



TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

People generally identify themselves by the work they do. Our jobs can provide a sense of accomplishment and contribute to overall life satisfaction. Jobs can also contribute to our social and economic stability. However, finding the right career path is difficult for almost everyone, but this is certainly true for young adults with disabilities. According to national studies, as many as 66% of working adults never had a career plan and are working at their current jobs because of chance factors, the influence of others or because that was the only job they believed available.

Looking forward to employment after high school should be an immediate consideration for all young adults with disabilities and their families. AHEDD believes the time to thoughtfully consider this transition is during the beginning of the high school. More specifically, we encourage transition planning and implementation to begin no later than a child's 16th birthday, but suggest that the process begin earlier at age 14.

Our recommendation is that each youth with a disability should participate in a Work Readiness Program that includes a variety of activities geared toward helping the student to obtain real work prior to graduation or within the first year after graduation. The approach is multi-faceted and structured, yet flexible enough to repeat steps which were missed or may need to be reinforced.

AHEDD encourages such Work Readiness Programs to require each student to participate in some form of work experience (paid or non-paid) every year. These experiences could be scheduled for evenings, weekends, or during summer breaks. The first step to finding such a suitable work experience is referring the student to a work readiness provider, such as AHEDD, to complete a plan of service that coordinates with the student's IEP. This planning will essentially map out future progress.

For students who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), there are work incentives specifically for high school youth who are interested in pursuing employment. Since many are often unaware of these incentives and how work will impact their benefits, AHEDD also advises such youth and their families to receive work incentive counseling as early as age 14.

AHEDD values individualized services and goals to promote a successful transition from high school to adult life as identified in each student's IEP. We are committed to assisting students achieve their goals of self-sufficiency and greater independence in their communities.

AHEDD is a specialized human resource organization with a mission to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of people with disabilities. AHEDD provides community employment services through a network of field offices throughout Pennsylvania. For further information about our Services, contact AHEDD at 1-866-902-4333 or inforequest@ahedd.org