

# Get Ready for Independent Living

## **Facilitator's Guide**



# Table of Contents

---

Introduction .....	3
Course Overview .....	4
Course at a Glance .....	5
Course Implementation .....	8
Moving Forward .....	14

## Acknowledgments

The VCU Center on Transition Innovations would like to thank the Virginia Department of Education for their support and contributions to this guide. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.

For further information about the Center on Transition Innovations, please visit our website at [CenterOnTransition.org](https://CenterOnTransition.org).

# Introduction

---

An important component of post-school independent living success is planning for independence while in school. Independent living involves a range of skills for personal care, home care, and skills needed to live in the community. Building independent living skills from an early age is key to helping students acquire the variety of skills needed to live and work independently in their communities.

The *Get Ready for Independent Living Facilitator's Guide* and [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) online course are tools that educators and service providers can use to help students set and achieve their independent living goals. There are many skills related to independent living. This course will focus on four topics of independent living because these are the skills needed by everyone wishing to pursue any level of independent living. The four independent living skills you'll teach are decision making, healthy relationships, transportation, and financial management.

## Purpose of the Guide

The *Get Ready for Independent Living Facilitator's Guide* is a resource for secondary educators, service providers, and families supporting students with disabilities in planning for independent living. This guide is a companion resource for the free, online course [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) which was developed by the VCU [Center on Transition Innovations](#). It guides the use of course information in small-group or whole-class instructional settings to help students start the process of successfully transitioning to independent living.

# Course Overview

---

[Get Ready for Independent Living](#) is a free series of online lessons, each focusing on a different aspect of independent living. These online lessons contain video presentations and resources that can be used to equip students and others with the knowledge and skills for the transition to greater personal independence. Topics include decision making, healthy relationships, transportation, and financial management.

## Audience

Students, grades 8 and higher, who have a desire to take a self-paced online class to learn more about the skills and knowledge necessary for independent living.

Educators and service providers can use this course to assist students with increasing their behaviors and knowledge to live as independently as possible. The content can be taught in either in-person or virtual environments.

## Course Outcomes

The goal of this course is to provide students with the information and resources to plan and prepare for independent living. After this course, students will better understand how to make a decision, create healthy relationships, manage their money, and choose transportation options that best suit them.

### Course Objectives

This online class is designed to empower students with disabilities to:

- Understand the decision making process and why it is important.
- Demonstrate the use of a decision-making model.
- Discuss the importance of building healthy relationships.
- Identify tips for using social media safely to build friendships.
- Describe what transportation skills are and why they are important.
- Identify safety tips and ways to practice transportation skills.
- Define financial management and why it is important.
- Learn about resources for managing personal finances.

# Course at a Glance

---

[Get Ready for Independent Living](#) contains four lessons with video presentations, resources, and portfolio activities. The Course at Glance provides an overview of these lessons. For each lesson, you will find a lesson title, videos with their length, potential discussion questions, and a brief description of each portfolio activity. Use this information when planning how to pace the course for students. The total time for all videos is 53 minutes and 5 seconds.

---

## Introduction

### Video

Welcome (2 min, 15 sec)

Skills for Independence (3 min, 17 sec)

Spotlight Virginians: Student Success Stories (4 min, 50 sec)

**Total:** 10 min, 22 sec

### Questions

Where do you think you want to live when you are an adult?

What skills do you still need to learn to live independently?

---

## Lesson One:

### Decision-Making

### Videos

Responsible Decision-Making (6 min, 58 sec)

Decision-Making Model (6 min, 18 sec)

**Total:** 13 min, 16 sec

### Questions

Why is decision-making such an important skill to learn in regard to independent living?

What do you do to help yourself make a decision? Do you already use a decision-making model?

### Portfolio Activity

#### Decision Making

This activity will help students practice making a decision using the DARE model and help identify supports to help in making decisions.

---

**Lesson Two:**  
**Healthy Relationships**

**Videos**

Friendship Essentials (8 min, 41 sec)  
Social Media and You (4 min, 52 sec)

**Total:** 13 min, 33 sec

**Questions**

Why do you think a unit on relationships was included as part of an independent living course?

Do you think social media impacts your relationships with your family, friends, and classmates?

**Portfolio Activity**

**Healthy Relationships**

This activity will help students to think more deeply about the relationships they have and make sure that their relationships (both in-person and on social media) are healthy.

---

**Lesson Three:**  
**Transportation**

**Videos**

Transportation = Independence (2 min, 5 sec)  
Places to Go (4 min, 19 sec)

**Total:** 6 min, 24 sec

**Questions**

What are the skills you want to learn related to transportation?  
Do you have any goals related to transportation?

Why is transportation an important skill to learn for independent living? What areas of your life are impacted by transportation?

**Portfolio Activity**

**Transportation**

This activity will provide students with an opportunity to figure out their current transportation skills as well as the skills that they may need to develop. Then they can start preparing to use transportation independently in the community.

---

---

**Lesson Four:**  
**Financial Management**

**Videos**

Money Sense (3 min, 32 sec)

Money for Living (5 min, 59 sec)

**Total:** 9 min, 31 sec

**Questions**

Do you know where your money goes or does it just seem to disappear without you knowing how you spent it?

Do you have a bank or credit card account? If so, how do you use it; as a savings account or a spending account?

**Portfolio Activity**

**Financial Management**

This activity will help students evaluate needs vs. wants, research a bank and a credit union, and consider if they are ready for a credit card.

# Course Implementation

---

This section provides specific guidance to facilitators on how to implement [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) in small-group or whole class instructional settings. These guidelines will assist with planning by identifying information, activities, and decisions that need to occur before, during, and after the course to ensure that all course objectives are met. Decisions about how to administer the course content should be based on the needs of the students and the desire to support decisions that students make about independent living.

## Before Course Implementation

Planning and preparation are key to successfully implementing the course in a group setting. Before the course begins, there are several factors to consider. Facilitators are strongly encouraged to complete the following steps before the start date of the course.

### Become Familiar with the Course

Thoroughly review the course content. Take the course from a student's perspective by viewing the videos and completing the supplemental activities. Determine if any extra resources are needed for each lesson based on the needs of the students.

**NOTE:** This course takes educators and other stakeholders approximately 10 hours to complete the videos and review the resources. Educators who want to use these hours as a professional development activity for recertification will need prior approval from their school division. Each division is responsible for designating the actual number of points that an educator can earn for participation. Vocational rehabilitation counselors may earn 10 Continuing Education Credits (CRCs) after completing all course requirements and passing all lesson quizzes.

### Determine Delivery Format

Facilitators can implement this course in small or large groups in a variety of ways:

**Direct Instruction:** Facilitator explicitly presents course content.

**Hybrid:** Facilitator develops interactions between online and face-to-face learning.

**Peer-to-Peer:** Facilitator provides reinforcement and support as students complete the course with a partner.

**Student-Directed:** Facilitator provides support as students work at their own pace.



## Determine Facilitator

The decision on which format to use for [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) will greatly depend on the personnel assigned to implement the course. Suggestions for facilitators could include resource teachers, career and technical education teachers, education coaches, or designated transition personnel. Service providers and family members may also serve as facilitators.

Consider facilitators' prior knowledge of transition planning for students with disabilities and the ability to commit time for planning and instruction when choosing a facilitator. The role of facilitator could be assigned to one or several persons over the length of the course, as staffing allows.

The role of a facilitator is to assist a group of students in increasing their knowledge of specific content objectives. A good facilitator manages the process of learning and creates an active environment within a group dynamic.

### Facilitator Responsibilities

- Clarify content information
- Facilitate group discussions
- Develop collaborative learning opportunities
- Provide content reinforcement and student support
- Inform students' case managers of transition assessment data
- Identify students' strengths, interests, needs, and preferences related to independent living
- Track student progress
- Provide feedback on activities
- Assist students in developing a portfolio

## Determine Schedule and Location

In addition to identifying appropriate staff to serve as the course facilitator, when and where the course may be offered will be critical to successful implementation. Suggestions for location include a resource class within a school, a community center (if offered as an extracurricular activity), or home.

Consideration may be given to offering the course as part of a regularly scheduled counseling session, as part of a study skills course, or as a supplement to any other course content. The course may also be offered during "study hall" if the option for delivery is as a student-directed, self-paced course. The time of day will depend on students' instructional schedules and the availability of staff.

## Determine Pacing

This online course contains four lessons with two video presentations, resources, and a portfolio assignment for each lesson. Facilitators are encouraged to pace this course appropriately depending on the class and student needs. It is recommended that 30 - 60 minutes be allotted for each lesson per week to allow students time to master lesson objectives. The length of time for each lesson will depend on whether students can complete portfolio activities during the meeting session or as homework.

### Direct Instruction or Hybrid Formats

If using direct instruction or hybrid formats, it may be wise to divide lessons with several videos to allow time for group discussion. Other options are to chunk the course by offering the first two lessons during one session, (for example, per quarter or semester) and the second two lessons at a different time. This may allow facilitators to ensure students have the foundational knowledge as they continue building independent living skills prior to graduating from high school.

### Peer-to-Peer or Student-Directed Format

If the decision is made to use the peer-to-peer or student-directed format, a start and end date should still be established. The facilitator will need to schedule times for consultation and periodic monitoring to answer questions, check for understanding, and ensure students are on track for completion. These check-in sessions should also be an opportunity to determine if support is needed for the portfolio assignments.

## Gather Assessment Data

Facilitators may choose to develop a pre- and post-assessment for each lesson to gauge students' progress. Discussion, portfolio activities, and information that is gathered also provide pertinent assessment data that can be used to plan for a student's life after high school. Consider using the videos to develop 4-5 assessment questions to determine mastery of content per module. Review and modify the quiz at the end of each lesson.

## Develop Lessons

Begin by determining the purpose, intent, and expectations for course completion. In addition to a pre-assessment, facilitators are encouraged to have a “warm-up” activity related to the lesson to prepare students for instruction. These could include one of the discussion questions, poll questions, or other interactive strategies to engage students. Facilitators will also want to determine an effective grading system for assignments provided in this course.

Facilitators are also encouraged to use strategies such as role play, games, and other activities to enhance course content and accommodate different learning styles. Consider inviting guest speakers, such as local transit representatives, counselors from centers for independent living centers, bank or credit union employees, and counselors who can speak on healthy relationships. This course is an ideal companion to other transition content.

## Check Technology

Check to make sure the technology, materials, and resources to view videos and complete the portfolio activities are available in the location where the course will be offered. Although there is no required textbook, the course facilitator and/or students will need a computer with internet access and a sound card with speakers to listen to the video presentations. All videos are captioned and transcripts are provided. It is wise to have paper copies of Fascinating Facts and Portfolio Activities as a backup in the event of any issues accessing digital formats.

## During Course Implementation

As with any instruction, it is important to set the tone for success by building on students’ prior knowledge, interests, and strengths. Begin by having students register for the [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) course. Then, review the syllabus for the course, and share the purpose and expectations for completing the course. Have the students watch the introductory videos. Then, proceed through the remaining lessons based on the established format and pacing. Do a technology check at the beginning of each session to ensure that students can view videos.



### Assess

If the decision is made to develop pre- and post-assessments for each lesson, administer the assessment at the beginning of each session, then use a warm-up activity and/or brief review of previous lessons, as time permits, to prepare students for new content.



### Watch Videos

The course contains a total of 11 videos to assist students with the learning independent living skills. Each video is captioned, and a transcript is provided.



## Discuss Topic

After completing the video presentations within each lesson, encourage students to take part in whole-class or small-group discussions. Group discussions are a beneficial component of any course in that they allow for further dialogue and assessment of knowledge of a topic. A list of potential discussion questions can be found in the [Course at a Glance](#).



## Review Fascinating Facts

Each lesson contains a Fascinating Facts document. The Fascinating Facts offers a snapshot of pertinent information relating to individual [Get Ready for Independent Living](#) lessons. Facilitators can use these as study guides to review individual lessons or for a review of the entire course. Another idea is to compile these one-pagers in a binder as a reference for independent living. Students may refer to them as a quick resource when engaging in independent living activities. Facilitators may also use the Fascinating Facts during IEP/transition planning meetings to inform and support discussions related to independent living.



## Supplement Lesson with Expanding Knowledge Activities

Each lesson contains Expanding Knowledge activities. This section provides additional activities and resources for students desiring to expand their knowledge about a given topic. Facilitators may use Expanding Knowledge activities as homework assignments, have students select one or two for a special project, or employ them as strategies to engage family members in discussions about independent living. The recommended tasks listed for each lesson could be used as coordinating activities to support independent living goals in the IEP. Expanding Knowledge provides the opportunity to further explore individual areas of interest and helps students in their decision-making process.



## Complete Portfolio Activity

Each lesson has a portfolio activity. These activities allow students to immediately use the knowledge and skills they have learned. Create a portfolio by compiling lesson activities and course resources. This portfolio provides an organized way to archive the course materials for future reference. By the end of the course, students will have a better idea of the skills they already possess and those they still need to build related to decision-making, healthy relationships, managing their finances, and transportation.



## Assess

If the decision is made to develop pre- and post-assessments for each lesson, conclude each lesson with the post-test to check for mastery of the material.

## After Course Implementation



### Review Completed Portfolios

Facilitators should also allot time to review each student's portfolio. Check for formatting, accuracy, and whether more instruction is needed. Students are encouraged to have both a digital and paper copy of their portfolio. Be sure that students can update their portfolios when needed.

Encourage students to share their portfolios, emphasizing their independent living skills and strengths, with school personnel, family members, appropriate agency providers, and any others who can support decisions made about independent living and other postsecondary goals. This information is critical for planning students' next steps in life after high school.

### Other Items to Include in the Portfolio

In addition to course materials compiled in the portfolio, other items may be included. These items can include (but are not limited to):

- IEP
- Summary of Performance
- Age-appropriate transition assessments
- Resume
- High school transcript
- Award certificates
- Certifications (such as CPR, WISE, and Get Ready for Independent Living)



### Evaluation

Be sure that students complete the course evaluation. Provide students the opportunity to share verbally and/or in writing what they gained from [Get Ready for Independent Living](#). Preserve these testimonials for future course participants and to assess the effectiveness of the course.

Make sure that all students who have completed all components of the course receive a certificate of completion to add to their portfolios. Once the evaluation is completed, students will receive a link for a printable certificate of completion.

# Moving Forward

By following the recommendations in this guide, facilitators will provide students with the knowledge needed to start building independent living skills in decision-making, healthy relationships, financial management, and transportation. These skills form a foundation to continue acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for independent living. The tools in this guide will prepare students, families, and other IEP team members to plan for a successful transition into independent living.

## Additional Suggestions

Below are additional suggestions to help guide facilitators in increasing effective transition planning.

### Share course information

Share the information and resources from the course with families, colleagues, and others to increase their knowledge, skills, and ability to use effective transition planning practices.

### Help students and parents learn about independent living options

Share information on building skills toward independent living and options available to students with disabilities early, beginning in middle school, for informed decision-making. Every student can achieve some level of independence in their community and achieve their personal goals toward community integration, and being well-informed is one of the first steps to success.

### Learn more about independent living

Visit the [Center on Transition Innovations](#) to learn about the most up-to-date resources and information on independent living for students with disabilities.

### Check out other CTI self-paced courses

[Get Ready for Independent Living](#) is one course in a free series of online courses for students with disabilities offered by VCU's Center on Transition Innovations. [Get Ready for College](#) and [Get Ready for Your Career](#) courses support effective practice and prepare students and families for a successful transition from school to adult life.