



Rhode Island
Youth Transition Workbook

Secondary Transition Workbook
Rhode Island Transition Council



What Would You Do If You Knew You Wouldn't Fail?

Work for the NFL...? Be a teacher...? Save the whales...?
Play the lead guitar in a band...? Be a nurse...?
Solve court cases...? Fight fires...?

Maybe you don't know yet, or have not *really* thought about it. Either way you already have the most important part . . . **YOU!**

The Rhode Island Youth Transition Workbook was developed to help you to make the most out of your high school years. Think about all you have accomplished as you transitioned from your elementary and middle school years, leaving childhood behind, to where you are now, your adolescence and your high school years. This is a time of self-discovery and opportunity. The decisions you make and the actions you take will set you on a path towards your adulthood. The purpose of this workbook is to assist you in your transition to the adult world. Within the workbook there are three stages:

Stage One: Accept Yourself!

Stage Two: Declare Yourself!

Stage Three: Empower Yourself!

The first stage, *Accept Yourself!* is designed to help you better understand who you are as a person, student and community member. The second stage, *Declare Yourself!* is intended to help you to make known who you are to your family and friends, your teachers, and other people in your community. Finally, the third stage, *Empower Yourself!* will help you take charge of your life.

This Youth Transition Workbook is a workbook. It is full of activities to assist you on your journey. Complete the activities! Make the most of it!



What is the Rhode Island Youth Transition Workbook?

The mission of this workbook is:

- to help you reach your potential by developing self-determination, advocacy and leadership skills.
- to motivate and inspire you to seek positive and meaningful participation in your transition as you take on the responsibilities and rewards that comes with adulthood in the world of employment, higher education, vocational training, independent living, health and wellness.
- to know always that you are a valued member of society; that you have a voice and your voice actually matters.
- to challenge you and other young adults with disabilities to actively take part in leadership development activities that will help those younger to:
 - 1) Achieve successful transition to adulthood
 - 2) Develop deeper connections to communities and peers
 - 3) Feel more in control of their lives
 - 4) Achieve better post-school outcomes
 - 5) Increase self-esteem and personal identities
 - 6) Improve life skills and decision-making
 - 7) Establish and maintain mentoring opportunities between youth with disabilities and young adults who have accomplished successful transitions.

Without you, society would not be a whole. You should know that your voice should be heard no matter how small, loud, or soft. You have the same rights and responsibilities as any other member of the society.



To achieve these goals it is our hope this workbook will serve as a launching point for Rhode Island youth with disabilities to become self-advocates and future leaders in their lives and in the lives of others.



Activity

Fill out the poem following the instructions in according to each parenthesis

I AM POEM

I am _____ (two special characteristics you have)

I wonder _____ (something you are actually curious about)

I hear _____ (an imaginary sound)

I see _____ (an imaginary sight)

I want _____ (an actual desire)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)

I pretend _____ (something you actually pretend to do)

I feel _____ (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch _____ (an imaginary touch)

I worry _____ (something that actually worries you)

I cry _____ (something that makes you sad)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)

I understand _____ (something you know to be true)

I say _____ (something you believe in)

I dream _____ (something you actually dream about)

I try _____ (something you make an effort about)

I hope _____ (something you actually hope for)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)



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- ❖ The Rhode Island Transition Council
- ❖ Rhodes To Independence School to Employment work group:
 - Rhodes to Independence
 - Rhode Island Department of Health
 - Rhode Island Department of Education Regional Transition Centers
 - The Autism Project
 - Rhode Island Parent Information Network
 - Rhode Island Department of Education
 - Parent Support Network
 - Social Security Administration
 - Office of Rehabilitation Services
 - Developmental Disabilities Council



**ACCEPT
YOURSELF**

Stage 1



So They Say You Have A Disability?

People with disabilities may have some limitation or illness that may not allow them to fully participate in certain areas of daily living (walking, writing, reading, or communicating). However, many of the *barriers* that people with disabilities face are due to the inaccessible environments and negative beliefs that exist in the world.

You might have heard the saying that no two snowflakes are alike. The same thing can be said about people. All people have many different characteristics. Some people may need different accommodations (or help) to do things that come easy to others, and you cannot tell just by looking at a person what they can or can't do. Remember all people will need help at one time or another in life.

Most disabilities fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. **Physical Disability:** People with this type of disability may have difficulties with moving or mobility or every day activities like eating or going to the bathroom. They may use assisted devices such as wheelchairs or walkers. *Example of people with physical disability may be a person with:* Muscular Dystrophy, Spinal Cord Injury, Club Foot or Feet, Cleft Lip or Palate.

“Disability, in and of itself, is a neutral fact--not a tragedy. Prejudice, not autism, is the tragedy. It doesn't matter how impaired a person is; autism doesn't stop them from being a part of their family, a part of their community, a human being of infinite value.”

Lisa Daxer, a young woman with autism writes about a barrier she has come across- ***Prejudice***



2. **Sensory Disability:** People with this type of disability may have difficulty hearing, seeing, or with body movement and body awareness. People with a sensory disability may be sensitive to the environment around them such as noise, light, touch or smell or have difficulty with spatial awareness and controlling movement or balance. Individuals who are blind or have visual impairments may use Braille, canes, or large print to assist them. People who are deaf or who have hearing impairments may use hearing aids or cochlear implants and/or use sign language. *Example of sensory disability may be a person with* Sensory Integration Disorder, Autism, Aspergers, and ADHD.
3. **Cognitive Disability:** People with this type of disability may have difficulty learning, communicating, and remembering information. They may also have trouble with problem-solving, paying attention, or understanding reading, math, or visual information. They may use daily planners, need more time on tests or quiet areas to study. *Example of people with cognitive disability may be a person with* Down Syndrome, Traumatic Brain Injury, Dyslexia, ADD, ADHD, and Autism.
4. **Neurological Disorders:** Affects the functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. The capacity of the nervous system is limited or impaired with difficulties exhibited in one or more of the following areas: the use of memory, the control, and use of cognitive functioning, sensory and motor skills, speech, language, organizational skills, information processing, social skills, or basic life functions. *Examples:* ADHD, Cerebral Palsey, Lupus, Dyslexia, Epilepsy, Tourette Syndrome, Traumatic Brain Injury, Spina Bifida, Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Migraines, and Learning Disabilities.
5. **Behavioral and Emotional Disability:** People with these types of disabilities may have difficulty with emotions, feelings, and behaviors. People with this type of disability may use medications, coping skills, or need counseling. *Example of people with behavioral and emotional disability may be a person with* Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Substance Abuse, Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury.
6. **Health-Related Disability:** People with this type of disability might have a physical condition that affects their overall health. They may have limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems. *Example of people with health-related disability may be a person with* Heart Disease, Asthma, Lyme's Disease, HIV/AIDs, Cancer, Diabetes, and Obesity.



Want to know more about your disability?

Here are some people to talk to or places to go:

- ✓ Your Parents or Caregivers
- ✓ Your Teachers
- ✓ Your Doctor
- ✓ The Internet (but be careful look for websites that end in: .org •.edu •.gov)
- ✓ The Library

Things to never forget!

Having disability is not a bad thing!

It is a part of you, but it does not define who you are as a person. You need to fully understand what your disability means to you and how it affects your life. Many people notice that they have barriers they need to overcome unlike their friends, but more than likely their friends have their own challenges you may not even know about. Sometimes feeling that you are different can make you uncomfortable about yourself, and possibly get in the way of your success. If you let it get you down, you will never be able to make your dreams come true.

Keep a positive attitude!

There are going to be times in life that you get frustrated with your disability. It is important to know that this is a part of life, and with a little patience you will find the light at the end of the tunnel. Do not let it get in the way of the dreams that you have set for yourself.

You are not alone!

Always know that just about everyone has or will have a disabling condition at one time in their life. And, that everyone has things they are good at and things that they are not so good at. It is important to understand what you are good at, and what you aren't good at so that you can do things that allow your talents to show. Find out what you are really good at and like to do and go for it!

Part of accepting yourself means knowing that you have a disability and understanding what it means to you in your life! The following Activity will help you to understand what your disability is and will give you helpful tips to get to know your disability.



Accept Yourself
and others will do the same





Activity

It is important to accept your disability and understand how it impacts your life. Answering these questions should help you get a better understanding of yourself and the role your disability plays in your life.

1. What is your disability? _____

2. Describe the barriers your disability presents to you. _____

3. Describe your strengths. _____

4. What are your weaknesses? _____

5. What kind of help do you get at school so that you can do your best?

6. What kind of things do you think you still need to improve on?
(examples: time management and organization)

7. What are others doing for you that you want to do or should do for yourself? _____



Getting To Know Yourself

To successfully make the transition from school to adult life and the world of work, you will need guidance and encouragement from the people who are active in your life, like family members, friends, teachers, and other people in your community. But in order to help you make the best decisions, you *and* those adults will need specific information about you. The best way to gather that information is by you participating in appropriate *assessments* that focus on *your* talents, knowledge, skills, interests, values, and aptitudes.

What are assessments?

Assessments are an essential part of your transition plan. The purpose of the assessment process is to identify transition goals that have meaning to you! Assessments are a series of evaluations and tests that you participate in. They will help you learn about yourself. You may discover something about yourself you never knew or they may help you to put into words something you could not explain. The assessments can be formal or informal.

Formal Assessments are where you take a test; it's not just to get you out of class for the day. Sometimes when you are scheduled to take a formal assessment, you will be taking more than one test at a time. Whenever you participate in an assessment, it is important to understand why you're doing it and what it can do for you. Before you take an assessment, ask the following questions:

- 1) What is this for?
- 2) How can it help me?
- 3) What is the test like?
- 4) How long will the test take?
- 5) Am I allowed accommodations?
- 6) How will I learn about the results of the test?



When you are scheduled for the assessment, make sure you have had a good night's sleep and a good meal. Make sure you know how long you'll be there, how you're going to get there and what accommodations you are going to be given. During the test, it is important for you to ask questions if you do not understand something.

Within a few weeks after the formal assessment you should meet with someone you trust to review the results of the assessment. This information is to help you understand your strengths and needs and to come up with ideas to be used in your IEP during high school and to build your post school goals.

There are basically 3 types of Assessments

1. The Transition Assessment - The BIG Picture!!

Transition Assessment looks at every part of your life by seeing you as a student, a worker, a friend, a family member and a person who lives in a community. It helps you look at what supports you may need to reach your goals in life. It helps you identify your strengths, needs, what you like the most... your interests.

2. The Vocational Assessment and Evaluation

Vocational Assessment and Evaluation looks at you as a worker. The best way to learn about you as a worker is to do work in different places. During these experiences, it's important for you and those who are helping you (boss, teacher, job coach, counselor, or family member) to collect information on how you do in different settings. This can help you gain good experience that can help you make a good career choice. The different places you can experience work include: in school, in your town working for a company, volunteering, internships and summer work.

3. Career Assessment

Career Assessment is another part of transition assessment and it deals with plans for your career throughout your lifetime. We all go through four stages of planning for our careers throughout our lives, which include awareness, exploration, preparation and adjustment. You will learn more about this in high school.

Informal Assessments are interviews and questionnaires that gather information to be used to determine your needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to your plans for your future. For example, if your future education choice is to enroll in a four-year college, it is helpful to know as soon as possible what financial resources your family might have or need. Another example might involve current and future



transportation needs so you can get to work or to various activities/places in your community. Informal Assessments will also provide you and the adults in your life a clearer understanding of influences on your career development, your role models, your knowledge of the world of work and your general ambitions. In other words, are all the adults in your life helping you enough?



Questions to consider for a lifelong career journey¹...

Here are some questions to help you along your journey...

Where do you want to go?

- ✓ Why do people work? Why do you want to work?
- ✓ What have you dreamed of doing when you finish school?
- ✓ What kind of job do you want?
- ✓ Where do you want to live, and with whom, when you are grown up?
- ✓ What do you enjoy doing when you are not in school?
- ✓ What jobs do your mother, father, and other family members have?
- ✓ What types of things do they do in their jobs?
- ✓ What is college? Why do people go to college? What is vocational training?

¹ These questions are adapted from: George Washington University from Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard, & Leconte. (2nd edition). (2007). *Assess for Success: A practitioner's guide for transition assessment*. CA: Sage Publications



What do you want to do?

- ✓ What activities do you do in your spare time?
- ✓ What volunteer or community service work do you do?
- ✓ If you have had a summer job, did you enjoy it? What parts did you like best?
- ✓ Do you prefer being inside or outside?
- ✓ Do you prefer being with other people, or do you enjoy being by yourself?
- ✓ Do you enjoy working with your hands and with tools, or do you prefer to solve problems in your head?
- ✓ Did you get along well with your classmates? If so, why did you? If not, why didn't you?
- ✓ What courses do you need to take to get ready for your job?
- ✓ Will you need to take courses during high school and after to get ready for the job?
- ✓ What requirements will you need to get into these courses?
- ✓ How will you prepare to live on your own?
- ✓ Do you and your family plan for you to attend college or other training?
- ✓ How will you gain the skills needed to succeed in college or other training?
- ✓ Will you be able to get a job based on your high school and/or college coursework?



How do you move ahead?

- ✓ Will you continue your training and education after you start working?
- ✓ Does the employer help pay for extra schooling or training?
- ✓ How can you get promoted at your company?
- ✓ What benefits does your company offer (insurance, vacation, retirement)?
- ✓ What will you do if you get laid off or lose your job?
- ✓ Do you have options to take classes in areas that you enjoy (hobbies)?
- ✓ Can you transfer your job skills to another company, if needed?



Discover Your Skills, Abilities, & Aptitudes²

Your Skills?

Most people don't realize how many skills they have. Each of us uses our skills regularly, often every day, but don't realize it! If you have friendships with people, **then most likely you use skills such as listening, talking, caring, and cooperating** to keep your friends.

² This section was adapted from the West Bay Collaborative TRANSITION ASSESSMENT 101: An Introduction & Overview of the Process Hands-on and informal transition assessments



There are three types of skills:

1. **Self-management skills:** These are skills that help you adapt to new situations like your personality, how you get along with others, and how you fit into work situations like school or a job. Some examples of using these skills include being reliable, being cooperative, and being willing to work hard at something.
2. **Transferable skills:** These are skills that you can use (are transferred) in many jobs and situations. For example if you are good at speaking up in class or in front of a group you could use that skill and become a teacher, lawyer, or an actor.
3. **Job-related skills:** These skills are occupationally specific. For example in order to be a successful architect you would need to be skilled in design, engineering, social awareness, business, and law.

Your Aptitudes?

Aptitudes are your natural talents. When you have an aptitude for something, you often find activities related to them enjoyable because you are “naturally” good at them. Every occupation, from automotive mechanic to zoologist uses certain aptitudes. The work you are most likely to enjoy is that which uses your strongest aptitudes. You may choose a career; go to college or have years of training to develop the **skills** and knowledge for that job but it will not improve the aptitude needed for the job. Aptitude almost guarantees success. **But most important, without knowledge and practice, aptitudes are only your potential skills!**

Some examples of **Aptitudes** and jobs that use them:

-  **Memory aptitudes:** The ability to remember numbers, sounds, words, designs, and spot changes or differences- detective, actor, public relations specialist.
-  **Manual dexterity:** The ability to move your hands easily and skillfully- mason, painter, carpenter, designer, medical assistant.
-  **Finger dexterity (fine motor):** The ability to coordinate eyes and hands and fingers rapidly and accurately- surgeon, jeweler, pastry chef, keyboarding



 **General Learning ability:** The ability to “catch on” or understand instructions and meaning (the big picture); to reason and make judgments- school principal, reporter/journalist, doctor, judge, lawyer, policeman, movie producer

 **Clerical perception:** The ability to see detail in words and numbers- editor, accountant, inventory clerk, data entry

Your Abilities?

Abilities are closely related to aptitudes. They are skills you have learned to do that involve one or more aptitudes. The higher your aptitude-the better your ability! Occupations have different sets of activities that use various levels and combinations of aptitudes and abilities. If you were to make a list of all your abilities you might find it never ends. If you start your list with the things you do well, find easy, and enjoy doing this will give you an idea of your skills.

Here is a list of important skills and abilities that teachers, coaches and employers and even friends are looking for:

- ✓ Communication Skills
- ✓ Teamwork/cooperation
- ✓ Enthusiasm for your work
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ Efficient planning
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Positive attitude



abilities



Activity

How important is each item to you?

Circle True (T) or False (F) for the following questions

T	F	I get satisfaction not from personal accomplishment, but from helping others.
T	F	I'd like to have a job in which I can use my imagination and be inventive.
T	F	In my life, money will be placed ahead of job security and personal interests.
T	F	It is my ambition to have a direct impact on other people's lives.
T	F	I am not a risk-taker and would prefer a career that offers little risk.
T	F	I enjoy working with people rather than by myself.
T	F	I would not be happy doing the same thing all the time.



Activity

What matters most to you?

For each item check the box that says how important each item is to you.

To me this is:

	Really Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Good health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage/family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beauty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accomplishment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Love	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Activity

What matters most to you?

Continued...

For each item check the box that says how important each item is to you.

To me this is:

	Really Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Power	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individualism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Activity

Narrowing down your interests!

Think about what matters most to you, your aptitudes, abilities, and skills.

List the three you feel describe you best, for example, you might write:
Friendship, helping people, manual dexterity.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List career areas that interest you for example: you might write: (given the examples above) Healthcare, Food Service, Education...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What employers would have these kinds of jobs?

For example you might say Nursing Home, Food Pantry, Restaurant, or School

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Would any of your top three interests fall into any of these categories as positions you could find now? Which ones?

- Volunteer position: _____
- Internship position: _____
- Part-time position: _____
- Full-time position: _____



What Does It All Mean?

Summary of Performance

The document to help you pull together information you need to plan for your future when you leave high school is called a Summary of Performance (SOP). The SOP is a document that summarizes your work and the supports you received in high school. In the future, you may want to share it with colleges, service agencies, government agencies and/or support providers.

Although schools may use different versions, there are some basic components to a Summary of Performance:

1. Includes general information about you, such as your name, address and contact information.
2. Measurable Post School Goals (sometimes called post school outcomes): post school goals focuses on your goals in learning, working and community living after you leave high school such as:
 - ☺ **Postsecondary education and training (college or tech school goals)**
 - ☺ **Employment (career and job goals)**
 - ☺ **Community participation (where you want to live, transportation, health and recreation)**



3. Response to school based interventions:

This section includes information on what things have helped you do well in school (accommodations, supports, services & equipment). It asks your teacher to provide information on what accommodations and supports worked best for you in school and suggestions on what may work best in other settings. It may also include what others should know about you to help you achieve your goals.



4. Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance:

This section includes information about your present abilities in reading and math as well as how you are doing generally in school. It may also include some of your test scores and assessments focused on careers, social skills, budgeting, behavior and your ability to live and do things on your own.

5. Functional Impact Statement:

This section provides a realistic picture of how your disability may affect you at work, at school, and in the community. It provides suggestions about how others can support you in these settings and what community services may be able to help you reach your goals.

6. Recommendations:

This summary of everything was mentioned in sections 1-5. It lists everything you need to be successful in all areas of your life including what you will need to get more academic training, get and keep a job and live independently.





Review

Terms to remember

- 1) Transition - An organized set of activities that help you move from high school to college, post-secondary training, independent living, or work successfully. Transition focuses on what you need and what you want to do with your future
- 2) Post school goals - Things that students decide to do with their life after they leave school
- 3) Assessments - A series of tests & activities evaluating your growth emotionally, physically, and mentally, your needs, your strengths, and your abilities.
- 4) Formal Assessments - Formal assessments are where you take a test; it's not just to get you out of class for the day. Sometimes when you are scheduled to take a formal assessment, you will be taking more than one test at a time.
- 5) Vocational Assessments- Vocational assessment and evaluation looks at you as a worker.
- 6) Career Assessments- Career assessment is another part of transition assessment and it deals with plans for your career throughout your lifetime.
- 7) Transition Assessments- Transition assessment looks at every part of your life by seeing you as a student, a worker, a friend, a family member and a person who lives in a neighborhood.



The three post school goals or outcomes

1. Post secondary education or training (going to a 2-4 year university, community college, technical school, or anything that furthers your education)
2. Employment (getting a job)
3. Independent Living (how to live on your own successfully - where do you want to live, how will you get around in your community, what do you want to do in your free time)

You can find more information about the things you read in this chapter at a Regional Transition Center: Regional Transition Centers sometimes called RTC support schools, families and communities in preparing students for adult life.

If you live in: Barrington, Bristol, East Providence, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Tiverton, or Warren your RTC is the **East Bay Educational Collaborative**; Coordinator: Carolyn Aspinwall; Phone: 401-245-2045 x303; Email: aspinwac@ride.ri.net

If you live in: Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket Smithfield, or Woonsocket your RTC is the **Northern Rhode Island Collaborative NRIC** Coordinator: Jane Slade; Phone: 401-721-0709 x103; Email: jslade@nric-ri.org

If you live in: Coventry, Cranston, Foster, Glocester, Scituate, Warwick, and West Warwick your RTC is the **West Bay Collaborative WBC** Coordinator: Therese Curran; Phone: 401-941-8353 x124; Email: curranwbc@aol.com

If you live in: Providence: your RTC is at the Providence School Department; Coordinator: Nancy Stevenin; Phone: 401-278-0520; Email: nancy.stevenin@ppsd.org

If you live in: Block Island, Charlestown, East Greenwich, Exeter, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, West Greenwich, and Westerly **at Southern Rhode Island Collaborative (SORICO)**, your RTC is: Coordinator: Joe Walejko; Phone: 401-295-2888 x109, Fax: 401-295-3232; Email: jwalejko@sorico.org

Your family may also need some extra support...you may want to suggest they contact the Rhode Island Parent Information Network - Phone: 401-270-0101; Email: www.RIPIN.org

A blue stage with curtains and the text "DECLARE YOURSELF" in the center. The stage is set against a dark blue background. The curtains are a lighter shade of blue and are drawn back to reveal the stage floor. The text "DECLARE YOURSELF" is written in a white, bold, serif font. The stage floor is a light blue color with a wooden plank pattern. There are four small white lights on the stage floor, two on the left and two on the right.

**DECLARE
YOURSELF**

Stage 2



What Is Advocacy...And How Do You Advocate For Yourself?

Advocacy can be easily defined as an action that produces change.

One of the most important parts of becoming independent is learning how to advocate for what you want. If you advocate for yourself, you are speaking up for what you want, and not letting other people speak for you. Too many times young people allow other people (usually adults) to make decisions for them. While advice and assistance from adults is a good thing, your future is your decision! This section is going to give suggestions on how to be your own self advocate.

The 4 keys to being a good self advocate

1) Do Research

In order to tell people what you want, you need to know what is out there. What are your options? What do you have to do to get the things you want? It is up to you to do your homework about things like career options, colleges, accommodations, and places you can go to get the things you need (example: Office of Rehabilitation Services or the Library). You need to know the pros and cons about decisions, and be able to make an educated decision.

For more information, talk to your guidance counselor or call Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)
Phone: 401-421-7005

2) Communication

Learning how to communicate with people is the key to advocating for your needs.

- Be polite- No yelling, manners go a long way, BUT DON'T LET PEOPLE WALK ALL OVER YOU. (**Don't forget to smile 😊**)
- Be confident- You need to know what you want to say! (You did the research; you know what you're talking about)
- Be heard- It is your life, make your feelings known. People are not mind readers. You need to make sure they understand you!



3) **Compromise**

While the decisions that are being made are about you, it is important to be open minded about other people's advice and ideas. Sometimes two heads are better than one! You may have an idea and your IEP leader may have one. Combining the two may make one **AWESOME** thought! Also, make sure that you are realistic about your goals (example: if you are not a good athlete, wanting to be in the NBA is probably not a good career goal).

4) **Teamwork**

You have a great number of people you can count on for good advice. Know who the people are who you can count on. Let the professionals do their jobs, and let your family be your family. Let your friends be your friends. They all have an important role in your transition process. Listen to their advice but always understand....**ITS ALL ABOUT YOU!** YOU have the final say!!

Self-Advocacy Skills: Do you have them?!

Self-advocates know their strengths and needs. They ask questions and seek assistance when it's appropriate, also without being too demanding or helpless. Since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will no longer protect students' rights when they leave high school, it is important that the transition process plan for students to learn about their rights and how to tell others their preferences, concerns and conclusions about school and adult options.

You can exercise self-advocacy skills by:

- **Knowing your rights**
 - Bill of Rights
 - IDEA
 - Americans with Disabilities Act, etc.
 - attending your IEP

- **Knowing your school's timeline for transition activities**



- **Learning how to exercise your rights by:**
 - participating in your IEP
 - expressing your preferences and interests to the IEP team
 - expressing your needs and desires with colleges and service agencies
 - expressing your views through the political process
 - explaining your accommodation needs
 - serving as board member of community organizations
 - joining committees that plan school activities

- **Being responsible by:**
 - making your own decisions and learning from your mistakes
 - managing job searches and/or work
 - managing financial resources
 - following through on commitments

- **Appropriately asking for help or support by:**
 - understanding your disability
 - learning how to request assistance to achieve the desired help
 - learning where to get the help you need

For more information about any of the things you read in this section:

Youth Employment Resource Guide - <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/ERPlan.pdf>

Living & Participating In Your Community <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/commliving.pdf>

Youth College Resource Guide - <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/CollegeGuide.pdf>



Healthcare Advocacy

Did you know that transition affects more than your education?

Almost all parts of your life will transition in some way. In order to be successful in college, trade school or a job you will need to take care of your health. Healthcare transition is a very important step for all youth to become independent. Often this transition includes, going into office visits without your parent/caregiver in the room with you, managing your own medications, finding new doctors, possibly changing hospitals and services you receive, and getting different insurance coverage.

When you turn 18, you are considered an adult by the medical community. This means that you are in charge of your medical decisions. Your parents aren't in-charge anymore. They can assist you in making decisions but ultimately the final say is on your shoulders! Your doctors will be asking you about your medical needs, your health history, and will ask what procedures you may or may not want. You need to be prepared to handle these changes and begin to understand your care as an adult. However, your family or guardians can still be involved in the decisions.

Who can you talk to about your Healthcare Transition?

- your parents/caregiver
- your doctor
- the school nurse
- your IEP team
- older family members and friends you trust

You can get more information about Healthcare Transition at the RI Department of Health,

Phone: 1-800-942-7434 or

Email: <http://www.health.ri.gov/family/specialneeds/transition/index.php>



Activity

Health Factors:

How can I deal with these?

Read each important health issue and decide how you would deal with that particular issue. Write your solution in the column.

Important Health Factors	How can I deal with this issue?
Do I understand my primary health care needs? (What I have to do to stay healthy?)	
Can I provide the right nutrition and fitness for myself?	
Do I have the self-care skills I need?	
Can I communicate questions and concerns?	
Can I get to and from medical appointments?	
Do I need to adjust my environment to accommodate medical equipment?	
Does my support team (including doctors) understand my health needs relating to my post school goals?	



Self-advocacy DO'S and DON'T'S

Advocacy is not always easy; in fact, it rarely is. Advocacy takes time, knowledge, and dedication. Often when we have to advocate we may be in positions where we are upset, angry, and “caught in the heat of the moment.” Although these moments may seem right to advocate, it is often better to wait and become more informed before advocating. Below is a list of things that should and should not be done when advocating. Advocacy is a skill that takes practice, the more you practice advocacy the better you will get.

DO'S	DON'T'S
Be polite	Yell or demand
Ask questions	Be shy
Know your information	Come to a meeting unprepared
Keep a record of important papers, phone numbers and names: Be organized	Lose your records, phone numbers, names of people who helped and hindered you
Send thank you notes and show your appreciation	Be ungrateful for people's time and effort
Give your contact information, and also remember to get theirs too!	Not bother to show up when someone has helped you get an interview, meeting, etc.
Be Confident	Be a push over or arrogant (overconfident)
Be willing to compromise	Be close-minded



Advocating In School:

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and the Secondary Transition Process

Many youth hear about their IEP's and their transition plans, but few students actually know what their school is talking about. This section will help you to:

- understand the federal law that protects your rights
- discuss the parts of an IEP and why it is important for you to participate
- use the transition process to plan for your future

What are your rights?

- IDEA stands for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- This national law determines the accommodations and supports provided to students with disabilities from ages 3 to 21.
- IDEA works to ensure that all students have a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) which means all students should be taught in a public school for free while getting an education that is right for the person.
- Your education should help you set goals for further education, employment, and/or independent living.
- IDEA requires that students with disabilities have an IEP, or an Individualized Education Program.

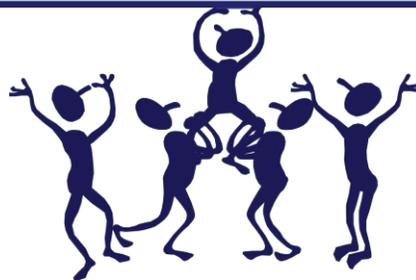


What is an IEP?

When you have a disability, you have certain legal rights to help you succeed. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is one of those rights. An IEP is a document that summarizes:

1. What you do well
2. How your disability affects your learning
3. What skills you need to work on in school this year
4. What services your school will provide
5. Where your learning will take place
6. What accommodations you receive
7. What your goals are for high school and after high school.

Your IEP is created by your own specialized, unique team made up of people who include: you, your teachers, your family, guidance counselors and anyone else you feel is important and should be part of the team (maybe your doctor, your employer, personal assistant, your mentor or aid).



Since your IEP is all about you; you have a unique opportunity to be in control of your life and your experiences in high school. Having input and actively participating in your IEP can help you be successful long after you graduate.

Your school and teachers are responsible for making sure that everything in your IEP is working for you (if it isn't you should speak up!) Each year your IEP is reviewed and updated as needed.



What is transition planning in the IEP?

- Transition planning must be included in your IEP beginning at age 14.
- Transition planning helps you figure out what you are going to do after you graduate from high school.
- Transition is an organized set of activities that helps you move from high school to college, post-secondary training, independent living or work. It focuses on what you need and what you want to do.

Once you graduate from high school, the assistance and services you receive from your teachers such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, wrap-around services and the people who help you with math, reading, behavior, test taking, etc. , will no longer be there to help you. But as you know life goes on after high school. Therefore you need to have a plan to be able to achieve your goals and live life as an adult. The transition process was created to help you set your goals and get things done to achieve your dreams.



Your school is required to help you develop post-school goals for when you leave school. Your post-school goals are found in your IEP.

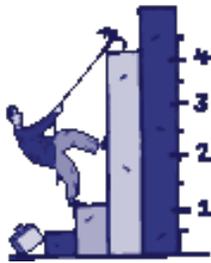
The three “post-school goals” that you need to think about when planning your future are:

1. Post secondary education or training (going to a 2-4 year university, community college, technical school, or anything that furthers your education).
2. Employment (getting a job).
3. Community Participation (how to live on your own successfully - where do you want to live, how will you get around in your community, what do you want to do in your free time).



How do I set post-school goals?

To be able to set post-school goals, you need to know about yourself including your interests, strengths and weaknesses. This is where the **assessment process** fits in. Remember assessments are where you learn about yourself and your post school goals? Remember again, when you are asked to take a test, it's important for you to learn about why it is happening, what to expect and how you can get accommodations to take the test? Remember too, after you take the test, it is important to sit with someone you trust to talk about what happened, how you are feeling and review your results. This information can be used to help you develop your post school goals.



Your post school goals directly influence the classes and activities you will take during high school. Transition planning helps the IEP team know about what you are interested in doing and includes agencies that may help you transition out of high school more easily.

What can be scary about your IEP?

Even though an IEP meeting can be scary at first it is your chance to have a say in the classes, activities, and supports you have in high school.

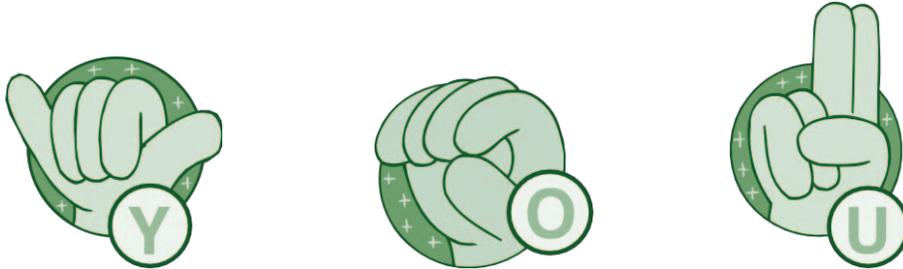
Going to your first IEP meeting can be overwhelming. You will probably find:

1. A few people you do not even know.
2. Your principal, teachers and your parents in the same room.
3. That it can be hard to speak your mind.
4. That teachers use their own language (use big words and acronyms you might not understand, don't forget you may ask them to explain in words you understand).



How to Participate in your IEP!

Because the IEP is about **YOU**, *you* need to be the one in charge during the IEP meetings.



Everyone will be talking about *your* education and life, so it is important for you to express *your* opinions.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

If you feel that something needs to be created or changed in *your* IEP, there are steps you can take to do so:

- You should try to be polite and courteous of others when they are speaking.
- You might want to say “excuse me” if you’d like to get a word in.
- Make sure you are calm and speak clearly (don’t have your hands near your mouth or chin).

The team members are here to help you and should be open to your ideas and/or suggestions. After all, it’s your life. You are the one living it and experiencing all its ups and downs. You should be able to have a voice and an opinion in what is put into your IEP and how it is put in there.



Activity

Questions to ask about your IEP!

1) What is my IEP? _____

2) What are my IEP goals? _____

3) How does my IEP effect my education? _____

4) How does my IEP prepare me to live independently? _____

5) What is my role in my IEP? _____

6) What is my parent/guardian's role? _____



Activity

Transition Planning:

What are my goals for after high school?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What am I doing in school that is helping me achieve these goals?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

What supports and services are out there to help me with the following?

Going to College, Business, Technical or Trade School

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Getting a job (Employment)

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____



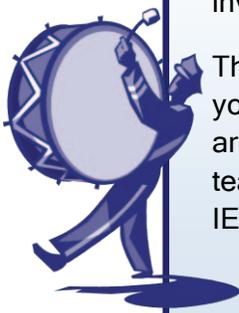
Getting ready for the IEP meeting

Before your IEP meeting...

- Review your IEP from last year (ask for a copy if you need one) and make notes on the changes or additions you would like to see.
- Highlight things you don't understand.
- Talk to a trusted adult about what you would like to see in this year's IEP.
- Be prepared to:
 - 1) discuss your post-school goals
 - 2) describe your disability
 - 3) talk about your strengths and needs
 - 4) describe your learning style (how you learn best and what gets in the way of your learning)
 - 5) tell team members the accommodations you need and why you need them
 - 6) describe any medications you are taking or medical needs you have

You should think about the activities you wish to take part in at school, i.e., sports, drama, band, peer groups, anything you want to be involved in.

Think about the supports you might need to get you there and help you stay involved. Think about classes you would like to take. If you are not sure about what your school has to offer...just ask your teacher. The next activity will help you brainstorm so that in your next IEP meeting you can bring your list and share it with your team.







Activity

Things I'd like to do and learn in school

Activities you'd like to take part in, in school -

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Classes you'd like to take part in, in school-

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Supports you'd like to have while in school-

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Classes you'd like to experience that will help you later in life after high school-

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



At the IEP meeting

Don't just sit there:

By the time you are in high school, you should consider running your own IEP meeting. If you don't know how to run a meeting, ask a family member, favorite teacher, or a trusted adult for help. Before the IEP meeting you can get together a small group of people (family members, friends, or other trusted adult) to help practice what you want to say. At first you may feel uncomfortable talking at your IEP meeting. If it helps write down what you want to say and have someone you trust read it. Or you could, put together a PowerPoint, or short video of what you would like to have discussed at your IEP.

Review (double check) IEP - make sure your age/anticipated graduating date are listed. You will also be asked to sign it to prove you were at the meeting.

Discuss and Identify Your Post School Goals

Talk about how you are doing in school - remember this is where your present levels of academic achievement and functional performance comes in.

Talk about the classes you are taking and activities you will be participating in this school year. Or the classes & activities you would LIKE to take and participate in.



Look back at activity worksheet: **Getting Ready for the IEP Meeting.** Maybe take it with you to your IEP meeting so you don't forget anything that you wrote!!



Annual Goals: Things to think about when discussing and reviewing your goals:

- What skills do you need to work on to reach your post school goals?
- Are there any health issues that interfere with learning or being in class all day?
- Do you have any behavioral issues that you need to work on?
- Are the annual goals in your IEP based on your post school goals?
- IEP goals should be written so that you understand what you need to work on this year.
- Did you agree to work on these goals this year?
- Are you able to understand how your progress will be measured throughout the year and how you will know that the goals have been reached?

Complete the other sections of the IEP -Based on your transition post school goals you and the other team members will discuss any accommodations, modifications, specialized instruction, supports or related services that you will need to be successful during this school year. It is important to know what accommodations you are getting now so that you can ask for them and succeed in the future. As an adult you will be expected to know what you need and what your accommodations are.

Some examples of Specially Designed Accommodations are:

1. Extended time to finish tests
2. Wheelchair ramps
3. Assistance in reading a book or a test
4. Books on tape

Some examples of Related Services are:

- ❖ Physical Therapy (PT)
- ❖ Occupational Therapy (OT)
- ❖ Speech Language Therapy

When is your next IEP meeting?

Write the date here _____



Activity

How to Make Sure My IEP is Going as Planned

Throughout the year, (i.e. at the end of each grading period), you should ask yourself the following questions to make sure you are making progress on your goals and that you are getting the right supports.

1. Are you getting the accommodations and related services discussed at your IEP meeting? _____
2. If not, what are you not getting? _____
3. Who can you talk to about getting them? _____
4. How close are you to meeting your IEP goals? _____
5. Who can you talk to if you are not where you would like to be with your annual progress? _____
6. What successes are you having in reaching your post school goals?

7. What challenges are you encountering in reaching your post school goals? _____
8. Have you made connections with any other agencies who can help you with your post school goals? _____
9. Are you learning and growing? _____



**EMPOWER
YOURSELF**

Stage 3



What is Empowerment?

Empowerment is a process, which helps people gain power and control of their life. People who are empowered have the knowledge and ability to lead.

Empowerment includes:

- ✓ having decision-making knowledge and power.
- ✓ having access to information and resources.
- ✓ having a range of options from which you can make choices.
- ✓ positive outlook on being able to make changes.
- ✓ increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stereotypes or discrimination.

Empowerment will help you ...

- ✓ to be able to make decisions about your life.
- ✓ to show others that you have control of your own life.
- ✓ to take responsibility for your own actions.
- ✓ to be true to yourself.
- ✓ to feel good about yourself.
- ✓ to feel a sense of accomplishment.
- ✓ eventually empower other youth or people.
- ✓ have other youth who can look up to you.



Empowerment and the People in Your Life

There is a fine line between support and control. Because people with disabilities often need more support to do things than other people, they often count on the people in their life (parents, siblings, teachers, friends, etc.) to help them. But it is very important for everyone to understand the difference between support and control.

Support- providing assistance which is directed and guided by a person with a disability to do the things that he or she has decided they want to do.

Control- providing assistance to a person with a disability which is not directed or guided by that person or when decisions are made for that person and not directed by him or her.

Youth with disabilities must have the right to direct their care and make decisions about their life.

How do you know when someone is controlling you?

- ✓ They don't ask you what you want.
- ✓ They speak for you.
- ✓ They do things without asking you if it is ok with you.
- ✓ They don't let you get a word in.

So what do you do when someone has crossed the line from support to control?

- ✓ Find out if they realize that they are controlling you.
- ✓ Ask them why they are controlling you.
- ✓ Explain to them that you have ideas too and that you would like them to respect your ideas.



- ✓ If they do not change their behavior, you may want to ask another person to intervene (assist in helping you get rid of the problem).
- ✓ Suggest that their idea is good but you have an idea too and two heads and possibly better than one! You can try to compromise!

Members of your family participate in your life. This is especially important when you have a disability, because your family is the closest support system you could have. They can help you learn more about your disability by helping you research information about it and find tips on how to get through life with it. They should be there for you when times are rough and you need guidance. They are the ones who love and understand you the most.

Here are examples of both:

- **Support:** Your family helps you plan what you want to do after you graduate high school (i.e., Going to college, assisting with options concerning independent living).
- **Control:** Your family wants to have you placed in assisted living after high school without discussing it with you because they think you can't handle being independent.

Emotional Support

One of the most important things a family can provide is emotional support. Studies have shown that negative behavior in students is often linked to a low level of family involvement. This is often because the student feels frustrated and thinks there isn't anyone he/she can turn to for support. This type of support includes:

- Comfort
- Encouragement
- Patience



Your family can also help you learn how to appropriately deal with:

- Frustration
- Anger
- Disappointment
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Fear





Activity

Check off each way your family is either patient with you, or ways they give you encouragement or comfort

My family is patient with me when:

- I lose my temper.
- I don't understand something.
- I do something the wrong way that they tell me to do.
- I forget to do things like take the garbage out.
- I say I don't know.
- I take extra long in the bathroom.
- I misplace things.

My family gives me encouragement when:

- I play sports.
- I am stuck on my homework.
- I say I can't do something.
- I am down or frustrated..
- I try new things on my own.
- I am having trouble with my peers'.
- I injure myself.
- I am having trouble talking.
- I am starting my first job.
- I am preparing for an interview.
- I get a good grade on a test.



Activity

Check off each way your family is either patient with you, or ways they give you encouragement or comfort. **Continued...**

My family gives me comfort when:

- I am sad or mad.
- my disability barriers get in my way.
- I admit I did something bad.
- I have trouble doing something.





Ways Your Family Can Help You

Your family members are the ones who can provide the most support. Depending on your age group, the types of support they can provide vary:

Younger Youth:

- Encourage and assist you to make plans with friends.
- Drive you and your friends to social gatherings (such as after school activities, school dances or any kind of meeting that encourages networking between individuals with similar disabilities).
- Allow you try to do new things even though you might make a mistake.
- Assist with homework as needed, meeting with teachers to review progress or concerns, etc. to promote academic success.

Sample supportive conversation between a youth and family

Rowan: *ugh I'm so bored, there's nothing to do!!!*

Mom: *Rowan, why don't you call Kyle. You two seemed to lose touch. Maybe you can make plan and get back in touch.*

Rowan: *Planning a day won't give me something to do today.*

Mom: *You don't know that. You and Kyle used to talk a lot; and the phone call will give you something to do now.*

Rowan: **sighs* okay, I'll call.*



Transitioning Youth:

- Look at colleges and vocational schools with you.
- Encourage you to manage you own healthcare.
- Help you learn to navigate public transportation, learn how to drive, or find any other methods of transportation.
- Assist in the research of independent living options.
- Have discussions with you concerning course selection in both secondary and post-secondary education.

Sibling and Extended Family Support:

Your parents or caregivers aren't the only members of your family who can provide support. Siblings (brothers and sisters) or extended family are another source of support. Siblings can help provide socialization opportunities by including you in their activities with their friends. Extended family can be resources in helping you to learn navigating life in general. In addition, grandparents can be very important to your health and well-being.

Family Involvement: Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Research your disability with your family to gain a better understanding of it. Some ways include:
 - Online research.
 - Reading books about your disability.
 - Networking with others who have had experiences with your disability.
 - Looking for resources in your community, such as family support groups and/or sibling support groups. Studies have shown that external support can lead to more family participation in a youth's life.
- Learn how to be patient and tolerant of each other.



- Acknowledge and embrace your disability and find ways to navigate the challenges that go along with it.
- Take opportunities to learn how to be independent while you're still living with your family. This will make the transition to independent living easier.
- Find ways to navigate your surroundings (i.e., wheelchair accessibility, guide dog, ask for directions, public transportation, etc.).
- Maintain open lines of communication between family members.

Don't:

- Assume you're less important than anyone in your family due to your disability.
- Allow your disability to get in the way of family togetherness.
- Reject support from your family.
- Be afraid to ask for help from your family when needed.

Your family may also need some extra support...you may want to suggest they contact the Rhode Island Parent information Network - Phone: 401-270-0101; Email: www.RIPIN.org



Conclusion

Active family involvement is the most influential factor in a youth's development. Studies have shown that family involvement leads to increased academic success through better grades and test scores, a more positive attitude about life, and more ambitions for one's self. Studies have also shown that family involvement has a positive effect on a youth's life regardless of ethnicity or the family members' levels of education.



Accommodations -- What Are They?

Accommodations are really important! The definition of accommodation is: Supports that help you succeed at a given task. Schools are required to give you the accommodations you need while in school. It is important to know what accommodations you are getting now so that you can ask for them and succeed in the future. As an adult you are expected to know what you need and what your accommodations are; don't assume people will know what you need.

Some examples of accommodations are:

- ✓ Extended time to finish tests
- ✓ Wheelchair ramps
- ✓ Assistance in reading a book or a test
- ✓ Books on tape
- ✓ Class assignments made available in electronic format
- ✓ Note taker
- ✓ Single dorm room
- ✓ Comfortable furniture
- ✓ Adjustable furniture
- ✓ Lab equipment located within reach
- ✓ Reasonable adjustments in attendance policy
- ✓ Braille Menu
- ✓ Large print books and handouts



- ✓ Computer with voice input/output
- ✓ Computer with spellchecker and grammar checker
- ✓ TV monitor connected to a microscope to enlarge images
- ✓ Audio-taped class sessions

What places can help me get my accommodations?

In school, the law says, the school district has to provide you with reasonable accommodations to help with your disability. But in college, higher education, and careers you have to be the one to advocate for yourself. You advocate for yourself by setting up appointments with disability services and telling them what you need to be successful. Colleges, after you tell them what you need, should provide you with it. But if you don't take action and contact them, they won't know what you need.

For additional information about accommodations, contact:

- Rhode Island Disability Law Center - Phone: 401-831-3150
- Americans with Disabilities Act Home Page - www.ADA.gov

Is College in Your Future?

Empower yourself by attending the annual College Forum. This forum will help you to understand what to expect and how to prepare for a successful college experience.

Breakout sessions include:

- The Freshman Experience
- Navigating Admissions & Accessing Accommodations
- Assistive Technology
- *Just for Students* - Legal Rights and Responsibilities
- *Just for Parents* - Preparing Your Child for Independence
- College Student panel.

For more information, contact Joe at the Southern Rhode Island Collaborative -
Phone: 401-295-2999/ext. 109 ♦ Email: jwalejko@ride.ri.net





Activity

What are some of the accommodations you get to help you succeed in school? How do they help you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Is there something else you are struggling with and may need additional accommodations?



Tips for getting support

As a person with a disability, you will be eligible for assistance from a service provider. This sheet gives you tips to help contact the services that can help you best. We will also give helpful questions to ask any service provider you may come in contact with along the way. When you turn 18, agencies expect you to speak for yourself, (not your parents or caregiver speaking for you). For example, if you request accommodations in college or training after high school, it is up to you to talk to the college.

Things you should know to fill out an application for services:

- ✓ Your full name (middle name included)
- ✓ Social Security number (try to memorize)
- ✓ Your official disability diagnosis
- ✓ What accommodations you need and/or are asking for
- ✓ Medical history (blood type, surgeries, illnesses, shots, and medication allergies, and other allergies)
- ✓ Employment history (where and when you worked)
- ✓ Education history (how much school you have finished so far)
- ✓ What is your and your family's household income
- ✓ Your parents' names (also names before they got married)
- ✓ Addresses (past and present)
- ✓ County or township you live in
- ✓ Phone numbers (past and present)



- ✓ Have an emergency contact and phone number
- ✓ References (people who know you well-NOT YOUR PARENTS)

The things you will need:

A copy of your:

- ✓ Valid Photo ID (Driver's License or state identification card or Visa)
- ✓ Social Security Card
- ✓ Birth Certificate
- ✓ Insurance Cards (if necessary)
- ✓ Recent Pay stubs (if necessary)
- ✓ At least 2 letters of recommendation (i.e., teacher, employer, coach, mentor, etc.)

Questions you can ask an agency or service provider:

1. What kind of services does your agency provide?
2. Where does your funding come from? (In other words: where do they get their money)
3. How does your agency help youth who are transitioning?
4. What can I expect in your application process and how long will it take?
5. Who can I contact if I don't get the services we agreed upon?



How to Get Empowered

Earlier, you read about the definition of empowerment. Now, let's review some of the ways that you can become more empowered.

- Have people in your life that support you in achieving your goals
- Know what accommodations you need to help you
- Have all your important documents and information
- Research service providers in your community

Supportive people in your life can be a big help. As we mentioned earlier, these can include people like family members, friends, teachers, or counselors. But it's also important to realize that there are agencies that can help you to become more empowered as well. The agencies which might help you will depend a lot on which outcome areas you choose after high school.

For up-to-date resource listings, see the resource sections in these handy guides:

Youth Employment Resource Guide - <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/ERPlan.pdf>

Living & Participating in Your Community <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/commliving.pdf>

Youth College Resource Guide - <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/CollegeGuide.pdf>





Your civil rights and empowerment

BAM! You just turned 18 years old. Okay you're not there yet, but it will come sooner than you think. One day you're a kid and then all of a sudden you're what everyone calls a "legal adult". There are many responsibilities, opportunities, and rights that come with being a legal adult. You are old enough to get married, own property, sign documents, vote, register with selective service and represent yourself in legal matters. These are all very important rights and responsibilities.

But perhaps the most important of those is your right to vote. You may remember your parents dragging you along to what was called polling places. They went there to cast their votes on a ballot for whom they thought was the best person to be making decisions:

- about your school, that would be someone on the school committee
- about how your town spends tax dollars, that would be your town council representatives
- about how best to run the state, the governor
- about how best to run the country, the president.

All these people need votes to win the election.

As a youth with a disability, it is important that your voice and concerns be heard.

Justin Dart (the father of the Americans with Disabilities Act) once said, "**Vote as if your life depends on it, because it does.**" We are affected by public policy as much and even more so than other groups of voters, so **it's critical that we make our voices heard.**

You don't have to wait until you are 18 to let your voice be heard. There are other ways to get involved while you are in high school. Ask your IEP team about:

- Student council
- Civics classes
- Model legislature
- Dare to Dream



Some ways to get informed are:

- Look up candidates; local or national policies online to see where they stand on citizens' rights and accommodations.
- Don't be afraid to call or even write them a letter. If you let candidates know you are interested in learning about them they may send you information about them.
- If you still need more information you can go in person to the candidates' headquarters and ask about their policies on citizens with disabilities. If a candidate knows they can receive new or more votes, the candidate will gladly let you know about their opinion or even change his or her policies for you!

Hard to believe that you hold that much power, huh?

If you would like to practice casting your vote, the Rhode Island Board of Elections (222-2348) will bring voting equipment to your school to help you cast practice ballots. Ask your teacher to schedule this activity if you think you need some practice. **

*For more information and activities on your civic responsibilities and rights check out <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/commliving.pdf> *

For more information and resources on your civic responsibilities and rights check out <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/publications/ritransres.pdf>. This booklet will also give you specific centers that you can call or visit websites about the law, your civic responsibilities and rights.



Empowerment Opportunity!

Dare to Dream Student Leadership

Rhode Island transition age students have the opportunity to participate in the Dare to Dream initiative, which includes youth leadership development opportunities and an annual youth conference.

Dare to Dream is a positive youth development initiative that aims to provide youth with special needs or disabilities with opportunities to be connected, productive and further their own areas of personal development. The goal of Dare to Dream is that every Rhode Island youth will have access to leadership development supports and opportunities in their school, community or interest group. Ask your teacher, principal, guidance counselor or local RTC (see page 24) for information on how to get involved.

Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference is a student led conference by students for students, which means students and young adults present workshops and share their experiences.

One student who led a workshop at last year's Dare to Dream conference said:

"Youth should attend and/or participate in Dare to Dream because the whole day just gives the youth so much confidence and leadership skills. They learn that they all can have a voice and how to effectively use that voice. It's a fun day filled with learning, talking, sharing stories, making connections, making friends, and meeting different people who know what you feel like." Kelsey, Shea HS class of 2010

What are the benefits of attending the Dare to Dream Conference?

- It's a day out of school!
- You will get to see students from different schools from all over Rhode Island
- You will get to see the University of Rhode Island Campus
- You will hear inspirational stories from students just like yourself
- You get to choose workshops that interest you presented by students in an interesting, creative NOT BORING way



- You make connections from someone's story to your own life
- You learn how to advocate for yourself after high school from someone other than adults
- You learn how to speak up and have a voice and the correct way to do it
- You learn how to share your story

Here are the benefits for participating at Dare to Dream Conference:

- All of the above plus:
- You'll be able to choose what kind of workshop you want to do, how you want to present the information like maybe a skit, or a video, or a hands -on activity to your student audience.
- You can work as a team with other students from your school in your presentation
- You get to feel what it's like to inspire and motivate others
- You will learn valuable skills like teamwork, public speaking, time management and many more. All skills you will need in your adult life
- In creating a presentation you will explore in depth a subject that interests you
- Doing a workshop or presentation may help you meet some of your graduation requirements

Being part of Dare to Dream might be a little scary in the beginning.

However, Dare to Dream is about coming out of your shell. It is about being **DARING!!** At Dare to Dream you learn that it's okay to struggle and it's okay to be yourself. Dare to Dream is a comfortable environment and you can speak freely without being judged.

If you are interested in learning more about Dare to Dream go to www.ritap.org/ritap/mytransition





Activity

Evaluation Activity

After reading this workbook: Can you say you are a leader?

Please answer the questions below about leadership

1. Do you feel like you may be able to advocate for yourself?

2. Does Dare to Dream sound like something you would like to do, and why?

3. What are some ways you can be a leader in your school?

4. What are some ways you can be a leader in your community?

5. Would you like it if your school made it a part of their curriculum to have a leadership program? Would you be part of it?

6. How might you start a leadership program in your school?

7. Would you like to help younger students advocate for what they need and be leaders too?



Activity

Fill out the poem following the instructions in according to each parenthesis

I AM POEM

I am _____ (two special characteristics you have)

I wonder _____ (something you are actually curious about)

I hear _____ (an imaginary sound)

I see _____ (an imaginary sight)

I want _____ (an actual desire)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)

I pretend _____ (something you actually pretend to do)

I feel _____ (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch _____ (an imaginary touch)

I worry _____ (something that actually worries you)

I cry _____ (something that makes you sad)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)

I understand _____ (something you know to be true)

I say _____ (something you believe in)

I dream _____ (something you actually dream about)

I try _____ (something you make an effort about)

I hope _____ (something you actually hope for)

I am _____ (the first line of the poem repeated)

THINK BIG  WE DOSM



RHODES TO INDEPENDENCE

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