

Families as Partners in Transition

Why is family involvement critical?

Teachers strive to include families in decisions about school life as a best practice in education. Research shows that students with disabilities also have more successful employment outcomes when families are involved in career development and planning for transition to work. Families can set clear expectations for working in the community and help schools figure out how to build on the strengths and interests of their daughter or son. This is the case because families:

1. Understand the skills and interests, as well as the communication and learning styles of their son or daughter
2. Provide valuable insights about the strategies and environmental factors best suited to their daughter or son
3. Help the team focus on abilities and build learning experiences around interests and strengths
4. Ask questions to maintain a person-centered approach during employment planning
5. Contribute to building a network of peers to support academic, social, and career development
6. Have connections to a larger set of community members and prospective employers
7. Will remain a part of the circle of support for their daughter/son after school services end
8. Serve as lifelong advocates and cheerleaders for their son or daughter



How can teachers involve families when planning for employment?

The section above describes why families are an integral part of vocational planning teams. Once you are ready to work with a student to begin the process of preparing for and seeking employment, there are several specific ways to collaborate with families. By using an employment planning tool or discussing the items below at a planning meeting, the student and her/his family can help with:

- **Identifying Transferrable Skills** by sharing the types of activities their daughter or son likes to do while at home and in the community and considering which of those the person is good at doing
- **Creating a List of Favorite Places** their son or daughter enjoys going to help the team consider characteristics of those environments (who is there, what happens, is it noisy or quiet, light or dark, indoors or out) as potential workplaces are identified
- **Determining Support Needs** of their daughter or son when engaged in a range of activities both in and out of school (home and community support needs might be different from those provided in the educational environment)

- **Developing a Set of “Non-Negotiables”** or the list of “must-haves” for their son or daughter (e.g. – specific time for a weekly dinner out, no work on Sundays, workplace on bus line)
- **Developing a Set of “Ideal” Elements** or the list of what will likely work best for their daughter or son in terms of work type, place, schedule (e.g. - distance from home to workplace, time of the day the person seems most energetic, focused, and willing to learn and work)
- **Formulating a List of Existing Connections** by thinking about potential employers everyone on the team knows and highlighting those who already know their son or daughter through family friends and activities
- **Building Work Ethic** by assigning chores at home, talking about the positive aspects of family members’ careers, and sharing all of the good reasons to get and keep a job
- **Supporting a Code of Conduct for Work** by establishing expectations for following rules and cooperating to accomplish tasks
- **Reinforcing Skills** necessary for successful employment by encouraging independence and maturity (getting up and ready for the day, keeping room clean, maintaining positive interactions with others)

Family involvement during transition benefits students by supporting them to:

- ⊙ Maintain a high quality of life
- ⊙ Obtain and keep meaningful employment and enjoy job satisfaction
- ⊙ Seize opportunities to make choices and self-direct their own lives
- ⊙ Focus on independent living

Additional Resources

[Let’s Get to Work Employment Planning Tool](#)

[What’s After High School Family Education Video Series](#)

[Self-Directed Employment Planning Modules](#)

