

## Virginia Parents' Tips on Transition Planning

The following transition tips were compiled from a survey developed by the Center on Transition Innovations and given to a diverse group of Virginia families whose children have experienced the transition from high school to adult options. These valuable suggestions can assist others in making informed decisions, advocating for improved services, and building upon school and community partnerships.

### **1. Love your child unconditionally, believe in him or her, provide encouragement, dream big!**

You are your child's biggest fan and advocate. Support and love them as only parents can in this exciting time.

- Be positive with your child.
- Maintain high expectations.
- Assist your son or daughter in communicating dreams and abilities to others.
- Allow your child freedom under safeguarded circumstances.

### **2. Insist on student voice.**

The student's voice should be present whenever he or she is the subject of the conversation. That means not just at the IEP meeting, but also at eligibility meetings, team meetings, and discipline meetings.

- Allow your child some freedom under safe circumstances. Yes, students might not succeed, but they need to find out how to handle adversity while you can still provide assistance.
- Allow your child to experiment and try different interventions and strategies. If one intervention, strategy, or approach doesn't work, don't give up, try another!
- Encourage your son or daughter to communicate with community agencies with your support.

### **3. Increase student involvement with the transition process.**

A great way to build self-determination for a young adult with a disability is through the IEP process. Begin student IEP involvement early. Assist your child in communicating his or her needs, wants and dreams, but let his or her voice be heard!

- Have the student attend all meetings.
- Assist in understanding your child's abilities, interests, needs, and preferences.
- Let the student express dreams and aspirations.
- Have the student be a part of the decision-making process.
- Practice participating and leading IEP meetings at home.

## 4. Research resources and do your homework.

It is easy to become overwhelmed with emotions during the transition process. Researching best options and practices provides a powerful tool to advocate for your child.

- Understand your rights and advocate for what you believe.
- Network with other families and hear from other adults with disabilities.

## 5. Be open-minded and think outside of the box.

Just because it has never been done, doesn't mean it can't be done. It can never hurt to discuss an idea concerning transition. It might sound like pie in the sky, but it might just work with some good planning.

- Be flexible and understanding while remaining firm in expectations.
- Don't give up and demand measurable annual and postsecondary goals.
- Be open to the possibilities that might emerge.

## 6. Collaborate with adult services.

Community adult services provide valuable support and programming once your child exits school services. Learning about the various services and building relationships with providers early will ease the transition to adult services.

- Learn the difference between the entitlement of special education services and the eligibility for adult services.
- Be well informed about the agencies in your community that provide support to individuals with disabilities.
- Become involved with agencies early and establish a relationship prior to exiting school.
- Be persistent! Follow up with phone calls and requests. Ask questions and be diligent.
- Encourage your son or daughter to initiate meetings with adult agency counselors.

## 7. Increase family involvement in the transition planning process.

Your child is the center of the IEP and you know your child best! The more the family is involved the more your child's voice will be heard.

- Attend all meetings, ask questions, stay involved, and express concerns. Take notes during the meetings.
- Understand and communicate your child's disability, strengths, challenges, and support needs. Describe how these areas affect education, employment, and independent living.
- Give family feedback on observed progress at home. What do you see in the home and community environment that speaks to your child's progress?
- Have a good understanding of the IEP team recommendations.

## Additional Information

I'm Determined

[imdetermined.org/parents](http://imdetermined.org/parents)

Pacer Center

[pacer.org/publications/pdfs/ALL14.pdf](http://pacer.org/publications/pdfs/ALL14.pdf)

Sound Out

[soundout.org/intro-to-student-voice](http://soundout.org/intro-to-student-voice)