

Postsecondary Education for Individuals With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

TIPS AND RESOURCES



Why a Postsecondary Education?

A postsecondary education can open a whole new world for people both with and without disabilities. The college experience allows one to broaden one's interests, establish and pursue one's goals, and form life-long friendships. It also allows for the possibility of a better paying job. The social relationships and experiences had in a college setting can lead to greater independence and a clearer understanding of one's place in the world. For a student with an intellectual or developmental disability, transitioning from high school to college can be successful with careful IEP transitional planning, thoughtful preparation, and selection of a relevant postsecondary education setting.

Postsecondary Transition Planning and IEP Goals

In Tennessee, when a student reaches the age of 14, IEP teams open a discussion on goals and planning for the transition from high school life to life after high school. If a student is considering going to college, it is important that he/she and the parent(s) know how a high school can assist in preparing and guiding a student toward meeting his/her postsecondary goal. Involving

the student in transition planning is very important. Listed below are some guiding questions for the student and his/her IEP team to consider as they pursue the goal of attending college.

- Is the student enrolled in classes to prepare for college?
- Are general education requirements being met?
- Can curriculum modifications/accommodations be gradually minimized as the student progresses through high school?
- How will the student learn study skills, time management, and organizational techniques that will prepare him/her for the college setting?
- How will the student learn social skills and maintain a positive self-esteem?
- How will the student learn self-advocacy skills?
- How will he/she learn to articulate his/her disability, learning style, strengths, and weaknesses?
- How will he/she explore college choices, support services, and financial aid and scholarship considerations?
- Consider including an IEP goal to learn to use assistive technology to increase access to reading and writing tasks.
- How were the students' postsecondary education goals determined?

Selecting a Postsecondary Education Institution

As a student with an intellectual or developmental disability begins to explore a postsecondary institution, many considerations should be taken into account. What kind of school and degree program will best aid the student in meeting learning and career goals? Would a 2-year or a 4-year college be more appropriate? Public or private? Would a technology center be an option? Take support services into account. These services vary greatly from institution to institution. Tour campuses and visit the educational institution's Office of Disability Services. Know what accommodations are necessary for the student and ask questions regarding the availability of these supports.



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PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Financial Aid

For approved Comprehensive Transition Programs, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 allows students with intellectual disabilities access to federal financial aid such as Pell Grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, and the Federal Work-Study program. Check with programs about whether they qualify. Other financial assistance possibilities include:

- Department of Social Security Administration (800) 772-1213 www.socialsecurity.gov
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (800) 270-1349 www.tn.gov/humanserv/rehab/vrs.html
- Individual Training Accounts (ITA) provided through Tennessee Career Centers www.tn.gov/labor-wfd/cc/
- Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS Plans) www.passplan.org

Tennessee Programs and Resources

Tennessee Task Force for Postsecondary Education for Students With Intellectual Disabilities

The Task Force plans and supports the development of postsecondary programs on Tennessee college campuses. With funding from the National Training Institute and coordination through the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, it has hosted two Capacity Building Institutes to raise awareness and promote systems change. For information see kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/community/postsecondary.html (615) 936-8852

Next Steps at Vanderbilt

Next Steps at Vanderbilt University is a 2-year nonresidential certification program for students with intellectual disabilities, ages 18-26, who have not earned a general high school diploma. The program provides individualized Programs of Study in the areas of education, social skills, and vocational training. It provides transformational learning experiences within an inclusive educational setting. It also holds a weeklong summer program. For information: nextsteps.vanderbilt.edu, (615) 343-0822

University of Tennessee FUTURE Program

The University of Tennessee's FUTURE Program is a 2-year nonresidential program culminating in a University of Tennessee FUTURE Program Vocational

Certificate and job placement. The program will provide individualized academic, social, vocational, and independent living skills to students ages 18-29 with intellectual disabilities and autism who completed high school without earning a regular high school diploma. Contact: <http://futureut.utk.edu>, (865) 974-9176

Tennessee Technology Centers (TTC)

Tennessee has 27 Technology Centers across the state, and has partnered with Vanderbilt's Next Step Program to develop a successful enrollment program at the TTC at Nashville. Students with intellectual disabilities have enrolled to pursue supplemental certificates in approved technical training areas. To determine if training opportunities like this exist in your area, contact LeAnn Blevins, Grants Coordinator at leann.blevins@tbr.edu or 615-366-4459. For links to local TTCs, visit: www.tbr.edu/schools/default.aspx?id=2654.

Postsecondary Education and Transition Websites

Think College, www.thinkcollege.net

For students, families, and professionals. Includes a national database of postsecondary programs available to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, policy briefs, and newsletters, and more. Think College is an initiative of the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Going to College, www.going-to-college.org

Going To College contains information on college life for students with disabilities. It is designed for high school students.

HEATH Resource Center, www.heath.gwu.edu

Information about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities at American campuses, vocational-technical schools, and other postsecondary training entities.

Other Resources

National Dissemination Center for Children With Disabilities—A student guide to the IEP www.nichcy.org/pubs/stuguide/st1book.htm

Center for Self-Determination—A guide to principles of self-determination www.self-determination.com

Office for Civil Rights—A student guide on preparing for postsecondary education www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html