

Inclusion and Employment Awareness

A Family Handbook to Support a Pathway to Employment for Students with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities



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Inclusion and Employment Awareness: A Family Handbook to Support a Pathway to Employment for Students with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.
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This Handbook is a resource for families, caregivers, educators and any service provider organization supporting children and youth who have a developmental and/or intellectual disability. This document is designed to give these partners tools and resources so children and youth who have a developmental disability can build the skills needed, throughout their school journey, to make employment a possible goal after leaving the educational system.

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If you have any suggestions for changes or additions to make to improve this handbook, or need to get in touch with the authors, please connect with us by email at info@odenetwork.com.



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Introduction



Access to open employment is a fundamental human right, as emphasized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹. The CRPD recognizes the right of people who have disabilities, including those with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, to work on an equal basis with others, with opportunities for freely chosen or accepted employment in an open, inclusive, and accessible labour market. Employment is also recognized as a main determinant of health², contributing to physical and mental well-being by providing financial stability, a sense of purpose, and social inclusion.

The foundation for successful employment for people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities is often laid during their school years. Inclusion in school allows students who have disabilities to learn alongside their peers, fostering a sense of belonging and developing important social and academic skills. An inclusive educational environment helps to break down stereotypes and build a culture of acceptance and understanding. By experiencing the same educational opportunities as their peers, students who have disabilities are better prepared for

the workforce, with higher expectations and aspirations. Additionally, inclusive education promotes self-advocacy and independence, which are essential for navigating the complexities of the job market and achieving long-term employment success.

However, for many families with children who have developmental disabilities, they have been presented with a list of deficits and struggles that their children will encounter in the future, with a narrative that often does not include positive outcomes for them. This *narrative of deficits* can result in lower expectations for the child from parents, caregivers, and educators. These lower expectations result in missed opportunities to include the child in typical home, school, and community activities that support the acquisition and development of skills that are foundational to employment.

A radical shift in thinking is needed for all who are involved in the life of a child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability.

1 Article 27 – Work and employment | United Nations Enable. (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html#:~:text=States%20Parties%20recognize%20the%20right,accessible%20to%20persons%20with%20disabilities>.

2 Public Health Agency of Canada. (2024, July 18). Social determinants of health and health inequalities. Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

“

When we consider activism among parents of children with disabilities, parents of children with intellectual disabilities have been on the forefront in many ways. They were among the earliest to organize, and they have been remarkably successful in achieving vast social transformation. Banding together and utilizing a range of social change techniques, parents helped build a more inclusive world, not just for their own children but for other people with and without intellectual disabilities too.³

”

Parents and caregivers have been at the forefront of change for children who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. **Engaging with parents in ways that are both inspirational and supportive is essential.**

Through this handbook, ODEN aims to bring awareness and empower families to better understand the importance of early exposure to work and developing employability skills, encouraging families to work and create a pathway towards employment, possibly challenging along the way others in “authority” who may have told them that their child will never achieve these goals.

Parents, caregivers, and educators do well in remembering that there will be ups and downs along the school journey; from JK to Grade 12 that journey can be up to 17 years!



3 Abramov, E., & Stein, M. A. (2021). Alison C. Carey, Pamela Block, and Richard K. Scotch, *Allies and Obstacles: Disability Activism and Parents of Children with Disabilities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020. Pp. 334. *Law And History Review*, 39(3), 617-619. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0738248021000389>

Skills can be mastered through accessible opportunities, perseverance and practice, but circumstances such as medical, health or social challenges may cause some skill regression in children, youth or adults. Everyone can benefit from rediscovering skills and working to master them further. By staying committed and supportive, families can help their children overcome challenges and continually build on their strengths.

A Note on Language

Language plays a critical role in shaping societal attitudes and perceptions, particularly when discussing people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. Language and how we use language can also highlight inherent power dynamics.

In this handbook, you will note that we are mindful on how we use language and terms such as “vulnerable.” Vulnerable comes from the Latin word for ‘wound’ and can suggest that people who have disabilities are “frail and in need of protection.” We aren’t inherently vulnerable because of our disability, but rather because of the acts and/or omissions of the society in which we live⁴.

This perception of vulnerability can lead to less opportunities for people who have developmental disabilities to experience and access opportunities that will help them build critical skills that are needed in employment.

Community Living British Columbia has published a great resource on how to address this topic – “Responding To Vulnerability”⁵. In their book, they offer a check list of what makes people

with developmental disabilities more vulnerable. See the table below and consider how the people surrounding your child (families, friends, educators, service providers) can work together to respond to vulnerability.

Things that can make people with developmental disabilities more vulnerable

- Not having a job or enough money
- Not having friends or family in your life
- Not belonging to clubs or groups
- Not taking part in community activities
- Not knowing your rights or how to recognize if your rights are violated or you have been taken advantage of
- Not participating in roles you want as a citizen
- Only spending time with other people with disabilities or with people who are paid to support you
- Discrimination at work or school
- Disrespect and negative attitudes from other people
- Difficulty communicating what you need
- Having challenging behaviours
- Not being listened to
- Not being taken seriously

Reflect on the language that you and those around your child use when talking about your child and their future.

4 People with Disability Australia. (2021). PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability. In PWDA Language Guide (p. 2). <https://pwd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PWDA-Language-Guide-v2-2021.pdf>

5 Community Living British Columbia (CLBC). (2011). A discussion paper about safeguards & people with developmental disabilities. <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Vulnerability.pdf>



Part 1

The Path to Competitive Employment Starts Early

Families of children who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities are often presented with a list of deficits that their child will face as they grow up; for some families, this narrative begins even before the child is born. How you and your family, friends, caregivers, educators and others think about your child is informative and very influential for their future.

Families are told to lower their expectations and remove all risks from their children's lives this can lead to missed opportunities for exploration and discovery of talents. This can potentially remove the child from the typical home and community activities that children who **do not** have developmental disabilities are often **encouraged or expected** to complete and participate in. These types of activities support the acquisition and development of skills that are foundational to employment.

In this section we will discuss how children's interests (their preferences for activities and environments), can help family/caregivers and educators to introduce ideas and activities that can be related to "work." Engagement in activities that are fun and that bring meaning to the child can lead to the development of transferable skills throughout their educational journey. This will lead to exploring ideas and concepts about what types of jobs the child/youth would like to do.

Figure 1 demonstrates this concept of overlapping relationships: starting with interests that engage the child, you can build/introduce activities that can be associated with job exploration and create a profile for your child's interests and skills that can support competitive employment when they leave high school or post-secondary education.

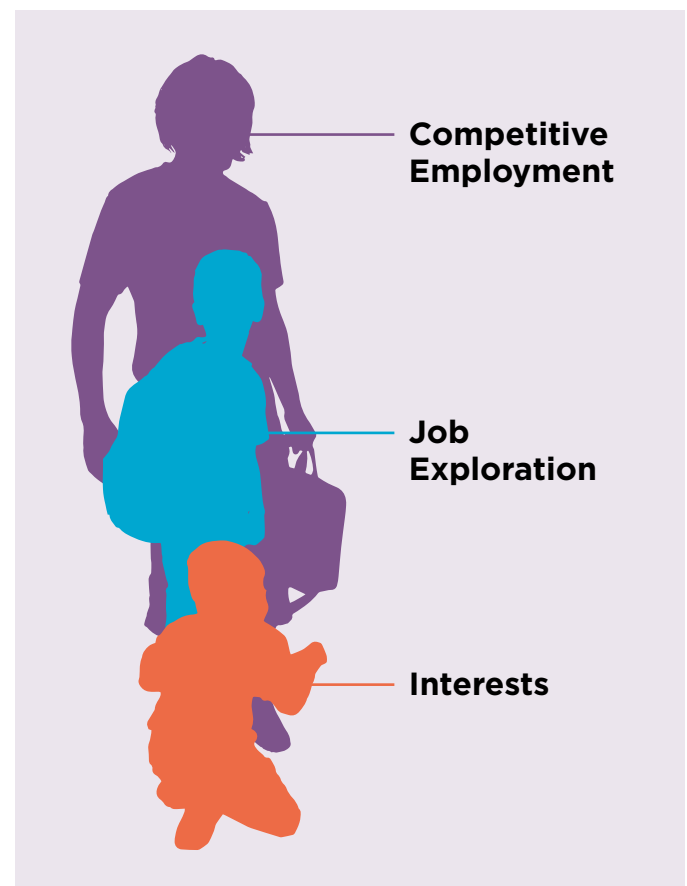


Figure 1. Overlapping relationship between interest, job exploration, and competitive employment.



Moments of Reflection

A word on “Starting Early”

Throughout this handbook and the learning modules created in this project, ODEN advocates to treat *employment preparation* for children and youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities as a journey that starts much earlier than high school.

However, we acknowledge that for some families and caregivers, who may be reading this document, their child’s journey to employment preparation may be starting **well after** they left school. Do not be discouraged if you think you have missed a perceived timeline – you have not.

The point is to support the start of this journey, no matter when.

1a. Discovering Your Child’s Interests

Children who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities should have access to as many opportunities as possible to explore what they like (and what they do not like!). Interests are developed through participation. Exploring interests is a great way to build a profile of what your child likes and doesn’t like to do!

For older children, take note of what your child is searching online, maybe it is cars, animals, music, fashion, sports. Any of these interests could lead to other opportunities to explore volunteering activities that also allow the development of employment skills, and of course, a potential for future employment.

For an interest checklist that you and your child can work with, follow this link: [Interests Checklist](#). In addition, the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment has put together a handout titled [Transition to Employment: What Parents Can Do Now](#). This resource outlines 4 steps to take while your child is young, to better prepare for employment later in life.

Please be sure to visit ODEN’s learning module for Families and Caregivers – [Raising Expectations: Starting A Pathway to Employment](#) for more resources.

Here are more practical ways to work with your child to discover their interest, based on the child age bracket and educational stage at child’s [grade level].



Ages 5 – 11

[Primary and Junior Grades]

Schools in Ontario have an [Individual Pathway Planning](#) tool. The Individual Pathways Plan is a component of the Education and Career/Life Planning Program for all Ontario students (grades K-12). Between Kindergarten and grade 6, students work on the **All About Me** portfolio. For your information, all students in grades 7 to 12 (ages 12-18) must have an Individual Pathway Plan (IPP) plan developed that they will review and revise at least twice each year. We discuss the IPP later in the document.

The [All About Me Portfolio](#) is an electronic portfolio for students to reflect on who they are, what opportunities they have in their school, and extracurricular activities. They can add information about themselves and their interests to this electronic portfolio. These items can be things done at school, or things done outside of school. When creating this portfolio consider the following:

- Ask the child what they want to do when they grow up; it is very appropriate to name everything from an astronaut to a butterfly – there are **no wrong answers** when kids dream about their future.
- Encourage and support any response that your child gives; dreams will change and with some creative thinking, you will be able to channel those dreams to goals.
- Request participation in school activities outside the curriculum (extracurricular) and that may have an inherent or perceived level of risk. Examples of these activities could include track and field, STEM Clubs, Cooking Clubs or basketball (competitions). These activities are important for skills development.



And while we discuss an electronic portfolio accessible through schools, you may choose to create your own -whether electronic or paper. The point is to have a number of ways to record this information and evaluate the progression of interests and skills development.

Age 12- 14

[Intermediate Grades/Middle School and High School]

Adding information to the student's electronic portfolio should continue into middle school and high school; continue to add items/activities/information to the electronic portfolio from experiences that the child is engaged in and outside of school.

For schools that use an electronic portfolio software such as [myBlueprint™](#), these might have interest inventories (or surveys). Consider guiding your child through those inventories and take note of any unknown interests. Encourage the school and educators to also assist the child in completing the interest inventories; occasionally students will share **different ideas** with school staff.



to younger grades (reading buddies) or volunteering at a local daycare to read to the children.

Any information that is learned is good information. Although certification is the goal for courses such as babysitting and first aid, it is also relevant to learn information **even** if the assessment for certification is not fully met – the point is to advocate strongly for full participation with the required accommodations to make both the content and the testing accessible to your young person.

Age 14 – 21 [High School]

As the student moves into high school, a much larger range of opportunities to discover likes and dislikes opens up. The student can use mentorship as a way to discover their interests.



Start to bring childhood interests into a teenaged context.

An interest in Thomas the Tank Engine can lead to exploring different types of trains, subway, and other modes of transportation. An interest in Disney Princesses can lead to exploring fashion, monarchy, and jewelry making.

If your child needs to bring a stuffed animal to school for self-regulation, consider how that can be replaced with a teenage appropriate item for example textured binder (fuzzy, sequences, etc.), keychain or pen, or a picture of the item to carry inside a school binder. This will help transition to a more age-appropriate self-regulation tool as they move through high school, work experiences, and into the workforce.

If interested in dolls and childcare, explore the opportunity of your child participating in a local babysitting course and/or volunteering at a local childcare centre. This interest could also lead to reading



Youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities can apply for [Community Living Ontario's Student Links](#) to find a mentor in an interest area. Other mentor opportunities for youth (16 ages and older) can be found with programs such as [MentorAbility Canada](#) and [Best Buddies Canada](#).

Be aware of any career and/or volunteer fairs hosted at the school or in your community. These are great venues to discover and explore what people do, specific to your community. There might even be things you never thought of as options for the future.

Engage with your young adult about the courses **they** would like to choose, to explore further interests. Consider advocating for accommodations to include student with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities in courses where **perceived safety/risks** prevent them from accessing the course – there are many ways to ensure access to the curriculum for these students such as the [Staying Safe At Work – Curriculum](#).

Building soft skills early such as communicating what your interests are, working in a team, following instructions, etc. can help create access to more opportunities throughout the school journey, even when support from Educational Assistants may be limited. Those opportunities may include extracurricular or club activities in the school setting, co-op programs, and others.

And lastly, as the high school journey continues for your young adult, continue to add interests, activities, and opportunities to their school's approved electronic portfolio. This would be a great resource as they are introduced to Employment Service Providers in your community.



1b. Connecting Interests to Job Exploration

For most of us, our interests and passion have influenced our career or work choices – we tend to do a job that reflects our values, our beliefs, and what we like to do! Students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities should have the same opportunities to explore how their interests and passions can translate to a job. This is what is known as job or career exploration.

Here are more practical ways to make the connection between interests and work, based on the child's age and educational stage at school [grade level].

Ages 5 – 11 [Primary and Junior Grades]

When out in the community, identify the employment opportunities that you see around you. For example: make a point to talk to your child if you see people



working in retail, customer service, construction, police, etc.

Consider how your child could, where appropriate, participate in community volunteering opportunities in local festivals; having your child help you neighbours with gardening, collecting neighbour's mail from super mailboxes, assisting with dog walking in neighbourhood; and participating in a community. All of these activities build important transferable skills.



Be sure to add these activities to their All About Me portfolio

Age 12 - 14

[Senior Grades/Middle School and High School]

In Ontario, for students graduating with a High School Diploma, a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement activities (volunteering) are a requirement.

Students accessing alternative curriculum or receiving special education supports,

and who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, working towards a Certificate of Accomplishment or an Ontario Secondary School Certificate are not required to complete the 40 hours of community involvement activities (volunteer hours).

These community involvement hours are still a valuable experience!

Help your young adult find volunteering opportunities and have them participate in these community hours. When completed, submit and have the hours recorded at school, even when you may have been told *it isn't necessary*. Advocate and work with the school and your community to have your child included in volunteering opportunities. Other opportunities may come up at the school itself, through volunteering at parent-teacher interview night (guiding parents to specific locations) or at the school's evening Art's Festival.



These opportunities are critical to build employability skills. In fact, the Ministry of Education clearly identifies the benefits of volunteering:



Volunteering as part of your high school experience helps you:

- *develop transferable skills*
- *explore different sectors and potential careers*
- *learn about your role as a citizen*
- *be aware of how you can support and strengthen your community*

[Ministry of Education - Get Your High School Volunteer Hours](#)

Volunteering also provides a great opportunity to connect the young person's interests to potential jobs in the not-for-profit sector.

Ages 14 - 16 [High School]

Perhaps your teen has expressed an interest in starting their own business or being their own boss. After all, people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities have a right to explore all forms of employment, including self-employment.

Your teen can consider participating in the [Summer Company](#) program. This program is offered by the Ontario government and is delivered by your municipality. It is open to youth aged 15+ who are attending high school/college/university and provides grants up to \$3,000.00 to start a summer business. The program is eligible for people who

are accessing the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). You will find more information about self-employment later in the handbook.

Note that for youth who are age 14 or over, their Individual Education Plan (IEP) must include a **transition plan** for the steps needed to transition from school to work, further education and/or community living. Families and caregivers can ask for organizations that support employment to be a part of this transition process. Starting relationships with these organizations (Employment Service Providers) early allows for the exchange of information about the student early, so that the staff at the employment agency can learn more about their interests, passion, dislikes, and aspirations for work.



Employment Service Providers deliver [Employment Ontario](#) programs and services under an agreement with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD)



Ages 16 – 19 [High School]

As the student reaches age 17, family/caregivers should make the switch from thinking about participating in summer camps to thinking about volunteering or employment opportunities during the summer months to build employability skills. This might include opportunities for participating as a Leader-in-Training at a summer camp; this would provide opportunities to build leadership skills with younger children, while being supported by older peers and a chance to explore further employability skills and opportunities.

During the school year, the student can begin to access co-op and/or Workplace Experiences as early as 16 years of age. If your young adult requires support in the Co-op/Workplace Experiences talk to the school staff about the plan to decrease that support over time.

Discuss with the school staff and special education staff different options for Co-op/Workplace Experiences in the last few years at school – use the extended school journey (beyond age 17) to access more work experience at different locations. This helps the student build their resume. Be sure to consider the interests and passion of the student to make every effort to align them with opportunities for work experience.

Attend resource fairs hosted in the community or by the school board to gather information about post high school options.

NOTE: Consider activities or extra-curriculum programs where your child was a **participant** (summer camp, community recreation programs). Discuss with the operators the opportunity for volunteer hours or leadership training where your child is provided a chance to develop transferable skills. Read about

Mark Haggarty, who started as a camper at McMaster Sport Fitness School and just retired as a paid coach after working there for over 30 years.



1c. Building Interests and Job Exploration into Competitive Employment

In the previous sections we discussed how to support the discovery of your child's interests and how to make connections from interests to job exploration. This next section provides practical resources for the last stage – competitive employment.

The Ontario Government defines competitive employment as:

employment paying minimum wage or higher in an integrated work setting where people with disabilities work in typical workplace settings alongside people with and without a disability. It can mean conventional employment where there is a typical employee/

employer relationship. It can include full-time, part-time, contract, or seasonal employment to recognize the diverse nature of people's disabilities and how their disabilities may impact their employment.

Competitive employment can also include self-employment or ownership or membership participation in a business enterprise where the objective is to earn at least the equivalent of minimum wage.⁶

As you and your young adult begin to explore competitive employment, tools such as resumes will be needed to communicate to employers the skills they have been developing through their school journey.

You may be looking for a document to track employability skills that will eventually make up their resume. The [Canadian Down Syndrome Society's Employability Skills Tracker](#) is a great tool that can help the young person track the development of skills such as:

- Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Teamwork Skills
- Personal Management Skill
- Organization Skills

The Government of Canada also has a [Skills for Success](#) tool to learn about everyday skills needed for work, learning and life. It includes:

- Learn About Skills
- Skills Assessment
- Skills Training

At this age, 17+, the family/caregivers and the young person would benefit from investigating paid summer work experiences through Community Agencies and Employment Service Providers.



These organizations may create individualized goals for the young adult to work on and assess these goals over the course of the work experience. Enquire with the agency if this has been done for your young adult while they were accessing their services and consider sharing any assessment with the school. This will ensure that all people working to support your teen in the learning of employability skills can assist in moving those skills forward.

Building a path to competitive employment also includes building a co-op/workplace experience plan with the school; determining goals and enquiring how those goals will be assessed.

As noted before, the young adult should take part in **different** co-op/work experiences while they are attending high school. Each opportunity should build on the last opportunity; for example, increasing time spent at the co-op/workplace experience and increasing difficulty of tasks.

6 1.1 Introduction to ODSP Employment supports | Ontario Disability Support Program policy directives for employment supports. (n.d.). ontario.ca.

At this age, family/caregivers and educators can determine preferred and non-preferred employment options based on the co-op and work experiences that the student has had. And these work experiences are a great way to build their resume/cover letter at a time while the school staff and educators can provide support.

Ensure that the young adult has an electronic copy of their résumé and cover letter when they leave high school. Having an electronic copy of the resume will allow any employment support agency to suggest adjustments to the resume for specific jobs the student may be applying for. An electronic copy can be saved to a USB key, or a copy can be sent to the student's email.

At age 20 – 21, and once the family has chosen an employment service provider or community agency, discuss with the school a plan for the [job developer](#) to observe the future job seeker at their Co-op/Workplace placement experience. In the student's final semester, investigate if the school staff can assist with the intake meeting that the employment service provider might require.

There are a few things that go unchecked in the excitement of the student leaving high school. As mentioned above, the family/caregivers and the student should ensure that the student has an electronic copy of any resume and cover letter that

they may have created along with their co-op teacher. You can also change the login on the student's electronic portfolio (i.e. myBlueprint) from a **school board email** to a **personal email**. Enquire what level of access the student has to the electronic portfolio after graduation. Questions to ask would be if they can they still add to the portfolio or do they have "read only" access. Remember, this information that you and your young adult have been documenting over their school journey will help them in their connection with an employment service provider for their future job exploration.

If you want to know some information about what jobs exist in the Canadian labour market, you can check information on the [National Occupational Classification](#) (NOC). The NOC includes every job in the Canadian labour market with the skills and credentials required for that job. It includes information on entry level jobs that do not require a high school diploma all the way to jobs that require specific post-secondary training.

The past sections have described some practical ways to discover interests, make connections to job exploration and connect these to competitive employment. The next part of this handbook will explore how you and your child can build a Future Job Seeker Employability Profile.



Part 2

The Future Job Seeker Employability Skills Profile



In this section, we will discuss how you, other family and caregivers, friends, educators and others involved in the life of your child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability can support building the skills profile for this **future job seeker**.

There are a number of skills that need to be developed and practiced, one building

on top of the other, to prepare a young person for employment. Figure 2 below demonstrates this concept of building skills and having a chance to practice them. The next subsections will explore this in more detail.

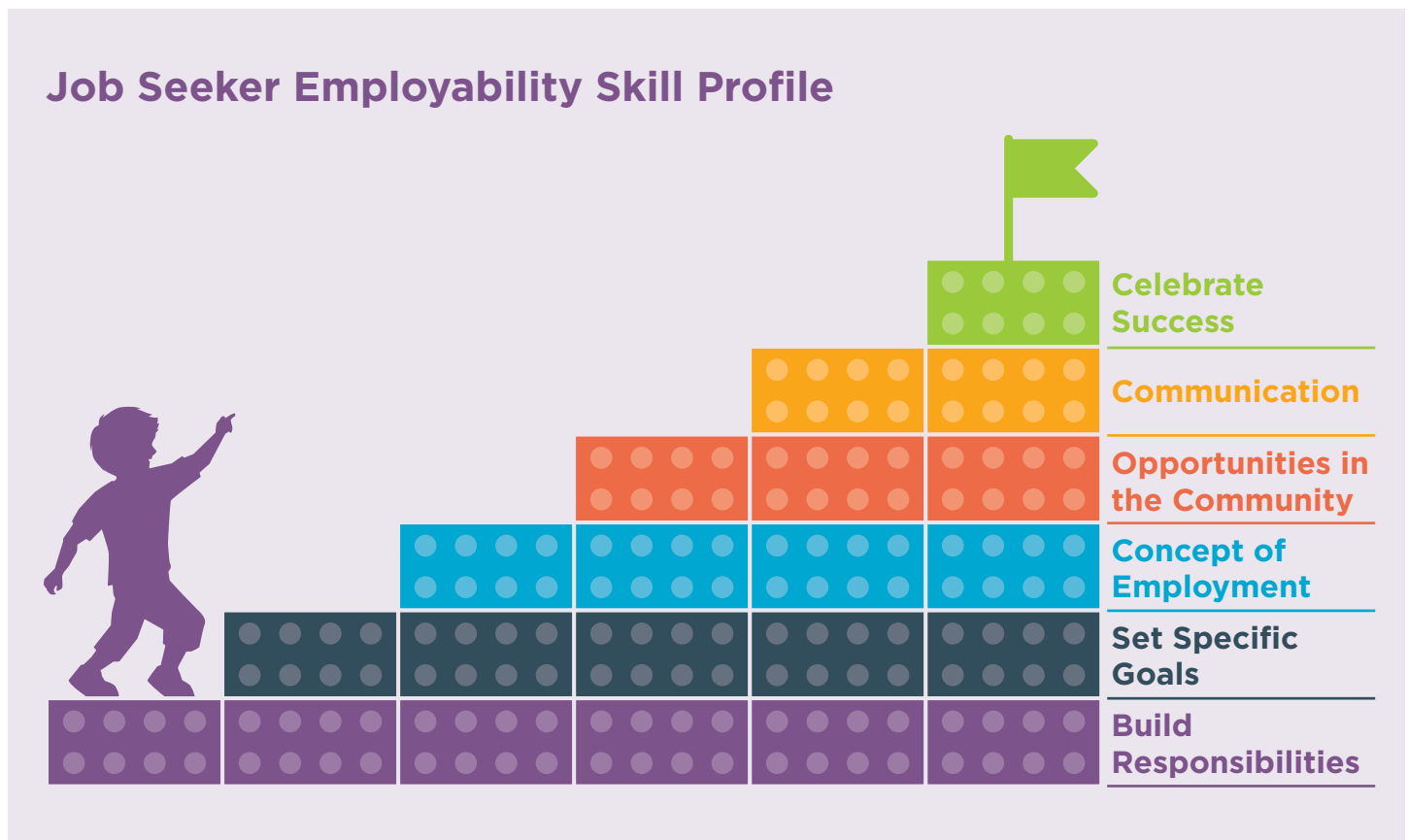


Figure 2. Building the Future Job Seeker Employability Skill Profile



How to Nurture Responsibilities at Ages 3 – 8

This is a special time when children want to help out at home, capitalize on this! Find household tasks that your child can be responsible for – you can visit ODEN’s learning module for Families and Caregivers – [Raising Expectations: Starting A Pathway to Employment](#) – for more resources to view a list of chores that are age appropriate.

You can introduce the “[Chunking Tasks](#)” strategy at this age, at home, and continue this technique well into adulthood. Chunking refers to breaking a large, lengthy, or difficult assignment or task into smaller parts. This strategy is commonly used in schools with students who have developmental, intellectual, and other disabilities where sustaining attention can be difficult.



2a. Build Responsibilities (And Accountability!)

How do we best teach responsibilities to children and youth? Well, we give them responsibilities!

The same is true for children and youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. We must create opportunities for them to hold responsibilities and contribute at home, in their school, in their community.

Keep track of the activities and the skills that the child develops as they take on more responsibilities. For some ideas on checklists to track life skills, visit the *Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center*, an American organization that has developed [Life Skills Checklist](#) a tool that includes categories like Personal Life Skills, Emergency/Safety Skills, Household Skills, and Community Skills. You can also ask the school educators (Resource Learning Teacher) what tools and resources they can provide for record keeping.



Consider this:

- ✓ Choose a chore
- ✓ Break down that chore into tasks (chunks)
- ✓ Create an action plan to participate in each task
- ✓ Assess the child's progress
- ✓ Break down further, or move forward with new task in the plan

Chores around the house can also improve [fine and gross motor skills](#) in an authentic manner – if your child has an occupational therapist (OT) and/or physical therapist (PT), speak to them about your desire to include your child in chores at home – better yet, show your OT/PT this handbook guide!

Examples of chunking chores:

Help with dinner

- Gather items from the fridge and pantry
- Wipe off the table
- Set the table
- Help with putting away leftovers

Doing laundry

- Help with sorting socks
- Help with folding wash cloths
- Putting own dirty clothes in hamper
- Deliver clean clothes to appropriate family member's bedrooms

Unloading the dishwasher

- Put away items
- Take out other items and hand them to you
- Have the child direct you where to put it away
- Put cutlery away

Be prepared that spills will happen, and something will break, that's okay. Kids need opportunities to learn from failure



in a safe environment – learning only happens when you can practice!

Chores such as making their own bed can be time consuming on a busy morning. Until your child can do it in a timely fashion, make it the responsibility of the child as soon as they get *home from school*.

Begin to expect that your child will be responsible for their **own belongings**. **Here is why this is important:** typically, in school, the Journey of Lost Belongings is mapped as such:



Cell phones and wallets are an important element of safety as the person becomes a teenager and young adult.

Start early with responsibilities to how they transport their own belongings. Have children pack their own backpack for daycare or school; use a visual checklist to assist; and these tasks can be done the night before to avoid hectic mornings.

Employment Connection:

Why is taking care of own belongings important? Packing their own school bag leads to develop skills that ensure they have everything they need for the work day when they are employed i.e. uniform, name tag, technology, lunch.



It is never too early to begin to talk and discuss internet safety.

In the USA, the Not-For-Profit “With All”, has put together a [parents guide](#) to discuss social media with children. This organization helps children and youth to feel good about their bodies and their eating habits. In Canada, the Canadian

Paediatric Society has a [social media](#) website dedicated to parents.

More specifically, for people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, Community Living British Columbia has designed an [online safety](#) website. And lastly, other resources on how to keep safe online can be found from [ConnectSafely](#), a California (USA) based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating people about online safety.



While you are discussing online safety with your child, begin to talk about personal space and consent, appropriate greetings for family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, school staff, other people in their life.

Employment Connection:

Why is developing Internet safety at an early age important? Employees need to understand boundaries for co-workers, supervisors, management; consent is a serious issue in the workplace.



Scaffolding Responsibility Skills at Ages 8 – 14

In the previous section, we discussed providing opportunities for taking responsibility. In this section, we will discuss and present examples of how parents, caregivers, families, and educators can use scaffolding as a method to reinforce the responsibility skills that their child has developed.

“The effectiveness of scaffolding hinges on the contingency rule: when the child struggles, the adult should increase the level of support provided, and when the child succeeds, the adult should gradually decrease the level of support. Scaffolding allows parents to adjust their support based on the child’s needs”⁷.

Continue to work on having your young person responsible for their belongings at school. Discuss this plan with your educators and educational assistants.

Have them carry their own backpack on the way to and from school. Resist the urge to take their backpack when they

get off the bus or on the walk to and from school. If the backpack is too heavy, remove some items for you to carry, but have your young person be responsible for the backpack.

Part of the transfer of responsibility to your child is that it becomes their responsibility, and their fault, if your child forgets a pencil case or their gym clothes. Even forgetting their lunch is not the end of the world and will allow your child to practice problem solving. For example, do they ask a friend to share their lunch? Do they ask the teacher for spare snacks in the classroom? They will be hungry when they get home, but they will have also had an opportunity to learn from the situation and develop resilience. Talk to the school staff about this plan so it doesn’t catch them off guard. Discuss your goal with them and how they can support the child in problem solving.

Now that your young person is/has been responsible for a few chores at home, identify all of the chores done at home as a family. Choose who is responsible for each one. Don’t forget to include things like laundry, mopping the floors, dusting, cleaning toilets, taking out the garbage and recycling. Also consider having them take part of making lunch or supper for the family. This allows you to discuss **teamwork** and how we have others who depend on the work that we do – that is, if your young person doesn’t complete a chore, it may impact others in their family.

Employment Connection:

Talking about the impact of our actions (or inactions) on others in our family is important. It develops a sense of teamwork.

7 Admin. (2024, April 22). Executive Function skills through scaffolding | Learn more! [Pathways.org](https://pathways.org).



Have the young person choose a few chores they want to be responsible for, then introduce one they do not prefer to do.

Employment Connection:

When working, employees typically do not enjoy about 30% of their job assignment.

When you have assigned chores for your child, consider adding times and days that the chores are to be completed.

Employment Connection:

It is important to introduce the concept of time to a child, early in their lives. By adding expectations when chores need to be completed (day and time), this will mimic expectations when working.

Use a timer to establish how long it takes to complete a given task; that becomes a baseline to show improvement; the goal is to decrease the time to successfully complete the task.

Employment Connection:

when employed, your young adult will need to complete tasks in a reasonable time.

Use a family calendar that is in a place that is accessible to your child; you can have them (or you can) add dates for chore responsibilities, doctor appointments, special activities; family birthdays, holidays and other important dates. Consider your child crossing off each day before bed.

Employment Connection:

Introducing the use of a calendar at an early age can build the concept of a schedule for work.

Consider an allowance for chores done at home and on time; this can help your child understand that work equals payment or a reward. You can consider changing the use of devices (phone, iPad, etc.) currently being used for entertainment to be used as a reward for accomplishing responsibilities in the home. Use the scaffolding method -start small for example unpacking backpack and lunch bag; build to multiple tasks before use of device for entertainment.

Employment Connection:

Work equals pay and pay equals savings; savings equal independence. Work is rewarding.



To support the understanding of what needs to get done, use a visual “to do” list to help your young adult move from task to task without having to be directed.

Employment Connection:

Why is understanding a “to do” list important? Employers do not have the time to direct employees for each task; once the task is learned, the adult should be able to complete a task and move on to the next without direction.

Practice having your teen stay home alone without a parent present. Again, start with small steps; tell the young adult you will be gone for a short period of time – maybe you go to get the mail at your neighbourhood community mailbox. Plan with your young adult what they will do when you, the parent or caregiver, is not home – perhaps they are responsible for house chores – provide a choice. Progressively increase the length of time they are left home alone. Maybe you will go for a short walk (10 – 15 min), to a corner store (20-30 min) or do a short shopping trip (30 min– hour).

Consider connecting with other community agencies who might have some suggestions to use technology to be safe in the home, i.e. Safety 1st Stove Knob Covers, Gas Stove Knob Lock. Developmental Services Ontario has a resource called [Technology and Your Housing Plan](#) that provides some ideas that you can consider now while your young adult still is at home with you, and you can have an opportunity to practice how to use these.

Employment Connection:

Practicing how to follow directions independently is important. Employees are expected to follow through with tasks under little or no supervision; this will help build dependability.

Depending on your school board, the high school day may **start earlier** and **end earlier** than elementary schools. It is difficult to find after school care programs for high school students; the more independent your youth can be at home, the easier the transition to high school will be for the family and the student.

Fortifying Responsibility Skills Development Ages 14 – 16

This is a great time to investigate after-school clubs or activities that your youth might be interested in!

All after-school activities are required to be supervised by teacher/school staff; if your young adult requires extra support, investigate the opportunity for a senior student to support (consider it volunteer hours). With the school, investigate the possibility of a support worker (non-school staff, paid for by family) to support in the activity. Participation in school activities may require some creative thinking, some advocacy, and a lot of relationship building among all stakeholders (families, caregivers, educators, etc.).

Discuss a backup plan with your young adult; occasionally after school activities are cancelled at the last minute due to weather, staff absence, etc. Create a communication plan and a plan for your young adult to get home if the bus has already departed the school. This will also provide an opportunity to help problem solve if activities are cancelled.

Employment Connection:

Extracurricular activities are important! This is a great opportunity to investigate different interests; practice communication with parents about schedule for after school activities, and pick up requirements.

Mastering Responsibility Skills Ages 16 – 18

Teenagers transitioning into adulthood would be expected to have a range of responsibility skills that include time management, financial responsibility, independence, problem solving, self-care,



and others. These are the type of skills you would be nurturing for your teen as they go through their educational journey – whether they have a disability or not! Remember not to lower your expectations on what they can achieve.

At this stage, you can have your teen start to carry a wallet. If you are concerned about losing important pieces of identification (ID), make a photocopy of the ID and keep the original at home.

Ensure your teen has a personal email and practice accessing it independently. Have family and friends send emails for fun! This will allow your teen to practice using email. Once your young adult turns 18 years of age, it is likely that school communication will be sent directly to the student through the student's school board email, or a personal email. If your teen is an emerging reader, investigate the use of text to speech/speech to text apps or software.

Employment Connection:

Digital literacy is important to increase access to employment. Encourage your young adult to check their email to build skills to receive schedules from work or other post-secondary opportunities in the future.

When your young adult is receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Income Support, you can use a portion of their ODSP to pay for their own cell phone. If the cell phone plan belongs to them, it will also start to create a credit rating for them!

The student should carry their cell phone when participating in co-op opportunities to check in with school – for example, they can contact the school once they arrive at the co-op placement or to problem solve public transit issues if they arise.

Employment Connection:

Learn to use a cell phone increases access to opportunities and to practice solving problems. Occasionally your young adult will miss a bus, or a bus will break down the way to work; they will need to contact the employer if running late.



There are many transit apps to download on their cell phone to help problem solve getting to work.

At this stage, the family and the young person can access advice from school personnel or an employment service provider or community agency to discuss the pros and cons of self-identifying as a person with a disability in the workplace. This is a very personal option.

While you may not want to disclose, you may want to discuss and coach your teen to identify accommodations they might require in the Co-op placement or work experience placement. Again, consult and access school personnel or an employment support agency to discuss and develop language to ask for accommodations in the workplace. In the USA, the [Job Accommodation Network](#) is a great resource for information on accommodations in the workplace.

A Note About Graduation:

As students get closer to grade 12, consider if your teen would like to graduate and leave high school at the end of grade 12 to pursue other options, or if they would like to remain in high school to continue to develop skills. Many school boards would allow students to participate in graduation activities even if they are returning the following year. Typically, students can only participate in the graduation ceremony once. As a family you can decide if your teen would prefer to participate in graduation in grade 12 with their peers, or if they are returning to school, prefer to wait until the end of their time in high school. Talk to your school about the options.

If choosing to participate in the graduation ceremony in grade 12, ensure the school is aware of this decision at the **beginning of the school year**. This will help to avoid missing deadlines for graduation photos, fees, ordering graduation gowns and including their names in any printed materials.

Implementing Responsibility Skills Ages 18 – 21

As your teen continues to transition to adulthood, mastering and implementing responsibility skills is key during this period of time. If your young adult has decided to remain in high school to continue to access more education and build more soft skills, some of the associated skills you would want to consider practicing further include:

- Build public transit skills to be able to go from home to their co-op placement, or from co-op placement back to home.
 - The more independent with public transit they can be, the more opportunities there will be for a variety of working experiences.
 - When transportation is an issue, get creative! Call on your support network, family, neighbours, and potential friends to help get the student to their work placement.
- Continue to talk about internet safety. The Passport Community Development Team (Developmental Services Ontario) regularly offers an online course called “Safety for Independent Living.” Past topics covered have been:
 - Basic First Aid Fire Safety and Emergency vs. non-emergency
 - Being Assertive and Bullying
 - People Safety, Getting Help, Tricky People & Safe Strangers
 - Online Safety, Road [Safety](#) & MoreEnquire with the Passport Coordinator (Developmental Services Ontario) in your area to find out when the next course is being offered.



2b. The Importance of Setting Specific Goals

Setting goals is more than just a way to achieve specific outcomes, it's a fundamental part of developing key skills and habits that will serve children, throughout their lives, whether they have a disability or not. Here's why setting goals is so important for children who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities:

Fosters a Sense of Purpose: Goals give the person something to strive for and help them understand the importance of having a direction.

Teaches Responsibility and Accountability: By setting and working towards goals, children learn to take responsibility for their actions and decisions. This builds accountability and helps them understand that their choices can impact their progress.

Encourages Perseverance: Goals require hard work and persistence. When children face challenges or setbacks, working

towards their goals teaches them to overcome obstacles and keep trying, which is a valuable lesson in resilience.

Builds Confidence: Achieving goals, even small ones, boosts a child's self-esteem and confidence. They learn that their efforts can lead to success, which motivates them to tackle new challenges.

Teaches Planning and Organizational Skills: Setting goals involves planning and organizing steps to achieve them. This process helps children develop essential skills like time management, prioritization, and problem-solving.

Provides Motivation: Goals act as a source of motivation. When children have something to work towards, they are often more engaged and enthusiastic about their tasks and responsibilities.

Supporting setting goals early Ages 3 – 8

The first goal we encourage you to discuss with your child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability is **what they would want to do when they grow up?** Children and youth who do not have a disability are often asked about their desires and aspirations for a career or job. Is this happening with your child who has a disability?

Employment Connection:

Self-reflection or the skill to articulate one's strength, interests, and experiences is important. It is good for your child to talk about themselves; this will help narrow down options when they start their employment journey.

Another goal to support at this age, and throughout their educational journey, is following instructions –

developing an understanding of how to follow instructions is important when considering employment.

Also, at this stage, encourage self-care skills such as washing themselves in the bathtub and picking clothing items independently – this helps to promote independence and self-care abilities.



Another way to build confidence and build independence is having your child learn to tie their own shoes. This skill takes many children a long time to learn, so don't give up if your child doesn't learn it quickly. As always, break down the task. Have your child do the first part, then you can complete it. Once your child has mastered the first step, move onto the next step, and you complete it. Keep working on it with your child until your child can do the whole task alone. Sure, there are slip-on shoes and Velcro fasteners that your child can use, but if they participate in sports, soccer cleats and basketball shoes may not have that option. Also learning to tie a knot is a transferable skill for things like tying a belt for karate. Talk to an Occupational Therapist about some strategies. You can start by checking out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c79wsBqDW1A>

Goals focused on time management can also be introduced and supported at this stage. Understanding “time” and “days” is important. Time management is an essential employability skill. Introduce the concept of yesterday, today, and tomorrow and support it with aids that help their comprehension of time. Using aids like a calendar can assist children who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities in understanding this concept.

It is never too early to support goals around building communication skills – again, an essential employability skill. Encourage basic conversation skills by teaching your child to introduce themselves, shake hands, make eye contact, and listen when others

are speaking. Role-playing can be a helpful tool here to teach these practical skills.

Employment Connection:

This will help your child be confident to try new things if they know they can work through learning the new skill without being rushed.

Supporting setting goals through the tween years Ages 9 – 14

When setting goals for youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, focus on their strengths, interests, and unique/individual needs - no two kids, whether they have a disability or not, are the same!



Moments of Reflection

A word on “Setting Goals”

When it comes to goals, be intentional, patient and observant. Process matters. Parents, caregivers, family, and educators should care about the process of completing a goal, not just the outcome. For example, we may want to implement accommodations for a child right away, rather than learning and understanding what the **child’s capabilities** are. Adults around the child should allow the child the **gift of time** to allow multiple attempts at a skill, as much as possible, to allow learning before an accommodation is put in place. An accommodation may only be required for one part of the task, not the entire task. You’ll be able to determine this requirement by paying attention to the process, not just the outcome.



Remember that this handbook has an overall main goal: providing strategies to acquire skills and knowledge that will help a young person with a developmental and/or intellectual disability when they wish to find employment.

At this age, continue to ask your child “what do you want to do when you grow up?” This narrative is important for the discovery of their strengths, interest, passion, and the things that motivate them.

As your child gets older, **dig deeper** into why they identify with, or are interested in, something or someone in their life. Look at the table on the next page for suggestions on how you can explore further their interests. Remember, exploring your child’s interests can lead you, your child, and their educators to establishing goals, and work through them, both at home and at school, to build skills that can transfer to work.

Table 1. Translating interests in childhood to potential jobs/careers

Strong Interest	Areas to explore	Examples – Career/Jobs
Disney princesses	Fashion, jewelry, signing, animation.	• Models changing the face of fashion • Brands by people who have a disability • Nova Scotian fashion designer with Down syndrome
Thomas the Tank Engine	Transportation, music, animation, design and graphics.	• People with disabilities working to become auto mechanics. • US pianist with Down syndrome plays film's soundtrack • The band with Intellectual Disabilities • Animator with Mild Intellectual Disability
Spiderman	Athletics, social justice, helping other people, acting	• Celebrating Athletes with Down Syndrome—Who Prove Their Power, Ability Through Sports • Canadian influencers and professionals with Down syndrome
Animal farms	Veterinarian related support, kennel care assistant, agriculture/farming, animal photography	• Autistic Vet proves critics wrong • Greenhouses can tap into valuable talent pool
First Responders/Doctors	Helping people, being part of their environment – hospitals, fire stations, police offices	• Project SEARCH – Getting students ready for work • London (Ontario) Police celebrate World Down Syndrome Day • Man with Intellectual Disabilities Works at Fire Station
Swimming	Fitness, helping others, water sports, being around water,	• Maddy's Story – Swimming Instructor • Goodlife Fitness – Inclusive employer

Children moving on to “tween” years need to be presented with age-appropriate entertainment options; shows, music, and movies that are made for toddlers should remain in the toddler years. **This is a goal that may seem difficult, but it is important.**

Employment Connection:

Why do we encourage age appropriate interests? Your young adult will be seen as a child if they talk about things that are well below their age; this may make it difficult for them to form relationships in high school, co-ops, summer employment and in the workplace.



If your tween continues to engage with entertainment meant for younger children, it will not only be increasingly difficult to move them to more age-appropriate entertainment, but it could decrease opportunities to sustain their social capital with same age peers. Their same age peers would rather engage in current sports, music and movies instead of interests that would appeal to a toddler. [Social capital](#) refers to the networks, relationships, and norms that

facilitate cooperation and social cohesion within a community or society. The more social capital one has, the more opportunities one will have.

Many children, whether they have a disability or not, thrive when they are able to follow established routines. This is certainly a great way to develop skills, but now is the time to introduce adaptation to “**change**.” This is a goal that can be developed both at home and at school.

Introducing changes to routines can allow the development of self-regulation strategies. Some suggestions on how to support change in a school aged child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability include:

- Preparing by talking about the upcoming change – using visual schedules or photos.
- Set goals to create small changes related to the new routine and celebrate when these are achieved.
- Practice the change – for a student who is moving to Grade 9, the transition plan should include visits to their new school – ask for ways in which you and your child can have further visits if you believe this will be helpful. Some school boards have programming to help students become more familiar with their new school. In Hamilton, Ontario, this is called [Passport to Grade 9](#).
- Model change – use opportunities in your life to demonstrate to your child that change happens to everyone, they are no different.
- Not all changes can be anticipated; introduce unannounced changes starting with change within a preferred activity. Move to change within an activity they don't mind do but it is not a preferred activity. Eventually, introduce change within an activity that they do not prefer and that is more difficult to accept.

Accepting change may require self-regulation strategies and here are two options to explore: “[The 5-Point Scale: A Tool to Learn Emotions and Calming Strategies](#)” and the Self-regulation strategies by the [Child, Adolescent, and Family Centre of Ottawa \(CAFCO\)](#). Other resources (at cost) include [Zones of Regulation](#).

Include the young person in discussions involving change. It is important for young people to know how and why changes are made. As it is for all of us, we may or may not agree with the change, but we can understand why a change needed to happen.

This is also a good time to start working on goals that support the development of problem-solving skills; knowing how to solve problems that we encounter in our everyday life is a skill required for employment. Also, setting up opportunities for problem solving skills can support **interdependence** – meaning, the child can work with others to solve the issue/problem at hand.

Families, caregivers, educators, and service providers need to work together to build opportunities for the child to solve issues/problems on their own. Advocate with school staff (educators, educational assistants, etc.) to give the child the time to work through problems and if frustrations arise, use techniques to build resilience and self-regulation.

Here are some suggestions on how your family can include problem-solving in daily tasks:

- If your child’s home responsibilities include sweeping the kitchen floor, move the broom from its typical spot. How does your child solve that problem? Do they look for it? Ask for help?
- If your child is playing a video game and having a hard time with a controller

or watching a show on TV and all of the sudden, the internet is out, how would your child respond? Do they look for help? Would they get frustrated? Can you coach them through the solution?

- Try different scenarios where your child will need to problem solve on their own or ask for assistance.



Try this resource for teaching and nurturing problem-solving skills: [How to Teach Problem-Solving Skills to Your Child](#).

Consider other opportunities for building goals within the context of school life:

Independence in getting to places within the school

- If your child is in a specialized program, instead of the bus dropping students close to their classroom door, ask whether they can drop off your child in the same area as all other students – finding their way around the school is an important step to build independence. If your child needs to be specifically taught this skill, how to find their way around the school, investigate with the school about how staff could

monitor them using the school cameras as you child practices moving from drop-off spot to classroom. The staff may also consider stationing staff along the route to the classroom for the student to check in along the way to a specific destination in the school.



The more independence the child has, the more opportunities they will have in high school, in the community, and with employment in the future.

Independence in taking care of their own belongings

- Discuss with the school staff to allow time at the end of the day for your child to pack their own backpack.
- Opening and closing their lunch containers and cleaning up after they finish eating, without being prompted; having these skills will reduce the amount of adult support they may require in high school.
- Ensure your child is able to attempt to do things for themselves many times before interventions or accommodations are established – problem-solving issues requires trial and error and practice!
- Ensure your child can be independent in the washroom; can manipulate buttons and zippers, individual stall locks etc.
- Ensure your child knows how to use a combination lock to use on their locker in preparation for high school; practice during the summer months; if a 3-digit lock is too difficult, the high school may have 1- or 2-digit locks for use/purchase.



Moments of Reflection

A word on “Judging a Person on a Snapshot in Time”

What if people defined who we are, or will be, based on a single moment? Sounds pretty unfair, no? So why do people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities get judge on what they can or cannot do based on one moment? One behaviour? One reaction?

As you go through this document, and this section on goal setting, of course the aspect of measuring how well those goals are reached will be top of mind. Remember, for people who have developmental disabilities, achieving goals *may* take longer. Assume that people can and will reach the goals you set.

We have spoken of the concept of a journey. It is the same for goal setting and achievement – it is a journey. Do not based success on a snapshot in time.

Supporting Goal Setting into Teenage Years Ages 14 – 16

At the age of 16 yrs, many families will begin to connect with [Developmental Services Ontario](#) (DSO) to access services and funding to support a higher quality of life for their children who have a developmental and/or intellectual

disability. The DSO is specific to adults (18+ yrs) who have a developmental or an intellectual disability. Although the supports and services do not start until the age of 18, families are encouraged to start the process at the age of 16 yrs to allow time if more documentation is required and to avoid any unnecessary gaps in service.

Families and caregivers can start to work with a [support person or support worker](#), a contract worker, or a family member to help support specific goals at this stage of the young person's life. When working with a support person, consider the following:

- Ensure the support person will understand the end goal and have some enjoyment from the goal work you are assigning- for example if the goal is to have your young person learn how to use transit, find someone who enjoys or likes taking the bus.
- Make sure the supporting person understands your young adults/family's goal for a life that includes employment; have them think critically about how to achieve those goals and report back about successes and challenges.

During the high school years, there are several opportunities to explore working and what other people do for work. Consider adding these experiences as part of your goal setting process – have your child participate in [Take Our Kids to Work Day](#) in grade 9 and encourage your child to take the Career/Civics courses (each is 0.5 credit) in grade 10. Discuss with your school educators how your child can participate fully.

Also, investigate if your school board has a [Project SEARCH Program](#). This is a school-to-work transition program, for students who have developmental and/or intellectual disability, offered across your

school board (if they are participating) and available in the student's **final high school year**. Each year many school boards across Ontario are starting Project SEARCH programs. If your school board is one of the many school boards with a Project SEARCH, investigate it early to see if this would be **a goal to work towards**.

As your teen grows older, have your child practice a signature. Signatures become an important aspect of growing into adults. Signatures do not need to be perfect; they need to be consistent and done with confidence. Many photo ID cards require a signature to be done in a specific space, (i.e. Ontario Photo ID card), so practice decreasing the amount of space needed for the signature.

Include financial literacy goals in this stage of your child's school journey. Financial literacy has many components. Concepts such as understanding needs vs. wants and that you must exchange money for an item at a store, can be taught at an early age. Other parts of financial literacy require an understanding of the sequencing of numbers, number values, "more than" and "less than" and even skip counting. Consider starting with dollar amounts first before tackling coins and change. Counting change is a more difficult skill to learn. Investigate the "Dollar Up" method to assist with this.

Your teen should have access to opportunities such as purchasing their lunch in the school cafeteria. Not only will they be practicing financial literacy goals such as choosing items to purchase and paying using cash or a debit card, but this will also help develop independence by standing and waiting in line and carrying a tray with their food.

Continue Goal Settings into Young Adulthood – Ages 17 – 19

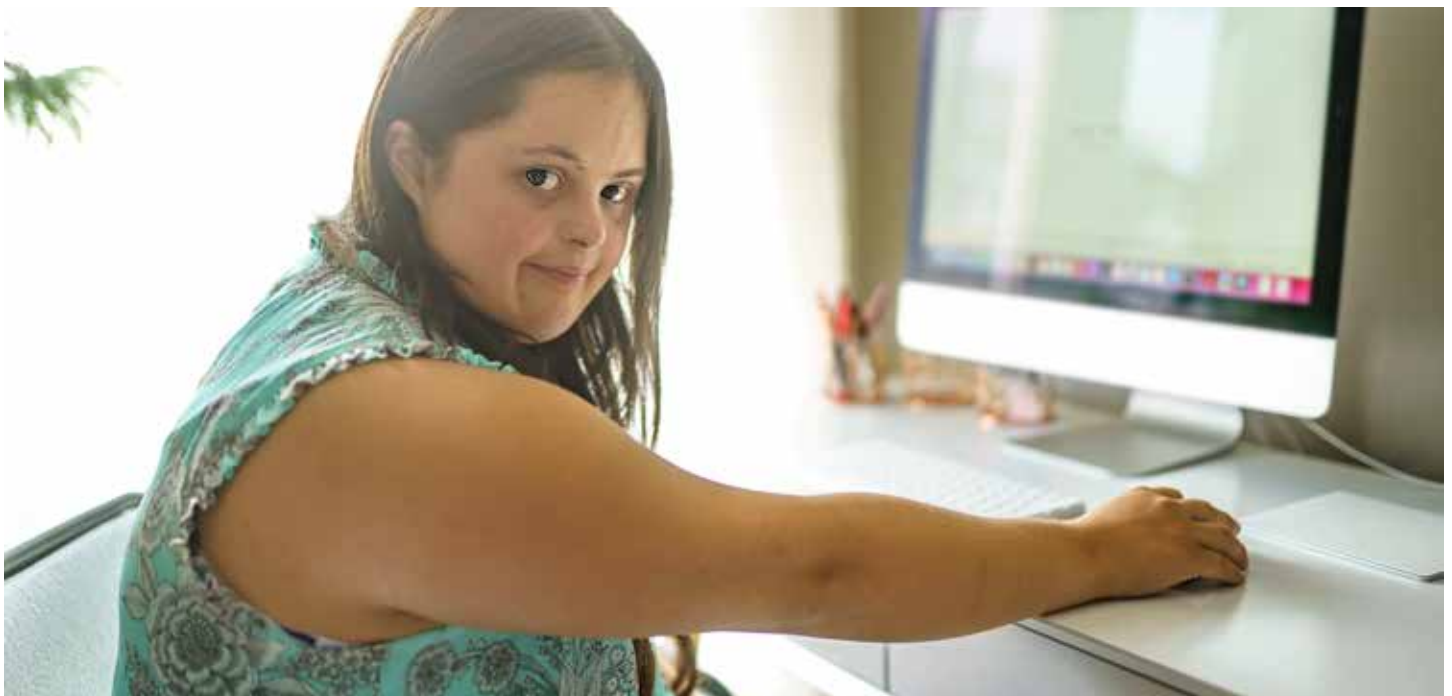
Many families/caregivers and their children who have a developmental and/or intellectual disability may choose to take a 7-year high school journey rather than the traditional 4 years (Grade 9-12). Consider the “extra” years as “extra time” to develop further the skills that your young adult has been developing.

Families and caregivers will benefit from working with the school to establish a framework for **workplace experiences** that the young adult can participate in over the next few years. As you think of goal setting for this part of their school journey, consider:

- Plan with the end in mind; in the last year of high school, the majority of their day should be in the workplace to mimic what the next year, out of high school, could look like; How do we plan backwards to get to be able to get to this goal?
- What are the goals that the school will set up for your young adult to access

co-op/work experience opportunities, by semester and year?

- How will the goals be assessed?
- How many hours will the student start with during the co-op?
- What is the goal for hours of experience **at the workplace**?
- What is the plan to fade support (educational assistant) in the workplace?
- In some school boards, co-op educators will opt to start with an **in-school experiences**, or in a nearby school; the purpose should be to work on:
 - Student learning to report to a supervisor,
 - Student learning to remain on task until it is completed,
 - For supervisor/support staff to determine how many tasks can the student complete with little supervision,
 - Student learning how to move from task to task independently,
 - Students have opportunities to problem-solve issues or problems.





Moments of Reflection

A word on “Co-Ops in School or Special Work-Life Skills Programs”

All work experiences should reflect **real life** – that is out in the open labour market, where people are hired to do a job, where employees of diverse backgrounds learn from each other, and where an employer provides the employee an opportunity to develop their skills to earn a living.

But as noted, for some school, offering work experiences for students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities starts within their own school.

If the student is accessing a work experience within their own school setting, parents and caregivers should ensure that the experience does not diminishes the student “social capital” with their peers.

For example: collecting garbage or recycling from classrooms can create situations where students who have developmental disabilities may be seen as “others” or “lesser than” – that is, less capable of succeeding in the same opportunities that students who do not have a disability have. This is not the case. With the rights supports, people who have developmental disabilities can hold jobs in the open labour market.

For some young adults who have disabilities they may want to, and are good at, keeping spaces clean for the benefit of others; this desire to contribute to their communities in this manner should not be ignored. If that is a goal the student would like to work towards, schools should be strongly encouraged to find alternative settings other than the school for this work experience to take place – consider that cleaning and maintenance experience can happen at hospitals, community centres, office buildings, etc.

For insight on some of the issue with in-school work-programs, please read: [School Coffee Carts Aren’t Inclusion.](#)

Preparing for Co-Op and Work Experience Placements

Even if the co-op placement does not require an interview to be accepted for the workplace, **ask for the interview to take place.** These are critical opportunities to develop employability skills needed for competitive employment. Research conducted by ODEN in their [Youth Success Strategy](#)

uncovered that many young people who have developmental disabilities and who seek support from Employment Service Providers do not know how to communicate about themselves, what they want to do when they leave high school or what skills they bring to the workforce. Practice makes perfect; students should have as many opportunities as they can to interview well. Discuss with the school for the

student to have the opportunity to practice an interview with adults they know, then with adults with which they are less familiar. This will mimic a real interview situation.

Consider where your young adult is in relation to their same age peers. Same age peers will be moving out of high school at this age, potentially entering the workforce or post-secondary education. If your young adult is remaining in high school, this is a perfect time to focus on employability skills and explorations as the school staff still supports them.

Your young adult should be spending **more time out of the school** participating in work experiential learning, and less time in classes. This will also impress upon the student that they are moving into adulthood, as they move through these last years of high school.



Consider that often co-op/workplace experiences are hosted in larger big-box stores such as Shoppers Drugmart, Canadian Tire or grocery stores. This type of job may not be the employment goal for your young adult, but this environment

is a good place to learn soft skills that are transferable to a preferred employment opportunity. The point is to keep on developing skills to move on to the dream job!

Some of these transferable skills include:

- Arriving at work, putting away personal belongings, and arriving on the work floor independently and on time.
- Completing multiple tasks without reoccurring direction.
- Identifying hierarchy in the workplace i.e. co-worker, supervisor, manager, owner.
- Taking breaks and lunch and returning to work on time.
- Communicating with clients, colleagues and supervisors with professional, workplace language.

Working towards inclusion in all aspects of Co-Op and Work Experiential Opportunities

If there is a co-op fair to highlight student's workplaces, ensure your young adult is included.

For students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, the Co-op placements that can benefit them the most will be those where the student can work towards tasks that are:

- multi-step or chunked,
- systematic: tasks that have pre-defined steps ensuring consistency; and
- predictable: when the student will have a general understanding of what the workday will be like before going in each day.

These types of tasks can be supported by visual examples, step by step checklist, assistive technology such as a tablet with electronic step by step process, or recorded instructions that can be replayed.



Young adults may also need to build up their stamina and endurance for what a work shift could be like – staying focused on work activities, having physical stamina and endurance are all important for paid employment. This is another reason for maintaining good physical health. For some research on the benefits of exercise please visit Canadian Down Syndrome Society’s “Stronger Bodies, Stronger Minds” – [Mindset Wellness Program](#).

Remember how in section 1 we discussed the importance of documenting skills and interests? When participating in different Co-Op placements, encourage your young adult to reflect on what they enjoyed about the job and what they didn’t enjoy about the job. This can be recorded as a reflection in the Individual Pathway Planning tool.

When your young adult finishes a Co-Op placement, enquire about a supervisor providing a reference letter. Again, documenting what has worked (or not) in the past with all the work experiences will help you and your young adult when seating and discussing new employment opportunities or supports with Employment Service Providers in your community.

If your young adult is considering a supported college program (Community Integration Through Cooperative Education or CICE); start investigating locations and eligibility requirements; these programs are highly competitive to get into; students will be required to participate in life at college with little supervision.

Connecting to Employment Service Providers – Summer Employment

Employment service providers in your community can support your young adult to access summer employment opportunities or to begin to discover what they would like to do for a job through Pre-Employment and Skill Development Programs. These services can come from organizations working under Employment Ontario or via organizations in the Developmental Sector such as Community Living organization across Ontario. Networks such as [ODEN](#) or [First Work](#) are good places to start to learn more about employment service providers working with job seekers who have a disability.

Setting goals that lead to employment Age 19 – 21

As the student becomes a young adult, it is important to begin to narrow down employment goals, that is the type of job or place of employment they would like to start.

We put an emphasis on *start*. The first job does not need to be the **only** job they will work at. This can be a place to start their employment journey. By now, as you have gone through documenting and exploring interests and passion, your young adult and you, family and caregivers, have a better idea of what they would like to do for work. You can deepen the conversation about potential work options by asking your young adult if they:

- Prefer to work in a team, or independently.
- Prefer repetitive activities or prefer to change activities in the workday.
- Prefer to work outdoors or indoors.
- Prefer to work with children, seniors, families, animals.
- Prefer to have a job that is clean or do not mind getting a little dirty.
- Prefer work that is quiet or do not mind a bit of noise.

For some ideas on what types of jobs your young adult may be interested in pursuing, visit: [O-Net Interest Profiler](#) or [Work BC Career Videos](#). Don't forget to connect with an employment service provider in your community that can support your young adult's career exploration process.

Leaving the high school system

Whether your young adult is leaving school at the age of 18 or waiting until the age of 21, they may need to experience more than one paid job before they find the best fit, that is OK! The employment service provider can continue to engage with employers to help find other opportunities.

At this stage, there may be a great deal of information collected on your child/young adult related to their interests, passion, likes and dislikes and overall, a vision for what they would like to do as they grow up. And as they move to adulthood and you both are developing a connection to Employment Service Providers in your community, having this information available in one document is of importance. This gives the [Job Developer](#) a great starting point to getting to know your young adult so they can better support the job matching process.

We have discussed in section 1 planning and documentation that can be done using school resources. There are also other planning tools that you can access, at no cost, and that could help summarize all the information about your child.

Partners for Planning through the Planning Network provide some great resources and guidance for families, caregivers and students looking to plan for their next stage in life – adulthood. [Visit Planning for Adulthood.](#)

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital has a personalized document to envision, work through, and track transition to adulthood preparation – visit [Personalized Transition Plan – My evolving journey into young adulthood.](#)

In addition, Connections: [A Guide to Transition Planning for Parents of Children with a Developmental Disability](#) also provides a guide that has different sections including Understanding Transitions and Tools and Resources that can guide your planning from creating your vision and creating specific goals.

Lastly, Limestone District School Board's, Donna Abbink Transition Planning Coordinator, has developed a number of [resources to guide families through the transition to adulthood.](#)





2c. Concept of Employment

Explaining the concept of employment, early in a child's school journey, equips the students with the knowledge and skills needed to transition smoothly from education to the workforce, supporting their long-term personal and professional development. The same should be done for students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. And this should be done early in life to better prepare these students.

Note that the research is clear – **fewer than one out of every four people** who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities have a job as noted in the [Advancing Equal Access in the Workplace for Persons Who Experience Intellectual Disability](#) report. In this report, people with lived experience, or self-advocates, noted that “they want inclusive employment – that

means people with and without disabilities working together, getting paid the same amount for the same kind of work”⁸. It is imperative for everyone involved in the life of a child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability to work together to provide the child with the education, knowledge, tools, and opportunities to build skills that they can carry into employment.

We will discuss how parents, caregivers, family, and educators can have further conversations about employment with children and youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities and how you can continue to document the outcomes of these conversations.

The information presented in this section is not age specific as in the previous two sections. All of these items and activities can be implemented at any age and revisited ***throughout their pre-employment journey and employment pathway***.

The National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, an organization in the USA, has put together a handout entitled [Set an Employment Destination and Map a Course to Get There](#). This document shares some ideas about linking interests to employment ideas and some questions to consider when mapping a pathway to employment.

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society has an [Employment Planning Workbook](#) that can assist with understanding employment and making an employment plan.

The Family Support Network for Employment (FSNE) has a comprehensive, free, online course [Learning Path To Employment](#) that provides people who have disabilities

8 Case, B. (2023, August 24). Advancing equal access in the workplace for persons who experience intellectual disability – Canadian. CASE MVP. <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/advancing-equal-access-in-the-workplace-for-persons-who-experience-intellectual-disability/>

and their families and caregivers with knowledge and tools to advocate for, and secure, meaningful paid employment.

The white paper “[NEXT STEPS FOR IMPROVEMENT: Identifying the Gaps Between Education and Employability in Ontario High Schools](#)” by Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) describes top soft skills that employers have said are missing in high school graduates taking entry level jobs. Skills such as teamwork, attention to detail, ability to follow instructions, problem-solving and coordinating with others. These are skills that families, caregivers, and educators can nurture in all students but in particular students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities as they may take longer and may need more practice to master these skills.

Time and time again, employers have shared with Employment Service Providers and networks like ODEN that the hard skills – training on specific tasks of the job – can be taught in the workplace. The keys to successful employment, as supported by the research from Human Resource Professional Association (HRPA), are soft skills and these skills need time, and practice, to be developed.

Continue discussions with your school, service providers (such as Occupational Therapists and/or Physical Therapists), recreational service providers (extracurricular activity providers), and other people who are involved in the upbringing of your child, to ask how all of you can work together to addresses development of these skills. The process doesn’t have to be complicated, or overwhelming, but requires intentional attention. See table 2 for some suggestions.

Table 2. Soft Skills and How They Show Up at the Workplace

Suggested Soft Skill	Plain Definition Related to Employment
Motivated to work	Wants to go to work
Dependable	Shows up to work on time, completes tasks assigned
Reliable	When given a task, they will follow through with that task in a timely manner
Teamwork	Step in to help others out when needed
Problem-Solving	Helps when issues arise, offering potential solutions, and implementing strategies
Self-regulation	Control of emotions and understanding how to ask for support
Accountability	Accepting responsibility for errors or mistakes, works to fix them
Communication	Can exchange information, ideas, messages among coworkers and supervisors

Conversations about employment can happen anywhere, anytime. When you and your child are out in the community, identify the employment opportunities that you see. For example, in retail settings you can find customer service, cashier, display designer and organizers, cleaning and maintenance, stocking, etc.

You can also have your child talk to different people in your family about what they do for paid work. Encourage your family and family friends to share with your child at what age they started to work, what they did, how many different jobs they had.

Chores at home with a reward of an allowance or time on electronic devices can teach that responsibilities can lead to rewards – translate that to what you do for work and how you are paid for the work that you do. When discussing and assigning chores in the home, you can also discuss teamwork; everyone has a job to do to help the home function.

When your son or daughter is in high school, investigate opportunities for [job shadowing](#); this is an opportunity to follow someone in a workplace to learn more about what they do; this is a short term opportunity that can last anywhere from 1-3 weeks. You can investigate mentorship programs; these can help students who have developmental disabilities learn about jobs and careers and how these match their interests and strengths. Programs that engage high school age students include:

- [Student Links Mentoring with Community Living Ontario](#) (ages 14-21).
- [MentorAbility](#) with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) (ages 16 and up).
- [Ontario Mentoring Coalition](#) – has developed resources for mentoring youth facing barriers to success.



2d. Opportunities in the Community

Through previous sections, we have been discussing the number of skills that need development, building on top of the other, to prepare a young person for employment. Community opportunities are essential to practice the soft skills we have been identifying as critical to succeeding in the workplace. The next strategies are just a few that you can implement to support your child/youth to practice the skills they have worked so hard to acquire!

When out in the community or in your neighbourhood, reduce the need to hold hands with your child as they get older. This can be habit forming and reduce the development of the skill to stay with or keep up with peers, or support staff in school. Also, as they grow into teenagers and adults, and if your family is using a contract worker to support respite, you would want to ensure that appropriate greetings are implemented as part of healthy boundaries (shaking hands

preferred over hugs) a goal to develop early in life.

Resources on social and physical boundaries as well as other aspects of relationship and sexuality can be found via the [Canadian Down Syndrome Society](#) and [Talking About Sexuality in Canadian Communities](#). Social boundaries are important in an employment context!

Volunteering can be an opportunity to learn skills that are transferable to the workplace. Access local volunteer websites or agencies to find opportunities in your community. Some resources include:

Employment Connection:

Volunteering can provide a chance to network, learn about job opportunities in community and build social capital.

- The [Ontario Volunteer Centre Network](#) is composed of active Volunteer Centres across the province of Ontario. Use the map in the website to locate your local Volunteer Centre, which you can contact to get involved!
- [Stepping Forward: Including Volunteers with Intellectual Disabilities](#) – provides a guide to support people who have intellectual disabilities to participate in volunteering activities.
- [The Volunteer Well](#): An inclusive online community for finding volunteer opportunities. It connects those in need with those eager to volunteer.
- Check your local Down Syndrome organizations, rotary clubs, churches, hospitals, local food banks, Habitat for Humanity, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)s, United Way and other not for profits.
- Check with your High School's **Student Services/Guidance** department for

other volunteer opportunities in your community. Since many students need to complete 40 hours community Involvement hours, they often find opportunities through this department at their school.



Moments of Reflection

A word on “Volunteering”

Volunteering is an incredibly rewarding opportunity and one that can help a person develop key skills to take to a job.

However, we must be vigilant that volunteering for youth and adults who have developmental and/ intellectual disability takes place in what are truly **volunteering placements**.

We do not volunteer in places or in positions where other people are getting paid for doing the same role -for example, we do not volunteer at a pizza place, car mechanic shop, or retail store. This is not only potentially illegal but also leaves a perception for that business that hiring someone who has a disability is not a value proposition, that they can be offered as “free labour”.

In Ontario, [work trials](#) or trail shifts must be paid (established in late 2023) – so be cautious of ideas to use “volunteering” as a door to do a trail run to see if the person can do the job; this will be an issue for both the employer and potentially for your young person.

Encourage the use of public transit, as another goal to develop within the opportunities in community – if you are in an area where transit is available and accessible.

Employment Connection:

Introducing public transportation is important! The the more independent people are with public transit, the more opportunities for finding employment that will be available to them.

Once connected to an Employment Service Provider, or a community agency supported by Developmental Services Ontario, talk to them about typical goals for transit. For example, does the Employment Service Provider concentrate their job development within a certain radius of where the job seeker lives? Employment requiring no more than 2 buses or 1 transfer. Employment within walking distance? Consider transportation and distance to work as a potential barrier you will need to address early in the connection to your employment support system.

When starting to use public transit; instruct your young adult:

- how to use a transit ticket/ transit card/cash
- Where to sit in the bus and strategies about talking to strangers
- Look for landmarks to get to destination
- How to signal next stop to get off

There is an opportunity to build independence with intent:

- When you are both comfortable that your child has the skills described above; travel along with your young adult but let them take the lead, sit apart from them on the bus.

- When you are comfortable with your child taking the lead and navigating transit on their own, provide your young adult has a cell phone, and consider follow the bus where they are travelling.
- The ultimate goal is to be comfortable enough that you as a parent or caregiver and your child can travel separately and meet at the destination.

[The MagnusCards](#)® is an app that uses visual guides and social narratives to help people with developmental and/ or intellectual disabilities engage with all aspects of their daily lives. They have partnered with a number of transit systems in Ontario to offer their “Travel Cards.” For example, you can read about their partnership with [Barrie Transit](#) to create Transit Magnus Cards for that region. Other transit systems have programs dedicated to safety travel for people who have developmental and/ or intellectual disabilities. For example, [Discover My Route](#) is a program from the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).

As you discuss transit, also consider pedestrian safety as it relates to crossing the street. This is another skill you may want to practice early with your child; the more practice they have the safer they will be. Here is a [video](#) to support the concept of how to cross the street safely.





2e. Communication

Being able to communicate in the workplace is essential. Communication can look different for different people. A young person who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability and who is nonvocal (that is, they do not use words to communicate or don't speak to communicate) can still communicate in many different ways including gestures, body language, visuals and through the use of assistive technology.

Looking for ways to encourage spontaneous communication? You can look into a tool created by ErinoakKids Centre called Communication Temptations. The communication temptations are used when the environment is structured so your child has to use spontaneous communication with another person in their environment (Prizant & Wetherby, 1985).



A person who is nonvocal can use a cell phone to type messages or use apps and devices to communicate (text to voice). The person could use an app to do the majority of communication and in the workplace that would be considered a workplace accommodation. Using typing or texting can support a youth who has difficulty with articulation. Any communication system (device or app) must be effective and happen in real time; therefore, a lot of practice is needed to use the device/app efficiently; it might take a few tries to identify the best fit for an individual to use as a communication tool.

There is research⁹ that shows that increasing literacy skills can increase verbal communication. Engage the school's Speech and Language Pathologist for a discussion on supporting communication via school resources.

In the workplace, it is important to be able to communicate safety hazards, questions and advocate for accommodations. Much can be done during high school years to help students learn these concepts of safety in the workplace and accommodations.

9 Taylor & Francis Online: Peer-reviewed. Accessed August 5, 2024. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21515581.2024.2319667>

Adults can support youth who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities to learn communication etiquette in the workplace – aspects like taking turns when communicating, not oversharing, knowing when to stop a conversation to move back to work, all of these are skills that need to be taught and practiced. Employment Service Providers often have programs dedicated to learning these types of skills so ask about their pre-employment programs.

General social skills or good manners are still valued in workplace situations and need to be reinforced and practiced by young people. Remind your young person about the importance of using “please” and “thank you,” opening doors for others, being polite and attentive to others, etc. These good manners can go a long way in a work environment!

As we have mentioned in the first section, it is particularly important to help children, whether they have a disability or not, to develop self-regulation strategies before they become teenagers. Refer back to the 5-point Scale or Zones of Regulation and help youth understand where they are on the scale and develop strategies to regulate. Keeping frustrations in-check in the workplace is an important skill.



2f. Celebrate Successes

You and your child will experience many successes as they move from a child to a teen, to young adult and into adulthood; make a point and take note of your child’s successes; regardless of how small they may be!



Small successes lead to big successes

It is important to take the time and celebrate your determination for your child to learn skills that will help them being successful adults. Don’t get discouraged if progress may not be as quick as you had hoped, keep at it!

It is important to acknowledge that this is not a linear journey. You could move “2 steps forward and 1 step back”. Skills that you thought were mastered, might need to be re-taught, that’s OK! Life comes to us without a manual, and we cannot predict how events in a child’s life (illness, the death of a favourite grandparent, losing a pet) may impact them and how well they continue to do with learning skills.

It is important to reinforce and praise achievements when a particular goal is met.

Need some ideas how to celebrate successes? Check out this link: [39 Simple Ways to Celebrate Your Child’s Success](#).

Part 3

Employment Service Providers

Employment Service Providers are agencies that can assist people who have disabilities to find and keep work. These agencies fall under Employment Ontario and work with job seekers and employers to match people with competitive employment, which is to say, “minimum wage” or better.

Typically, this is a free service and there may be many Employment Service Providers in your area. To find the Employment Service Providers in your area, visit Employment Ontario at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>



Inquire if your school/school board is hosting an employment supports resource fair. The board might be able to gather the employment service providers in your area for an information fair for students and their families to visit.

You will need to choose **one** Employment Service Provider to work with, so make some inquiries to find a good fit for your young adult. Typically, to use an Employment Service Provider, under the Employment Ontario program, the job seeker will need to be able to work at least 20 hours per week.

NOTE: Organizations that are **not** funded by Employment Ontario may have employment support, for a fee, that you can access and do not need to meet this 20 hour per week work requirement. Again, inquire with each organization to determine what services they can provide to your young adult.

Although employment service providers will not begin their services until a person is ready to look for work, they might welcome a chance to talk to you and your teen about their supports and services as early as grade 9 or 10. If you would like to talk with a service provider, let them know that you are building a pathway to employment and would like some information about supports, the labour force in your area and what you should include in your school planning.

As your young adult is getting closer to graduation, consider beginning your search for an Employment Service Provider 6 months before graduation. If you have a service provider in place a few months before the end of the school year, the provider may be able to gather valuable information from school staff. The provider may also be able to visit the job seeker at their co-op placement.

Here are some questions you can ask, suggested by Family Support Network for Employment in their online course



Learning Path to Employment

- ✓ Who funds your Employment Service?
- ✓ What is your experience supporting someone with differing abilities?
Be specific to your situation: ASD, Developmental Disability, hearing or vision impairment, etc.
- ✓ What are the steps that my young adult can expect to go through?
- ✓ How long will those steps last?
- ✓ How many people do you support each year?
- ✓ How many are successfully employed?
- ✓ What happens to those who are not successful?
- ✓ How do you know when youth and the employer are satisfied?
- ✓ How many businesses are you currently working with?
- ✓ What will my young adult be doing when you are looking for a job?

Once you have chosen a provider, they will do an intake to discuss work experiences, skills, interests, and goals. All the information that you and your young adult have gathered along the way will be valuable information for the service provider! Encourage your young adult to respond to the intake questions themselves so the provider can get to know them.



Your school may be able to invite a service provider to come to school to meet with a class of students. They may be able to provide some workshops on employment

An employment plan will be developed that can include:

- ✓ Creating/revising a resume and cover letter

- ✓ Initial discussion about disclosing a disability
- ✓ Initial discussion about accommodations
- ✓ Plan to contact possible employers
- ✓ Setting up interviews
- ✓ Plan to practice for the interview
- ✓ Review plan for transit to the workplace

Ensure you share with the provider when you hope to start a new job. If you have planned a family vacation during the summer after graduation, share that with the provider. New employees cannot start a new job and then ask for 2 weeks off for a family vacation.

Once employed, the service provider may provide assistance in training and short-term job coaching. The service provider will also keep the client on “retention” for up to 1 year. Retention is regularly follow ups with the employee and the employer to assist with new skill acquisition or problem solving that might be required. If the work placement is not successful, they can assist in other employment opportunities.

One of the benefits of using a service provider is that they can problem solve any issues that might come up in the workplace. Employers would prefer to communicate directly with the employee and the service provider, not necessarily the employee’s parents – after all, the client is an adult and deserves that respect!

All the hard work you have done to gradually release responsibility to them, helped them build skills and independence, and provided opportunities to discover and identify interests will be evident! That’s not to say there won’t be bumps in the road, but they will be well on their way!

Congratulations for sticking with it!

Part 4

Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

Entrepreneurship and self-employment offer a unique opportunity for people who have developmental and or intellectual disabilities, just as it does for anyone who doesn't have a disability. These types of employment offer the flexibility to create customized work environments and schedules that accommodate individual needs. It empowers people to leverage their strengths and passions, while overcoming traditional workplace barriers.

But there are some distinct differences between the two –entrepreneurship involves setting up a business, taking financial risks, employing others and hoping to make a profit in return that supports not only you but your employees. Self-employment is realized when the person works for themselves, without having any employees, and running the business for their own benefit. You can read a brief article on the differences between entrepreneurship and self-employment by visiting: [Let's start over, shall we? Entrepreneurship vs self-employment.](#)

When considering either of these employment models, ask and consider some of these questions along with your young person:

- Do they have a specific skill that is marketable?
- Would they have an idea for an item that they can create and sell?
- Or a bigger idea, to solve a problem, that they have been thinking about.

You and your young adult might consider exploring entrepreneurship or self-employment if your young adult's life/health situation may make it difficult to enter traditional employment.

In Ontario, the provincial government offers [Summer Company](#), a Provincial program offered through municipalities for youth who want to try being opening a business. The program offers a grant of up to \$3000 for youth ages 15- 29 years of age. The youth must be a returning student (high school or post-secondary) after the summer. Want to know more about success stories for this program visit: [Summer Company Yearbook.](#)

Some Employment Service Providers, through Employment Ontario, may also provide support for people who have a disability (no specific to developmental or intellectual disability) to start their own business or become self-employed. You can request further information from your local Employment Service Provider.

If you are looking for inspiration on others who have made self-employment or entrepreneurship their employment model, check these links below (some are Canadian and some are from the USA):

Niam Jain Artist

[Canadian Autistic Artist Niam Jain](#)

Andrew Banar; Group Hug Apparel

[Local clothing designer named a Canadian Down Syndrome Hero](#)

**Anthony at your service**

[Meet Anthony, a guy with autism and his own delivery business](#)

Aaron the Brick Guy

[Meet Aaron, a guy with autism and his own brick art business](#)

Brad Who Builds Things

[Meet Brad, a guy with autism who builds things](#)

[How a love of construction toys helped change the life of a man with autism](#)

Sean Underestimating

[Meet Sean, a guy with autism who loves trains](#)

John's Crazy socks

[John's Crazy Socks: On A Mission To Spreading Happiness](#)

Colletley's Cookies

[Changing the World One Cookie at a Time](#)

Summer Shirt Company:

Be Kind to Everyone

[Be Kind to Everyone](#)

Applewood Acres High School Design Abilities Instagram [@design_abilities](#)

Part 5

Other Considerations for Employment Success

Ensuring employment success involves various considerations – we have already discussed building skills and measuring progress, accessing opportunities and ensuring that everyone in the life of your child has higher expectations about employment as a viable option for them after leaving the educational system. But there are some other associated considerations that can ensure a smoother transition to employment.

Social Insurance Number (SIN)

If you have not done so, ensure that your child has a Social Insurance Number (SIN). A SIN number is a unique identifier assigned to Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and temporary residents by the Government of Canada. It is used primarily for:

- **Tax Purposes:** The SIN is required for filing taxes, receiving tax refunds, and ensuring proper crediting of tax payments.
- **Employment:** Employers need the SIN to report earnings and deductions to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and it's also used to confirm an employee's eligibility to work in Canada.
- **Government Benefits:** The SIN is used to access various government programs and benefits, such as Employment Insurance (EI), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and Old Age Security (OAS).
- **Financial Services:** It is often required when opening bank accounts or applying for credit, as it helps in verifying identity and preventing fraud.

The SIN is confidential and should be protected to prevent identity theft.

Bank Account

Opening a bank account is easier to do when your child is under the age of 16 years of age, and you may be able to open one with no fees or very little fees because they are still considered dependent.

Disability Tax Credit

Consider applying for the Disability Tax Credit. The Disability Tax Credit is an amount that can be used to reduce the amount you may need to pay in taxes. The application can be found online. A portion of the application must be filled out by a medical practitioner. Although you will not have to re-apply yearly, the government may require a reapplication at some point.

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) for your child. The RDSP was developed by the Government of Canada in 2008 to help Canadians with a disability create financial security. With personal contributions, grants and bonds provided by the Canadian Government, and opportunities to grow the plan through various investment options, an RDSP can grow quickly. You can find more information via

Partners for Planning in their website page "[Introduction to the RDSP](#)".

Supported Decision Making vs. Guardianship

Investigate Supported Decision-Making vs Guardianship in preparation for adulthood; know the rights of your young adult as they turn 18 yrs. and your responsibilities as a parent; more information may be available through your local Community Living agency or through Partners for Planning (online webinars). You may want to consider joining a parent group that has other parents of children who are also transition planning.

Government Identification

At age 16 consider obtaining the Ontario Photo Card as a piece of government identification. This would be in lieu of a driver's license and can be obtained at any Service Ontario location. If your young adult obtains their driver's license, the driver's license will replace the Ontario Photo ID card.

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

At the age of 16 years old, you can begin to apply for Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) and the various funding options available. In Ontario, a psychological-educational assessment is required to access developmental services because it provides a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's cognitive, academic, and behavioural functioning. The [psychological-educational assessment](#) is performed by a Psychologist or a Psychological Associate.

The age of the psychological-educational assessment may not matter. If you have an assessment that was done when your child was young, still submit it as a part of the application. The DSO will tell you if they need more information

Ways to obtain a psychological-educational assessment include:

- Most schools will suggest they would benefit from this assessment and will offer to have it administered to assist with addressing the educational strengths and needs of the learner. Talk with your child's school regarding the possibility of getting the assessment done with the school board. Once the assessment is completed, the Psychologist will explain the results of the assessment and provide you with a copy. **Although the school board will provide this assessment at no cost, there can be a long waitlist.**
- Agencies (such as psychology training programs with a university) that can offer free, or low-cost testing.
- Seeing a psychologist working in private practice may be the quickest option. In many cases, a family member's employee health plan may pay some of this expense¹⁰.

For more information on Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) visit <https://www.dsontario.ca/>

Once approved for DSO, your young adult will have access to [Passport Funding](#). Having your child's eligibility (for DSO and Passport Funding) determined before the age of 17.5 yrs of age will make it easier to apply for the Ontario Disability Support Program – Income Support (ODSP Income Supports). In other words, do not delay the process of connecting to DSO.

¹⁰ Psychoeducational Assessment: Ontario: Mental health services, help and support : eMentalHealth.ca. (n.d.). eMentalHealth.ca Resource Directory. <https://www.ementalhealth.ca/Ontario/Psychoeducational-Assessment/index.php?m=heading&ID=453#:~:text=This%20is%20paid%20for%20by,is%20usually%20the%20quickest%20option.>

Passport Funding

Passport is a program that helps adults 18 years or older with a developmental disability to participate in their communities and live as independently as possible. Passport Funding is a reimbursable program. That means that you need to ensure the expense is eligible for Passport Funding, then you would pay for the expense and submit the receipt for reimbursement. In addition to other things that support independent living, a portion of Passport Funding can be used to help develop skills to apply for and maintain a job.

Here's how Passport Funding can be used for employment purposes:

- **Job Coaching and Support:** Funding can cover the cost of job coaching services that offer on-site support to help new employees who have a disability navigate their work environment, develop job-specific skills, and address any challenges.
- **Skill Development through training programs:** Job seekers can use Passport Funding to access specialized pre-employment training programs that improve their job skills and enhance their employability. This includes workshops, courses, or certifications relevant to their chosen field.
- **Assistive Technology and Equipment:** Passport Funding can be used to purchase assistive technology or adaptive equipment that supports an individual's ability to perform their job tasks effectively. This might include specialized software, ergonomic tools, or communication devices.
- **Transportation and Accessibility:** Funding can cover expenses related to transportation to and from the workplace if public transit is not accessible or if alternative transportation arrangements are needed.

- **Employment-Related Supports:** Funding can be utilized to hire personal support workers who assist with daily activities related to employment, such as personal care or managing work-related tasks.
- **Job Placement Services:** Funding can be used to engage with employment agencies or job placement services that specialize in matching individuals with developmental disabilities to suitable job opportunities.

Ontario Disability Support Program – Income Support (ODSP)

ODSP Income Support is a monthly amount to be used for the expenses of daily living. If approved, ODSP also includes a basic benefit package (i.e. prescriptions, dental, vision). The application can begin at the age of 17 ½ yrs.

Some considerations for the process of applying for ODSP:

- Although the parent is taking the lead on completing the application with and for their young adult, the applicant is the young adult, not the parent. Therefore, there are 2 things that need to be proven from the applicant's perspective (not the family as a whole):

1. Financial Need

- Based on the applicant's finances, not the parent's
- Applicant cannot have more than \$40,000.00 in liquid assets
- RDSP does not count as a liquid asset

2. Proof of Disability

- Can submit the DSO letter of eligibility from the DSO as proof of disability under a "Prescribed Class"

- If you do not have the letter of eligibility from the DSO, you will be provided with a package to be filled out by a health practitioner and will be sent away for adjudication

The letter of eligibility from DSO will act as proof of disability for [Ontario Disability Support Program Income Support](#) under a “Prescribed Class”. Meaning that you have already proven the disability to one government agency, the DSO, therefore that letter can act as proof of disability for ODSP. Again, it is advisable to begin the ODSP application process at around 17.5 years of age.

The amount that a person can receive for ODSP income support is up to **\$1,368 a month** and may be adjusted based on their situation. This income support is also adjusted in July each year, based on inflation¹¹.

Supports and Service in the “Child Sector”

At the age of 18 years old, your young adult will be moving from the “children’s sector” to the “adult sector”. Some funding and services that your child was receiving will end, and other support and services can start (if eligible).

Funding that will end at 18 years of age include:

- [Ontario Autism Program](#) (OAP)
- [Special Services at Home Funding](#) (SSAH)
- [Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities](#) (ACSD)

NOTE: ACSD might be administered through ODSP. Since ACSD is based in, part based on family income, the

applicant (your young adult) will still need to apply for ODSP Income Support at 17 ½ as now the eligibility is based on the applicant alone.

Need More Information?

Where can you turn for more information on all of these programs? [Partners for Planning](#) (P4P) is a great resource! *P4P is a national non-profit organization that supports people with a developmental disability and their families to be proactive in planning for the future.* P4P has many free resources and webinars about support and services that families want to know about including SSAH, ODSP, DSO, building a good life, supportive decision making and much more. Visit their website for more information: <https://www.planningnetwork.ca/>



Moments of Reflection

A word on “ODSP and Employment”

There may be some misconceptions regarding people who receive ODSP and their ability to work. You can most certainly be a recipient of ODSP Income Supports **AND** work and still receive benefits, although there are specific rules and guidelines to follow.

It is always best to speak to the ODSP office for assistance on rules and guidelines.

¹¹ Income support from ODSP. (n.d.). ontario.ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/income-support-odsp>

Part 6

Continued Education and Learning after High School

The end of high school does not mean the *end of learning*. Your young adult might want to continue to do some learning before they enter the world of work. Here are some options to continue to develop and learn literacy, numeracy, and other skills that are important to support their employment success.

Employment Ontario funded Basic Adult Education – literacy (age 18+)

The [Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills](#) (LBS) program helps adults in Ontario to develop and apply communication, numeracy, interpersonal, and digital skills to achieve their goals. The LBS program serves learners who have goals to successfully transition to employment, postsecondary, apprenticeship, secondary school, and increased independence. The program includes learners who may have a range of barriers to learning.

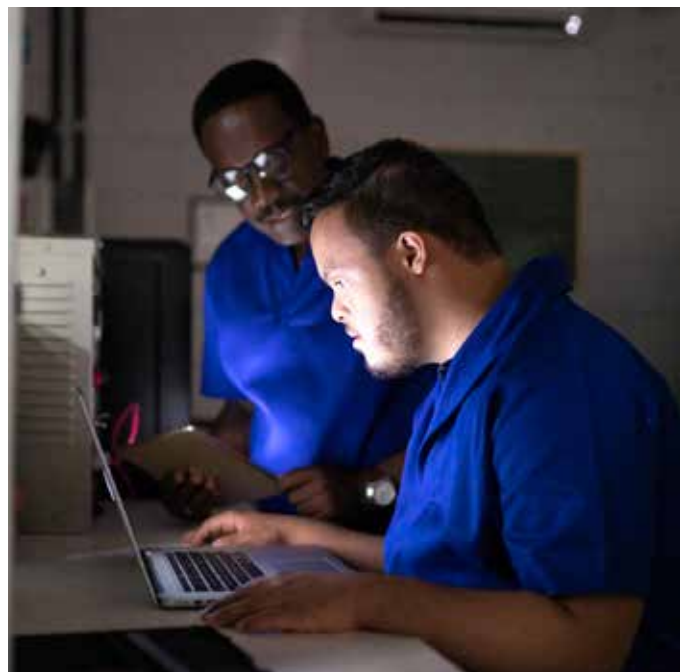
Supported College Programs

In Ontario there are many colleges that offer different educational opportunities. Most people are aware of different college programs that lead to college certificates, diplomas and degrees. Entrance into these programs depends on pre-requisites and high school marks. Colleges across the province also offer more supported college programs. Supported college programs refer to educational programs designed to accommodate students with

various needs, including students who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities.

Unlike elementary or high school, college programs require an application, have admission requirements and tuition fees required to participate in the program. When considering an application to a college program, spend some time investigating the admission requirements as they relate to what was achieved in high school.

As explained later in this handbook, students can leave high school with a Certificate of Accomplishment (C of A), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or the Ontario School Secondary Diploma (OSSD). Within the OSSD there



are 3 levels of English that could have been achieved in high school, University level, College level, Workplace level. For the typical college program colleges would require success in the University or College level English credit while in high school.

If a student was successful in achieving the Workplace English, unless the program requirement lists the Workplace English as a requirement, students may need to take Academic Upgrading before they can apply to a college program. Academic Upgrading is offered at all Ontario Colleges, is tuition free and is an opportunity to help students build skills and increase their academic standing. Students may need to have an assessment to determine eligibility to this program. There may be an age requirement to participate in this program.

Other college programs will list the OSSC as a requirement for application or the applicant must be a **Mature Student**. A Mature Student is a student who is 19 yrs or older who and/or has not achieved an OSSD.

There are colleges that offer programs to students who require more support. These programs are available to students who benefited from modified or alternative curriculum while in high school and who did not achieve the OSSD. In this case, admission can then be based on being a Mature Student. These programs can be 1 or 2 years in length and likely will include at least one co-op opportunity.

If a student is considering applying as a mature student (starting a college program at the age of 19 yrs), consider talking with the high school about staying an extra year to meet the age requirement to apply for the college program. The student can also consider working for a year before applying to college as a Mature Student.



Some things to know about the more supportive college programs:

- Programs have different names (i.e. CICE, Career Pathways, Vocational Program).
- Some colleges require students to apply to the program through the Ontario Colleges central application website (<https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en>); there will be a fee for this application.
- Other colleges require the student to apply directly through the college's website.
- An interview may be required as a part of the application process; the applicant cannot have a parent, or an educator support them in this interview.
- The deadline for applications is February 1st.
- No transportation is provided to college.
- Classes at college are spread out during the day; students are not supervised between classes.
- Students will need to navigate the college campus independently.

- Programs have limited enrolment and are competitive to get into.

If you are considering college, attend opens houses and/or program tours.

Check with your guidance teacher about supported programs. They will help navigate the requirements and the application process.

Passport Funding may be able to pay for college tuition; enquire with your Passport Coordinator.

Links to Post Secondary Education Information

1. **Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE).** To find a college that offers CICE, follow this link: <https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/programs?q=CICE&page=0>
2. **George Brown - Vocational Program** <https://www.georgebrown.ca/programs/college-vocational-program-a101>
3. **Mohawk College - Career Pathways Program** <https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/programs/preparatory-studies/career-pathways-361>
4. **Algonquin College - Academic Assistance for Adults with Developmental Disabilities** (offers in-person and virtual options) <https://www.algonquincollege.com/aaadd/>

Other Learning Opportunities

You and your young adult can also check with your local DSO office for opportunities for further learning. The information below provides further details on programs offering learning opportunities for people who have developmental and/or intellectual disabilities.

ABC Life Literacy Canada

“**UP Skills for Work**” helps learners develop key employability and life skills through free workshops and downloadable workbooks. The program focuses on key skills such as Motivation, Attitude, Accountability, Time Management, Reading, Numeracy, and Confidence. These skills help workers to be adaptable and motivated throughout their whole employment and as they move into new roles or careers. This is self-paced learning, complete with 10 downloadable workbooks and videos that explain concepts. The website also includes many more toolkits and activities to support the development of employability skills. Follow this link: <https://upskillsforwork.ca/resources/#getstarted>

[ConnectAbility](#) may be another resource that can provide links and information on learning opportunities.

Conclusion



We opened this handbook with a note that showed that access to employment is a fundamental human right and a main determinant of health; we have talked about employment contributing to physical and mental well-being, providing financial stability, a sense of purpose, and social inclusion. And the research tells us that people who have developmental disabilities can work and want to work.

This book has brought you, the reader, a number of strategies and tools to lay a foundation of exploration of interests, passion, likes and dislikes for your child who has a disability. We hope that you feel empowered to start and continue conversations that lead to accessing opportunities for your youth to build employability skills. We encourage you to

engage educators and family members, service providers, and others who play a role in the life of your child in these conversations. Everyone has a responsibility when it comes to building a future where employment is a viable goal for your child.

We said that a radical shift in thinking is needed for all who are involved in the life of a child who has a developmental and/or intellectual disability. We hope the content of this handbook has set a new tone for your conversations when it comes to the future that you dream for your child who has a developmental disability.



Appendix A

Government of Ontario Education Information and Documents

1. Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12

For any information on special education in Ontario, you will need to review the document: **Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 DRAFT 2017**. This replaces the following documents:

- Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans (2000)
- Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation (2000)
- Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)
- The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide (2004)

<https://files.ontario.ca/edu-special-education-policy-resource-guide-en-2022-05-30.pdf>

2. Transition Planning Policy and Procedure Memorandums from Ministry of Education

Some information that impacts special education includes:

PPM 140: Incorporating methods of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) into programs for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

"The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to school boards footnote 1[1] to support their use of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) as an effective instructional approach in the education of many students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). footnote 2[2] This memorandum establishes a policy framework to support incorporation of ABA



methods into school boards' practices. The use of ABA instructional approaches may also be effective for students with other special education needs.”

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-140>

PPM 156: Supporting transitions for students with special education needs

“This memorandum sets out for school boards footnote 1[1] and schools new requirements for transition plans for students with special education needs from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Effective transition planning is important. Individualized transition plans that reflect a student’s strengths and needs provide the foundation for successful transitional experiences that support the building of student resiliency. Articulating student transition needs can also be a valuable component of developing an individual student profile. It is expected that the implementation of the requirements set out in this memorandum will result in continuity of programs and services for students with special education needs and will support improved student achievement and well-being.”

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-156>

Integrated (tri-ministry) transition planning for young people with developmental disabilities

“The development of transition plans for students with special education needs often involves collaboration with community partners. In recognition of this need for collaboration, the Ministry of Education

has committed to working with two other ministries – Children and Youth Services, and Community and Social Services – to build on and improve the existing continuum of supports for young people with developmental disabilities. As of 2014, integrated transition planning is available to all young people (14 years of age and older) who meet the definition of having a developmental disability under any of the three ministry legislation frameworks. The intent of integrated transition planning is for all who support the young person with a developmental disability to work collaboratively in order to facilitate a smooth transition to post-secondary pathways. Integrated transition planning involves principals, educators, students and their families, and others who support the young person such as community service and health care providers.”

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12/integrated-tri>

3. Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Students who have been identified as having an exceptionality through an IPRC, must have an IEP developed to support their learning. The school may also develop an IEP if the student has not been identified as exceptional through an IPRC.

If the student is working on an alternative curriculum, overall and specific expectations that make up the student’s program will be included in the IEP. The IEP is considered a “living documents.” If a student achieves a goal, the IEP can be revised to reflect a new goal. If the student is having difficulty in achieving a goal, the IEP can be revised to break down a goal into more manageable sections.

Included in an IEP should be assessed strengths and assessed needs. The students assessed strengths should be considered as ways for that student to access the curriculum (Ontario Curriculum or Alternative Curriculum). The assessed needs are to areas of the curriculum to focus on.

4. High School Credits

Unlike elementary school, students in high school need to meet curriculum requirements to be able to attain credits. There are ministry documents that outline expectations for each course. Courses will have overall expectations and specific expectations. Curriculum documents can be found here: <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/>

Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) Requirements:

The OSSD is comprised of 30 Compulsory Credits and Elective Credits. To find out more details, follow this link:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/high-school-graduation-requirements>.

Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) Requirements:

The OSSC can be granted if a student leaves with at least 16 credits (7 compulsory, 7 elective) Check your local School Board's website for specific information

Certificate of Accomplishment (CofA)

The C of A can be granted if the student leave school with under 16 credits required by the OSSC. Check your local School Board's website for specific information

K-Codes

In high school, each class will have a code. This is for the purposes of scheduling, keeping track of credits attempted, credits attained, and courses taken. For students who are working on alternative curriculum (non-credit), schools may use k-codes on their schedule. K-code are ministry codes, but the expectations in the k-code are locally developed and can be highly individualized for the learner. A list of k-codes can be found here: <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/course-descriptions-and-prerequisites/appendix-d>



Appendix B

Links for appendix Family Handbook

1. United Nations - Article 27 - Work and employment

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html#:~:text=States%20Parties%20recognize%20the%20right,accessible%20to%20persons%20with%20disabilities>

(footnotes)

2. Social determinants of health and health inequalities

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

(footnotes)

3. PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability

<https://pwd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PWDA-Language-Guide-v2-2021.pdf>

(footnotes)

4. Responding to Vulnerability

<https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Vulnerability.pdf>

(footnotes)

5. Transferable skills - Curriculum and Resources

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/transferable-skills/introduction>

6. Tufts Career Centre - Interests Checklist

<https://cdn.careers.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2020/07/Interests-Checklist.pdf>

7. The Transition to Employment: What Parents Can Do Now

<https://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-12.pdf>

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Please be sure to visit ODEN's learning module for Families and Caregivers - Raising Expectations: Starting A Pathway to Employment for more resources [Raising Expectations: Starting A Pathway to Employment. - The Ontario Disability Employment Network \(odenetwork.com\)](#)

8. Halton Pathways - Individual Pathways Plan (IPP)

<https://www.haltonpathways.ca/career-planning/individual-pathways-plan-ipp#:~:text=The%20Individual%20Pathways%20Plan%20is,at%20least%20twice%20each%20year.>

9. Government of Ontario - Education and Career Planning

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/education-and-career-planning>

10. myBluePrint

<https://myblueprint.ca/>

11. **Community Living Ontario – Student Links Mentoring**
<https://communitylivingontario.ca/what-we-do/student-links/>
12. **Canadian Association for Supported Employment – MentorAbility Canada**
<https://www.supportedemployment.ca/initiatives/mentorability/>
13. **Best Buddies Canada**
<https://bestbuddies.ca/>
14. **The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health – Staying Safe at Work**
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-159/default.html#:~:text=Staying%20Safe%20at%20Work%20is,workers%2C%20and%20students%20with%20disabilities.>
15. **Government of Ontario – Get your high school volunteer hours**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-your-high-school-volunteer-hours#:~:text=questions%20or%20concerns.,Places%20you%20can%20volunteer,not%2Dfor%2Dprofit%20organizations>
16. **Government of Ontario – Start a summer company: students**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/start-summer-company-students>
17. **Government of Ontario – Employment Ontario**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>
18. **McMaster University – Summer camps legend Mark Haggarty retires**
<https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/summer-camps-legend-mark-haggarty-retires/>
19. **Canadian Down Syndrome Society – Employability Skills Tracker**
https://cdss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Employability-Skills-Tracker_notes.pdf
20. **Government of Canada – Skills for Success**
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success.html>
21. **Career Professionals of Canada – Job Development: A Vital Role in Our Profession**
<https://careerprocanada.ca/job-development-a-vital-role-in-our-profession/>
22. **Government of Canada – National Occupational Classification**
<https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>
23. **Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center – Life Skills Checklist**
<https://peatc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Independent-Living-Life-Skills-Checklist-Booklet-ENGLISH-Interactive.pdf>

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You can visit ODEN’s learning module for Families and Caregivers – [Raising Expectations: Starting A Pathway to Employment. – The Ontario Disability Employment Network \(odenetwork.com\)](#) to view a list of chores that are age appropriate.

24. **Chunking Tasks**
<https://learn.beaconforschools.com/learn/chunking-tasks/>
25. **Hasbro Children’s Hospital – Fine and Gross Motor Skills Development**
https://www.lifespan.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/HCH-Fine%2B-Gross-Skills_infographic.pdf

26. **A Parent's Guide to Social Media**
<https://withall.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/WithAlls-A-Parents-Guide-to-Social-Media-updated.pdf>
27. **Social media: What parents should know**
https://caringforkids.cps.ca/hand-outs/behavior-and-development/social_media
28. **Community Living British Columbia – I Can Be Safe Online**
<https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/resources/safeguards-resources/i-can-be-safe-online/#:~:text=ICanBeSafeOnline.com%20was%20created%20as,and%20connecting%20with%20their%20community>
29. **Parent Guides from ConnectSafely**
https://connectsafely.org/parent-guides/?gad_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjws560BhCuARIsAHMqE0FtdXV6v7LKoJWyoDNwvQjZHKkcME-jcGr41XEINGHB6Ooq-VqAS-CekaAjx2EALw_wcB
30. **How Scaffolding Helps Build Executive Function Skills**
<https://pathways.org/scaffolding-helps-build-executive-function-skills/#:~:text=The%20effectiveness%20of%20scaffolding%20hinges,decrease%20the%20level%20of%20support.&text=Scaffolding%20allows%20parents%20to%20adjust%20their%20support%20based%20on%20the%20child's%20needs>
(footnotes)
31. **Developmental Services Ontario – Technology and your Housing Plan**
<https://webps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/DSO-Technology-Options-for-Home-Oct-21.pdf>
32. **Job Accommodation Network**
<https://askjan.org/>
33. **Developmental Services Ontario – Funded Services**
<https://www.dsontario.ca/funded-services>
34. **HOW TO TIE YOUR SHOES – Easy for Kids!**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c79wsBqDW1A>
35. **These 10 disabled female models are changing the face of the fashion industry**
<https://newzhook.com/story/disability-disabled-female-models-fashion-gucci-voguemadeline-stuart-carola-insolera-emily-barker-elie-goldstein-zebedee-management/>
36. **Disabled-Led Brands to Shop from This 2021**
<https://accessnow.com/blog/disabled-led-brands-to-shop-from-this-2021/>
37. **CBC News – Sky's the limit for Nova Scotian fashion designer with Down syndrome**
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/marie-webb-down-syndrome-online-store-fashion-designer-1.6052278>
38. **Disability Horizons – Andy's Kars: the garage that repairs cars and... people's lives**
<https://disabilityhorizons.com/2011/07/andys-kars-the-garage-that-repairs-cars-and-peoples-lives/>
39. **This Animation Shares the Touching Journey of a Man with Down Syndrome**
<https://lbbonline.com/news/this-animation-shares-the-touching-journey-of-a-man-with-down-syndrome>
40. **The Mutes: The band with Intellectual Disabilities**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU0ts-hD7gs>

41. **Goh Chok Tong Enable Fund – Love for animation helps illustrator with mild intellectual disability find the hero within**
<https://www.gctenablefund.sg/2018/04/22/love-for-animation-helps-illustrator-with-mild-intellectual-disability-find-the-hero-within/>
42. **Special Olympics – On World DS Day: Celebrating Athletes with Down Syndrome—Who Prove Their Power, Ability Through Sports**
<https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/news/on-world-ds-day-celebrating-athletes-with-down-syndrome-who-prove-their-power-ability-through-sports>
43. **10 Canadian Influencers and Professionals with Down syndrome**
<https://www.qicreative.com/blog/canadian-influencers-and-professionals-with-down-syndrome>
44. **BBC – The autistic vet who proved her doubters wrong**
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-humber-61421685>
45. **Special abilities – Greenhouses can tap into a valuable talent pool by hiring employees with disabilities.**
<https://www.greenhousemag.com/article/labor-special-abilities/>
46. **Project SEARCH: Getting students workforce ready**
<https://hollandbloorview.ca/stories-news-events/stories/project-search-getting-students-workforce-ready>
47. **London Police Service – World Down Syndrome Day serves as a reminder that our differences should always be embraced & celebrated**
https://www.facebook.com/story.php/?story_fbid=832717148885579&id=100064419050396
48. **Regina man with intellectual disability fulfills lifelong dream of working for fire department**
<https://creativeoptionsregina.ca/regina-man-with-intellectual-disability-fulfills-lifelong-dream-of-working-for-fire-department/>
49. **APM – Maddy’s Story**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqYBs587VpM>
50. **Employable Me Digital Exclusive: Goodlife Fitness**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwFvnsvGimg>
51. **Southern New Hampshire University – What Is Social Capital and Why Is It So Important?**
<https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/newsroom/business/what-is-social-capital>
52. **MyPATH – Grade 8 to 9 Transition**
<https://www.pathtosuccess.ca/grade-8-9-transition>
53. **Milestones Autism Resources – The 5-Point Scale: A Tool to Learn Emotions and Calming Strategies**
<https://www.milestones.org/map/browse-articles/the-5-point-scale-a-tool-to-learn-emotions-and-calming-strategies>
54. **CAFCO – Resources**
<https://www.cafco-ceafo.ca/resources/>
55. **The Zones of Regulation**
<https://zonesofregulation.com/>
56. **How to Teach Problem-Solving Skills to Your Child: A Guide for Every Age**
<https://www.familycentre.org/news/post/how-to-teach-problem-solving-skills-to-your-child-a-guide-for-every-age>

57. **Developmental Services Ontario**
<https://www.dsontario.ca/>
58. **Partners for Planning – Planning Network**
<https://www.planningnetwork.ca/resources/action-guide-to-hiring-support-workers>
59. **Take Our Kids to Work**
<https://www.studentscommission.ca/resources/projects/tokw/>
60. **Project SEARCH – A School-to-Work Training Program**
<https://projectsearchcanada.org/index.html>
61. **The Weeklyish – School Coffee Carts Aren't Inclusion**
<https://weeklyish.substack.com/p/school-coffee-carts-arent-inclusion>
62. **ODEN – Youth Success Strategy Project**
<https://www.odenetwork.com/initiatives/youth-success-strategy/>
63. **Canadian Down Syndrome Society – Mindsets Wellness Program**
<https://cdss.ca/mindsets/>
64. **Government of Ontario – Employment Ontario**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>
65. **Ontario Disability Employment Network**
<https://www.odenetwork.com/>
66. **First Work**
<https://firstwork.org/>
67. **O*NET Interest Profiler**
<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>
68. **WorkBC – Career Trek Videos**
<https://www.workbc.ca/plan-career/career-trek-videos>
69. **Career Professionals of Canada – Job Development: A Vital Role in Our Profession**
<https://careerprocanada.ca/job-development-a-vital-role-in-our-profession/>
70. **Planning Network – Planning for Adulthood**
<https://www.planningnetwork.ca/resources/planning-for-adulthood-action-guide>
71. **Holland Bloorview – Personalized Transition Plan: My evolving journey into young adulthood**
<https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2023-11/PersonalizedTransitionPlan-20231115.pdf>
72. **Connections – A guide to transition planning for parents of children with a developmental disability**
<https://www.class.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/Transition-Planning.pdf>
73. **Life Beyond School – Transition Planning Documents**
<https://sites.google.com/limestone.on.ca/ldsblifebeyondschool/starting-to-plan/transition-planning-documents?authuser=0>
74. **Canadian Association for Supported Employment – Advancing Equal Access in the Workplace for Persons Who Experience Intellectual Disability**
<https://www.supportedemployment.ca/advancing-equal-access-in-the-workplace-for-persons-who-experience-intellectual-disability/>
75. **Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center – Set an Employment Destination and Map a Course to Get There**
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Glossary

Access 2 Card (Easter Seals)

This card is to help reduce the cost of eligible entertainment venues. Presenting this card at eligible places will provide a support person with free entry. The card holder will pay full price. There is a fee to obtain this card.

https://easterseals.ca/en/access-2-card-program/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwv7O0BhDwARIsAC0sjWPU56QzkqiZwXU2pz_-hKcFiRFtiUg8eMCQAmlYnP4WxrVxMa2JDZoaAm_kEALw_wcB

Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)

ACSD is financial support provided to eligible families of children (17 yrs and under) with severe disabilities. The amount of financial support may be dependent on family income.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/assistance-children-severe-disabilities-program>

Certificate of Accomplishment (C of A)

The Certificate of Accomplishment is available to students who are leaving high school but have not achieved the required credits to receive the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC). Check your school board's website for more information.

Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)

DSO is the single point of access to government support and services in the adult developmental sector. Applications can begin as early as 16 yrs and if eligible will start at 18 yrs. <https://www.dsontario.ca/>

High school K-Codes Courses

K-codes are Ministry of Education approved codes to be used for the purpose of scheduling alternative curriculum high school courses. K-codes are not credit bearing. Although the K-codes are government approved, the alternative curriculum described in the code is locally developed by the school board.

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/course-descriptions-and-prerequisites/appendix-d>

Identification, Placement and Identification Review Committee (IPRC)

An IPRC is a committee that decided if a student is to be deemed as having an exceptionality according to categories set out by the Ministry of Education

<https://education.easterseals.org/preparing-for-an-iprc-meeting-tips-for-parents/#:~:text=The%20Identification%2C%20Placement%20and%20Review,the%20decision%20is%20reviewed%20annually.>

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a written document that outlines assessed strengths, assessed needs as well as accommodations, modifications and/or outlines alternative curriculum. An IEP must be developed for a student identified as exceptional by an IPRC. An IEP can also be developed for a student not identified as having an exceptionality through and IPRC.

[https://www.ontario.ca/page/individual-education-plans#:~:text=An%20individual%20education%20plan%20\(%20IEP,to%20learn%20and%20demonstrate%20learning.](https://www.ontario.ca/page/individual-education-plans#:~:text=An%20individual%20education%20plan%20(%20IEP,to%20learn%20and%20demonstrate%20learning.)

Individual Pathway Plan (IPP)

Building on the Kindergarten to Grade 6, **All About Me** portfolio, the **Individual Pathway Plan** (IPP) takes over for Grade 7 to Grade 12. The IPP is typically web based and allows students to contribute reflections, artifacts and plan for their future. <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/creatingpathwayssuccess.pdf>

Natural supports

Natural supports are the people around your child who can support your child to help enhance the quality of life. They can provide social inclusion and belonging in a variety of environments. Natural supports could be co-workers, people in the community, friends and family members.

<https://www.supportedemployment.ca/resources/service-providers/resource-hub/the-importance-of-natural-supports/>

Ontario Autism Program

OAP is a government program for children (under the age of 18) who are on the autism spectrum. To register for the

OAP the child must be under 18 yrs, live in Ontario, and have a written diagnosis of autism from a qualified professional. For more information: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-autism-program#section-0>

Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP)

ODSP Income Support is a monthly amount to help with the expenses of daily living. The application starts at the age of 17 ½ yrs and if approved will start at the age of 18 yrs.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-disability-support-program>

Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

The OSSD has specific requirements for the number of credits and the categories those courses satisfy. Some credits are compulsory, and others can be electives. There are other graduation requirements depending on when the student started high school.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/high-school-graduation-requirements>

Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC)

The OSSC is available to students who are leaving high school without achieving their OSSD but have the required credits to receive the OSSC. Check your school board's website for specific information.

Passport Funding

Passport Funding is available to adults (18 yrs +) who are eligible for DSO. This is a reimbursement program to help recipients participate in their community.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/passport-program-adults-developmental-disability>

Special Service at Home (SSAH)

This is a reimbursement program available to families of children (17 yrs and under) with disabilities. This can be used to purchase supports and services to help families care for their child as well as participate in activities in their community or at home.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/special-services-home>

National Occupational Classification (NOC)

This is a standardized Canadian database used to describe every occupation in the labour market. Each occupation has a NOC code. The database will outline the

skills and credentials needed to do that job. The databased includes entry level jobs that do not require a high school diploma to jobs that require specific post-secondary training. (<https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>)

Transition Plans

All students who are supported by an IEP are required to have a transition plan included in their IEP. The transition plan should have the transition action, who is responsible for that action and the timeline.

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12/transition>





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