

# Alabama Planning for Transition Handbook

READY FOR TAKE OFF!



**A handbook to help you decide what you want  
your life to look like after graduation ...  
And to help you outline the steps so you can  
make it happen!**

By The Arc of Shelby County   
An Affiliate of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Alabama

Adapted for Alabama by Susan Ellis

## About The Arc of Shelby County

At The Arc of Shelby County, our mission is to provide tools that build communities where every person belongs, where each person has the opportunity to build the dreams that add up to a happy and productive life.

Whether during infancy, adulthood or any stage in between, The Arc of Shelby County provides programs and services that help our communities embrace each others' differences.

The Arc of Shelby County exists to provide a support system for infants, children and adults who face the daily challenges of developmental disabilities...

We serve individuals with developmental disabilities by offering a relationship that lasts as long as you need it, to be used however you see fit. It is our belief that you and your family are best suited to determine the types of services and supports you need. You are best suited to make your goals, plan your life, dream your dreams.

We are working everyday to increase the number of ways that we can support you in your endeavors. Some of our programs have served hundreds to date and others are new and still developing. Still others are our dreams...part of our mission to serve you in more ways...

The Arc of Shelby County, Inc.



*This project is funded by a grant from The Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the funding organizations.*



## Preface

This handbook was created for use by youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families, educators, and community support teams. While it is true that it is never start too early to start planning for your adult life, this handbook is a useful tool for individuals to access community resources for adults *no matter what your age or stage of life*.

Our vision is that this tool will be easy to use and will be accessible to every person who has a developmental disability or who advocates for them. The focus of this publication is to assist disability advocates access and create excellent outcomes for adults in Alabama experiencing significant developmental disabilities.

This publication was originally produced by the Transition Projects at The Rural Institute Center for Excellence in Disability Education, Research, and Service, University of Montana: *Partnerships for Transition*. The Rural Institute has given permission to The Arc of Shelby County to revise the project to incorporate information for individuals and families in Alabama.

The purpose of this workbook is to help youth to take the lead in planning for their adult lives. The workbook shares important information, encourages youth to begin thinking about life after high school, and offers ideas they can use to plan routes to reach their goals. This is not a workbook parents, educators or others should hand to young adults and ask them to complete on their own. Rather, it should be used as a guide for conversations, either one-to-one or in groups, between adults and between young people. The workbook includes suggested activities, but don't be limited to these - be creative!

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## Recommendations for users:

This project is available on the Internet. If you are using a printed version, please check with [www.arcofshelby.org](http://www.arcofshelby.org) to ensure you have a copy with the most current information. Users with significant reading, learning or physical conditions should ask a friend, family member or community professional for assistance to accommodate any difficulties using the handbook. Users may pick and choose sections and activities that are appropriate to their unique situations.

### **Note to Teachers:**

- ***You might want to photocopy the “activity” pages of this workbook and keep the extra copies in a binder. This way, you can use the workbook with multiple students.***

## *Transition from school to adult life: It's never too early to start planning.*

While graduation from high school is a natural life event for many teenagers, for students with disabilities this requires more planning, negotiation, and decision making. Your choices about where you want to live and work and whether or not you want to continue your education are a bit more challenging if you will need continued support or accommodations. High school is the last time you will be "entitled" to receive services. So make the most of your time there. Have a plan for when you graduate and connect with new supports or service agencies before you graduate from high school.

IDEA 2004, the law that directs schools about helping you plan for your adult life, states that Transition Planning must be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) when you turn 16. That means that your IEP team will want to know what your goals are for after you leave high school. For example, where do you want to live? Who do you want to live with? Do you plan to rent an apartment or buy a home? What will you do for work? What will you do for fun? What places or events will you want to go to in your community? How will you get around?

These post-school goals will help you and your team determine the classes you should take and what would be helpful to prepare you for the adult life that you want. Even though the IEP doesn't start talking about life after school until you are 15 or 16, you and your family need to start thinking about your future much earlier. Parents don't usually wait until their kids are 16 to talk to them about getting a job and supporting themselves after high school - start talking and thinking NOW about what you want your life to be like once you no longer attend high school. Encourage your parents to have high expectations for you. Have high expectations for yourself.

Once Transition starts being discussed at your IEP meetings, *you* need to be invited to the meetings so *you* can add your input. **It is your life after all!** This workbook is meant to help you think about Transition and what you want to do, what you need to learn in school, and what supports you might need to live, work and play as independently as possible. It will help if you think about this ahead of your IEP meetings so you will be well prepared to direct your future as a participant in your meetings.

For your first Transition Planning meeting, think about all your strengths...the things you are good at doing. If you need help, ask your family, friends, and teachers what they think you do well. Make a list and bring it with you to your meeting. Also, make a list of things you like to do-- your interests. Most importantly, spend some time thinking about what you want your day to look like the day after you graduate from high school. Fill out this workbook and bring it to your Transition Planning meeting to make sure that your IEP team knows what *your* thoughts are about your future.

## **There are 4 steps to planning your transition from high school to adult life.**

STEP ONE: ANSWER THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS MY DAY GOING TO LOOK LIKE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?"

STEP TWO: ASK YOURSELF HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW.

STEP THREE: MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU COULD LEARN TO DO, OR WHAT STEPS YOU COULD TAKE TO GET CLOSER TO THESE GOALS BEFORE YOU GRADUATE.

STEP FOUR: THINK ABOUT WHO CAN HELP YOU MEET YOUR GOALS AND CONTINUE SETTING NEW ONES.

**This workbook will help you take these steps one at a time.**

# My Timeline

Fill in the blanks below with a pencil. Update the timeline each year.

## My Timeline

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date I will graduate \_\_\_\_\_

I have \_\_\_\_\_ year(s) to work toward how I want my life to look after graduation.

Things I should do this year:

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What do I want my  
life to look like  
after high school?

## STEP ONE: ANSWER THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS MY DAY GOING TO LOOK LIKE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?"

The following pages list questions for you to answer. Your answers will help you plan what your days may look like after high school. You can write your answers in the spaces provided below or there is a page following each set of questions for either drawing pictures or pasting pictures cut out of magazines that show your answers.

### **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Would you like to attend college? If so, why? What would you like to learn? Would you like to participate in a degree program, audit classes, or take classes that are of particular interest to you?

Would you like to learn a trade such as construction? Welding? Auto mechanics? Cooking or food preparation?

What about an apprenticeship program where you work alongside someone who knows how to do the things you want to learn and they teach you as you help them? (There are formal apprenticeship programs or informal opportunities in your community.) What types of things might you like to learn through an apprenticeship program?

If you think on-the-job training might be a good way to learn a new job, have you thought about supported employment services? With supported employment, a person called a job coach helps you find and learn a job in the community. Once you learn the job and you and your employer feel comfortable that you can do the job on your own, the job coach won't be with you at the job anymore.

## Education/Training

*(If it helps you, to draw or paste pictures that show what additional education or training you want after graduation, do that below):*



*(example picture)*

**WORK/EMPLOYMENT** *(Authors' Note: Anyone can work in their community regardless of the severity of their disability. Employment may look different for each of us.)*

Do you plan to work after graduation?

What type of work will you do?

How many hours a day do you want to work?

What type of help might you need to find a job? Do you think you would need help to apply for a job? What kind of help do you think you might need to learn and do the job? Do you think you would need help to keep the job?

Do you want to own your own business?

## Work/Employment

*(If it helps you, draw or paste pictures that show what kind of job you want after graduation, do that below) additional education or training you want after graduation, do that below):*



(Example picture)

## **HOME**

Where will you live after you graduate from high school?

Will you live with your family? Friends? Or do you plan to live alone?

Do you want to live in town where you are close to stores and neighbors or do you want to live out in the country with more space?

What type of help might you need to live in the community?

Will you rent an apartment or a house? Own a house or condo?

# Home

*(If it helps you, draw or paste pictures that show where you want to live after graduation, do that below):*



(Example picture)

## **COMMUNITY**

Make a list of places in the community that you might like to go and a list of things you would like to do in your community.

What would help you do more of these activities and get to these places?

How will you get around? Is there a bus system where you live? Will you drive, ride your bike, carpool with friends, or walk to where you want to go?

Where will you go for fun?

Will you be wanting to go to grocery stores, go places to just have fun, eat out at restaurants, go to doctor's offices and banks?

Will you want to have a volunteer position or help out in your community?

Will you vote?



# Community

*(If it helps you, draw or paste pictures that show what things you want to do in your community and how you will get to the places you want to go after graduation, do that below):*



(Examples)

## Create Day Timers (Daily list of activities)

Here is another exercise to help you think about what life will look like after you graduate. You will fill out two day timer pages. The first page is for a day when you are **still in school**. Write down what you do all day, including things like where and when you eat your meals, how you get to school, what your classes are, what you do for fun after school and in the evenings, etc

**Example Below:**

# June 08, (*This Year*)

Monday	
6 am	
7 am	Wake up to alarm and get ready for school
8 am	Applied English
9 am	Science
10 am	Health/P.E.
11am	Lunch with friends at school
12 pm	Math
1 pm	Study Hall
2 pm	Choir
3 pm	Ride bus home
4 pm	Make Snack Walk to YMCA for swimming lessons
5 pm	Ride home from YMCA with mom and eat dinner
6 pm	
	7pm - 8pm Chores
	8pm - 9pm Watch a movie with my family
	9pm - 10pm Go to bed at 10.

**Now it's your turn.** Fill out this day timer page by writing down what you do all day right now, while you are still in school. Your page will probably look pretty full since you spend much of your day in classes

## June 08, (*This Year*)

Monday	
6 am	
7 am	
8 am	
9 am	
10 am	
11 am	
12 pm	
1 pm	
2 pm	
3 pm	
4 pm	
5 pm	
6 pm	
	7pm - 8pm
	8pm - 9pm
	9pm - 10pm

This day timer page is for a day **after you've graduated**. Write down what you want your day to look like when you're finished with high school.

**Example of Day Timer for After Graduation**

Monday	
6 am	
7 am	Get up, shower, and have breakfast
8 am	Leave home and walk to work Work at Farmers State Bank
9 am	
10 am	
11 am	
12 pm	Walk home, prepare and eat lunch
1 pm	Walk to gym Work out at gym
2 pm	Do errands (grocery store, post office, bank)
3 pm	
4 pm	Head home, do chores around the house, make dinner
5 pm	Eat, clean up the kitchen, make lunch for the next work day
6 pm	Call friends, take a walk, play computer games, listen to music
	7pm - 8pm
	8pm - 9pm Watch TV
	9pm - 10pm Go to bed at 10.

**Now it's your turn.** Fill out this day timer page by writing down what you'd like to be doing after you've graduated. Try to have your day be as full as it was when you attended school.

## June 09, (*The Year You Graduate*)

Monday	
6 am	
7 am	
8 am	
9 am	
10 am	
11am	
12 pm	
1 pm	
2 pm	
3 pm	
4 pm	
5 pm	
6 pm	
	7pm - 8pm
	8pm - 9pm
	9pm - 10pm

What do I do now?

How much help and support  
do people give me now?

What are my skills and  
abilities today?

## STEP TWO: ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW.

To help you think about what you need to learn to do for yourself before you graduate from high school, think about what you do now and how much support you are getting. You don't need to be totally independent to work, live, or play in your community, but there might be skills you can learn, supports you can use, or a way to do things differently so you can participate as much as you are able.

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

What are your academic skills (for example, reading, writing, math, using computers, etc.)?

What accommodations or help do you use to participate at school?  
(Examples of accommodations include taped books and lectures, large print, oral tests and reports, extended times for tests and assignments, a paraprofessional to remind you what to do, a peer mentor who helps you in class, etc.)

What things do you get help doing at school?

If you don't read or do math, what strategies do you use to get these things done?

If you have people who provide support to you in an activity or class (like an aide), what do they do for you?

## **WORK/EMPLOYMENT**

What work experiences have you had in school? In the community? At home?

What chores and responsibilities do you have at home?

What are you good at doing?

What do you need help with when you are working or doing your chores?  
What's the best way to teach you a new job so you can do it well and as independently as possible?



# Activity

List all the chores, in-school jobs, and community jobs that you have tried. For each one, indicate what you liked best and least about that job. Talk about what types of help you received to do that job.

<b>Chores/Jobs</b>	<b>What I liked Best</b>	<b>What I liked least</b>	<b>Help I received</b>
(ex) Loading the dishwasher	I didn't have to wash dishes by hand	I had to adjust the dishes to fit the most glasses and plates	I needed help learning how to operate the features on the machine

# Activity

Here is an activity a parent, other family member, or teacher can do with you. Ask that person to take pictures of you doing different work tasks that you have tried before (for example, shelving library books, feeding the dog, vacuuming your room, selling Girl Scout cookies to a neighbor, drilling holes for a curtain rod, fixing the motor on your scooter, making bread...) Tell that person what you liked and disliked about each task and have them write down what you say. Tell them what you did well and what you needed help doing with each task and have them write that down, too.

Task	What I liked Best	What I liked least	What I did well	Help I received
(ex) cooked spaghetti	Eating the spaghetti	Boiling water is hot and scared me	Opened the jar of sauce	Getting the pasta out of the boiling water

## **HOME**

When you are at home, what kinds of things do you do?

What do you do on the weekends, during the summer, or on other days when you don't have school?

What's the best way to help you learn new things around the house (like cooking, laundry, yard work, etc.)?

Are there any safety issues for you at home? (For example, would you need help getting out of the house in case of a fire or do you need someone close by when you're bathing in case you have a seizure?)

Do you use the phone? Who do you call?

Do you spend time at home by yourself?

Do you remember to take your medication each day? Does anyone help you take your medication (for example, open the bottles, count the pills, give you the insulin injection, etc.)?

# Activity

**Write down your typical routine for a school day from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. Put a + next to the actions you do by yourself and put a \* next to the actions that someone helps you with.**

## School Day Daily Routine

(ex.) +use the bathroom, + brush my teeth, \* iron my shirt

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# *Activity*

**Write down your typical routine for a weekend day or school vacation day, from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. Put a + next to the actions you do by yourself and put a \* next to the actions that someone helps you with.**

Weekend or School Vacation Day  
Daily Routine

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# Activity

Have someone take photos or a videotape of you completing the chores and other responsibilities you have at home. If someone helps you with these chores and responsibilities, describe how they help or ask them to describe how they help. (For example, do they remind you it is time to do the chore? Check your work to see if it is right? Physically help you?)

<b>Chore/Responsibility</b>	<b>Who helps?</b>	<b>How do they help?</b>
(ex.) Clean the bathroom	My mother	I have a written check list of job duties to complete

## **COMMUNITY**

Where do you go for fun in your community?

Where else do you go in your community (for example, the doctor, grocery store, hardware store, restaurant, etc.)?

Who helps you go shopping at the grocery store, access the local gym, go to your favorite restaurant, or visit the doctor? How do they help you?

How do you communicate with people in your community? (For example, through a sign language interpreter, using a communication device, writing notes when people don't understand you, or by using eye movements and gestures, etc.)

How do you get to where you want to go?

## **Activity**

**Draw or paste a picture of your house in the middle of this page. Around your house, draw or paste pictures of all the places where you go now in your community. If there are other places where you would like to go but you haven't yet, draw or paste pictures of them and put a circle around each one of them. You might want to do this activity on a piece of flipchart paper or large dry erase board instead so you will have more room.**

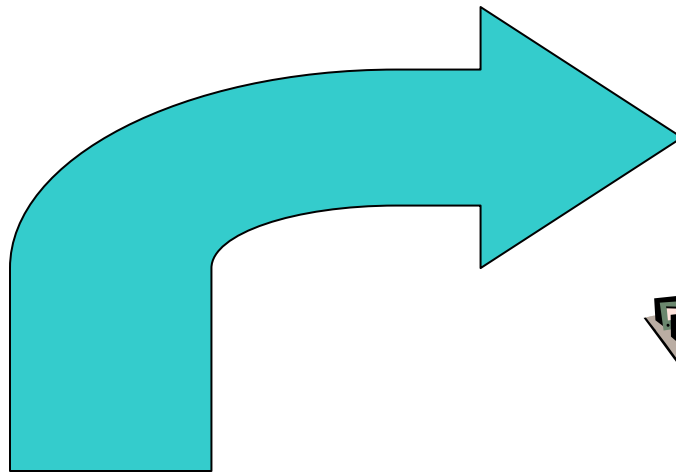




How do I get from where  
I am now to where I want to  
be when I graduate?

**STEP THREE: MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU CAN LEARN TO DO, AND THE STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE A TO GET CLOSER TO THESE GOALS BEFORE YOU GRADUATE.**

Think back to the first two steps you took in this workbook. You started by creating a vision of what you want your life to look like after graduation and then you painted a picture of where you are today. Now it's time to think about what you might need to learn, practice, or experience to get from where you are now to the life you want to have after high school. This might include steps like trying new things at work and at home, volunteering in your community, visiting an adult developmental disabilities agency or an Independent Living Center. You might also want to learn to use technology that can help you participate more fully in a job in your community. This would also be a good time to start finding out information about different housing options. On the path to your vision, there will be steps that you will need to take, but there will also be steps your parents, your teachers, and/or other people providing services to you will need to take with you.



Life After  
High  
School



Where You  
Are Now

## *Activity*

**EDUCATION: What skills do you need to learn to finish high school and gain life skills that will help you get ready to meet your adult goals?**

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**Here are some activities that can help you get ready for adult living. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Learn to follow a schedule or to use a checklist to remind me what to do next instead of having someone tell me what is next.
- Learn about safety in the community and at home so I can do more things on your own.
- Practice explaining how I learn best and what I need for accommodations or help.
- Explore technology that will help me read and write more easily.
- Visit a local college. Pick up a course catalog. Meet with the Disability Services for Students to see what supports are offered.
- Google the state's Job Corps Programs and read about the various courses of study they offer.
- Choose someone in the community who works in a job that I am interested in. Ask them about how they learned to do that job and what kind of training they received? Where did they get the training? Are there other places you could get the same kind of training?

## *Activity*

**EMPLOYMENT:** What things help you learn how to do something new? What help do you need to get a job? For example, do you need someone with you when you learn a new task? Do written instructions help? Is it better if you can see an example of what you're supposed to do? Would it be helpful if you could practice filling out job applications and doing job interviews with someone you trust or would it be best for someone to represent you to an employer and create a one-of-a-kind job for you?

**Here are some activities that can help you prepare for having a job in your community. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Increase my chores and responsibilities at home.
- Sample various job types through volunteering or work experiences.
- Get a paid job.
- Visit an agency in my community that provides supported employment to adults.
- Visit agencies that can help me find a job such as: Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation or Workforce.
- Request a thorough vocational evaluation from my vocational rehabilitation counselor. In the Birmingham area, you can request employment and independent living evaluations from vocational rehabilitation at their Lakeshore facility or ask for the Children's Rehabilitation Teen Clinic evaluation for students with the most significant disabilities.
- Meet with adult agencies such as the local Mental Health Authority to explore what they provide for employment supports.
- Participate in job experiences in the community (a community-based work assessment) to find out what environments, supports, and tasks can help me be most successful. *Your school IEP team can facilitate this or your Vocational Rehabilitation counselor can arrange for this.*
- Ask my IEP team for an assistive technology evaluation to see if they have any ideas about gadgets or strategies that can help you work more independently.
- Learn about Customized Employment.

# *Activity*

**COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES:** What skills do you need to learn to actively participate in your community as independently and actively as possible? What skills do you need to learn so you can get to businesses and use their services and enjoy recreational activities you want to be a part of? Are there other things that would help you participate more in your community?

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**Here are some activities that can help you prepare for an active community life. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Learn to shop for meals or learn to use a shopping service.
- Learn to buy things I want or need or come up with ways I can use to shop by myself without learning math. (For example, using a debit card, writing a check, charging groceries, etc.)
- Attend a class at the YMCA.
- Learn to go to a movie with a friend or by myself.
- Join a community interest group.
- Visit the local Independent Living Center and ask about peer mentors, classes or self-advocacy groups.
- Come up with strategies to make myself understood to unfamiliar people.
- Practice asking about whether or not a hotel, restaurant or business is accessible.
- Find a list of non-profit agencies in my community that need volunteers.
- Find out how to register to vote.
- Learn different ways to get where I want to go like calling a friend or coworker and asking for a ride, walking safely in my community, taking the bus, or seeing if I can learn to drive.

# Activity

**POST-SCHOOL ADULT LIVING: What do you need to learn to live as independently as possible? Do you need any services, supports, or technology that would help you do things more independently?**

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**Here are some activities that can help you prepare to live as independently as possible. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Think about the daily activities where I rely on someone else for help, then think about ways I can be more independent in each of these activities.
- Take a first-time home buyer's class.
- Learn about HUD and Section 8 housing
- Find out how to rent an apartment.
- Visit a friend who lives on their own and ask them about the kinds of things they needed to learn to do this.
- Explore group living options such as living in an apartment with friends or living with people who would provide some support to me in exchange for rent or living in a group home or living in supported living.
- Find out about Alabama's Home and Community Based Medicaid waiver services if I need ongoing support to live in the community.
- Apply for SSI.
- Learn to manage my own doctors' appointments and medications.
- Learn money management and budgeting.
- Open a checking account.
- If people are concerned about me living in the community by myself, think about all the strategies I can learn that would help me live more independently and safely in the home of my choice.
- Explore the possibility of having someone provide support to me in my own home.

# Activity

**RELATED SERVICES:** What related services will you continue to need after graduation? Examples might include: orientation and mobility assistance, help with obtaining and learning to use a new piece of technology, counseling, using public transportation or arranging rides to work, physical therapy, nursing services, personal care...

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**Here are some activities that can help you plan for the services you will need after you graduate. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Research what physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy services are available in my area for adults. Find out who provides these services.
- Learn how to hire and direct my own personal care attendant.
- Make a list of all the activities my family helps me with now that a personal care attendant would need to provide in a new situation, such as college.
- If I need special technology, meet with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to ask about funding for services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, blind, and/or who use technology.
- If I need medical assistance at home, ask my VR counselor if I qualify for a State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) Medicaid waiver or the Technology Assistance (TA) waiver.

## *Activity*

**DAILY LIVING SKILLS:** What daily living activities (like paying bills, cleaning and maintaining a house, preparing meals, doing laundry, and taking care of your personal hygiene) do you need to learn to do? What daily living activities will you continue to need help with after you graduate?

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**Here are some activities that can help you learn and practice daily living skills. Put checkmarks by the activities you plan to try.**

- Have my parents go through their monthly bills with me and show me how they pay each bill.
- Develop a household budget showing what my expenses might be after I graduate and how much income I will need to meet those expenses.
- Learn how to fix a leaky faucet.
- Help paint something like a fence, porch, or bedroom.
- Do my own laundry each week.
- Plan and cook a meal for myself and my family once a week.
- Search the Internet for simple recipes I might want to try.
- Practice keeping myself clean and brushing my teeth twice a day.

**FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL EVALUATION: This can be formal or informal. It is a strategy used to find out what someone's skills, abilities and support needs are for working. A functional vocational evaluation can be performed by the school or by an employment agency in the community. This process can help you understand the environments and supports that work best for you, as well as helping you to identify different tasks that you can do in the community. This assessment should NOT determine whether or not you are ready to work in the community. It should describe the conditions (including supports) that will help you be the most successful in a community job.**

**You and your IEP team should discuss whether you could benefit from a Functional Vocational Evaluation.**



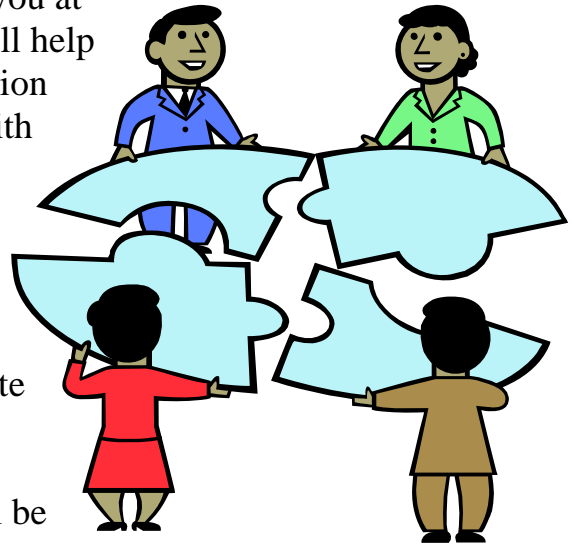
What agencies can help me  
get to where I want to be  
after graduation?



## STEP FOUR: THINK ABOUT WHO CAN HELP YOU MEET YOUR GOALS AND CONTINUE SETTING NEW ONES.

A big part of planning for your life after high school is thinking about what services and supports you might need once you graduate. For example, what kind of supports might you need to get the job that you want, live as independently as possible in your community, and lead an active life? The people who help you at school are not usually the same people who will help you after you graduate. A major part of Transition Planning is connecting you and your family with adult agencies who might provide or pay for services as you are finishing high school and after you leave high school.

The school is required to help you and your family identify and connect with the appropriate agencies. Many times, adult agency representatives will be invited to your IEP meeting; or information from the agencies will be shared at your meeting. It is up to you and your family to follow through with each agency, to apply for their services, and to complete their eligibility processes. Your transition from high school will be smoother if you connect with the agencies that will help you after graduation **BEFORE** you leave school.



Important differences between schools and adult agencies:

1. If you are a student with a disability and you qualify for special education services, the schools **must** provide you with those services. This is called an **entitlement**. Once you exit high school, services are provided by adult agencies. You have to apply for the services and even if you apply and meet all the qualifications, you may not receive the services or may not receive them right away. This is because adult services are based on **eligibility and availability**.

2. There are ***waiting lists*** for some adult services. Even if you qualify for services as an adult, you may have to wait until an agency can serve you, or you might have to find other ways to get the help you need.

3. In schools, most services that you need are coordinated by one person, your special education teacher or case manager. After graduation, you or a family member might need to ***coordinate your own services***. (Sometimes a Department of Mental Health case manager can help with this but not always.)

4. ***Eligibility requirements may be different*** for children and for adults. They may also be different for people who are still in school and those who are finished with school.



## Which agencies or services could help me to reach my goals?

There are many different agencies, programs and services that might be able to help you reach your goals. The following pages will tell you about some of the resources available. You can also talk to your parents, the parents of other young people with disabilities, teachers, people providing you services right now, and adults with disabilities who are successfully living in your community...they might have other ideas for you. The Internet can be another source of information. You can do a “Google” search for specific topics like “accessible housing” or “customized employment for people with disabilities.” Here is a website that will give you information and contact numbers for various adult service agencies in Alabama:

<http://sites.google.com/site/transitionresourcesinalabama/home>

Many disability services are deficit-based. This means that when you apply for these services, you will often be asked to describe what you cannot do well or at all. You may also be asked about what supports help you function at home, at school, and in your community. Learn what the application forms are looking for and how eligibility for particular services is determined. You might want to have someone from school, your case manager, a community living specialist from your local chapter of The Arc, or a peer mentor from the local Independent Living Center help you complete the paperwork.

**Informal or creative support:** Sometimes you may choose not to use an agency to help you or there might be a long wait to get help from that agency. Get creative! Could a friend help you get to work? Could you exchange free or reduced rent for someone to live with you and provide some help? Could a co-worker help you punch in on the computerized system at work?

## *Activity*

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about adult agencies. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take.**

- Get to know what the adult agencies are in my community. Learn about their eligibility requirements.
- Ask my teacher to invite agency representatives to join my IEP team as early as possible.
- If your school hosts a Transition Fair, Transition Forum, or other meeting where families and students can be introduced to agencies—go, ask questions and get information.
- Ask my school for brochures, pamphlets, and business cards from agencies so I can learn more about those that might be the most helpful to me.
- Apply for adult services as early as I can and definitely BEFORE I finish school.
- Talk to other young adults who have graduated from high school to get information and ideas.
- Check with the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities to see if there are any statewide conferences for my family and me to attend.

# **Alabama Community Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities**

Some young adults with more significant intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities may require more supports to live in the community than their own families can provide. These young people may be eligible for services through Medicaid waivers.

## ***Accessing Community Services through Medicaid Waivers in Alabama***

This workbook focuses on helping young adults who were born with significant disabilities or acquired conditions that have caused disabilities during childhood, before they finish high school.

While the money to pay for Medicaid comes from both the Federal Government and the State Government, states administer the Medicaid Program (take care of the decisions and paper work). Medicaid Waivers from the state are limited by how much money the state can offer to match to the portion the Federal Government provides.

Example: For Alabama, the Federal Government will give our state \$2.00 for every \$1.00 our state offers to put into the Medicaid system (this % varies annually). If our state can only put \$1,000.00 in, we will only receive \$2,000.00 from the Federal Government resulting in \$3,000.00 of money for our state to use to provide Medicaid services.

There are several federally mandated services that each state's Medicaid program must provide and then there are numerous other services that states can choose to provide or not.

While Medicaid was created to help people with low incomes, now there are several Medicaid programs designed to help other people who fall into various categories such as women who are pregnant, people who are elderly, and people with disabilities.

Certain Medicaid programs designed for people with disabilities are called Medicaid Waivers. They were created to allow people with disabilities to get the services they need to live at home or somewhere else in the community rather than being placed in an institution or nursing home. Since people usually qualify for Medicaid BECAUSE they are placed in an institution or nursing home, the word "waiver" indicates that the program "waives" the usual criteria of being institutionalized and instead lets the person receive the needed care in their community. The idea of "waiving" household income applies in some cases and only the "individual's" income is considered. You will need to apply for a Waiver to determine if you meet all the criteria.

Medicaid Waiver criteria and a list of what is available at Alabama Medicaid's Website is listed further down on this page. Remember that while you may not view your child as "needing care in a nursing home, hospital or other institution" this is simply stating that your child needs continuous or skilled care that other than you or your family providing it, a nursing home, hospital or institution would be required.

Medicaid's Website describing the various Waivers is located at:

[http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov/programs/long\\_term\\_care/ltc\\_waiver\\_services.aspx](http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov/programs/long_term_care/ltc_waiver_services.aspx)

The following paragraph is copied directly from this site. You can click on "Chart – Alabama HCBS Waiver Services" to get a side-by-side comparison of all the waivers or click on each Waiver individually for details regarding each specific waiver. If you choose to apply for a waiver, you need to contact the agency listed as "Who provides Case Management?" in the column under the specific waiver column you choose. There can be thousands of people on any given waiting list for these services so you should apply immediately.

## Home & Community-Based Waiver Services

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Home and community-based waiver programs are available to eligible Medicaid recipients who are at risk of needing care in a nursing home, hospital or other institution. Clients must meet financial, medical and program requirements and must be willing to receive services in their homes or communities. Waiver program enrollment is limited and a waiting period may be necessary.

- [Summary of Programs](#)
- [Chart - Alabama HCBS Waiver Services - \*Updated 7/16/10\*](#)
- [Elderly & Disabled Waiver](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Waiver](#)
- [Living at Home Waiver](#)
- [Intellectual Disabilities Waiver](#)
- [State of Alabama Independent Living Waiver](#)
- [Technology Assisted Waiver for Adults](#)

Not every adult with a disability will be eligible for Medicaid or a Medicaid waiver. The purpose of these waiver services is to provide enough support to individuals with the most significant disabilities to live successfully on their own or with their families in their community so they avoid living in nursing homes and institutions.

- Write down the name and phone number of the local Department of Mental Health contact person—Mental Health Authority/310 Board-- (below is the link with a chart that is a list of phone numbers by county:

[http://www.mh.alabama.gov/Downloads/COPI/Find\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Servces\\_By\\_County.pdf](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/Downloads/COPI/Find_Mental_Health_Servces_By_County.pdf)

- Visit the local Mental Health Authority (310) office in my county.
- Ask a 310 representative to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Invite a 310 representative to my next IEP meeting.
- Complete an application for Department of Mental Health Medicaid waiver services to make sure I am on the waiting list.
- Talk to a person who receives these Medicaid waiver services. I might ask a service provider or support group for someone who may speak with me about these services.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to find out the best way to talk to a Department of Mental Health provider agency (like The Arc or Volunteers of America) staff member to learn as much as possible about their services.

## Alabama Mental Health Services

If you have a mental health impairment, explore **Alabama Mental Health Services**. The Department of Mental Health Division of Mental Illness is the state agency that manages services in Alabama. These might include case management, counseling, day treatment, and employment and residential supports.

- The Division of Mental Illness Services *MI* serves children and adolescents who meet the criteria for Serious Emotional Disturbance. Services include outpatient treatment, In-home intervention, case management, day treatment and residential services.
- Adult Mental Health services are available to individuals 18 and older who meet the definition for having a Severe and Disabling Mental Illness.
- Check the website for Wings Across Alabama, below:  
<http://www.wingsalabama.org/>

This is a self-advocacy organization for those receiving mental health services.



**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Alabama's Mental Health Services. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Read about the adult Mental Health services that are available in Alabama. For information about these services visit the following website:  
<http://www.mh.alabama.gov/MI/?sm=b>
- Write down the name and phone number of the local Mental Health contact person. The following link will give you contact information by county:  
[http://www.mh.alabama.gov/Downloads/COPI/Find\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Servces\\_By\\_County.pdf](http://www.mh.alabama.gov/Downloads/COPI/Find_Mental_Health_Servces_By_County.pdf)
- Make an appointment to visit the local Mental Health office. Ask a Mental Health staff member to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Invite a Mental Health staff member to my next IEP meeting.
- Complete an application for Mental Health services.
- Talk with an adult who receives Mental Health services.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to learn the best way to ask Mental Health staff members about adult services.

## Social Security Administration

**Social Security** has two financial assistance programs available to youth and adults with disabilities. The most common Social Security financial program for youth is Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which comes with Medicaid health care coverage in Alabama.

- ❖ You can apply for SSI at any age but the eligibility for children under age 18 is based on the resources and income of their parents.
- ❖ At age 18, young adults can apply for SSI and only their income and resources are counted.
- ❖ Youth who have been receiving SSI must reapply and be determined eligible as adults when they reach 18.
- ❖ Work incentives such as PASS plans (Plans for Achieving Self-Support) can shelter money for employment supports or anything an SSI recipient needs to become more self-sufficient. (People receiving SSI may qualify for a Social Security PASS if their resources or income reduce their SSI check. People have used PASS plans to pay for cars, equipment, job coaching, and other goods and services to help them reach a vocational goal and become more self-sufficient.)
- ❖ Two agencies that can help you with Social Security questions or with work incentives are:
  - **WIPAs (Work Incentives Planning Assistance agencies)**, which are resources in most every state that can provide you with information about Social Security work incentives.  

<http://www.alawin.org/>
  - **PABSS (Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security)**, which can provide help with issues about your Social Security benefits or help write a PASS plan.

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Social Security. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Read about SSI and work incentives. For information about SSI and work incentives visit the following website:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/transitionresourcesinalabama/home>
- Print out the current fact sheets on SSI available at the website below
- PABSS offices.
- Make an appointment to visit the nearest Social Security office.
- Ask a Social Security representative to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Complete an application for SSI.
- Make a list of ways that a PASS plan could help me work.

### **Fact Sheets**

Website: <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/training/publications.asp>

- “Disability” Defined
- Paychecks and SSI Benefits
- SSA Work Incentives 2009
- SSI and SSDI: Similarities and Differences
- Changes in SSI and SSDI
- SSI & Children Turning 18
- SSI Benefits and Children with Disabilities
- Weighing the Risks: Some Tools for Benefits Analysis & Planning for SSI and SSDI Recipients
- Property Essential for Self-Support (PESS): A Self-Employment Resource that SSI Doesn’t Count

# Housing

If you want to rent an apartment or buy a home, there are a lot of **housing assistance** programs that might help you pay the rent or the mortgage. If you qualify for residential services through a Medicaid waiver (see page 56) make sure you get on the waiting list now.

**Section 8** is a program that provides assistance for housing based on income. To find out information or to apply for this program, you should contact your local housing authority. Section 8 often has a waiting list so applying early is important. You can apply at numerous locations and use the voucher anywhere.

- The **State of Alabama Public Housing Authority** website <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/al.cfm>  
Provides links and information on housing options offered within Alabama.
- Alabama Housing Finance Authority website provides information <https://www.ahfa.com/Default.aspx>
- United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham housing training is available: topics include the information about accessibility; financial restrictions; the importance of support services; working with your financial institution; and laws that serve to protect persons with disabilities in order to assist them in finding an appropriate home, regardless of whether it is a rental unit or if it is purchased.  
<http://www.ucpbham.com/our-programs/community-living.html>
- The Central Alabama Fair Housing Center (CAFHC) is a non-profit agency created in 1995 to ensure equal housing opportunities for all residents of central Alabama. This agency has information on disability and the federal Fair Housing Act.  
<http://www.cafhc.org/whoware/>
- Volunteers of America (VOA) Southeast has programs for housing and home ownership. It is our goal to create home ownership opportunities for low to moderate income families. VOA is building affordable housing throughout our community and helping acquire financing in order to purchase their home.  
[www.voase.org](http://www.voase.org)
- Habitat for Humanity in Alabama may have some resources in your area. Check out Habitat for Humanity at the link below to contact them.  
<http://www.alabamahabitat.org/>

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about financial supports for housing. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Read about different housing assistance programs. For information about housing assistance visit the following website:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/transitionresourcesinalabama/home>
- Write down the address and phone number of the local Housing Authority office.
- Make an appointment to visit the local Housing Authority office.
- Print out information about housing assistance programs to see if I might qualify for the service and bring it with me to my next IEP meeting.
- Invite a Housing Authority representative to your next IEP meeting.
- Complete an application for Section 8 rental assistance.
- Talk to someone who uses a Section 8 rental voucher.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to get the most information as I talk with a Housing Authority representative.

## Independent Living Centers (ILC)

Independent Living Centers can serve as a resource for people of any age with disabilities. Resources available at Alabama's ILC's include: peer mentoring programs; assistance with information and referral; individual and systems advocacy; independent living skills training; advocacy and information regarding Social Security benefits.

<http://www.ncil.org/news.html>

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about Independent Living Centers. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Read about ILCs. For information on ILCs visit the following websites: <http://www.ilrgb.org/> <http://www.montgomerycil.org/> <http://www.ilcmobile.org/>
- Write down the address and phone number of the nearest ILC.
- Make an appointment to visit my local ILC so you can explore resources and make connections.
- Ask an ILC representative to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Invite an ILC representative to my next IEP meeting.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to get the most helpful information and talk to an ILC representative about their services.

## Work/Employment

There are several agencies that can help you find a job. Each has its own application process and eligibility requirements. While you are in high school you should have assistance with your IEP team members to have some kind of part-time employment before you exit school. You should be working while school is out (summer time) and even on weekends during school. Getting paid work experience before you leave school is very important to your future. Your IEP team should include a counselor from ADRS (below).

**The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS)** is the state agency that houses the adult **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** and **Children's Rehabilitation Services (CRS)**. They provide a broad range of services for youth and adults who have physical or mental disabilities that might prevent them from getting or keeping a job. Services that can help those who want to work and need VR resources may include evaluation, job training, job development, rehabilitation technology or helping a person with getting services to get a college education. There are also programs for long-term supported employment that include on-site job coaching and access to counseling and problem solving for the life of the job. ADRS also facilitates the Alabama Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), a self-advocacy program for youth with disabilities.

- Apply for ADRS service the spring before your exit year of school or earlier.
- If you have a 504 plan instead of an IEP, you may still qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- Alabama has a chapter of the Association of Persons in Supported Employment (Alabama APSE). Al-APSE sponsors annual statewide conferences with national and regional speakers who present workshops to educate jobseekers with disabilities and their families on topics essential to successful employment and benefits. Scholarships are available to attend the conference. <http://www.al-apse.org/>

The **military** offers a variety of educational and career options.

- If you are planning to apply to the military, check the entrance requirements for the branch you are interested in (Army, Navy, Marines, etc.) because they are different for each branch.

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about employment programs and services. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Read about the employment services are available in Alabama. For information about employment services visit the following website:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/transitionresourcesinalabama/>
- Write down the name and phone number of the local VR contact person.
- Make an appointment to visit the local Job Service, Workforce office, or One-stop Career Center.
- Ask a VR representative to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Invite a VR representative to my next IEP meeting.
- Complete an application for VR services.
- Talk to an adult who receives VR services.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to learn the way to get a VR representative to learn more about their services
- Attend an AL-APSE (Alabama Association for Persons in Supported Employment) event. [www.al-apse.org](http://www.al-apse.org)



## Education

When you graduate from high school, you may decide to continue your **education**. You can do this in a variety of ways, like attending a college, university, technical or trade school; completing an apprenticeship; or going to Job Corps. Job Corps serves students ages 16-24 in residential career training programs and provides technical training in a variety of trades (culinary arts, mechanics, welding, etc.).

<http://www.jobcorps.gov/centerlocations.aspx?statename=al>

- ❖ By your junior year, contact Disability Services for Students at the university or college of your choice. Ask about the services that can help you be the most prepared for taking university or colleges courses.
- ❖ Before you decide on your classes for high school, learn about the classes the college you are interested in attending requires you take before admission (these are called “prerequisites”). Try to complete these courses during high school if you can.
- ❖ By your junior year of high school, request accommodations for the ACT/SAT exams. (Many colleges and universities will require you to take one of these exams and earn a certain score to be considered for admission to their school.)
- ❖ Request a comprehensive assistive technology evaluation at your IEP team meeting (as a rising Junior or rising Senior). Review the evaluation recommendations and make sure you include them in your adult planning for future education and work needs. Talk to the assistive technology center or college to find out what type of technology, accommodations and support strategies are typical in college environments.
- ❖ Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to fund some of your school tuition or supports.

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about educational opportunities you might want to pursue after high school. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Research trade schools and apprenticeship programs as an alternative to college. For information on some trade schools and apprenticeship programs in Alabama visit the following Alabama Community College System website:  
<http://www.alabama.gov/silverheader/Welcome.do?url=http://open.alabama.gov/>
- Read about what student financial aid programs are available.
- Write down the name and phone number of the Disability Services for Students contact person at the university or college you plan to attend.  
<http://www.alabama.gov/silverheader/Welcome.do?url=http://open.alabama.gov/>
- Make an appointment to visit a college, trade school or Job Corps (or if there isn't a college, trade school, or Job Corps facility near you, research the programs online).
- Ask an apprenticeship program representative to visit my school and meet with interested students.
- Invite a Job Corps representative to my next IEP meeting.
- Complete an application for the college/university/trade school/technical school of my choice.
- Ask about taking one class at a time if you aren't interested in getting a degree.
- Complete an application for Job Corps.
- Interview a college student with a disability at the university I plan to attend.
- Use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to interview the Disability Services for Students representative at the university or college I want to attend.

## Self-Advocacy Organizations

**Self-Advocacy Organizations** are groups for people with disabilities run by people with disabilities. These organizations educate people about disability history, disability culture, as well as individual rights and responsibilities, and how to be assertive and ask for what you want and need. There are many different self-advocacy groups out there. Explore as many as you can to decide which ones fit with your values, beliefs, needs and interests. Here are a few to get you started:

- ❖ **ADAPT** is an organization “fighting so people with disabilities can live in the community with real supports instead of being locked away in nursing homes and other institutions” (taken from the ADAPT website).

<http://www.adapt.org/>

- ❖ **PEOPLE FIRST** is a self-governing, self-directing, self-advocacy organization for individuals with a developmental disability.

<http://www.pfofal.org/>

- ❖ **SABE (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered)** works to make sure people with disabilities are treated as equals.

<http://www.sabeusa.org/>

- ❖ **CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)** provides resources and advocacy information for individuals with AD/HD and their families.

<http://www.chadd.net/template.cfm?affid=323&p=about>

- ❖ The **Alabama chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)** allows you to connect with other Alabamans who receive mental health services.

<http://www.namialabama.org/templates/System/default.asp?id=44494>

- ❖ **Wings Across Alabama** is a non-profit organization for consumers of mental **health** services with a dedication to making positive change in their lives. <http://www.wingsalabama.org/>

**Here are some action steps you can take to learn more about self-advocacy organizations you might want to join. Put a checkmark in the box next to each action step you plan to take:**

- Search the Internet to learn about other self-advocacy organizations. For information on some of the self-advocacy organizations out there visit the following website:

<http://sites.google.com/site/transitionresourcesinalabama/home>

- Research at least three self-advocacy organizations that interest me.
- Invite a self-advocate I trust to my next IEP meeting.
- If it seems helpful to me, use the Interview Guide on page 69 of this workbook to interview a self-advocacy organization representative from the group I want to join.

# **Interview Guide**

## **To Use with Adult Services Providers**

- 1. What do you do for people with disabilities?**
- 2. Who can use your services?**
- 3. How old must I be to apply for your services?**
- 4. How is the application done—who starts the process, what do I need to do?**
- 5. Can I custom tailor the services I receive if what I need or want isn't exactly what you provide?**
- 6. Are your services time-limited?**
- 7. Are there waiting lists for your services? If yes, how long is the average wait? How do you move up on the list (by date of application, level of need, etc.)?**
- 8. Are there other ways (besides waiting for an opening) to access your services?**
- 9. Will you provide the services to me or do you contract with local providers? If you contract with local providers, who are the providers in my area?**
- 10. How do I choose the provider I want?**
- 11. Can I change services or providers down the road if I choose?**
- 12. Can a provider say that they don't want to serve me?**

## Self-Determination

Self-advocates are the focus of this handbook—people with significant disabilities. Every successful adult is a successful self-advocate. Students and adults with disabilities need to learn to speak up for themselves, be aware of their needs, be knowledgeable about resources available, and be connected to others in order to develop new and original, individual resources. Disability advocates around the world recognize the importance of self-advocates directing their own lives.

***Self-determination*** is the word used to describe what individuals do to control their own futures and the services they receive. Each person using this handbook is the focus of their own person-centered plan for their future. Self-advocates need to know their rights and responsibilities in their communities. Your person-centered plan should change and evolve as you meet new life challenges. Everyone needs a team of family members, friends, co-workers, and community members or neighbors to be a part of a support system they can count on for help.

***Self-directed or Self direction*** is the term used to describe the process self-advocates use when they direct financial control of public services they need. Eventually, all states will have services that self-advocates and their families direct for themselves. Alabama is educating individuals and families about self-direction through the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities.

## Self-advocates must be life-long learners!

### Here is a list of organizations that sponsor programs self-advocates and their family members can access for continuing education on disability rights and services.

- Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities (ACDD) sponsors workshops and conferences in Alabama and sponsors the Consumer Involvement Fund to allow families and individuals to attend national workshops/conferences to bring back current “best practices” in disability information to our communities.  
<http://www.acdd.org/content.asp?id=200307>
- Every year, Auburn University and the Alabama State Department of Education Division of Special Education host a statewide **Transition Conference**.  
<https://fp.auburn.edu/institute/XX/default.asp>
- Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) is part of the nationwide federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) system. ADAP’s mission is to provide quality; legally based advocacy services to Alabamians with disabilities in order to protect promote and expand their rights.  
<http://www.adap.net/>
- Alabama Association for Persons in Supported Employment, hosts annual statewide conference on supported employment with scholarships for self-advocates and family members. Also hosts workshops on job coaching.  
<http://www.al-apse.org/>
- Full Life Ahead Foundation exists to “infect” individuals with disAbilities and their families and communities with Hope. FLAF holds Hope Training Conferences, seminars, and provide support and technical assistance through and with a well developed web of contacts in Alabama and throughout the country. Within Alabama, we act as an agency making our services available for free or at a reduced cost. Throughout the year, we hold at least three overnight weekend workshop retreats at Children's Harbor Lodge near Alexander City, Alabama and other locations throughout the State of Alabama. We present at schools, conferences, and other settings at no charge around the state and nation. For the two-day, overnight trainings, we charge a small fee to get the families and individuals to “buy into” the weekend and process. <http://www.fulllifeahead.org>

- Partners in Policymaking, a national website with tutorials available on employment, special education, self-advocacy, and more.  
<http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/online.html>
- TASH is an international grassroots leader in advancing inclusive communities through research, education and advocacy. TASH is a volunteer-driven organization that advocates for human rights and inclusion of people who have the most significant disabilities and support needs. They also have annual national conferences and provide website support.  
<http://www.tash.org/index.html>
- The Arc of Alabama has local chapters all over the state of Alabama and hosts an annual statewide conference.  
<http://www.thearcofalabama.com/>



## Transfer of Rights When You Are 18

When you turn 18, you will automatically become your own legal guardian unless someone petitions the court on your behalf to state that you need assistance with certain decisions or activities. During the IEP meeting a year before you turn 18, your special education case manager will explain that at 18, you will have the right to sign your IEP and determine who can attend your IEP meetings unless someone has been appointed your legal guardian. Do you need a legal guardian? This is a question you must look at carefully with your family. What things do you need help doing? Are there ways for you to get that help without giving up the right to make your own decisions? Sometimes people need assistance in one area more than another.

For example, you might need help applying for a loan and managing your finances but be quite capable of making your own decisions about your IEP and signing off that you agree or disagree with IEP team decisions. In this case, maybe your parents could help you open a bank account that would require co-signatures for all checks (that means you and someone else you trust would have to sign each check you wanted to write). If you ever needed to apply for a loan, your parents or case manager could help you complete the loan application. Sometimes people need help for a short period of time and then can return to making their own decisions.

An example might be if you were very sick in the hospital and were not able to make decisions by yourself. A temporary medical guardianship would allow someone you trust (like your mom or dad) to make important medical decisions on your behalf until you were feeling well enough to make the decisions on your own again. There are lots of options for receiving the help you need without having someone appointed to be your full guardian.

**There are lots of activities to help you explore alternatives to guardianship. Here are just a few...put checkmarks in the boxes next to the activities you will try.**

- Visit the following web page for an explanation of alternatives to guardianship:

<http://www.adap.net/Guardianship.pdf>

- Have a conversation with your parents. Ask them what they are most worried about when they think about you living on your own and working in the community. Talk about what scares you, too. Then brainstorm ways we can address those fears. For example, if your parents are afraid I'll forget to pay the bills and you will lose your apartment, it might make sense to open a bank account and set it up so that bills are automatically paid from the bank account every month.

- Ask your parents to read about a Medical Power of Attorney and talk about it with you.

- Think about whether or not you want your parents to attend my IEP meetings once I turn 18. Have an open, honest discussion with them so you can compare the benefits of having them at the meeting against any negatives from having them there.

- Talk about alternatives to guardianship with self-advocates from groups like People First of Alabama, ADAPT and your local Independent Living Center.

*Start your research early. Remember, this is YOUR LIFE. Take the lead in planning and preparing for it!*

We wish you all the best as you develop your travel plans to your adult life. When you finish, may you have the destination of a rich, rewarding, meaningful life in the community where you choose to live...a life that includes education, employment, housing, recreational activities, community involvement, social connections, and the supports you need to do all the things you want to do.

