

So your child wants to pursue employment opportunities following high school...

Tips for Parents

Where will your child live and work after high school? Who can provide employment services? How do these services and supports get paid for? Thinking about the future can be pretty scary. The intent of this tip sheet is to assist you and your child in preparing for employment. More knowledge in the transition process typically means feeling more confident and comfortable in advocating for services and programs that will lead to a better quality of life for your child.

While in high school, encourage your child to...

- ✓ Consider applying for services through the Division of Rehabilitation Services and gain work experience through Project Skills.
- ✓ Engage in volunteer work experiences.
- ✓ Apply for Youth Leadership Forum (activity sponsored by TSLP).
- ✓ Explore career opportunities and develop career interests.
- ✓ Learn about his/her disability.
- ✓ Become involved in extra-curricular activities.
- ✓ Participate in job shadow opportunities.
- ✓ Tour and visit with adult service providers.
- ✓ Actively participate in his/her IEP meetings.

HIGH SCHOOL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and local school districts. **Project Skills** provides students the opportunity to learn different skills in a variety of job placements, with the assistance of a job coach.

Many times, students with disabilities don't get an opportunity to participate in a paid work experience while in high school. While the Division of Rehabilitation Services covers the cost of wages and additional supports, **Project Skills** enables employers to provide these students with valuable work experiences in a real work setting.

Over 80% of South Dakota school districts are participating in **Project Skills** and giving their high school students with disabilities the opportunity to further develop career interests and gain work experience.

For further information regarding this program, contact your local Division of Rehabilitation Services office, high school special education teacher or Transition Services Liaison Project.

Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired provide a program that provides individualized vocational rehabilitation (VR) and supportive services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to get and keep jobs compatible with their skills and abilities. The mission of this agency is to enable people with disabilities to become employed, live independently and direct their own lives to the extent of their ability.

How can Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors help?

- Participate in transition planning with you and your local school district.
- Work with your child and school district to obtain work experience through the Project Skills program.
- Assist with transportation, assistive technology and other disability related expenses for training or employment.
- Work with the school district to obtain vocational or job site evaluations.
- Provide career guidance and vocational counseling.

Through services provided by DRS, individuals with disabilities are finding employment in the areas they choose to work and are keeping these jobs! For information on the address and phone number of the DRS office nearest you, go to <http://dhs.sd.gov/drs/> or call (605) 773-3195.

Vocational Rehabilitation Puts Dreams Within Reach!!

Putting Your Young Adult on the Path to Future Employment

- Teach your child how to set goals and work towards achieving them. Start small and work towards larger goals. Many students who struggle with school or drop out do so because they lack long range goals.
- Encourage work-based learning experiences: internships, part-time jobs, or

volunteer and community service opportunities help define interest in a specific career. Vocational education classes expose young people to varying careers and prepare them for work.

- Help your young adult develop employment 'soft skills' by practicing them at home. 'Soft skills' include such things as being able to accept directions, ask for help, deal with conflict and engage in interpersonal communication. They also include being prompt and good personal hygiene.
- Set up opportunities for your child to develop friendships and social skills. You will be assisting your child in developing the ability to interact and get along with others, another essential skill employers look for and value in an employee.

SD MyLife

SD MyLife is a complete guidance system available to high school students in South Dakota. Students can access this program by going to www.sdmylife.com. Through this program, students can determine interests, skills and abilities. Students can explore careers in their interest area and develop a plan of what courses to take in high school. If your child isn't familiar with this program and hasn't accessed it in school, talk to the special education teacher or the high school guidance counselor at your school.

Opportunities for Your Child in the Adult Services System

Family Support 360 is a program for people with developmental disabilities. The program will do "whatever it takes" to give people the ability to get the services they need. These services will make it easier for people to live and work in the community on their own. Contact the Division of Developmental Disabilities at 1-800-265-9684 for more information.

Independent Living Centers provide services to individuals with disabilities in the areas of advocacy, information and referrals, independent living skills and training and peer support. Contact the Independent Living Specialist at 1-800-265-9684 for more information.

DakotaLink provides assistance to individuals of all ages to acquire and use the latest available assistive technology devices that best meet the need to maintain independence at home, work, in the classroom or in leisure activities. Contact DakotaLink at 1-800-645-0673 or www.dakotalink.net for more information.

South Dakota Benefits Specialist Network provides advice and support on Social Security work incentives, Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF, Housing Assistance and other disability related benefits. Information about Social Security benefits is provided on an

individual basis for Vocational Rehabilitation consumers. Contact South Dakota Benefits Specialist Network at 1-800-224-5336 for more information.

Financial planning is an important part of transition. Many people with disabilities are beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal program that provides financial and medical benefits, through the **Social Security Administration (SSA)**.

Did you know???

- If your child is receiving SSI Benefits prior to the age of 18, SSA will need to re-determine the individual's disability under the adult definition of disability. The 18 year old individual is an adult, considered to be a family of one, and only his/her finances and resources are counted.
- Your child can complete all needed paperwork for Social Security determination, but do not turn into Social Security office until his/her 18th birthday.
- If the SSI recipient pays his/her fair share for room and board, the recipient will be eligible for the full SSI Benefit amount (assuming the beneficiary has no other income). If your child lives in your home, does not pay room and board, and has no other income, the benefit amount is reduced up to 1/3.
- It is not unusual for a person to be denied Social Security benefits and choose to go through the appeal process.

South Dakota Benefits Specialist

If your child receives Social Security benefits and is starting work, it may be in your best interest to schedule an appointment with a **Benefits Specialist**. There are five **Benefits Specialists** in South Dakota who are available to provide advice and support to Vocational Rehabilitation consumers on managing your social security benefits. They can also assist you with advice on:

- Social Security Work Incentives
- Food stamps
- Public assistance
- Other disability related benefits

To contact a **Benefits Specialist**, call 1-800-224-5336.

Does your child receive personal care services in your home?

If so, he/she now may be eligible to access these services in the work place!

Personal Assistance Services (PAS) gives people with disabilities the support they need to work! These services are medical, hands-on services that assist eligible individuals to maintain employment. Services include:

- Basic personal care

- Assistance with dietary needs related to a medical issue
- Range of motion exercises
- Medication reminders
- Repositioning and transfers

For more information and to see if your child is eligible for Personal Assistance Services, contact Coordinator of Attendant Services at 1-800-265-9684.

SD Department of Labor & Regulation

Each year, the local offices of the SD Department of Labor and Regulation (formerly known as SD Career Centers) fill more than 50,000 job openings. Every office is staffed with trained professionals ready to help you identify opportunities and prepare for productive employment. Services that are available to you are:

- Identify your career interests.
- Find out what skills are needed for a new career.
- Write a resume.
- Locate possible jobs.
- Complete the application process.
- Prepare for a job interview.
- Access appropriate training.

All individuals seeking employment or information about the local labor market, including job listings, receive assistance at no charge. Call 1-605-773-3101 or go to <http://dlr.sd.gov/> for the nearest DLR office

Encourage your Child to Attend a Transition Forum with You!

Transition forums are informal and interactive meetings that allow you to network and make connections with adult service agency staff and identify resources that your child may access in the future. Representatives from many agencies who provide services to adults are invited to answer questions students and families may have. For more information on dates and locations throughout SD, contact the transition liaison in your area or go to the TSLP website at: www.tslp.org

Final Thoughts

- ✓ You and your child should take a leadership role in planning and implementing his/her transition IEP, including promoting employment services early!
- ✓ Involve your son or daughter in completing ordinary tasks in your home.
- ✓ Make your child's responsibilities (homework, school projects, household chores) his/hers, not yours.
- ✓ Visit and share with other parents who are in the transition stage for their

child!

- ✓ Help your child understand his/her disability. Share information with them about others with disabilities who have achieved success in their lives!
- ✓ Encourage your child to volunteer in their community. Volunteering allows young adult to gain work skills, build social skills, develop career interests and is a great addition to his/her resume.
- ✓ Involve your child in any decision-making that affects him or her.
- ✓ Be open to new ideas! Listen to the ideas of teachers and community providers, but do know **YOU** are the one who knows your child best.