

Ten Pointers for Parents/Families

Listen to your son or daughter. Ask your teen what he or she would like to do with his or her life - then really listen to them. What are their dreams, goals, etc.? If s/he is nonverbal or has difficulty communicating these thoughts, use your knowledge of your teen to ensure transition plans select his or her likes, dislikes, talents, etc.

Start early. Building a path to your son or daughter's dreams will take a lot of planning and discussion. Start transition planning by age 14 ½.

Know your teen's needs, abilities and skills. If you have never heard of or used a person-centered planning tool, ask other parents, advocates or members of your IEP team. Be familiar with how much assistance s/he needs or does not need to accomplish his or her goals.

Encourage your teen to attend IEP/Transition Planning meetings. This is a plan for his or her future! Your son or daughter should be invited. Together, prepare for the meeting. Encourage self-advocacy skills in your teen. During meetings, have the staff direct questions to your teen.

Become aware of all the opportunities in your community. Extracurricular activities at school, as well as social, recreational, volunteer, job opportunities in the community. Encourage as much participation as possible. Then decide together with your teen how much s/he wants to participate.

Become aware of and use person-centered planning and self-directed IEP. Using person-centered planning tools and having your teen engage in learning and engaging in a self-directed IEP process will encourage their active participation and ownership and will build self-advocacy skills that will help ensure success in life after high school. Research shows that young adults who have self-determination skills upon leaving high school have a much higher rate of success in adult life.

Encourage your teen to learn and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication, and social skills for different setting, e.g., employment, school, recreation, peer relationships, etc.

Learn about the programs, services, accommodations or modifications you and your teen need. Be sure you are both clear on how to contact and access programs and services. Ask your school team how you can get this information.

Take responsibility for becoming familiar with adult service systems and agencies now. This will help your teen in making decisions that will impact his or her future. Invite to the IEP/Transition Planning meetings representatives from adult service agencies likely to serve your son or daughter.

Dream! Don't be limited by existing services. Focus on the supports your son or daughter will need to reach his or her personal goals. Together with your teen, your transition team of educators and service providers, you can build these supports.

Adapted from Tools and Tips for Transition, Pacer Center, Inc. MN 1996)