

Transition Planning for Youth with Disabilities: From Incarceration to the Community

Developed in collaboration with the Virginia Department
of Juvenile Justice Division of Education Transition Services

The goal of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Division of Education is to provide quality instruction to meet a student's academic and career-related goals to enhance their re-entry into the home community. The Commonwealth of Virginia ensures that educational services are not suspended during the student's involvement with DJJ through provisions in the Code of Virginia, including the transfer of scholastic records. Between entry and discharge, students receive various services to meet their educational and transition needs and prevent recidivism.

Transition-Related Services Provided by DJJ

Educators might be surprised to learn that approximately 50% of the youth at the DJJ have disabilities. DJJ Division of Education serves students with disabilities in correctional facilities with a full range of educational options to meet their needs, which include transition to post-school outcomes. Instructional staff and school administrators adhere to the same licensure requirements as expected for Virginia's public school divisions and follow federal and state special education regulations.

Building a Portfolio

During a student's time with DJJ, they receive services from the school's transition specialists to assist them with building a thorough portfolio as they pursue goals toward successful adult outcomes.

The portfolio may include:

- Resume and cover letter
- Industry certifications
- Interest and aptitude assessments
- Letters of recommendation
- Academic transcript (may include college coursework completed while at DJJ)
- Submitted college applications
- Scholarships (applied for/awarded)
- Financial aid (applied for/awarded)
- Documentation of interviews and job applications submitted prior to release
- ASVAB testing scores

Continuing Academic Progress

Special education students who graduate with an Applied Studies Diploma or General Education Development (GED®) are able to continue to work towards a standard diploma until they meet the age of eligibility. They may also move into DJJ postsecondary education programs, where they will continue to receive special education services.

Taking Postsecondary Education Courses

Postsecondary education courses are geared toward the attainment of industry certifications, credentials, or college course completion. Vendors provide programs that award industry certifications. College courses are taught via partnerships with local community colleges and universities.

Serving Students in Community Placement Programs

The Division of Education maintains partnerships with Community Placement Programs (CPPs), where a number of DJJ youth are placed at detention centers closer to their homes. To support programming for DJJ postsecondary youth in those CPPs, DJJ's Division of Education provides resources tailored to individual CPP needs such as laptops, tablets, tuition, cosmetology kits, and certificate and credentialing opportunities.

Planning Services as Students Return to their Community

Transition specialists and re-entry advocates work with the court service units and community programs to ensure appropriate wrap-around services are available and in place when a student returns home. Special education teachers support students with disabilities in developing self-advocacy skills to gain confidence as well as skills to ask for help, solve problems, and understand their rights as a person with a disability. Students with disabilities also participate in both the Pre-Employment Transition Services and Pathway programs offered through the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, which link students to postsecondary programming, guide them in exploring career options, and prepare them for re-entry into the community.

Tips for Educators

Students with disabilities placed in a correctional facility deserve every effort to improve their postsecondary outcomes. Use these tips to help students obtain gainful employment outcomes.

- Develop effective self-advocacy and self-determination skills training as part of a student's educational experiences.
- Work closely with the school's re-enrollment coordinators at DJJ and the home school regarding the exchange of appropriate records and information.
- Work closely with the DJJ re-entry advocates and school transition specialists to ensure services are in place upon returning to the community.
- Understand treatment needs of the student and assist in maintaining/accessing those services through funding sources available to public schools and within the community.

Visit the [Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice](http://djj.virginia.gov) (djj.virginia.gov) for more information.

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