

How Can Parents Help with Transition?

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6. Encourage social integration. Everyone needs friends. Young people with disabilities cannot afford to be isolated from non-disabled persons their age.
7. Provide real experiences. Persons with disabilities need experience in work situations. This should be addressed by the PPT and incorporated into the IEP. Parents/guardians should also look for ways to provide work experiences outside of school.
8. Encourage good grooming and good work habits. Since the person with a disability usually has to overcome a certain amount of prejudice it makes sense for him or her to take particular care to make a good impression by being appropriately dressed and well groomed and be punctual, reliable, and hard-working.
9. Foster the acceptance of criticism. Most teenagers are sensitive to even the mildest criticism. Young people have to learn to cope with the standards of the workplace and with unfair criticism. Practicing acceptable responses to criticism needs to begin early.
10. Provide opportunities to manage money. Teenagers should be paid for the work they do and taught the necessary skills to manage their own money. Gradually, they should be encouraged to do their own shopping using their own money and, those who are able, should begin to do some budgeting as well.

Transition means letting go for families. The issues surrounding transition are complex and loaded with emotional significance. However, the more information that you have, the easier it is for you to make wise decisions.

PEAK Parent Center, Inc. (October, 1992) Parents, let's unite for kids. In D. Ahern – Presbie (Ed.), A curriculum guide for the development of self-determination and advocacy skills (pp. 9-10). Storrs, CT: The A.J. Pappanikou Center on Special Education and Rehabilitation: A University Affiliated Program.

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There are many ways that parents/guardians can help to make sure that their child's transition is as smooth as possible. The following are some guidelines:

1. Set realistic goals. Include your son or daughter in setting goals for the future and make sure that the school program prepares him/her to meet those goals. All students need to gain as many independent work and living skills as possible.
2. Encourage gradual independence. Parents are not always going to be around. Begin now to encourage independent travel, self-care activities, money management, and decision-making. A person with disabilities may always need support, but each task/activity that he or she can do alone is a great gain and one less thing that someone else will have to be paid to do for him or her one day.
3. Gather information about issues such as guardianship, sex education and sexual responsibility, and driving. Decisions about these matters will have to be made based upon the person's level of independence and competency, the family's values, and the resources available to help with each issue.
4. Familiarize yourself with the adult service system. Parents/guardians need to become informed about the available programs and the entrance criteria for each one. Getting a person's name on the appropriate waiting list is sometimes of critical importance.
5. Build self-esteem. Act as though you expect your son or daughter to have a future. Teach him or her skills that you would teach any child who is getting ready to go out into the world: how to do laundry, make a simple meal, and sew on a button. Because you have confidence, he or she will have confidence too.

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