
4. Developing career awareness
5. Exploring career options
6. Preparing for particular career
7. Finding work and assimilating into workforce

Job-search skills that must be learned in this process:

- How to use newspaper and online job listings
- How to network
- How to develop a resume
- How to write a cover letter
- How to fill out applications
- How to conduct a job interview
- How to write a follow-up/thank-you letter

Develop Transition Planning Portfolio that includes:

- Listing of all work experiences, paid and unpaid
 - Names of companies/organizations where worked, including supervisors' full names
 - Dates held each job
 - Titles of each job
 - Responsibilities of each position held
- Letters of recommendation

Part Two: COMMUNITY

Community living entails:

- Knowledge and specific functional skills
- Decision-making
- Planning
- Prioritizing
- Organization

Domains of Community Living include:

- Meal preparation
- Consumer skills
- Self-care
- Housekeeping
- Mobility
- Leisure time skills
- Social skills

Obstacles to readiness for meal preparation include:

- SHOPPING
 - **Math**- problems understanding price of groceries on sale
 - **Visual memory**- problems remembering layout of store
 - **Visual figure-ground**- difficulty finding one item among many on store shelves
- COOKING
 - **Reading**- difficulty decoding/understanding recipes
 - **Math**- trouble measuring
 - **Visual discrimination**- discerning teaspoon from tablespoon
 - **Temporal**- trouble timing courses to serve together

HINTS to help students with disabilities in meal preparation

- Employ children as cooking assistants from the early years on
- Train how to use appliances and knives
- Use think-alouds as metacognitive modeling
- Chart meal timing
- Teach grocery shopping skills in the store

HINTS to help students with disabilities in meal preparation

- Discuss decision-making re: sizes and brands
- Encourage use of calculator to track costs
- Teach how to store leftovers and when to toss them!
- Model how to clean up

Part Three: POST- SECONDARY LEARNING

Options after high school

- Non-degree programs
- Community college
- Junior college
- Online programs
- Technical schools
- 4-year college

HINT #1: Know the law

- IDEA does not apply to higher ed
- Under Section 504 and the ADA, discrimination based on disability is prohibited
 - *Otherwise qualified* students must have equal access through provision of *reasonable accommodations*
 - But students must self-disclose to be protected

HINT #2: Create learning-related section of Transition Planning Portfolio

- **School records:** past and present IEPs, transcripts, one-page summary of extracurriculars
- **Disability documentation:** most recent psycho-ed evaluation, listing of all approved accommodations, copy of ACT/SAT scores
- **College-specific information:** questions to ask at interview, completed Common App, updated resume, essay describing disability, non-confidential letters of recommendation

HINT #3: Discuss pros and cons of disclosure of disability

- Consider circumstances
- If choice is to disclose, prepare
- If choice is not to disclose, be aware that civil rights protections are forfeited

HINT #4: Carefully consider if college is the best path

- Consider motivation
- Weigh whether teen is prepared for the academic and social demands
- If college is not the path...
 - Provide support for making alternative plans
 - Help teen develop script

Resources about the college choice and application process include:

- Princeton Review
 - www.PrincetonReview.com
- Educational Testing Service
 - www.ets.org/disability (documentation guidelines)

Resources re: alternatives to college

- Alternatives to College: Time Out, Internships, Service, Work
<http://nth.s.newtrier.k12.il.us/services/postHS/alternatives.html>
- The Princeton Review: Is a Career or Technical Program Right for You?
www.PrincetonReview.com/cte/articles/plan/cteright.asp
- Oracle Education Foundation After-High Alternatives
<http://library.thinkquest.org/C005172/alternatives.html>