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Transition Guide and Supports for Families of Adolescents with Disabilities

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Transition Guide and Supports for Families of Adolescents with Disabilities

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Abstract

Often when individuals with disabilities transitioned out of high school, there were a variety of repeated questions that teachers and administrators seemed to constantly be answering each year. The first goal of the project was to answer those questions and potentially serve as a resource for teachers and other professionals to answer the questions parents/guardians were asking them. Another goal was that even if the information was different for their district it could at the very least guide professionals and families in the right direction to find answers and support. The literature review provides information about parent/guardian and teacher collaboration which was important when creating a plan to help a student with a disability transition out of high school. The literature also covers the importance of transition and resources that would help professionals, teachers, and families understand what was incorporated into transition.

Keywords: parent/guardian-teacher collaboration, parent/guardian involvement, individualized education plan, transition

Parent/Guardian- Teacher Collaboration

Literature Review

Collaboration is an essential part of the relationships between parents/guardians and schools which helps students with disabilities become successful. Collaboration can start in the community and build into a relationship between individual parents/guardians and the teachers at the school. There are many different types of parents/guardians that teachers may have to collaborate with, but understanding strategies on how to collaborate with them will help the teacher find success in the process. Collaboration helps all students with disabilities be more successful because everyone is on the same page. Collaboration is an essential part of the Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process and continues to be important as the student ages throughout high school.

What Is Collaboration?

“Collaboration is a method of solving the problems of teaching and learning in partnership with others” (Clark, 2000, p. 56). Collaboration is a process that requires shared thinking and working together as a team to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Parent/guardian-teacher collaboration is when the parent/guardian can communicate with the student’s teacher to work together to build a relationship to create an optimal learning environment at home and at school for that student (Western Governors University, 2021). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates the collaboration between parents/guardians and teachers (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019). Therefore, making it an essential part of the IEP process and key to helping students with disabilities become successful.

The benefits of collaboration are endless. A few key benefits of collaboration include building a positive and trusting relationship with the student and the family, creating open lines of communication, creating a welcoming space for learning to happen, learning more about the

student and the ways he/she learns best, creating a general understanding to ensure everyone is on the same page, and keeping parents/guardians informed about the student's progress (Western Governors University, 2021). Even though there are struggles that come with collaboration, the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages because it will benefit the student and help them be successful. Parent/guardian-teacher collaboration is a crucial aspect of student learning and achievement.

Who Needs To Collaborate?

Collaboration can occur with a multitude of different individuals. However, to help students with and without disabilities be successful, collaboration needs to start with community collaboration and transition into collaboration with families or parents/guardians and students. Starting to get the community involved to promote collaboration could include, inviting the parents/guardians within the community on field trips or allowing them to be a part of classroom projects (Tali Tal, 2004). Allowing the community to be involved in field trips and classroom projects promotes trusting and respectful relationships between the school and its community members.

Once gaining the trust and building a collaborative relationship with the family, building a trusting and collaborative relationship with parents/guardians will be easier to create and maintain. “Parent-teacher collaboration is considered a significant factor in education” (Bang, 2018, p. 1787). Not only does collaboration between parents/guardians and teachers improve education as a whole, but it improves parent/guardian satisfaction with teachers and schools. Research suggests collaboration with parents/guardians is never easy for teachers because the relationship is often distorted or even conflicted (Bang, 2018). Parent/guardian-teacher collaboration is often unpredictable which requires frequent improvising and continuing to work

at building the relationship to help improve student success and education in general. Building relationships and trust with the parents/guardians is a goal for every teacher. As well as, building a collaborative relationship with the student becomes part of building a collaborative relationship with the family as a whole. Everyone feels included and that their voice is heard when collaboration occurs.

Types of Parents/Guardians and Suggestions When Collaborating

There are a variety of parents/guardians that teachers may need to collaborate. All families are different and may have unique needs. Parents/guardians tend to fall under one of the different parent/guardian types when collaborating with teachers. The types include sensitive parents/guardians, passive parents/guardians, unreasonably demanding parents/guardians, and parents/guardians protesting directly to a director (Bang, 2018). There are effective practices that teachers can use to ease the barriers when trying to collaborate with parents/guardians.

Sensitive Parents/Guardians. Often when teachers collaborate with sensitive parents/guardians, it may cause more teacher stress because the teacher feels like they are never good enough for that parent/guardian. Sensitive parents/guardians are those parents/guardians who consistently express their concerns as well as their dissatisfaction to their child's teacher (Bang, 2018). Research has suggested several reasons why these parents/guardians might be considered sensitive. One reason may be that parents/guardians feel they are given limited information and are "left in the dark" when they want reassurance about their child at school and their child's experiences (Bang, 2018). The second reason suggested was the parents/guardians felt concerned about the teacher's disinterest in their child (Bang, 2018). They felt if a teacher held a disinterest in their child, the teacher might ignore the child by not supporting them with their weaknesses or helping build them up. The last reason for parent/guardian sensitivity was

the limited communication and not being able to gather thorough information from the child's teacher (Bang, 2018). Parent/guardian sensitivity comes from genuine concern about their child while the child is at school.

Passive Parents/Guardians. Passive parents/guardians can be described as parents/guardians who are not picky or troublesome, quiet, unobtrusive, and tend to leave schooling decisions up to the teachers (Bang, 2018). These types of parents/guardians do not express their dissatisfaction for fear of annoying or angering the teacher which they think will be manifested in their child. Therefore, it would be a disadvantage for these parents/guardians to be anything but passive. However, passive parents/guardians could limit collaboration because they seem uninterested in their child's education (Bang, 2018).

Unreasonably Demanding Parents/Guardians. Research suggests that unreasonably demanding parents/guardians are the most difficult to work with because they demand what they believe is "right" for their child and do not consider the needs of other students in the class or the teacher's educational philosophy (Bang, 2018). These misguided beliefs are what impede collaboration. The teacher is required to consider all the student's needs within his/her classroom to make educational judgments that often conflict with the parent's/guardian's requests or demands.

Parents/Guardians Protesting Directly To A Director. These types of parents/guardians bypass the teacher altogether and express their dissatisfaction directly to the director or administrator (Bang, 2018). When this happens, the teacher is often blindsided by the situation and only learns of what is going on when they are called down by the director or administrator to discuss the situation. When the teacher is put on the spot, it does not give them much choice, but to give in to the demands of the parent/guardian. The parents/guardians go

directly to the director or administrator because they feel if they express their concerns to the teacher it will create an uncomfortable relationship or be embarrassing (Bang, 2018). Even though this method solves the problem quickly for these types of parents/guardians, it may not produce the best outcome for the class as a whole. With these types of parents/guardians, there is no collaboration time and the trust between the teacher and the parents/guardians is damaged creating more barriers to collaboration (Bang, 2018).

Helpful Suggestions. Every situation between parents/guardians may be different and unique in its own way. There are a few helpful suggestions that could alleviate some of the barriers created by the different types of parents/guardians that teachers may encounter when trying to build a collaborative relationship with the parents/guardians of their students. First, teachers and parents/guardians should develop a basic understanding based on their views and experiences. Second, teachers and parents/guardians should talk openly and share ideas to build a foundation for a trusting relationship. Third, conflicts and disagreements should be recognized and identified so a solution can be discovered together as a team. Fourth, teachers should develop welcoming environments that promote parent/guardian-teacher collaboration. Lastly, parents/guardians and teachers should become partners in improving education to benefit all students. The suggestions to improve parent/guardian-teacher collaboration could ultimately improve education for all students. (Bang, 2018)

Collaborating With Diverse Families

Sometimes, teachers find it difficult to collaborate with parents/guardians who come from different diverse backgrounds than themselves. Some teachers may find it uncomfortable or they do not know how to effectively collaborate with diverse families because they have never been taught the skills or strategies to do so. Diverse families may include but are not limited to,

cultural, linguistical, socioeconomic, race, ethnicity, family make-up, gender identification, family history/ background, etc. There are four different approaches schools and teachers can use to help foster a collaborative relationship with diverse parents/guardians and their children. The approaches include 1) interpret, 2) invite, 3) interact, and 4) intend (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019).

Interpret. Interpretation is a simple act in which schools can use to help increase the comfort levels of the parents/guardians and the student within the school. An example of interpretation could be posting a welcome sign in multiple languages that represent the demographics of the student population within the school. This would help create a welcoming environment that values diversity to help build a connection with the parents/guardians. Using an interpreter for families who speak another language would also help put the parent/guardian at ease knowing they are understanding everything that is being said and decisions being made. (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019)

Invite. “Schools can extend invitations for families to share their cultural perceptions and beliefs about their children’s academic abilities, interests, and encourage families to engage in the school and classrooms” (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019, p. 121). Schools should try and engage parents/guardians and their children in school activities as much as possible to help build the parent/guardian-teacher relationship. Helping parents/guardians become engaged in school activities will help them feel connected and safe when attending school events and sending their children to school (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019).

Interact. Teachers can help diverse parents/guardians access resources and information by purposefully interacting with them and seeking out their input about their needs. For example, parents/guardians of a child with a disability are more prone to higher stress levels and may benefit from support services to help alleviate some of the stress-related challenges (Gerzel-Short

et al., 2019). Therefore, schools can help guide parents/guardians to the appropriate resources to help support them in their needs. Teachers can also provide information about health screenings, tips for transitioning, and how to apply for post-secondary resources are all topics parents/guardians may be unaware of but would greatly benefit from (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019).

Intend. Schools and teachers can be more intentional in active listening by creating parent/guardian and teacher engagement that embraces diverse families as resourceful and valuable. Examples of active listening include affirming family members' contributions and addressing their needs, concerns, and challenges (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019). Teachers and schools should ensure they make eye contact when speaking with parents. Also, teachers should reiterate to families that they are valuable and their input is important to improve parent/guardian-teacher relationships and the success of the student with a disability. To help parents/guardians feel more comfortable and promote meaningful participation teachers should use language free from professional jargon, provide multiple opportunities for parents/guardians to ask questions, provide examples when explaining complex information (e.g. special education testing results), share printed information supported with visuals, and have meetings and printouts in the parent's/guardian's preferred language (Gerzel-Short et al., 2019).

Importance of Collaboration to Develop an Effective IEP

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed for students with disabilities and is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which states all students are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). To create an IEP, a team is required to include the case manager, student, parents/guardians, at least one general education teacher, a qualified school representative, and other service providers as needed. Everyone on the team works together to develop goals and support plans designed to meet the

student's unique needs and to allow them to be successful in their education. However, it is not uncommon for parents/guardians to be passive members of the team and the case manager developing the IEP without discussing the contents, goals, or support plans with the team first. (Williams-Diehm et al., 2014)

Collaborating to develop an effective IEP should create positive change in the way teachers teach and the way students learn. Successful collaboration during an IEP meeting involves everyone on the team committing to mutual problem-solving and decision-making that is focused on the student (Clark, 2000). Parents/guardians can provide input on goals and supports they believe will best help their child. Teachers and service providers can contribute strategies that have worked best for the student in their classes. An important piece of the collaboration process for the IEP is parents/guardians giving informed consent when agreeing to the IEP plan created for the student (Clark, 2000). Informed consent is when the parent/guardian understands everything in the plan clearly, whether it is read to them, or they have read it independently, and the family agrees to the plan voluntarily (Clark, 2000).

Collaborating For Better Transition Outcomes

To help a student successfully transition from high school to post-high school life, or college, federal laws mandate transition planning for each student receiving special education services (Southward & Davis, 2020). To help aid in the transition process and develop transition goals, parents/guardians, teachers, and the student need to collaborate. Even though the transition activities must be influenced by the student, the team can help the student be successful by helping to bridge the gap between high school life and post-high school life by teaching the student the skills he/she needs to be successful (Davis & Southward, 2021). Therefore,

collaboration is essential in identifying where the student is struggling and needs the most support to achieve their post-secondary transition goals.

Transition Guide and Supports for Families of Adolescents with Disabilities Handbook

Introduction

The transition from high school to either a postsecondary institution or post-high school life, in general, can bring a lot of anxiety for parents/guardians and students with disabilities alike. However, with effective collaboration between the family and the child's team at school, the anxieties can be eased to allow for a smooth process for everyone involved. Additional collaboration with outside resources (e.g. therapists, county social workers, vocational rehabilitation services, etc.) are needed to help support the student with a disability.

The handbook provides resources and information to families with an adolescent with a disability entering or in the transition process. The handbook may also be helpful for schools to use as a reference as well as a repository for resources to provide for families. It is often hard to locate the appropriate resources for the family and to address their questions. The handbook will serve as one place that holds resources and information. Resources can be added as needed, as well as updated moving forward. Each school district is going to be different in the resources they offer and provide to families. The handbook would be a start or a good reference on what types of resources may be offered in other districts or states even if they are not the exact same ones as the resources used in the handbook. New information, new resource, and new methods are constantly being developed making this handbook a work in progress. It will forever evolve and change.

Contents

What is Postsecondary Transition	15
Key Procedural Safeguards in IDEA	16
Age of Majority: Transfer of Rights	18
What is it?	18
How Can Parent/Guardians Help?	18
Parts of a Transitional IEP.....	19
Manifestation Determinations	20
Graduation Requirements	21
Difference Between IDEA and ADA	22
Student Options After High School	22
Resources to Learn More about Transition	23
Resources to Support Transition While Still In High School	24
Specialized Colleges, Universities, and Training Programs	24
Assistive Technology Resources	25
Transportation Services	26
Resources to Support students Financially	27
Community Resources for Support	28
References	30

What is Post-Secondary Transition?

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (n.d.), “secondary transition planning is the process of preparing students for life after high school and includes planning for postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living.” In other words, postsecondary transition helps the student learn the skills needed to reach their goals after high school whether that be going to college, joining the workforce, living independently, or helping them learn budgeting skills to manage their money.

When a student reaches 9th grade or is 14 years old, special education takes on a new focus compared to when the student was in elementary school or middle school. Educators and other professionals continue to work through academics with the student, but they also work on helping the student build the skills needed to be successful after graduation. There are a few regulations that come with planning for postsecondary transitions which include the following (*Secondary transition a parent introduction, 2015*):

1. Postsecondary educational skills need to be assessed, by law, no later than ninth grade or 14 years old
2. They are based on family and student preferences
3. Education/training and employment/careers are areas that are required
4. The transition must be assessed as part of a 3-year evaluation

It may seem premature to start transition planning for post-high school when the student with a disability is entering ninth grade or is 14 years old, but this extra time is much needed to prepare everyone, and allows more time to adjust to what is needed before the student is on their own after graduation. With the transition focus, comes a change in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process as well. Some of those changes include the student being encouraged to

become very involved in the IEP decision-making process, transition goals being added, the student's projected class schedule being included, and transition services being listed (*Secondary transition a parent introduction*, 2015). The changes may be overwhelming at first, but it is all set in place to support the student and prepare them for their future.

Key Procedural Safeguards in IDEA

All parents/guardians and students have legal rights and protections, called procedural safeguards if they have a child with a disability or receive special education services. The procedural safeguards lay out the ground rules for how the parents/guardians or student with a disability who has reached the age of majority will work with the school to continue to develop a plan to support the student with a disability. The following are the top ten key parts of the procedural safeguards to know and understand (Lee, 2021):

1. Procedural Safeguard Notice
 - a. A notice must be provided by the school that contains a written document explaining your rights. This often comes in a printed document titled *Procedural Safeguards*. You may ask for a verbal explanation as well.
2. Parent/Guardian Participation
 - a. You have the legal right to participate in any meeting about your child's education, which also includes IEP meetings. You may also call an IEP meeting at any time.
3. Access to Educational Records
 - a. You have the right to have full access to your child's school records and get an explanation of them. You may ask for corrections to be made if necessary.
4. Confidentiality of Information

- a. The school must protect your child’s confidential information, which includes but is not limited to his/her name, address, social security number, and other personal details.
5. Informed Consent
 - a. Before your child is evaluated or provided any special education services for the first time, the school needs to inform you of what is involved. The school cannot move forward or begin anything without your written consent.
6. Prior Written Notice
 - a. The school must provide you with written notice of any proposed changes before making the changes permanent. The document must tell you what is being proposed and why.
7. Understandable Language
 - a. When the school provides any written notices, the language used must be understandable to the general public. It must also be in your native language.
8. Independent Educational Evaluation
 - a. If you do not agree with the results of the school’s evaluation, you have the right to have your child assessed by someone who is not a school employee. Even though they do not need to act upon those results, the school may view them and consider the results provided.
9. “Stay Put” Rights
 - a. If there is a disagreement with the proposed changes, the “stay put” protections keep your child’s current IEP in place while you and the school work together to come up with a solution and a plan everyone can agree on.

10. Dispute Resolution Options

- a. You have the right to disagree with what the school proposes is best for your child.

Age of Majority: Transfer of Rights

What Is It?

The age of majority is the legal age, typically eighteen-years-old when a student is no longer considered a minor. Once a student reaches the age of majority, they gain the rights and responsibilities of an adult and can make certain legal choices just like any other adult, called the transfer of rights. An individual or organization can be appointed by the courts to have legal authority over a person who is considered incapacitated or unable to provide for their own basic needs or financial management even with support in place. (PACER, 2015)

In special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) gives states the authority to transfer all educational decision-making rights from the parent/guardian to the student once they reach the age of majority. The educational rights that transfer may include receiving notices of IEP and evaluation meetings, consenting to placement changes or a reevaluation, collaborating with the team to develop a new IEP, and requesting mediation when needed. Parents/guardians can guide and support the student through each process, but the student gets the final say. Even though it is an exciting time when a student reaches the age of majority and gains new rights, risks still come with the new freedom. Some risks include deciding to drop out of school or drop special education services altogether even though they may still need them. (PACER, 2015)

How Can Parents/Guardians Help?

As a parent/guardian, it is important to help support their child for when they reach the age of majority to understand the rights that they gain at that point in their lives. Even though it may be hard to let go of some of the parental/guardian roles, helping a child develop their own skills such as decision-making skills, taking on more responsibility, and developing independent living skills is necessary. Parents/guardians do not need to step back completely for their child to learn these skills, but can slowly give their child more freedom to learn these skills over time. Parents/guardians can ensure their child does not feel pressure when making decisions, allow them to determine their own course and timing when moving forward in learning new skills, and stay involved even after the child reaches the age of majority to continue to guide them to make good decisions, and seek out opportunities for the child to make choices from an early age and continue to do so throughout their school years. If parents/guardians do not know where to start, they can start by asking themselves a few questions. (PACER, 2015)

- 1) How can I influence my child's decisions?
- 2) Do I let my child speak for themselves, or do I typically speak for them?
- 3) Can I separate my desires for my child from my child's wishes?

Parts of a Transition IEP

A standard IEP is used until the student with a disability reaches 14 years of age or is in 9th grade. A transition IEP is used from the time a student with a disability is 14 years old or in 9th grade until they graduate high school. A transition IEP is a standard IEP with additions to support the student in their transition needs. In addition to a standard IEP, a transition IEP must include the following (The Arc Minnesota, 2021):

1. Measurable postsecondary goals written based on the needs of the student.

2. Courses of study needed to help the student continue to move forward and to help them reach their postsecondary goals.
3. The anticipated month and year of graduation must be included.
 - a. If a student has a continuing need for services after their anticipated graduation they may remain in school until their goals are met or until July 1st after their 21st birthday.
 - b. If a student graduates and accepts a diploma, they are no longer eligible for special education services from the district.
4. Transition services including:
 - a. Instruction (specialized, regular, career, and technical education)
 - b. Related Services (e.g. speech and language services)
 - c. Community Participation
 - d. Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives
 - e. If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills

Manifestation Determinations

All manifestation determinations must happen before the initiation of an expulsion or suspension of a student with a disability. It must also occur before a change of placement occurs for a student with a disability due to a violation of a code of student conduct. A change of placement may occur if the removal of the student with a disability exceeds more than 10 consecutive school days or the student has been subjected to a series of removals because of a pattern of the same behavior. Determinations occur on a case-to-case basis. (*Manifestation Determinations*, n.d.)

If it is determined that the conduct is due to the manifestation of the student's disability, the school must take steps to remedy those deficiencies. This may be in the form of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP), or both depending on the situation and the current plan that may already be in place for the student with a disability. If the behavior has not already been addressed in the student's current IEP, the team must review and revise the student's IEP so the student will receive services appropriate to his/her needs. However, a change of placement may still be discussed if it is appropriate to meet the student's needs. (*Manifestation Determinations*, n.d.)

If the behavior is determined to **not** be a manifestation of the student's disability the school may apply the most relevant disciplinary procedure to the student with a disability in the same manner and duration as the procedure would be applied to a student without a disability. If the student with a disability is expelled or suspended, the district should continue to provide special education and related services. (*Manifestation Determinations*, n.d.)

Graduation Requirements

The graduation requirements are those of a rural school in central Minnesota. The requirements may be adjusted on an individual basis based on individual needs that may require a student to have altered graduation requirements as described in their IEP, as needed.

Students must have 46 total credits accumulated through grades 9-12 to graduate. To promote maximum student learning and appropriate levels of instruction, a two-tier diploma system is available to students. Students may only take 1 study hall per semester unless approved by the administration. Therefore, they must be enrolled in 6 periods of academic credit per day. Requirements per grade are as follows (*Melrose Area, 2022*):

- 9th grade: Students should take two semesters of English, math, social, physical science, physical education, and two art-related electives to fulfill their art credits.
- 10th grade: Students should take two semesters of English, math, physical education/health, and U.S. History. Students should also take one semester each of Biology I and general chemistry.
- Grade 11: Students should take two semesters of English 11, world history/careers, math, and an art credit. Students should take 1 semester of Biology II and select one other science elective for one semester.
- Grade 12: Students should take two semesters of English. They should take one semester each of American Government and Economics. Students shall select other elective courses to fill their schedule to meet the requirements.

Difference Between IDEA and ADA

IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Whereas, ADA is the Americans with Disabilities Act. IDEA aims to protect the rights of children whereas ADA protects the rights of adults. Therefore, IDEA protects students while in school and their rights. ADA will protect them while in college or while they pursue their postsecondary goals following high school. Eventually, when they find a place of employment, ADA will also protect them. When in college, ADA helps provide the student with the accommodations needed to be successful.

(“Idea, Ada, and Section 504,” 2021)

Student Options After High School

The Northern Lights Interagency Council (2022) created a list of options students have following high school graduation. If a student chooses to continue their education in a school

setting at a college or university, they could seek support from the disability coordinator to set up accommodations. (See table for postsecondary options and descriptions)

Option	Description
Technical and Community College (2-year college)	Provides specialized training in a specific career field, trade, or profession, which can include a plethora of programs. Some programs can take less than two years. A student can get a certificate, diploma, or associate's degree.
Apprenticeships	Students learn on the job. It provides an opportunity to learn career skills while working on the job. Some employers will support the student while they attend a program to help build their skills.
4-year College/University	Colleges are smaller than universities. Both offer programs in undergraduate studies and graduate studies. Students can gain a certificate or a degree.
Military	A person who is on active duty is considered full-time. They may live on the military base and can be deployed at any time. A person in the reserve is not full-time, but they can still be deployed at any time. Certain medical conditions may cause a person to be rejected.
Workforce	After graduation, a student may get a full-time or part-time job. Some jobs may include some training, whereas others may not.

Resources To Learn More About Transition

Each resource listed below will help families understand the pieces and the importance of postsecondary transition.

1. Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative
 - a. www.nlsec.org
2. Minnesota Department of Education
 - a. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/sec/>
3. Iris Center
 - a. <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/tran/cresource/q1/p01/>

Resources To Support Transition While Still In High School

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR)
 - a. Career Solutions: <https://careersolutionsjobs.org/>
 - i. Career Solutions provides multiple resources for students and families, while also working with the school to support the student in their transition from high school to their postsecondary goals. Students learn employable skills and, when ready, complete short job shadowing opportunities and employment opportunities to help demonstrate their employment skills and practice them. Runs through personal insurance.
2. Positively Minnesota at the Department of Employment and Economic Development
 - a. <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/>
 - i. They provide support resources for students, schools, and families. They connect everyone with a counselor. They guide families on how to best help their children through the transition process.
3. WACOSA
 - a. <https://wacosa.org/>
 - i. They work with students with disabilities to help them transition out of high school and into the community. They work with the student to help find them jobs, transportation, and help to build their skills to become productive members of the community. They will continue to work with the student even after they graduate high school, as needed.

Specialized Colleges, Universities, and Training Programs

1. Minnesota Independence College and Community (MICC)

- a. <https://www.miccommunity.org/>
 - i. The college specifically works with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and learning differences. It also offers a summer program. They offer programs to help a student learn the skills needed to live independently. The students live on campus in an apartment-like setting to help engage them in their learning and independent living.
2. Occupational Skills Program at Ridgewater College in Willmar, MN
 - a. <https://ridgewater.edu/academics/areas-of-study/occupational-skills/>
 - i. The college helps students with disabilities transition from postsecondary training into entry-level jobs. They offer vocational training on-site, life skills, personal management, job seeking and job-seeking strategies, and applied job search. A preliminary interview is performed to determine if it is the right fit for the student and what transition skills the student still needs to learn and master.
3. WACOSA
 - a. <https://wacosa.org/>
 - i. Wacosa works with students with disabilities transitioning out of high school and into the community. They help them find jobs, and transportation to guide them to become productive members of the community.

Assistive Technology

1. Assistive Technology for Transition Success
 - a. <https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/assistive-technology/>

- i. PACER provides a multitude of resources for schools and families in selecting the right assistive technology device for the student. They will also lend out assistive technology devices when needed, for families to test out.
2. Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology and Transition Planning
 - a. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED520112.pdf>
 - i. The resources provided in the document allow schools to give the most appropriate assistive technology option for families to consider using and trying when addressing the student's needs. The 5 transition areas need to be considered and discussed before choosing the most appropriate assistive technology for the student. The resource also gives information on how to use assistive technology when transition planning.

Transportation Services

1. Easter Seals
 - a. <https://www.easterseals.com/programs-and-services/transportation.html>
 - i. Easter Seals works with schools and families to help set up transportation and help with setting up transportation services. The transportation given by Easter Seals could help students with employment opportunities.
2. National Aging and Disability Transportation Center
 - a. <https://www.nadtc.org/about/transportation-aging-disability/>
 - i. Help connect students with disabilities with transportation and transportation services. They help support students in schools in reaching their postsecondary goals on IEPs. They help support communication

between families and schools to set up local transportation and ensure everyone is comfortable with the student using the local transportation systems.

Financial Supports

1. Federal Student Aid (FASFA)

- a. <https://studentaid.gov/help/fafsa>
 - i. Federal student aid comes in the form of loans, federal grants, or work-study programs to help support students who want to attend post-secondary programs.

2. Medicare (Health Insurance)

- a. <https://www.medicare.gov/>
 - i. Medicare is a federal insurance plan for people who are 65 years old or older, qualifying younger people with disabilities, or people with end-stage renal disease.

3. MNsure (Health Insurance Coverages)

- a. <https://www.mnsure.org/new-customers/whatis-mnsure/index.jsp>
 - i. MNsure is Minnesota's health insurance marketplace where individuals and families can shop, compare and choose the health insurance coverage that meets their needs. MNsure is the only place you can apply for financial help to lower the cost of your monthly insurance premium and out-of-pocket costs. Most Minnesotans who enroll through MNsure qualify for financial support.

Community Resources For Support

1. Catholic Charities

a. <https://www.ccstcloud.org/>

- i. Catholic Charities provides several services that support everyone in the community. They have everything from emergency services to services for homeless youth, financial services, and services for those with developmental or physical disabilities.

2. United Way Central Minnesota

a. <https://www.unitedwayhelps.org/>

- i. United Way helps a variety of people under the umbrella terms of financial stability, community safety net, education, and health. They help the homeless, low-income, those with exceptionalities, older adults, and many many more people in a plethora of situations.

3. WIC

a. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/>

- i. WIC supports mothers and children up to age 5 with healthy eating. It is available to mothers and children with low incomes or who are at a nutritional risk due to income in the home. This is a good option for students who have babies while still in high school or who are transitioning out of high school and have a baby. It is also a good option for mothers who have babies even though their other children may be older than 5 years old.

4. Stearns County Case Management

- a. <https://www.stearnscountymn.gov/1037/Developmental-Disabilities>
 - i. Stearns County Human Services provides case management services to those who qualify under a Developmental Disability. They help connect the student and family with resources in the community to help support them and meet their needs.
5. Social Security Administration
- a. <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/people-with-disabilities/services/>
 - i. Schools could work with this agency to gain resources and information to share with families to better support them and plan a program to meet the needs of their children. The school could work with the agency to help connect the families with residential and treatment programs for students as they transition if needed.
 - ii. They can also support families in setting up financial benefits for their children. The student may qualify for social security benefits depending on their disability. If the student qualifies, it would help relieve some of the financial burdens placed on families. The website is very clear about what is needed to qualify.

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