

TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE

A Guide for Parents

Parents must be proactive in planning for the future of a disabled student. This is particularly important when we have a student with severe developmental delays. It is important to also ask questions, demand appropriate on-site job exploration and support services, follow-up to assure registrations are in order, and stay informed of state guidelines on transitioning. In essence, become an active participant in the transition planning. It is the Parents' responsibility to register the student with agencies serving adults. To assure a smooth school to work transition, consider the following steps:

1. **Two (2) years prior to graduation:** Although referrals can be made earlier *when appropriate*, students should be referred to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation¹ ("OVR") two years prior to graduation. A referral to OVR can be made by anyone, including the student, a family member or school personnel. However, for students under the age of 18, permission from a parent or guardian must be obtained before information about a student can be released to OVR.²
2. **Initial referral to OVR:** At the time of referral, OVR will need the following information about the student³:
 - a. Student's name, address, telephone number, date of birth and social security number.
 - b. Brief statement of student's disability.
 - c. Name of student's teacher, school and (if applicable) student's special program or placement.
 - d. Student's anticipated graduation date.
 - e. Description of student's employment goals.

¹ OVR is a division of the Department of Labor and Industry, works with families, the DHS and school districts to assist adults with disabilities prepare for and find appropriate employment. www.dli.state.pa.us.

² *Department of Labor & Industry*, www.dli.state.pa.us.

³ *Id.*

3. **After OVR referral:** After a referral is made, OVR will need the following information from school records⁴:
 - a. Documentation of student's disability, which should include available medical and psychological information.
 - b. Current IEP, including the Transition Plan, Multidisciplinary Evaluation ("MDE") and Evaluation Report ("ER").
 - c. Vocational tests and reports that are available, both formal and informal.
 - d. Information about student's employment strengths and needs, such as teacher and classroom observations and description of student's involvement in school to work activities.
4. **Initial OVR Interview:** Following the referral, an OVR counselor will contact the student and parents to schedule an initial interview. During the interview, the student and parents should expect to discuss the student's disability and how it may affect student's ability to work. The student and parents will be required to provide the following information to OVR during this initial interview:⁵
 - a. Medical history related to student's disability (e.g., names and addresses of doctors and specialists, hospital admissions, names of medications, etc.)
 - b. Educational history.
 - c. Job history, including volunteer and paid work experience, if applicable.
5. **Determining OVR eligibility:** Since OVR's program is based on an *eligibility* for services and not an *entitlement* to services, a student must be certified by an OVR counselor as being eligible. The assigned counselor must first determine the student has a disability. The counselor must further determine that the

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

student's disability substantially interferes with his or her ability to prepare for, get or keep a job.⁶

6. **Register with the PA Department of Human Services:** DHS is the gatekeeper of services for adults with intellectual disabilities. Call your county's main office to be sure that the student's case file is open and active. Your case manager will assist you in contacting other agencies such as OVR, Social Security Administration⁷ ("SSA") and Medical Assistance ("MA"), transportation services, and local provider agencies that will support the student's post-high school plans.
7. **Register with your local SSA Office:** Request an MA card (or ACCESS card) to assure that student has healthcare insurance. Parents' income is not considered when applying for MA for a child with a medically diagnosed disability.
8. Work closely with your case manager or supports coordinator from DHS in coordinating services from OVR.
9. Choose a provider agency to provide on-site job coaching, usually funding through OVR. Then, contact that provider agency's liaison with OVR to expedite the initial OVR intake meeting.
10. Make a written request for a community-based work assessment from OVR.
11. **Convene an IEP Transition Meeting:** The school transition coordinator should attend and assist in writing transition IEP's. The following individuals should attend every IEP meeting:
 - a. Student
 - b. Parents
 - c. Regular and special education teacher
 - d. Vocational education staff
 - e. DHS case manager or supports coordinator

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ The Social Security Administration allocates monthly cash benefits to people ages 18 through 64 with disabilities who are not able to support themselves. For 2002, eligibility for benefits restricts earnings to no more than \$780 per month and restricts savings or personal assets to no more than \$2,000.00. Social Security Disability programs also offer health care coverage or medical assistance through Medicare and Medicaid. www.ssa.gov

12. IEP Transition Meeting:

- a. Confirm student's year of graduation.
- b. Develop specific writing goals for employment.
- c. Discuss and plan for transportation needs and services, including public transportation training goals. Coordinate transportation training and home-to-work transportation services through your case manager or supports coordinator at DHS.
- d. Request several on-site community based job explorations provided through the LEA. This will help assess the student's work preferences and abilities.
- e. Request career exploration and job-coaching services from local provider agencies.
- f. Explore post-high school education options, such as community colleges and vocational schools. What supports are available from their office of disability services?
- g. Request information about provider agencies and their programs' compatibility with the student's needs and interests.

13. Transition questions to consider:

- Does the Transition IEP include specially designed instruction and related services based upon the student's individual needs or the development of adult living objectives?
- How will student get around in the community?
- How will student meet personal needs?
- What recreation opportunities should student strive for?
- Are there available services such as using the city bus system?
- Is the student able to access other community services?
- What are the student's daily living skills?
- What are the specific responsibilities of the District and OVR agency?

For more information:

For additional information about school to work transitioning, visit www.transitionmap.org and . . .

*** The ARC at www.thearc.org**

*** The National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, www.ed.uiuc.edu/sped/tri/internetsites.html** This web site contains information on promising transition practices and programs and provides transition resource state sheets listing relevant agencies.

*** Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) www.dli.state.pa.us**

*** PaTTAN (PA Training and Technical Assistance Network) at www.pattan.k12.pa.us**

*** PA Depart. Of Public Welfare at www.dpw.state.pa.us/ (to download forms required by DHS)**

*** Social Security Administration www.ssa.gov**