

Let's Get to Work "What's After High School?" Parent Education Series Session 3 Q & A

General Questions: (Answered by Shannon Huff, Project Coach with BPDD/LGTW)

Q. How can we better support schools in customizing employment, starting with individualized career exploration, when they have limited resources and tend to "group" exploration and work experiences, in part due to limited staff and resources?

The Lets Get to Work (LGTW) Project is designed to help schools learn how to engage in individualized and person-centered career planning. The schools involved in the grant project are learning about best practices with integrated employment and taking the time to implement them so that they can become confident and efficient with these new practices and methods. Ongoing professional development and the support from school leadership to implement best practices are two key ingredients for a successful school to work transition program.

There are resources all around students within the schools to explore and try new things. Exposure to new things helps students shape their future goals. Each school involved in the LGTW project was asked to complete an opportunity map. This map revealed all the opportunities that currently exist in school to connect *individual students to based on the students' interest*, rather than creating something new or separate within the special education program.

Much of what happens in school, especially in the early exploration phase, is classroom or group based. However, once we begin to narrow down or better identify a student's skills and interests, plans can be made to pursue individualized options. During transition planning or IEP meetings, you can develop plans with the school to be strategic about providing individualized support or attention at times in order to reach employment goals. This is also the time that DVR may get involved. DVR can help a student secure a paid work experience. Or, perhaps the student could find a volunteer experience or paid work experience after school or on the weekends that could be supported by paid or natural support.

Not all vocational planning can, or should, happen during the school day. Parents play an important role in supporting their sons and daughters at home, in the community, and on the weekends to engage in a variety of experiences to build employment related skills and identify their interests. The best outcomes happen when parents and teachers work *in partnership* with the student to pursue their employment goals.

Q. What happens when a parent tries to implement these strategies and school doesn't cooperate?

[Wisconsin FACETS](#), a partner in this parent education series, can be a resource to families who need information and support when working with schools. You can also contact DPI's Education Consultant

for Special Education, Wendi Dawson, who was a co-presenter in this parent training. Her contact information is: (608) 266-1146 or Wendi.Dawson@dpi.wi.gov

Q. Is the employment data you shared available?

DPI, DVR and DHS track data on employment rates within their respective programs. Their data is compiled into a Wisconsin State Trend Data Report by these agencies. The purpose of the document is to use this state data to assist in sharing information, improving transition planning, creating improved communication, identifying services, collaborating in activities, interagency planning and data driven targeted technical assistance. A copy of the most recent WI State Data Trend Report can be found by clicking [here](#).

Q. What is your opinion of purchasing a business or businesses to employ maybe 50% of employees with disabilities?

If you have the resources to purchase a business (or businesses) and can employ people with disabilities, that is wonderful. Not all families have the resources, drive, or know-how to purchase and run a business! I like that you want to create an inclusive work environment (e.g. having both people with and without disabilities working for the business). *That is ideal.* If you want to create an inclusive workplace, be sure to consider natural proportions so you create a workplace that includes people with disabilities in proportion to their presence in the general population.

No matter who works at the business, the right job match is critical to your success as a business owner and their success as an employee. If you have people in mind that you want to employ (e.g. a family member, friends, sons or daughters of friends), it would be wise to make sure these people want to work in the kind of business you purchase and have the skills (or the interest to learn the skills) that you need as a business owner. Also, be prepared for the eventual reality that after so many years, the people you originally hired may want to move onto other jobs. It is rare these days, especially for young people, to want to stay in a job for as many years as people used to!

Q. I am a parent of a disabled young adult. He is 18. We are in contact with DVR, our high school and long term care. How do I make all these entities work together for my son? We currently deal with each entity on our own at different meetings.

These agencies have what is called an [Interagency Agreement](#). That agreement spells out how our state's agencies follow the mandates that are in place for collaborating with people who are jointly served by their agencies. The [Transition Action Guide](#) and the [Technical Assistance Guide for Adults Seeking Integrated Employment](#) provide more details and tips on how parents, students and these agencies should be working together. They are definitely worth the read.

You can (and should) ask that these team members meet together with you. These agencies should be working together with you and your family member. Open, regular communication and team problem

solving is key to success! If you are still experiencing difficulty with working as a team, contact the leadership for that agency ([Meredith Dressel](#), DVR; [Jess Thompson](#), DHS; [Wendi Dawson](#), DPI).

Q. Is self-employment a viable and stable job? There are many individuals in the system who do not generate an owner's draw/profit from their micro-enterprises. Do you consider this a student's sole job or is self-employment better in conjunction with another paid position?

Self-employment can be done on a full or part time basis. Some people own businesses and have jobs as well. This is true of people with and without disabilities. The choice is up to each and every person. Self-employment can be viable and stable *if the business is planned in a well thought out way*. I believe that businesses should be planned so that they are profitable for the owner. A good rule of thumb for families, educators and service providers is to help prospective business owners create a business plan so he/she can eventually draw at least \$10/hour for the work activity he/she puts into the business. Sometimes families, school staff or service providers don't help someone plan a business with this in mind. They may undermine the business owner's potential to make money by undervaluing the product or service, or think quality or pricing doesn't matter because it is just something that the person "likes to do." On the flip side, just because someone sells something, it doesn't mean that this person needs to start a formalized business. Some people may want to engage in their endeavor as a hobby, and that is okay. For example, not all people who make and sell arts and crafts are self-employed. Many people do these things as a hobby. Even SSI allows some hobby income, and the IRS lets hobbyists deduct some expenses related to hobbies. Understanding the difference between having a hobby and running a profitable business is the first step in making an informed decision about pursuing self-employment.

Q. How does volunteering fit with supported employment? Will the county budget include volunteering?

Volunteering can be a great way to build skills for employment and expand a person's network of contacts for future job seeking. Typically, if someone volunteers and needs formalized support to do so, the service is not paid for as "supported employment" or "job coaching." Often, the needed support for a volunteer position is funded under the pre-vocational service or supportive home care service in our state waivers (e.g. CIP, Family Care, and IRIS). DVR does not provide funding to support a volunteer experience. However, this does not mean that a person cannot pursue or be involved with a volunteer opportunity while working with DVR on their employment goal.

Q. The movement for post-secondary education for people with cognitive disabilities is new and underdeveloped in WI. Is there a way to get in touch with other parents who are interested?

The best person to contact is [Molly Cooney](#) who works with Wisconsin's [Think College](#) initiative.

Q. Is there a list of any kind that gives ideas for jobs for kids with significant disabilities? Also, interest inventories for the same population?

There are infinite numbers of jobs out there, literally. Many of us have only a small set of possibilities in mind. We think of the typical jobs that we see every day or the things we have done or close family or friends have done. In the training, I talked about using tools to get out of the box of typical jobs. In my 20 years in working in this field, I've seen people with disabilities do so many kinds of things; it wouldn't be possible to create a list. Plus, a list would be limiting. For some people, we need to be extra creative or take a longer time to figure out what is possible.

I suggest you consider the tasks the person can do, the environments they do well in and the things they like. In the training I showed a Venn diagram that encourages you to brainstorm with others in these three areas and think creatively about how they overlap. You will find the slide with that diagram in the training materials for session 3 of the What's After High School training on the [Lets Get to Work website](#). [Click here](#) for a packet of articles and tools created by leaders in customized employment (Griffin and Hammis Associates). They have some good advice on Vocational Themes in the article on page 8 and a workbook for developing vocational themes just after that article.

I also highly recommend using the Self-Directed Employment Planning modules at: www.incontrolwisconsin.org

Q. I did not see anything in your training about college planning for those with cognitive disabilities and the funding sources for these programs. What is the effect on their state dollars if a student goes out of state or county for college? Where can I find info on funding outside of Think College?

[Think College](#) is a good resource to identify post-secondary education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Many colleges accept Financial Aid. The Student Services office at any university or technical college should be able to connect you with help you with the FAFSA application or check out the [FAFSA website](#). DVR is also a source of financial help for post-secondary education and training. Social Security's Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) work incentive may also be a source of funding if the education or training program is related to the pursuit of a vocational goal. You can find out more about PASS by talking to a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist <http://www.eri-wi.org/benefits-specialists> or by visiting: <http://ilr-edi-r1.ilr.cornell.edu/pass/> or www.passplan.org

By state dollars, I am not quite sure what you mean. There are people who go to school in other cities and states and receive needed services. However, some services are not 'portable' out of state. In these cases, sometimes DVR will provide funding for these services.

If you are concerned about benefit eligibility when living out of state, then a Disability Benefit Specialist at the [Aging and Disability Resource Center \(ADRC\)](#) could answer your questions. Also, a contact person at the program itself that you are concerned about (e.g. at the county, Family Care or IRIS program) could also answer questions specifically related to out of state living for school and how that would affect their particular program/funding/services.

Q. Are there assessments through the DMV to find out if someone is ready to get behind the wheel and get their driver's license? (My daughter's disability affects her complex and critical thinking – my concern is figuring out when she will be mature enough to drive).

The Division of Motor Vehicles provides information about driving with a disability:

<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/medical/disability.htm>

There are private companies that provide driver's assessments and driver's education to people with disabilities. The high school may know of some options, and so would your local ADRC or DVR office. A few of options are: Adaptive Experts www.adaptiveexperts.com/wi.html, Adaptive Driving Specialists www.adaptivedrivingspecialists.com and UW Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute: www.uwstout.edu/svri/upload/Pre-Driving-Evaluation-and-Training-flier-2.pdf

Q. How do you convince employers to hire a person with a disability? It probably would have to be without DVR's help due to the fact that my son is not toilet trained completely.

There are many employers that hire people with disabilities. Sometimes families connect with them and sometimes job developers can help to facilitate the job finding/employer negotiation process. There are some tools on the internet that can be helpful to educate employers. Here are a couple great resources:

- Think Beyond the Label – <http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/>
- The Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy has some great learning tools (booklets, videos, fact sheets) on Customized Employment, which is a job development strategy for people with significant disabilities – <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm>

Also, just because your son is not toilet trained, doesn't mean that DVR isn't a source of help. If your son wants to work (or as his guardian you support him to pursue employment), DVR can provide essential services to help your son achieve his goals. I have worked with people over the years who are considered to have "profound" disabilities and they are working in the community. It may take more time to figure out the right job match, and it might take the right job developer who believes that work is possible for your son or the right employer, but employment is possible!

My advice is to make sure you get your son connected to DVR and when it comes time to pick a service provider to work with him for assessment or job development, be sure to interview these providers and pick one that has experience working successfully with people with significant disabilities on community employment.

Sometimes self-employment could also be an option. Check out this video of a young man who started a business with the support of school, his family, DVR and an adult service provider:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c298osJEe80>

Q. My son is a high school senior. He has high functioning Asperger's. He is able to do most any type of job for his age; however, he has low motivation. Should he state on job applications that he has high functioning Asperger's, or not? Also, he was denied twice for SSI. Do you have any suggestions for a successful third try?

As for the SSI appeal, you can ask a lawyer for help. That may be the next step. Here's some information about hiring a representative: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10075.pdf>

The State Bar of WI could help you connect with a competent lawyer:
<http://www.wisbar.org/forPublic/INeedaLawyer/Pages/i-need-a-lawyer.aspx>

A lawyer in the Madison area that knows a lot about disability issues is Roy Froemming:
<http://www.froemminglaw.com/aboutus.html>

Regarding disability disclosure, I personally do not think it would be a good idea for him to list his disability on a job application. Employers generally use applications to screen out candidates; listing his disability may increase the likelihood of this. Here are some things I suggest:

- 1) He should learn about how and when to disclose his disability from a Job Accommodation Network expert. You can get in touch with JAN by email, phone or iChat: <http://askjan.org/>
- 2) Consider applying for DVR services, if you haven't already done so. DVR could provide funding for a job developer to support him in making contacts to employers (and scout out employers on his behalf). DVR could also help him secure a temporary work situation so he has current work on his resume or an On the Job Training opportunity with an employer.
- 3) Identify your personal networks and family connections. Most young people get their jobs through who they know – not by randomly submitting applications wherever there are help wanted signs or advertisements of open positions. I attached the worksheets from the session 3 that focus on identifying transferrable skills, ideal conditions and personal networks for job searching. Informational interviews and job shadows are a good way to meet employers without the expectation that they hire you (but I've found that many of them like that someone has taken an interest in their place of business and will sometimes provide opportunities for the person to shadow more or even work there).

DHS Related Questions: (Answered by Sarah Lincoln and Jessica Thompson of DHS)

Q. Is there a waiting list for services in WI? If so, at what age do you apply to be eligible – 17 ½?

Some DHS services have waiting lists. Legacy Waivers typically do have waiting lists for adult Long-Term Care programs, whereas Family Care/IRIS counties do not. Children's Long-Term Support Waivers may have waiting lists in some counties. It is best to contact your county human services department.

DVR Related Questions: (Answered by Meredith Dressel of DVR)

Q. When you are talking to DVR about employment, this is not in-house piece meal work placement, correct? This would be any employment anywhere?

DVR provides services to assist individuals with community employment that is consistent with an individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of the consumer. Employment must be in an integrated setting and individual must be compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. DVR does not provide services in a non-integrated setting such as a community rehabilitation program.

Q. My son is 17, a junior in high school (so within 2 years of graduation). When I called DVR, I was told there are no services available until age 18. If he elects to stay in school until 21, can we still apply now?

It is recommended that students apply for DVR services at least two years prior to exiting school. If he elects to stay until 21, he should apply for services by the time he is 19. If you feel that your child should apply for services prior to this time, it is recommended that you consult with the DVR counselor assigned to his school. DVR services are available to youth before they turn 18.

Q. Can we find out if an individual qualifies for DVR services before he/she exits public school to determine if the student should move on 18, 19, 20 or 21?

It is recommended that students apply for DVR services at least two years prior to exiting school. If he elects to stay until 21, he should apply for services by the time he is 19. Determining when a student should exit school is a decision that can be made with your local school district. If you choose, DVR can be invited to IEPs prior to a DVR application to be part of the conversation.

Q. What do we do if we invite outside agencies (DVR, etc) and we have no shows or no response? We even let DVR set the date for the IEPs.

Local management should be contacted if you are having difficulty with coordination of services for students.

Q. Most of our students have applied for DVR. The teacher hands in apps to DVR personally. What do we do about if there is no response from DVR on the student's applications?

Local management should be contacted if you are having difficulty with coordination of services for students.

Department of Public Instruction Questions (Answered by Wendi Dawson, Transition Consultant, DPI)

Q. Is dual enrollment allowed in WI?

Yes – for more information on WI options see:

<http://youthoptions.dpi.wi.gov/files/cte/pdf/dualenroll.pdf> or contact Kevin Miller 608-267-3161.

Q. Can you do dual enrollment with a technical college and hold off on getting a diploma? Will funds go to the technical school to help pay for the education?

If you wish for the school to pay for courses taken as a technical college, you can approach the IEP team (the decision is made by the IEP team about the appropriateness of the service requested) or you can investigate Youth Options: <http://youthoptions.dpi.wi.gov/>

Q. If a student with special needs wants to attend college are there any funds available to help with this type of training?

You can approach the IEP team to consider dual enrollment options.

Q. It seems that some school are insisting on a particular assessment tool – how does a parent go about getting the school to use a different tool that’s more applicable to their loved one? If usual advocacy doesn’t work, who can help?

Parents/guardians can contact DPI to discuss mediation, facilitated IEP, or file a formal complaint at 608-266-1781. See also http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_wsems.

Q. When did the Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) start and why don’t schools do it?

All public schools received formal notification about the required use of the Postsecondary Transition Plan. A copy of this notification can be found on the Indicator 13 website:

<http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/spp13-webbased-iep.pdf>

All school districts were required to begin using the PTP to complete the transition portion of the IEP as of December 3, 2012. If you are aware of a school district not using the PTP please contact Wendi Dawson at wendi.dawson@dpi.wi.gov or 608-266-1146.

Q. Under the Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) action items ‘community work experiences’ was placed on action items with student, staff and DVR to complete. That was in February. There has been no action and there is only one month left of school. How do I get to the next step to get my son community work experiences? We have no transition coordinator at the school to take to the helm. So what can I do to move the process along when everyone is ‘so busy’ and nothing happens? I don’t want to file a complaint but just want it done.

I would start by contacting the school district administrator to share your concerns.

Q. What are my options when my school transition coordinator is less than effective at their job and finding my child employment?

Contact your local school district administrator to discuss your concerns. If the student's IEP is not being followed, a formal complaint can be established through DPI by calling 608-266-1781.

Q. What transition (job development) services are available for homeschooled students?

The public school is not required to provide any services to homeschooled students.