

# Introduction

The future can often seem uncertain for a young adult with autism. It may be hard for you to imagine your child out in the world, or what he or she will do once the school bus is no longer arriving each morning. Some parents find the thought of the transition process overwhelming. Many families have spent years researching, negotiating and advocating for services and supports to maximize their child's potential during his or her school years. And the thought of doing this again with a whole new system can seem daunting.

*To ease your fears and help you start developing your child's transition plan, you have come to the right place!*

As overwhelmed as you might be, try to be positive when thinking about the future. Take a look back and think about all of the strides that your child has made so far, and how much you have learned along the way. One lesson you may have learned over and over is the importance of being proactive.

Keep in mind, too, that many others have traveled this road before you, and lots of information and resources have been developed to help you along the way. Additionally, experts in the field have researched and investigated the process and we have compiled a great deal of this information and many of these resources into this guide. The best news is that autism awareness is continuing to generate more opportunities for growth in the transition process, which can lead to more opportunities for young adults with autism like your child!

The guiding principle that we used in developing this kit is that all individuals with autism, regardless of the level of support needed, should be able to live a life filled with purpose, dignity, choices and happiness.



As parents and caregivers, we all want our children (those living with or without autism) to be happy and to live fulfilling lives. It is important to remember that what constitutes happiness or fulfillment for a person is specific to that individual. All young adults living with autism have their own unique strengths and challenges, as well as their own specific likes and dislikes. So what may be an appropriate or desired employment, housing, postsecondary education or community involvement option for one individual may not be the right fit for someone else.

**This kit will provide you with suggestions and options for you to consider as you set out on this journey toward finding your child's own unique path to adulthood.**

With the importance of finding your child's own specific path in mind, the development of self-advocacy and independent living skills is highlighted throughout this kit. We have broken the kit down into different sections. At the end of the kit, we have provided resources specific to each section. Since the transition process is different in each state, we have also developed timelines for each state, with state agency information that may be helpful to you throughout this process.

When it comes to transition planning, it can be helpful to start thinking about the future as early as possible. Some parents even start the transition conversation with their child's school by age 12 or 13. And while it is never too early to think about the future of your child, if your child is older and close to finishing high school or aging out of the school system, rest assured that it is also never too late!

It can also help to work backwards. Think about where you see your child in the future based on his or her strengths, challenges, abilities and preferences. What type of job will he or she have? Where will he or she live? The transition plan should be developed and then adjusted through the years with these ultimate goals in mind. Where do you see your child in ten years? To get there, where do you see him or her in five years? Two years? Six months? Working backwards can help you stay on track and take the necessary steps now to get to the future you and your child dream of.

Remember that all roads do not lead to the same place. The path will be different for each family, but the goal remains the same: that your young adult with autism will lead a fulfilling and happy adult life. With some planning and collaborative efforts with your child, family members, educators and other professionals involved in his or her life, you will succeed in accomplishing this goal!

Happy reading!

