

Guidelines for Aligning High School & Beyond Plans (HSBP) and IEP Transition Plans

APPENDIX D: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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College

Whether in middle or high school, if an IDEA-eligible student is planning to attend college, there are several critical steps to be taken to become college-ready. Early in the transition process, a student is encouraged to:

- Take interesting and challenging courses that prepare him or her for college;
- Be involved in school or community-based activities that allow him or her to explore career interests, including work-based learning or internship opportunities;
- Meet with school counselors to discuss career goals, such as vocational and educational goals, programs of study, college requirements, including the admissions process and any standardized tests required for admission; and
- Be an active participant during the IEP meetings.

As noted earlier, the IEP Team is responsible for ensuring that the student's IEP includes the specialized instruction, supports, and services needed to assist the student in preparing for college and/or other postsecondary schools. Students with disabilities and their families interested in higher education are encouraged to consider the college environment that provides the best educational program and support services to assist students with meeting their needs and career goals.

For tips on navigating the college application process, please visit the [Federal Student Aid website](#). For more information on preparing for college, please see the [College Preparation Checklist](#).

Students with disabilities will benefit from discussions with their parents, school counselor, DVR counselor (if applicable), and other professional support staff about the services and supports needed to be successful in postsecondary education or training. For students whose eligibility terminates because the student has graduated from secondary school with a regular high school diploma or the

student has exceeded the age of eligibility for a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under State law, the school district must provide the student with a Summary of Performance that documents the student's academic achievement, functional performance, and recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

- [2-Year Community and Technical Colleges in Washington](#)
- [4-Year Public Baccalaureate Institutions in Washington](#)

Work-Based Learning (e.g., Community-Based Work Experiences)

Whether the student's next step is employment or entering a postsecondary training or an educational program, it is important for students with disabilities to obtain as much work experience as possible to prepare for adult life. Work-based learning activities extend the classroom into the workplace, connecting acquired knowledge and skills to a student's future employment. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD) reports that the value of a work experience, whether paid or unpaid work:

- Helps students acquire jobs at higher wages after they graduate; and
- Equips students who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings to be competitively employed to a greater extent than students who have not participated in such activities.

NCWD also recommends that a student with a disability participate in multiple work-based learning experiences and those experiences be directly related to the student's education program.¹ Community-based work experiences, such as internships, apprenticeships, and other on-the-job training experiences, provide increased opportunities for students to learn a specific job, task, or skill at an integrated employment site, and to transfer the knowledge gained to real-time work experiences. Visit the [NWCD Youth](#) website to learn more about the value of community-based work experiences. DVR agencies provide a variety of community-based work experiences and on-the-job training services to students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis under the DVR program. The DVR counselor and the student with a disability will identify a specific vocational goal to determine whether a community-based work experience is a necessary service for the student with disability to achieve an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment or supported employment. "Competitive integrated employment" is employment with earnings comparable to those paid to individuals without disabilities in a setting that allows them to interact with individuals who do not have disabilities.

Supported Employment Services: These services are for individuals needing intensive ongoing support to gain employment, maintain employment, or both. Services are provided in individual or group settings and are available in the basic plus, core, and community protection waivers through DDA.

Community-based work experiences allow the student with a disability to explore potential careers related to the specific vocational goal, potential workplace environments and demands, and other aspects of the work. These experiences offer the student opportunities to gain firsthand knowledge of a particular job skill, or to learn the culture of day-to-day employment. These experiences can be offered in lieu of, or to supplement, vocational training or educational programs, or as a standalone service. To

¹ National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. [Guideposts for Success: Career Preparation & Work-Based Learning Experiences](#).

ensure the success of community-based work experiences, DVR agencies are encouraged to develop agreements with employers and the student with a disability that describe the training objectives, services to be provided, timelines, and financial responsibilities necessary for a successful community-based work experience. The following list describes work-based strategies used to enhance competitive integrated employment opportunities for students with disabilities:

Internships: Internships are formal agreements whereby a student is assigned specific tasks in a workplace over a predetermined period. Internships can be paid or unpaid, depending on the nature of the agreement with the company and the nature of the tasks.² Internships are usually temporary on-the-job work experiences. They not only provide individuals, including students with disabilities, actual work experience and the opportunity to develop skills, but also the opportunity to determine if the type of work involved is in keeping with the individuals' career interests, abilities, and goals. There is no guarantee that an internship will lead to a permanent employment offer. However, DVR counselors refer students with a disability to an internship to increase their employment opportunities. The internship experience is frequently enriched by the provision of services or supports, such as transportation and vocational counseling, as described in an approved individualized plan for employment (IPE) under the DVR program.

Mentorships: A young person with or without a disability may participate in a mentoring relationship to hone his or her occupational skills and work habits. The business community describes [mentoring](#) as an employee training system under which a senior or more experienced individual (the mentor) is assigned as an advisor, counselor, or guide to a junior or trainee (mentee). The mentor is responsible for providing support to, and feedback on, the individual in his or her charge. The mentor's area of experience is sought based on his or her career, disability, and history or life experience similar to the mentee or a host of other possibilities. Many schools or existing community organizations, such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and centers for independent living, introduce students to older peer or adult mentors who have achieved success in a particular area that is important for the student (for example, employers, college students, recovering substance abusers).³ Interaction with successful role models with disabilities enhances the disability-related knowledge and self-confidence of students with disabilities, as well as parents' perceptions of the knowledge and capabilities of their students with disabilities.⁴

Apprenticeships: Apprenticeships are formal, sanctioned work experiences of extended duration in which an apprentice, frequently known as a trainee, learns specific occupational skills related to a standardized trade, such as carpentry, plumbing, or drafting. Many apprenticeships also include paid work components. In an apprenticeship program, an individual can learn a trade through on-the-job training as well as through related academic knowledge. Often, these programs involve an employer

² Luecking, R. G. (2009) *The way to work: How to facilitate work experiences for youth in transition*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

³ Powers, L.E., Deshler, D.D., Jones, B. & Simon, M. (2006). Strategies for enhancing self-determination, social success, and transition to adulthood. In D.D. Deshler and J.B. Schumaker (Eds.), *Teaching adolescents with disabilities: Accessing the general education curriculum* (pp 235–273). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

⁴ Powers, L.E., Sowers, J., & Stevens, T. (1995). An exploratory, randomized study of the impact of mentoring on the self-efficacy and community-based knowledge of adolescents with severe physical challenges. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 61(1), 33–41.

and a community college or university and a trade union. An individual applies for specific training and, once accepted, can participate in the apprenticeship program. Employment opportunities are usually offered to an individual who successfully completes the program. DVR counselors assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for the apprenticeship application process, develop a plan to gain the prerequisite knowledge and skills for the trade, and identify support services needed to be successful in the apprenticeship program. [Apprenticeship Programs can be found here.](#)

Paid Employment: Paid Employment involves existing standard jobs in a company or customized employment positions that are negotiated with an employer. These jobs always feature a wage paid directly to the student. Such work is scheduled during or after the school day. Paid employment is frequently an integral part of a student's course of study or simply a separate adjunctive experience.⁵ Often times, these employment experiences are the first steps towards building a meaningful career for students with disabilities.

Career Pathways⁶: As students with disabilities prepare for their careers, they are counseled to consider and explore a specific career to determine if it meets their career interests, abilities, and goals. The Career Pathways model is designed to facilitate an individual's career interest and advancement with multiple entrance and exit points in the individual's career over his or her lifetime. Key program design features of the Career Pathways model include contextualized curricula, integrated basic education and occupational training, career counseling, support services, assessments and credit transfer agreements that ease entry and exit points towards credential attainment.

Career Pathways are also designed as a system strategy for integrating educational instruction, workforce development, and human services, and linking these service delivery systems to labor market trends and employer needs. Career pathways systems use real-time labor market information and active employer involvement to ensure that training and education programs meet the skill and competency needs of local employers. The more the systems are aligned at the State and local levels, the easier it may be to create a level of integration necessary to develop comprehensive programs and ensure an individual's success.



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⁵ Luecking, R. G. (2009) The way to work: How to facilitate work experiences for youth in transition. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

⁶ Information in this section is based upon a [Joint Dear Colleague letter](#) on career pathways (OVAE, ETA, Administration for Children and Families). April 4, 2012.