



Transitions

Transitioning to post-school education or employment

Early transition planning

The completion of secondary school can be an exciting time for young people as they celebrate their achievements and look towards experiencing increased independence and adulthood. Young people with a disability may need more support when transitioning from secondary school to the workplace or a post-secondary training or education setting. Early planning and preparation for this transition can help young people with a disability transition successfully, and may be particularly important for young people who find change confronting or challenging.

Career Education Funding supports Victorian government schools' career education programs, with provision for additional support to students at risk of disengagement or not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment. This supports schools in ensuring all students aged 15 years and over are provided with an individualized, annual Career Action Plan and support. Personalised Learning and Support Planning is important for the successful post-school transition of students with disability.

The [Strengthened Career Planning Resource for students with disability](#) is a planning resource designed to create specific learning goals and experiences to support a student's dreams and aspirations.

Below is a guide for secondary schools for planning and preparing for this transition.

The transition team

Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), Vocational Education and Training (VET), School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT)

School staff

- School staff will play an important role in setting up a post-secondary transition team, and developing school-based strategies and resources to support a student with a disability in preparing for a transition. This team will be made up of the original Student Support Group, but in later stages may also include other members such as health professionals (for example, a speech pathologist may support a young person with developing positive communication skills for a job interview) and the school's career practitioner. Additional input may also be sought from employment placement officers, higher education disability liaison officers, NDIS, Centrelink, Disability Employment Services, or specific tertiary institutions.

The young person

- Use a young person centered approach. While a young person may benefit from support and guidance when planning a transition, it is important that their wishes are prioritized – that is, that they are actively involved in identifying their post-secondary interests and goals. When the young person becomes an adult, advocacy will become their own responsibility. Involving the young person in planning their transition presents an opportunity to support them in building their ability to advocate for their own goals, interests and support.
- Encourage active participation. Some young people with a disability may default to a passive role, or find it challenging to discuss or assert their personal views in the presence of 'authority figures' (such as parents and teachers). Some young people may need support in becoming an active participant. In some cases, a 'pre-transition' planning process may be helpful. For example, young people may benefit from role plays or coaching on identifying and communicating their views or handling disagreements. It may also be helpful to provide clear guidelines and coaching to other transition team members on communicating with a young person and ensuring their views are heard and respected (for example, responding to participant's views non-judgmentally and genuinely considering and incorporating their ideas).

- Consider how to tailor communication. Consider how to tailor communication about the transition plan to a young person's strengths and abilities. Some young people may prefer direct and precise communication, some may prefer visual cues, and other young people may require communication that considers their unique communication abilities (e.g. AAC; Braille versions of documents; sign). For example, stories about different career options for a young person with intellectual disability could be presented via PowerPoint. Participants themselves may wish to communicate their preferences, dreams and thoughts through PowerPoint, AAC (which may involve pausing to give young people an opportunity to communicate), or gestures (e.g. thumbs up or thumbs down to options). Find what works for the young person and provide plenty of opportunities for them to communicate using their preferred approach. Check that transition goals and tasks have been clearly communicated to the young person, and all other team members.
- Consider a young person's strengths and abilities. It is important to consider other ways the planning process can be tailored to a young person's strengths and abilities. Effective participation for young people may involve shorter meetings or opportunities to take short breaks, sitting in a place that they are comfortable (e.g. outside of the 'meeting circle'), or providing options such as video conferencing or having one-to-one meetings with a mentor or advocate who then represents them in meetings. Some young people may participate more confidently if they have time to develop rapport with the meeting's facilitator before meetings are scheduled.

The family

- Parents have been identified by research as being the most influential factor in child education and career decisions, and so inclusion of the family in transition planning is key. Family engagement in transition planning can activate additional emotional and practical supports for a young person, and can provide them with opportunity to work on skills at home. Families can support a young person with developing life skills at home, such as budgeting, hygiene, safety and housework. Parents can also support young people in developing independence, by providing opportunities for their child to make choices, take risks, explore and take charge of a situation. Involving parents in the transition process

Effective transition planning and support

Making decisions

There are a range of considerations that a young person and their family may wish to explore when making decisions on post-secondary education, training or employment. Encourage young people and their families to discuss these considerations and explore options early. A range of post-secondary education, training and employment options can be found [here](#).

[AllPlay Learn's Strengths and Abilities Communication Checklist](#) covers a range of strengths and preferences that are relevant to making decisions.

Have high expectations

Having high expectations of a young person's potential for employment has been linked to better employment outcomes. Recognising a young person's strengths and abilities, and holding high expectations, avoids limiting a young person's postsecondary options unnecessarily when goals are developed. It can also be helpful to recognize that what may be considered a 'challenge' in one setting, can in fact be a 'strength' in an alternative setting. A young person can excel when they are able to work in an area that draws from their strengths and personal interests. It is important to emphasize that all jobs and workplaces have both positives and challenges, and experiencing boredom, frustration or difficulty in a job does not automatically mean that the job is not a good fit.

Consider career counselling assessments

If using standardized tests or questionnaires to help young people identify career options or interests, consider whether these need to be tailored to a young person's unique abilities and communication style, or whether other less formal approaches may be more appropriate. [My Career Insights](#) is available in all Victorian Government schools for Year 9 students.

Visit facilities or employers

It may be helpful for young people and their families to visit training or education facilities or prospective employers to seek further information to find the best fit for a young person's preferences and strengths. For example, courses/training/workplaces within smaller settings may be preferred by some young people who find large groups or noisy environments overwhelming. In contrast, other young people may prefer large settings where they have access to a wide range of experiences and people, and a diverse curriculum that provides more opportunities to pursue a personal interest.

Accommodation

Another consideration when planning postsecondary life is accommodation. Some young people may stay in the family home where they can continue to receive family support, particularly in early stages when they are navigating many changes. Others may benefit from living with others where they can build friendships and develop important social skills.

Develop a transition plan

Identify overall goals

In early stages of secondary school these may focus more on developing a range of broad skills, and providing a range of experiences so that a young person can identify potential career goals. In later stages of secondary, goals may focus more on a specific pathway and what skills can be built on to achieve that pathway.

Set clear goals that can be tracked

Transition plans that set clear goals and monitor progress are most helpful. Plan when and how key skills will be taught, and how acquisition of these skills will be tracked. Providing clear detail will be helpful. For example, if teaching a specific social skill, determine how often, how long for, and using what approach (role play; video modelling). Clearly plan how progress will be monitored. For example, how often will progress be checked, and how will progress be measured.

Tailor the transition plan to the student's strengths and abilities

Many young people with a disability learn better when there is structure and predictability. Transition plans that incorporate structure and predictability are more likely to be successful. A structured and predictable environment will result in faster acquisition of key skills, whether that be at school, with a health professional, or in a work experience setting. Similarly, many young people with a disability benefit from visual material when learning. Considering how visual prompts such as videos for specific skills or settings (e.g. models what happens in a lecture theatre; how to engage in positive customer service), photographs, visual schedules or other visual material can be incorporated into the transition preparation.

Use evidence-based practices

Consider using evidence-based approaches to inclusion and learning that are a good fit for the young person's strengths and abilities. Some young people may need to practise a skill related to transition in different settings or with different material. Some may need tasks broken down into smaller steps (e.g. job application process broken into smaller tasks). Some young people may respond well to role plays, visual prompts, or video modelling. Consider what works well for the young person's learning in other contexts, and [access AllPlay Learn's evidence-based strategies](#) for inclusion of young people with a disability or developmental challenge.

Provide positive support

Transitioning out of secondary school can be stressful for all students, and is likely to be even more stressful for young people with a disability. A positive attitude and consistent encouragement may help students if they are dealing with frustrations, disappointments or anxiety about upcoming changes.

Key targets for transition

Workplace, social and life skills development

Workplace skills

Young people with a disability will benefit from support with acquiring key workplace or job seeking skills. It is helpful to teach young people how to search for and apply for jobs, and role play interviews (providing specific corrective feedback). Young people with a disability who work during school are more likely to be later employed as an adult. Internships, work experience, voluntary work, and casual or part-time work can help young people develop experiences and skills for post-secondary life. [A Job Well Done](#) is a set of safety resources to help students with disabilities, career practitioners and teachers prepare for work experience. A range of workplace learning opportunities and opportunities for community partnerships can be accessed [here](#).

Where possible, seek feedback from the employer on a student's strengths and areas for further skill development, and provide this feedback to the student's transition team / Student Support Group. It is important that employers are aware of a student's strengths and abilities, and that arrangements are made early to ensure the safety and success of the student. Visit work experience safety skills for students with a disability.

Disclosure can only be provided to third parties (such as employers) with prior consent from parents/guardians, or by the student (if over 18).

Life skills

Young people with a disability may need to learn new life skills in order to make a smooth transition post-secondary. Some young people may benefit from ongoing support with specific skills, while other young people may, with initial support and practice, be able to maintain these skills independently. Consider which life skills may be important for a young person. Key skills may include healthy living, safety, transportation, money management, hygiene, housekeeping, seeking help (safety, health or mental health help), or living with others. Life skills that may be important for career or training goals include time management, study skills, and personal organization.

Social skills

Social skills are important skills for workplace and further education contexts. Social skills are important for developing social connections, and for successful inclusion and promotion within the workplace. Transitioning out of secondary school can result in losing contact with previous friendships, and the need to develop new friendships. Consider what social skills may be important for a young person's post-secondary goals and aspirations. Some key social skills may include social conversation (making small talk; understanding slang and idioms), respecting people's personal space, working in group projects, public speaking, explicit discussion of social norms for new situations they may encounter (e.g. lectures, small classes, specific workplaces), and sexual education.

Learning these skills

Role playing, counselling, practising, and specific instruction on skills can support students in acquiring workplace, social and life skills. Opportunities to apply these skills in real world settings may be particularly helpful. Completing chores at home, participating in school clubs or other extracurricular activities, or opportunities to participate in a 'work' setting (such as volunteer, internship, work experience or paid work opportunities) can provide a student with opportunities to practise. When identifying opportunities to participate in work settings, looking for work settings that are a 'good fit' for the student's strengths and abilities can support positive experiences and increased confidence.

Teaching independence

A specific focus on helping a young person develop increasing independence throughout secondary may be important. Consider how various skills related to teaching a young person independence (e.g., goal setting, self-management) can be implemented across all year levels, and across multiple settings (classroom, lunch, home, social clubs, workplace). Strategies that increase a young person's ability to manage their own work and behaviour may be particularly helpful. Self-monitoring can help a young person with setting goals and monitoring their performance. Approaches such as video modelling, visual supports, or breaking tasks into smaller subtasks can also provide opportunities for a student to work independently. As young people mature, support them with learning to self-manage their world. Consider ways to teach them how to recognize triggers or challenges in their environment, and take action to address these. For example, if a young person becomes anxious by specific noises, teaching them to recognize that is why they are distressed, and how to address that (wear headphones or ask to work in the next room), can provide them with valuable, transferable skills. Similarly, teaching them how to implement strategies themselves may be useful (e.g. teaching them how they can break a task down into manageable chunks).

Self-advocacy

Throughout their school years, a range of people (including parents and teachers) plan, advocate for, and support a child with a disability. When reaching adulthood, the young person becomes responsible for planning, advocating and accessing supports.

University/TAFE/Training colleges

Students may need to be taught how to locate and access supports in a post-secondary education facility. This includes contacting disability or educational supports, explaining their disability and completing paperwork, and asking for accommodations. Some post-secondary education facilities may have peer mentors who can support young people with transitions. Identifying and exploring how to access a range of supports within the chosen facility may be helpful.

Workplaces

Asking for accommodations within their workplace may be daunting for some young people. Talking through their concerns, and their rights under the disabilities act, may be helpful. Teaching young people how to request accommodations may be helpful. For example, teach them to (i) identify specific changes that would be helpful, (ii) explain why these changes would be of benefit, (iii) consider whether the changes are reasonable, and (iv) identify how they provide solutions to previous challenges with performance.

Disclosure

Disclosing a disability is a personal decision, however is important in relation to work experience and structured workplace learning. Further information on disclosure, including manuals and forms, can be found on the Victorian Department of Education's work experience and structured workplace learning pages. Disclosing a disability can be beneficial if it leads to the implementation of workplace or training/education accommodations. Discuss with the student the pros and cons of disclosure, what to disclose and not disclose, and when to disclose. Some young people with a disability may be reluctant to report their disability if they worry about stigma or a lack of inclusion. It may be helpful to talk with them about their concerns and explain their rights to privacy and confidentiality when disclosing they have a disability. Role playing and pre-interview practice with scripts can also help them practise what they could say, and frame accommodations from a strengths-based perspective. If a young person does not wish to give full disclosure, they may be able to meet with a supervisor to discuss changes that would increase their productivity (e.g. "I find I get through my work more effectively in the morning before others arrive").

Discrimination

Young people with a disability may not recognize discrimination when it occurs, or they may not know what to do if they are being discriminated against. Educating young people about their rights and responsibilities under the Disabilities Act may be an important aspect of preparing them for post-secondary life.