

DCN FORUM

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We're on the Web!
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Transition and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Transitioning to adulthood can be a stressful time for young adults with autism and their families. Becoming informed and starting early are the best ways to increase the likelihood of a successful transition. Share the following important points with parents before your students leave the high school program.

This is the time that long-term legal and financial planning discussions should begin. Parents should consider whether full or partial guardianship/conservatorship is appropriate for their son or daughter.

- Adult services are based on funding that is allocated by state/federal guidelines. Services are not automatically available as in an adolescent's IEP. Although many individuals request services, selection depends on eligibility and funding availability.
- Adult agencies place less focus on instructional activities whereas, many adolescents may have many objectives in their IEPs, adult objectives may only have 10 or less and focus on the individual's quality of life including meaningful participation in the community, employment, the development and maintenance of personal relationships, and personal well-being.

When a student approaches adulthood he/she may be eligible for services/benefits (federal/state) from the following agencies:

- Social Security Income (SSI) - refers to Understanding Supplemental Security Income/SSI for Children <http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/text-child-ussi.htm>. This federally funded program provides benefits for people of any age who are unable to do substantial work and have a severe mental or physical disability. Other programs include Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), PASS (Plans to Achieve Self-Support), Medicaid and Medicare.
- Center for Independent Living (CIL) <http://www.ncil.org/>. A national leader in helping people with disabilities live independently, become fully participating members of society, and offers links to advocacy services. <http://www.virtualcil.net/cils/query-iandr.php?state=ca>.
- Department of Rehabilitation - provides services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living and equality for individuals with disabilities. <http://www.rehab.cahwnet.gov/services.htm>.
- Mental Health and Mental Retardation Agencies- This agency provides a comprehensive system of services responsive to the needs of individuals with mental illness or mental retardation. Funding is a combination of federal, state, and local dollars. <http://mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/stateresourceguides/california01.asp>.
- Regional Center (RC) - This state operated agency provides resources to find and access services available to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. <http://www.dds.cahwnet.gov/RC/Home.cfm>.



- Community colleges and adult education programs may offer coursework for students with ASD. Visit the California Department of Education (CDE) website, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/ds/> to locate a program and/or activities. Another CDE website with information for students is <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/is/>.
- Local parks and recreation department also offer a variety of activities.

On a final note, students who pass the high school exit exam and wish to attend college may qualify for a Section 504 plan. Visit http://www.dcn-cde.ca.gov/504/504_index.htm for general information regarding understanding Section 504.

Additional resources to check out:

- California Parent Organization <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/caprntorg.asp>.
- NICHCY: Employment 101 <http://www.nichcy.org/eNew/foundations/employment101.asp>.



WHAT'S NEW IN TRANSITION?

Successful transition planning for adolescents with disabilities should result in

- a. The transfer of support from the school to an adult services agency
- b. Access to post secondary education, and/or
- c. Life as an independent adult.

To guide our students into a successful transition we need to establish measurable post-secondary goals (MPSG). IDEA 2004 requires that MPSG are written in the areas of 1) instruction, 2) employment, and if appropriate 3) daily living skills. Another requirement is that goals are based on age appropriate assessments.

We are often asked, "how do you write an MPSG?" The annual goal must support the MPSG. It should state what the student will be able to do by the end of the year, guide instruction, and take the student from his/her present level of performance to the level expected by the end of the year. An important point to remember is that a goal cannot say a student "plans on" anymore. The following examples may serve as a guideline:

- Begin with "After high school..." - "Upon graduation..."
- Use results-oriented terms, such as: "enrolled in" - "work" - "live independently"
- Use descriptors such as: "full time" - "part time"

Examples of goals using the MPSG language are:

Instruction - "Upon completion of high school I/John will enroll in courses at a 4 year college", or "After graduation, I/Gail will live at home and participate to the maximum extent in my daily routine (e.g. feeding, dressing, bathing, choice making)".

Employment - "After graduation from high school I/Bob will intern in a vocational program for building and carpentry".

An excellent resource reference is "Transition to Adult Living: An Information and Resource Guide (2007 revised edition)". Examples of MPSG and measurable annual goals are available. (see pages 32-39). A copy is available at http://www.calstat.org/textAlt/tg_text_only.html.

