**10 Questions You May Have When Your Son or Daughter Is Transitioning From High School in Kentucky**

**How can my son/daughter get help with preparing for, obtaining, and being successful in a job?**

EMPLOYMENT – He/she may become employed. If so, there are several agencies which can assist you in identifying employment. The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to consumers with disabilities in order to reach their employment outcomes. To get in contact with Vocational Rehabilitation, call (502) 564-4440, find your district office at <http://ovr.ky.gov/programservices/district.htm>, or refer to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Offices handout to locate your district office. You may also contact the Kentucky Career Center. Find the office nearest you at <http://kentuckycareercenter.ky.gov/Office/Locations.aspx>.  
   
**How can my son/daughter get help and support for additional education?**

EDUCATION – He/she may attend college or technical school. If you need help in identifying an appropriate program, your son/daughter may receive guidance from the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; call (502) 564-4440, find your district office at <http://ovr.ky.gov/programservices/district.htm>, or refer to the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Offices handout to locate your district office. Also, ensure that once your son/daughter arrives on campus, he/she gets connected with the disability resource center.

**What can my son/daughter do during the day if they are not a candidate for employment or further education? \*(individuals may be employed AND also attend a day program)**

DAY PROGRAMS – If he/she will not be working or attending school, a day program may be another option. In order to obtain information about local day programs, contact the Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DDID) for more information. DDID’s phone number is (502) 564-7700 and the website is <http://dbhdid.ky.gov/ddid/>.

VOLUNTEERING – Your son/daughter may also be interested in volunteering in the community. The Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service is committed to disability inclusion, and you can locate your nearest volunteer center by visiting <http://chfs.ky.gov/dfrcvs/kccvs/volunteer.htm> or calling 1-800-239-7404.

**How will he/she pay for supports to support him/her to live and go out into the community?**

Enroll your son/daughter for Medicaid waivers (currently there are waiting lists). These provide a variety of services in your home or in the community to help your son/daughter with autism. See [http://chfs.ky.gov/dms/mws.htm](http://www.chfs.ky.gov/dms/mws.htm) or call (502) 564-5560 for descriptions. See the Kentucky Medicaid Waivers handout for more information.

You may also contact your local community mental health center and the Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DDID) for more information. Community mental health center points of contact are listed on the Directory of Community Mental Health Agencies handout, whereas the phone number for DDID is (502) 564-7700 and the website is <http://dbhdid.ky.gov/ddid/>.

**How will my son or daughter with a severe disability who is unable to earn an income obtain money?**

Your son or daughter may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI provides help for people with disabilities and limited income, and provides money for basic needs. Amounts vary by individual but the maximum monthly amount for 2015 was $733. Visit the website at <http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/ssi.htm> for more information. To begin an application call 1-800-772-1213 between 7am-7pm, Monday-Friday (you can also identify your local Social Security Administration office from this phone number).

Social Security also offers a Representative Payment Program, which provides financial management for the SSI payments of beneficiaries who may have difficulty managing their own SSI payments. You may contact your local Social Security Administration office. Find your local office at <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp> or call 1-800-772-1213.

Your son or daughter may be able to receive additional income if you or your spouse have a disability and receive Social Security Disability Insurance. SSDI is the federal social insurance program that provides monthly cash benefits to workers with disabilities and their families. To qualify, you must have a recent work history that meets Social Security’s requirements. To learn more about whether you might be eligible to apply, see <http://www.ssa.gov/planners/disability/> or call 1-800-772-1213 to ask questions or schedule an appointment at your local Social Security Administration office.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can provide benefits counseling to help your family navigate the process of applying for and using SSI. Call (502) 564-4440 or find your district office at <http://ovr.ky.gov/programservices/district.htm>.

**How can I ensure that my son/daughter has health insurance coverage?**

EMPLOYER BASED – If your son/daughter will have employment after transitioning from high school, he/she may be able to obtain insurance from his/her employer.

OBAMACARE – If your son/daughter will not obtain employment after high school, he/she can apply for health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). Kynect: Kentucky’s Healthcare Connection is Kentucky’s official ObamaCare marketplace. Visit Kynect at <https://kynect.ky.gov/> or call 1-855-459-6328 for details about how to apply for health insurance coverage. You may also find the handout “How to Kynect” beneficial for navigating health insurance questions and options.

MEDICAID – Your son/daughter may qualify for Medicaid to assist in paying for his/her healthcare costs. Visit <http://www.chfs.ky.gov/dms/mcolinks.htm> or call 1-855-459-6328. See Kentucky Medicaid Waivers handout for more information.

COVERAGE THROUGH PARENTS – If you and/or your spouse are employed and your son/daughter is not, your employer may continue to cover your son/daughter as a dependent under your insurance coverage. Check with your employer to inquire.

You can talk with someone at your local Arc for more information. Visit <http://www.arcofky.org/contact-us/>, call The Arc of Kentucky at (502) 875-5225, or use The Arc of Kentucky Chapters map handout to find the Arc closest to you. Additionally, if you have concerns about your son/daughter’s rights with regards to his/her insurance services, you may contact your local Arc or the Kentucky Department of Insurance to file a complaint at 1-800-595-6053 or <http://insurance.ky.gov/>.

**How can my son/daughter live independently?**

HOUSING – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers subsidized housing for individuals with disabilities. For more information about homeownership/rental help and counseling, call HUD’s Louisville field office at (502) 582-5251 or visit <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/kentucky>. SSI also provides monthly income that can be used to pay for housing (see number 3 above).

FOOD – The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps people with limited financial resources purchase their groceries. Contact SNAP at 1-855-306-8959or <https://prd.chfs.ky.gov/SNAPPrescreen/SNAPLanding.aspx> to learn whether your son/daughter may be eligible for benefits.

**What should I do if my son/daughter continues to require assistance with making decisions as an adult, and how can I understand my son/daughter’s rights and advocate for his/her services?**

You will need to consider different options such as guardianship and power of attorney.

You can consult Kentucky Protection and Advocacy at 1-800-372-2988 or online at [http://www.kypa.net](http://www.kypa.net/) and/or The Arc of Kentucky at (502) 875-5225 regarding guardianship/power of attorney issues and advocating for services. Refer to P&A’s handout, “Thinking about Guardianship?” as well as The Arc of Kentucky Chapters map handout to find the Arc closest to you.  
   
**What if my son/daughter needs or wants somebody to talk to with regard to transition issues or other issues he/she may be dealing with?**

Publicly-funded community services are provided for Kentuckians who have developmental and intellectual disabilities through community mental health centers. To locate your local community mental health center, visit <https://dbhdid.ky.gov/cmhc/>, call (502) 564-4527 (press 1 to continue listening in English and then press 3 to reach someone from the Department of Behavioral Health), or see the Directory of Community Mental Health Agencies handout which lists all community mental health centers by county.

If you need support for yourself throughout this process, there are AUTISM-related parent support groups located throughout the state. You may locate your closest group on the Autism Spectrum Disorders Related Support Groups in Kentucky handout, or by visiting <https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining/families/February2015SupportGroupList.pdf/view>.

**What should I do if I plan to leave my son/daughter any financial assets?**

Consult with an attorney who is knowledgeable in estate planning and special needs trusts. A special needs trust is a federally mandated way to protect and maintain your son/daughter’s benefits.

Your local Arc can assist you with this, as well. You may contact The Arc of Kentucky at (502) 875-5225, visit their website at <http://www.arcofky.org/contact-us/>, or use The Arc of Kentucky Chapters map handout for more information.

**Transition Process Resource Guide for Indiana**

**Introduction and Purpose**

A parent, a teacher, an adult service provider, and an employer all have the common goal of enhancing the success and independence of a son/daughter, student, or employee with autism. This guide provides suggestions to help ensure a smooth and successful transition from school to the post-school environment for the person with autism.

**Why is transition planning crucial for the person with autism?** People with autism often rely on familiar routines, familiar people, and familiar environments to understand the world around them. Because they have difficulties understanding, organizing, and using cues in functional ways, they need to be taught in each specific situation through a planned sequence. Change is usually difficult; new expectations are hard to understand, and anxiety is often high. External stimuli can be distracting, and it is often difficult to attend to the relevant cues. However, each person with autism is unique and the degree to which they will manifest particular symptoms or behaviors varies considerably. Thus, individualized planning is critical. Moreover, transition goals for each person will also vary. Success is enhanced by providing a longitudinal and functional school curriculum that teaches the person with autism the skills to live successfully with needed supports throughout their day, whether working, going to school, volunteering or engaging in other meaningful activities.

**What is transition?**

The passage from high school to adulthood is a major life transition. It begins with a functional and academic school program that prepares the student with the necessary skills for community living, work, and/or post-secondary education. Transition is successful when the person with autism is able to live and enjoy meaningful day activities in the community identical to persons without autism, consistent with his or her needs, wants and capabilities. Ideally (s)he will enter employment and be integrated into community life or go into post-secondary education.

More people with autism are now living in their communities and attending local schools. Service providers and employers need to begin asking questions and perhaps shifting ways of thinking about some of the members of their community. Although service providers, employers, and members of the community may not be parents of individuals with autism, they are still responsible for helping these people become as successful and independent as possible. It is not the sole responsibility of parents to advocate and struggle for the rights of their children with autism, especially when they become adults. We need to begin thinking in terms of partnerships and ownership, including self-determination and ownership for youth with autism themselves and the well-being of our community as a whole; only then can we work together as a cohesive unit with a common goal.

Transition from school to work can be thought of as a three step process, (Wehman, Kregel, Barcus, & Schalock, 1986) that includes: (a) longitudinal educational programming, (b) formal planning for the movement from school to employment and/or post-secondary education, and (c) the creation of multiple, meaningful employment options and/or post-secondary education. Similar stages occur for transition to other goals (e.g., establishing housing apart from family of origin, meaningful day activities other than work).

An appropriate educational program is the **foundation** of a successful transition and is made up of a functional curriculum in an integrated school environment with community-based instruction, in addition to academic instruction focused on high expectations that are relevant for the student. A functional curriculum addresses the development of skills appropriate to the specific goals. For example, for those with a goal of working, the curriculum might focus on communication, rate and production, accuracy and quality, social skills, and socially appropriate behaviors. Formal planning for the movement from school to the specific goal(s) (i.e., employment, post-secondary education) is the **process** of transition and is comprised of individualized plans that formalize transition responsibilities and ensure adequate planning. Consumer input from the parents and students, as well as from interagency cooperation, are vital components of the process. The creation of multiple, meaningful employment, post-secondary education or other non-work options represent the **outcome** of the transition.

A successful transition leads to achievement of the specific individualized goals, such as employment in the community. The type of goal will vary. For example, depending upon the needs for supports, the individual with autism can works in individualized supported employment, enclaves in industry, mobile work crews, and bench work jobs (Mank, Rhodes, & Bellamy, 1986), with individualized supported employment representing the most inclusive and typical form of employment. Students with autism who go on to 2 and 4 year college programs may also enter other types of careers commensurate with their educational preparation.

**Why each person is an important participant?**

An **individual** with autism is the consumer of services. Participation in meetings concerning transition is based upon the person’s strengths and interests. The individual with autism can participate in possible activity choices by a review of responses to past experiences and/or by incorporating meaningful information into meetings. Students can also have a vital role in selecting their own transition goals, and the strategies and supports that will help them achieve those goals.

Student participation in transition planning means having a voice in a critical moment in planning one’s future (Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neal, & Wood, 2004; Thoma & Wehman, 2010).

**Parents** are the most informed and knowledgeable persons about their child. Parents’ participation in the transition process with teachers and adult service providers is important not only as advocates but also as consumers of services on behalf of their son or daughter ((Kucharczyk et al., 2015; Wehman, Kregel, Barcus & Schalock, 1986).

A **teacher** is vital in providing an effective functional curriculum that will prepare the student for post high school life. Collaboration with parents and adult service providers will ensure a smooth transition without interruption (Dalrymple & Angrist, 1986; Kucharczyk et al., 2015; Wehman, Kregel, Barcus, & Schalock, 1986).

The **adult service provider** is key in providing options for services after high school and ensuring their availability. Commitment to and support for the client must be long-term. Respect, knowledge, and belief in the success of the individual are vital.

Community partners are also crucial (e.g., employer, landlord, neighbors). For example, an **employer** is crucial for providing the opportunity for the employee with autism to obtain success and independence in the work place. The employer acts as a bridge between the person with autism and the community. Willingness to help those with severe disabilities lead a more meaningful life and demonstrate their successes will cause attitudes of others to change and improve.

**What to do after high school?**

There are many possibilities for what an individual with autism can do after leaving high school. These options depend a great deal on the interests, goals, desires, and skills of the individual. While a few of these possibilities will be discussed below (with a focus on work and education) these are not the only potential options, and great care should be taken to ensure that the individual with autism is consulted and involved in the planning of his/her life after high school.

**Employment**

For those with an employment goal, there are several possible services that might be helpful. Supported employment is a service in which personalized, integrated employment opportunities are developed for people with disabilities, at regular pay for the job that is performed. Supported employment will provide these individuals with the services and supports they need to obtain and maintain competitive employment (Indiana Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, 2006).

In Indiana, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will determine if an individual with a disability meets the eligibility requirements for supported employment services. If found to be eligible, individuals are then referred to supported employment providers who will provide the supportive services determined to be necessary for that particular individual and job placement. To begin the application process you can call the Indiana Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Indianapolis at 317-232-1319 or toll free at 1-800-545-7763.

**Values of Supported Employment**

Supported employment requires the belief in two principles. First, one must value integrated works for persons with autism. Second, one must recognize that even though jobs can’t be guaranteed, supported employment must proceed (Gardner, Chapman, Donaldson, & Jacobson, 1988). No one is assured that a job lasts forever; however, most people still continue working in the community. They may retain and look for new jobs or may be able to secure another job using networking and supports. Supported employment also reinforces the notion of individuals seeking job *advancement* – that is, pursuing a career path. As a young adult with autism develops his skills and gains new job experiences, that individual – like all of us – may want to seek additional opportunities in his work!

**Education After High School**

There are several different directions an individual can take if they want to continue their education after high school. In Indiana, students can attend a college or university to earn an associate or bachelor’s degree that can lead to a career. Students may also attend a local community college campus of the Indiana Vocational Technical College System where continued education can be in the form of an associate/bachelor’s degree or a vocational certification. No matter what form of education a student chooses to pursue after high school, planning for that choice must begin before a student graduates to ensure the high school curriculum is structured in a way that prepares the student for their choice of education. You can discuss your child’s educational options with teacher who oversees his/her IEP (individualized education plan) or contact the Office of Special Education of the Indiana Department of Education at 317-232-0570 or toll free at 877-851-4106.

If a student with autism decides to continue their education at a college or university, he or she can still receive some support from the office of disability services at that college or university. However, it is important to know that disability services in higher education are different from those provided in high school and each college will have certain criteria the student must meet to be eligible to receive these services.