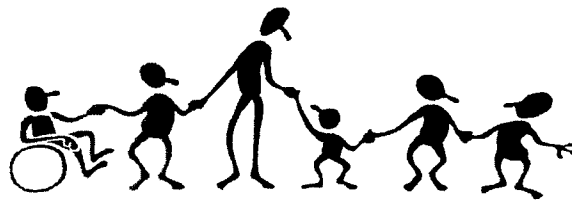


A Transition Planning Guide for Families of Youth & Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities



Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition

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www.smact.org

2007

DISCLAIMER

At the time of publication, all contact information is represented correctly to the best of our knowledge. Please contact the Council office with any corrections to the information contained within this guide.

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This guide was created by members of the Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition (SMACT). SMACT provides information, education, training and outreach related to transition planning with youth who have special needs aged 14-25. Please contact our office whenever we can be of assistance as you work with youth and young adults in planning for their future.

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This booklet is available in alternative formats, upon request.

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INTRODUCTION

Transition services for students with disabilities are required by a federal law called the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**, commonly referred to as **IDEA**. In keeping with Maine's Special Education regulations, transition services are to be a part of every student's **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**, beginning at age 14 and earlier, if appropriate. A well-designed transition plan addresses all aspects of a student's post-school life. Common considerations often include:

1. Where is the student going to live and work?
2. What will the student be doing during the day?
3. What will the student be doing for fun?
4. How much and what type of involvement will the student have in his or her community?
5. How will the student support himself or herself financially?
6. Will the student need help making important decisions?
7. Who will help the student to be successful in these areas?
8. How will medical expenses be covered?
9. What continuing educational opportunities are available?
10. What are the transportation options?
11. Will the student need support outside his/her family and how much?
12. What courses and classes should the student be taking while in school to assist them in reaching their goals after high school?

This manual will serve as an introduction to the world of "**Adult Services**" and will hopefully answer these questions and more. Our goal is to provide you with information that will address some of your concerns about what it will be like for your child when he/she has completed schooling. All young adults are different, as are all families. **There is no single "right plan" in transition planning and what some families want for their child may or may not be what you want for yours.** The best planning occurs when it considers contributions from a variety of sources: the student, the family, the school, representatives from adult service agencies, and other involved community members. It is meant to improve a student's employment ability, continuing education options, housing options, and to develop a social and recreational network that continues after high school.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF TRANSITION SERVICES

From the 2004 regulations implementing the federal special education law IDEA:

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- (A) Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation
- (B) Is based upon the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences and interests and...
- (C) Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

SEC 300.42

- (b) Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16 (14, in Maine), or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually, the IEP must include:
 - (1) Appropriate measurable post-secondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and
 - (2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals
- (c) Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority under section 615(m) (of IDEA)

SEC 300.520

PREPARING FOR YOUR YOUTH'S FIRST TRANSITION PLANNING MEETING

1. **Talk with your youth** about his or her hopes, dreams and plans for the future (i.e. Dreams/SNOW Charts). Make notes of your youth's goals and plans.
2. **Meet with or speak to** your youth's special education teacher before the first meeting:
 - H Review your youth's post-school goals
 - H Discuss realistic time frames for attaining the identified goals
 - H Determine together who should be invited to the meeting
3. **Encourage your youth** to attend the transition planning / IEP meeting and help him/her to prepare to share information about his/her future goals and plans.
4. **Prepare to share** what you know and your dreams/goals for your youth. Information about living skills, special interests, summer or after-school jobs, individual strengths etc., as well as the results of formal evaluations are very important for the team to know. Remember, you are an integral member of your child's team.
5. **Prepare to discuss** your expectations for your youth.
6. **Bring your own questions.**
 - H What information do you need from the various members of the transition planning team?
7. **Talk to other parents** who have children who are going through or have gone through the process for support and resource ideas.
8. **Contact your regional transition council** for help in identifying resources, information and referral, and technical assistance-related to transition planning.
9. **Keep a file** of all your communications and people you have contacted, date that you spoke, and the results of the conversations.
10. **Remember that teamwork** is an absolutely essential part of transition planning. Do not hesitate to call any member of the team to exchange information or ask questions.

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Transition planning and school programming should go hand-in-hand. When a comprehensive transition plan is developed, a student's school program and curriculum are more likely to relate to the direction which the student (and his team) has identified as the goals for adult life. For example, if a student has determined that he/she would like to have a job when he/she gets out of high school, then it will be important to have part of his/her school program to include a vocational component. When a plan is developed early, the programming is sequential in nature. Using the goal area mentioned above, an example of a "coordinated set of activities" would include sequential activities such as:

- ✓ **An interest inventory**, to determine vocational areas of interest from which to build
- ✓ **Pre-vocational experiences** such as "jobs" within the school setting. **Taking data** on performance with each of these experiences will be important in determining future vocational experiences
- ✓ **Volunteer** experiences designed to continue to assess areas of strength and interest
- ✓ **A vocational experience** - For some students that might mean participation in a vocational program through a vocational high school, for others it might mean community based vocational experiences. Again, information gathered to share regarding areas of strengths and needs will be important.
- ✓ **Linkages with adult agencies**, such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR or Voc. Rehab.) or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). If a student is eligible, these **agencies** will assist in determining and providing necessary support after a student graduates from high school.
- ✓ **Paid employment** - The goal would be for a linkage with a appropriate paid **employment** situation for a student by the time he/she graduates from high school.
- ✓ **Connections to community-based** social, leisure, and recreational opportunities

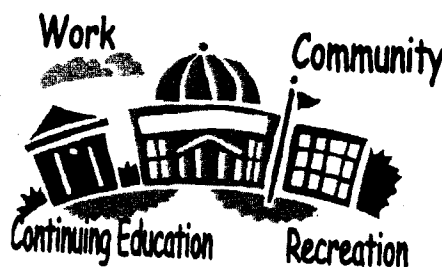
This type of a sequential approach to planning would apply to all appropriate transition planning areas: **social and leisure participation, housing, continuing education, maintenance of one's medical needs, independent living skill development, decision making and self-advocacy.**

TRANSITION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

IEP goals, during the transition process, need to address the skills necessary to function in the adult world. These goals need to be an integral part of a student's IEP throughout high school. The closer your youth is to completing his/her education, the more you will realize the importance of having this type of goal addressed. Try to develop & prioritize only as many goals as can realistically be accomplished. Too many goals may be confusing and/or counterproductive. The best transition planning will result in IEP goals that are most suited to learning the skills one will need to succeed after high school. Most likely, these transition goals will encompass aspects of some or all of the following areas:

- Academic
- Employment
- Continuing Education
- Independent Living
- Social/Recreational
- Medical/Health
- Legal

The following pages contain more details about these areas, but remember it is the **entire team's responsibility** to ensure they are addressed, **not just yours and not just the schools**. Remember that the most effective transition planning occurs when a team begins as early as possible, although it is a requirement of Maine's Special Education law to begin the process at least by the age of 14. It is **always beneficial to have an eye on the future** whenever an IEP is written for any age child as well as when determining related activities at home.



TRANSITION CONSIDERATIONS & RELATED ACTIVITIES

Academic

- Identify individual learning styles
- Become aware of career and employment interests
- Focus on what you will need to succeed in the community
- Reinforce what the schools are teaching at home
- Foster a lifelong love of learning
- Learn about post-secondary educational opportunities:
 - Adult Education Technical Schools
 - Community Colleges Colleges and Universities
- Practice communication across all environments (home, school, job, leisure activities)

Employment

- Visit various employment sites
- Job Shadow an employee at these sites
- Work at home (summer job, chores, etc.)
- Become aware of career and employment interests
- Develop transportation options (driver's license, public transportation, etc.)
- Apply to Vocational Rehabilitation
- Visit local programs that provide vocational services

Independent Living

- Develop good personal care
- Develop housekeeping, budgeting, and cooking skills
- Know how to handle emergencies and how to live safely
- Visit local providers of residential services
- Learn to access key parts of your community
 - (bank, grocery store, post office, doctor's office, etc.)
- Obtain state identification card through Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- Develop social and emotional safety skills
- Learn about and/or refer to the Department of Health and Human Services for mental retardation adult services
- Review the eligibility requirements for accessing Social Security benefits and/or Supplemental Security Income

TRANSITION CONSIDERATIONS & RELATED ACTIVITIES

Social ~ Recreational

- Arrange ongoing social activities (with peers)
- Establish exercise routines
- Join school or community sports teams or a health club
- Join organizations (religious, fraternal, social clubs, etc.)
- Invite others to activities
- Maintain an active relationship with family

Health

- Discuss health issues with your youth
- Assist your youth to understand and take more responsibility for monitoring their medication (s)
- Learn what they think and feel about their own health needs
- Have them practice making doctor's appointments
- Inventory what they can and cannot do for themselves
- Institute learning objectives to teach personal health care
- Assess the impact of health care issues on post-school plans (job, living, recreation, etc.)
- Make connections with community health services available after high school (i.e. physical/speech/occupational therapy)
- Explore continuation of family's medical insurance, post school.
- Explore eligibility of MaineCare

Legal

- Assess decision-making competency
- Inform student of newly obtained rights and responsibilities by the age of majority (18 years old); including education, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) & Rehabilitation Act (504)
- Explore the range of guardianship options
- Explore the establishment of a special needs trust, as early as possible

TRANSITION CHECKLIST

The following is a checklist of transition activities that you and your son or daughter may wish to consider when preparing transition plans with the IEP team. Skills and interests will determine which items on the checklist are relevant. Use this checklist to ask yourself whether these transition issues should be addressed at IEP transition meetings. The checklist can also help identify who should be a part of the IEP transition team. Responsibility for carrying out the specific transition activities should be determined at the IEP transition meetings. Timelines are approximate.

Four to five years before leaving the school district

- ✓ Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be a successful learner and worker
- ✓ Identify career interests/skills, complete interest/career inventories, request a vocational assessment, if appropriate
- ✓ Identify needed community support services and programs
- ✓ Explore options/requirements for post-secondary education admission or continuing education
- ✓ Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports
- ✓ Learn to communicate your interests, preferences, and needs
- ✓ Learn to explain your disability and needed accommodations
- ✓ Learn and practice informed decision making skills
- ✓ Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities
- ✓ Broaden your community activities and friendships
- ✓ Use local public transportation options
- ✓ Examine money management and identify necessary skills
- ✓ Acquire an identification card and the ability to communicate personal information
- ✓ Learn and practice personal health care
- ✓ Learn and practice personal safety skills (especially in the community)
- ✓ Practice communication across all environments (home, school, job, leisure activities)

Two to three years before leaving the school district

- ✓ Ensure contact has occurred with community support services programs and agencies
- ✓ Invite adult service providers, peers, and others to the transition/IEP meeting
- ✓ Match career interests and skills with vocational coursework and community work experiences
- ✓ Gather more information on post-secondary and continuing education programs and the support services offered. Make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams, if appropriate
- ✓ Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues
- ✓ Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal communication and social skills for different settings (employment, school, recreation, with peers, etc.)
- ✓ Explore guardianship options prior to age of majority (18)
- ✓ Begin a resume and/or a personal/career portfolio to be used to showcase strengths, skills, and experiences. Update regularly.
- ✓ Practice independent living skills
- ✓ Identify needed personal care attendant (PCA) services, & if appropriate, learn to manage these services
- ✓ Register to vote (all) and for selective services (if male, 18 yrs)
- ✓ Apply for financial support programs (SSI)
- ✓ Continue to assess vocational skills

One year before leaving the school district

- ✓ Confirm eligibility for support services with agencies and develop an individual service plan
- ✓ Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, and identifying necessary accommodations at post-secondary and work environments
- ✓ Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed
- ✓ Take responsibility for arriving on time for work, appointments, and social activities
- ✓ Identify the post-secondary school you plan to attend and arrange for accommodations, if appropriate
- ✓ Assume responsibility for health care needs to whatever degree possible (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions)
- ✓ Continue to assess vocational skills
- ✓ Identify and use transportation options

AGE 18 CHECKLIST

Not all activities are applicable to everyone

Financial

- ✓ Apply for Social Security benefits and/or SSI
(Contact local Social Security Office to determine timeline for applying)
- ✓ Research appropriateness of a special needs trust

Health Insurance

- ✓ Determine upper age limits on eligibility for children with disabilities on your personal insurance policy
- ✓ Explore health insurance options (i.e. MaineCare/Medicaid)
See MaineCare Section

Selective Service

- ✓ Register for the Draft (males only) at the local Post Office

Guardianship

- ✓ Explore range of options regarding guardianship
- ✓ Petition court for guardianship, if necessary
- ✓ Contact local Probate Court to determine timeline for applying and associated costs

Vocational Rehabilitation

- ✓ Ensure application for Vocational Rehabilitation services has occurred (interview completed and application signed)

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

- ✓ Apply for eligibility of Adult Services (even if your child has children's case management services)

To speed up the process for applying for both SSI and MaineCare (Medicaid), take copies of the following items to your appointment:

Social Security Card
Birth Certificate
Bank Account Records
School Records (IEP & Assessments)
Medical Records/Medication information
Names, Addresses, & Phone Numbers of Doctors who treat your youth
A copy of Special Needs Trust, if applicable

WHEN DOES SPECIAL EDUCATION END?

"A student's eligibility for a free and appropriate public education (F.A.P.E.) ceases upon graduation from high school with a regular diploma" (Maine Special Education Regulations). So, when a student graduates **and** receives a regular high school diploma, she/he is no longer eligible for special education services. Some students will continue to be eligible for special education services through the age of 20 if they have not met the graduation requirements specified in their IEP and have not received a regular high school diploma. A student who has not reached the age of 20 before the start of the school year (July 1st) may be entitled to receive a public school education through their 20th year, if deemed appropriate (20-A M.R.S.A. Chapters 301 and 303)

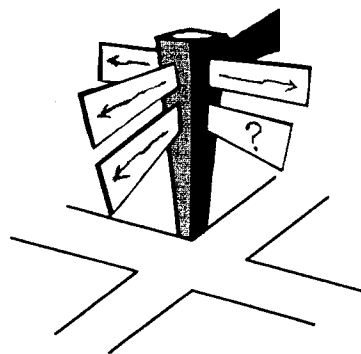
An important requirement of the IEP is to determine the "anticipated date of graduation" (Section 5.11, Maine Special Education Regulations, November 1999). For effective planning, it is best for everyone, including your child, to have an open discussion at the IEP meeting about the anticipated date of graduation at least by the time he/she reaches the age of 14 or 15. This will assist everyone to know what the time frame is for the best planning possible in order for them to move toward their long-term goals. It will also help them to have a target date for their graduation and feel connected to their class.

Another important part of the transition planning process is having information regarding the movement from entitlement for services to eligibility for services. All students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education while they are in public school. **Once youth exit the public school system, they must meet eligibility criteria and services are often determined as resources allow. Each agency has distinct eligibility criteria.**

Families who begin transition planning early (at least by age 14) will have more time to create opportunities and connect with supports in order for their young adults to achieve their goals.



**CRITICAL
CONNECTIONS
&
CONSIDERATIONS**

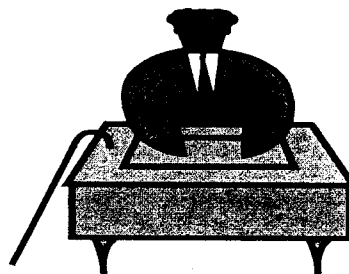


VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

(V.R. or Voc. Rehab.)

Vocational Rehabilitation is a state agency through the Department of Labor. Vocational Rehabilitation's goal is **assisting interested individuals who have disabilities to get and keep a job.** It is intended to provide employment-related support services for a limited period of time, and within a mutually developed Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Vocational Rehabilitation often contracts with community service providers who provide Situational Assessment, Job Development, and Job Coaching Services. Employment related services that are available may also include: career exploration, vocational assessments, job development, short term job coaching, support for the acquisition of job related assistive technology, and post-secondary education that is related to one's vocational goal. Although direct services through V.R. typically will not start before a student leaves high school, it is important to include a V.R. Counselor as part of your youth's team generally 2 years before they leave high school to better insure that there is a smooth transition for the vocational goals of your child. A vocational rehabilitation counselor can be an important resource for a student's team as vocational goals and objectives are developed for an IEP.

If through an assessment, it is determined that your youth will need longer term vocational services than what V.R. provides (for example, ongoing job coaching), it is very important for communication and a linkage to occur among the school, V.R. and with the Dept. of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS) early in the development of your youth's transition plan.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DHHS) (Developmental Services)

*(also known as Office of Cognitive and Physical Disabilities - OCAPD)
(formerly known as the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services)*

This is also a state agency that provides support to people with disabilities of all ages who meet specific eligibility criteria. For the purposes of this manual, we will focus on services that are provided to people with a diagnosis of mental retardation, autism or pervasive developmental disorder (PDD).

As with other agencies, there is a referral process that is necessary to complete in order for your young adult to be determined eligible for services, even if they have received services from DHHS as a child. If your child has a children's case manager than that person may make the referral for adult services through DHHS. It is always beneficial as a parent to check, at least by the time your child is 17, with the intake coordinator of adult services for DHHS to determine whether or not DHHS is aware of your child, the support needs that he/she has, and to ensure that the referral to adult services is in process.

There are many services that DHHS supports. They include services for residential support, day habilitation support and employment support. DHHS usually will contract with a community provider organization that will provide the desired service. There is choice for a young person in deciding which provider organization will provide the necessary support.

If your young adult is eligible for services through DHHS it is very important for you to become familiar with what they have to offer, how to apply for services, how their services interact with services from other agencies (ex. Voc. Rehab.) and to determine if there is a waiting list for services. It is also essential that a representative from DHHS or one of their contracted community providers be actively involved in the transition planning process.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal income supplement program administered through the Social Security Administration (SSA). It is designed to assist people who are aged, blind or disabled and who have little or no income.

When a child turns age 18, the Social Security Administration no longer considers the parent's income and assets when it decides if a young adult can receive SSI. *A child who was not eligible for SSI before his or her 18th birthday because the parent's income or assets were too high may become eligible at age 18. Regardless of whether or not your child has qualified for SSI before age 18, she/he must reapply in order to determine if she/he remains eligible for income support as adult.* Children who qualify for SSI prior to age 18 do not have to file a new application. However, they must undergo a non-medical re-determination and be reevaluated under the adult medical criteria. SSA will generally initiate these reviews but it is a good idea for individuals to contact SSA in the event we do not contact them. It is helpful for families to contact their local Social Security office prior to their child's 18th birthday to determine the specific timeline for application.

To determine or redetermine eligibility, Social Security will ask you to describe how your child's disability affects his or her true ability to work and what those limitations are that hinder work. Although this may be difficult, this is the time when it is important for everyone to accurately portray your child's disability when asked how their disability affects their limitations. Please refer to the age 18 checklist on page 11 for more information regarding what to provide for documentation when determining eligibility.

The Social Security Administration has an appeals process. If your child is denied eligibility, the decision should always be appealed if you do not agree with the decision.

The Social Security offices are extremely busy. Patience is important when communicating with their offices. Often times their telephone lines are busy and many times you will need to be on the phone for an extended period of time while waiting for a claims representative. Having something with you to do while you are waiting may be helpful. Don't give up or hang up!

(continued on next page)

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Another program through the Social Security Administration is **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**. This program provides benefits to individuals who are disabled or blind that are covered by workers' contributions to the Social Security system. In addition to other qualifying categories, SSDI refers to benefits paid to adult children who are disabled (age 18 and older) based on the contributions made through their earnings or the earnings of their spouses or parents.

There are other programs that are administered through the Social Security Administration, including Social Security Auxiliary and Survivors Benefits. Again, it is important to communicate with the Social Security office in your area to determine the process for applying and the eligibility requirements for each program.

Other suggestions when working with Social Security include:

- ✓ Document everything. Create a log of all communication with SSA that include: date, claims rep name, nature of discussion
- ✓ Use the SSA 1-800 number for general information. Do not attempt to resolve specific issues related to benefits with this method. Make an appointment with a claims representative in the local office.
- ✓ Request written documentation from the claims rep. verifying your understanding of the conversation. SSA will provide written documentation of all format determinations or actions affecting eligibility and paying amounts. They generally do not provide written follow-ups of informational conversations.
- ✓ If your adult child lives with you, keep good documentation regarding their portion of household expenses (food & shelter). This will affect the amount of benefits payments.
- ✓ Remember that SSI is designed to be a supplemental income program. As your adult child increases their work hours or rate of pay, their benefits will proportionately decrease. Hopefully, the long-term monetary benefits of increased employment will far exceed those of depending on SSI for the long term.

MAINECARE **(formerly known as MEDICAID)**

MaineCare is a joint state and federally funded program that provides health care coverage to people who meet their financial guidelines. Financial eligibility is determined by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Family Independence. An application for MaineCare can be acquired by calling or visiting any DHS regional office (refer to page 20). MaineCare is sometimes referred to as the payor of last resort. In other words, it is a secondary insurance.

Sometimes children under the age of 18 (or 19 if the child is a full-time student) may receive MaineCare through an income waiver (Katie Beckett or Deeming) if it is determined that the medical needs of the child are so great that they will need this insurance in order to have their child remain at home.

As with SSI and SSDI, regardless of whether or not your child qualifies for benefits before the age of 18, they must reapply to determine eligibility for MaineCare as an adult. For those who qualify for SSI, MaineCare is a benefit that they will automatically receive if they continue to remain eligible for SSI as an adult. MaineCare will continue to be provided to a person as long as they are receiving at least \$1.00 in SSI. If someone is determined ineligible for SSI, then it is important to apply for MaineCare at the age of 18 to see if their income may qualify them for MaineCare.

In addition, the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services manages specific MaineCare benefits for those who qualify for their services. There is a link between the services that are provided by BDS and MaineCare. Feel free to ask the representative from BDS with whom you are working to help you to understand this linkage.

As was mentioned in the Social Security section of this guide, keeping accurate records related to MaineCare correspondence and medical bills is essential. **In addition, it is important to keep asking questions until you understand what is expected of you and what you can expect from others.**

GUARDIANSHIP

Coming of age at 18 for a young adult with a disability poses many new challenges that a family needs to consider. For students with or without disabilities, the age 18 affords all the rights and responsibilities normally associated with adulthood. For our young adults, this would include approving their own IEP, making decisions about and authorizing medical procedures, authorizing the release of confidential records, and applying for any services that may be appropriate (such as SSI, etc.).

For many young adults, this is just as it should be, as they are capable of making informed choices when presented with complex issues. For others, there may be some parts of their life that they can make decisions for themselves and some parts where they need assistance (partial guardianship). For others, another adult may need to be appointed by the court to make virtually all decisions (financial, medical, legal) on the young adult's behalf. (Court-appointed guardian)

Guardianship is a legal arrangement whereupon an individual (or ward) is formally declared by Probate Court to be "incapacitated" or unable to make certain decisions for themselves. The court then appoints another adult to make such decisions. The appointed guardian is often a family member, but, if necessary, the guardian can be from a public guardianship agency. Guardianship can be shared between co-guardians and it can also be temporary. Guardianship can be full (covering most aspects of the individual's life) or partial (covering the aspects spelled out in the court decree).

Another legal option to consider is Power of Attorney. This is a legal document that must be notarized, in which a person delegates to someone else a part of their authority to make legal and or medical decisions.

Regardless of the level of disability, your young adult will have all the rights and responsibilities afforded to other American citizens at age 18, unless a court has declared differently. If you feel your child will need assistance making decisions, you should explore the different options with guardianship and the process to apply and, if appropriate, submit an application through your county probate court when your child turns 18 years old. It does not automatically happen.

SPECIAL NEEDS ESTATE PLANNING

As children get older so do their parents (believe it or not!). No one likes to think of his/her own mortality. Effective planning well in advance will ensure that parents' intentions of providing some financial resources to their children will be realized without jeopardizing other resources and supports that they will need in order to live as independently as possible. Parents share a common bond – a child who has special needs. The care giving concerns presented to parents necessitate different requirements for estate planning. Although simple wills and guardianship determination may protect your other children, special preparation must be made for families who have children with disabilities. Good financial/estate planning always has as its goal lessening the burden on surviving members who are trying to carry out the descendant's wishes. This is particularly important for all concerned when there is a family member who has a disability.

It is essential to research wills and trusts to provide you with a comprehensive plan to address your own special needs for your family. If assets, investments, insurances, and estate plans are properly coordinated ahead of time, families will not be forced to make compromising decisions in a crisis. Who will take care of the finances for my child? Will my/their assets disqualify my child for services and support? Will the people that I want be willing to manage the finances and decisions that will need to be made for my child? Without proper planning, it is possible that others (including the state) will make decisions for your child that are contrary to your intentions.

In order to preserve financial benefits (ex. Supplemental Security Income, MaineCare) many families develop a special needs trust. A special needs trust will allow for inheritance or other resources to be used to augment rather than disqualify someone for other financial benefits.

When developing the long term financial plan for your child, it is essential to be working with an attorney who has experience in developing a plan on behalf of someone with a disability. Some families have been faced with negative financial consequences when a financial plan has not been developed properly. Do not hesitate to ask a potential attorney with whom you might be working what their experience has been in developing financial plans for a person with a disability.

REGIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

(formerly known as the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services)

Region 1 – York and Cumberland Counties
175 Lancaster Street
Portland, Maine 04101

Phone: 822-0270

TTY: 822-0248

Toll-free: 1-800-269-5208

Fax: 822-0138

Maine Parent Federation (MPF) **Statewide Parent Network (SPIN)**

P.O. Box 2067
Augusta ME 04338

Phone: (207) 623-2144

Websites: www.mpf.org

Toll-free: 1-800-870-7746

www.mpf.org/spin/index.html

Maine Transition Network/Committee on Transition (MTN/COT)

P.O. Box 2219
Augusta, Maine 04338

Phone: 621-9878

Fax: 623-1677

Website: www.mainetransition.org

Toll-free: 1-800-328-9549

E-mail: cot@ghi.net

Probate Court

Cumberland County
142 Federal Street
Portland, Maine 04101-4196
Phone: 871-8382

York County
P.O. Box 339
45 Kennebunk Road
Alfred, Maine 04002
Phone: 324-1577

REGIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Cumberland County
550 Forest Ave, Suite 150
Portland, Maine 04101

Phone: 771-2851
Toll-free: 1-800-772-1213
TTY: 773-3981

York County
110 Main Street
Suite 1450
Saco, Maine 04072

Phone: 282-5956
Toll-free: 1-800-772-1213
TTY: 282-6404

Southern York County
80 Daniel Street, Rm 200
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Phone: (603) 433-0716
Toll-free: 1-800-772-1213
TTY: (603) 436-3086

Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition (SMACT)

28 Foden Road
South Portland, Maine 04106

Phone: 878-5166

Fax: 774-7695

Website: www.smaact.org

E-mail: smaact@ghi.net

Southern Maine Parent Awareness (SMPA)

886 Main Street • Suite 303
Sanford, Maine 04073

Phone: 324-2337

Fax: 324-5621

Toll-free: 1-800-564-9696

Website: www.somepa.org

Vocational Rehabilitation (V.R., Voc Rehab)

Cumberland County
185 Lancaster Street
Portland, Maine 04101

Phone: 822-0400

Toll-free: 1-800-315-1192

TTY: 879-0412

Fax: 879-7553

York County
110 Main Street, Suite 1106
Saco, Maine 04072

Phone: 286-2600

Toll-free: 1-800-521-5871

TTY: 286-2614

TTY Toll-free: 1-800-492-0670

Fax: 286-2608

WEBSITES

Council for Exceptional Children

www.cec.sped.org

**Council for Exceptional Children
Division of Developmental Disabilities**

www.dddcec.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education

www.ericec.org

HEATH

**National Clearinghouse of Post-Secondary Education for
Individuals with Disabilities**

www.heath.gwu.edu

IDEA '97

www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/

Learning Disabilities Association of Maine (LDA)

www.ldame.org

**Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities
(MADSEC)**

www.madsec.org

**Maine Parent Federation – MPF
Statewide Parent Information Network - SPIN**

www.mpf.org

www.mpf.org/spin/index.html

Maine State Legislature

<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/>

Maine Transition Network/Committee on Transition

www.mainetransition.org

Selective Service Information

www.sss.gov

Social Security Administration

www.ssa.gov

Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition

www.smact.org

Southern Maine Parent Awareness

www.somepa.org

WEBSITES

**The National Information Center for Children and
Youth with Disabilities**

www.nichcy.org

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights

www.pacer.org

Post-Secondary Financial Aid

www.finaid.org

Post-Secondary Support Information

www.collegeboard.com

www.petersons.com

State of Maine

Many links to state agencies and other information

www.maine.gov

Governor of the State of Maine

www.maine.gov/governor

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (VR)

(Vocational Rehabilitation, V.R., Voc Rehab)

www.maine.gov/rehab/

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

www.maine.gov/dhhs/

Department of Education (DOE)

www.maine.gov/education/

Department of Labor (DOL)

www.maine.gov/labor

MaineCare (formerly Medicaid)

www.maine.gov/dhhs/OIAS

WrightsLaw

Articles, cases, newsletters and other information about special
education law and advocacy.

www.wrightslaw.com

Please remember that Web addresses are case sensitive.

DEFINITIONS

- ADA** **Americans with Disabilities Act** – a civil rights act that guarantees equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, state and local government services, employment, transportation, and telecommunications
- DHHS** **Department of Health and Human Services** (State department) A combination of the two departments formerly known as the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services and the Department of Human Services
- DOE** **Department of Education** (State department)
- Dreams/ SNOW Chart** **A transition-planning process** used by many student centered teams in Maine to assist youth in developing post-high school goals
- FAPE** **Free and Appropriate Public Education** – A right given to all children who participate in public education
- IDEA** **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:** The federal law that sets the standards for educating students with disabilities. Part of the law addresses transition services.
- IEP** **Individual Education Plan:** The annual plan agreed upon by a team that outlines the services the school will provide for the coming year.
- IPE** **Individual Plan for Employment:** An employment plan that is developed between a client and their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor that specifies services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation that will assist the client in reaching their vocational goals.

DEFINITIONS

- ISP**.....**Individual Service Plan:** This is the adult services equivalent of an IEP.
- OCAPD**.....**Office of Cognitive and Physical Disabilities** within Department of Health and Human Services
- PET**.....**Pupil Evaluation Team:** For students in the transition age range, this team is required to develop a Transition Plan as part of a student's IEP.
- SECTION 504**.....**The section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** that is a civil rights act. It prohibits federally funded organizations from discriminating against an otherwise qualified individual solely on the basis of handicap.
- SMACT**.....**Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition** – The regional office of a statewide system called the Maine Transition Network/Committee on Transition (MTN/COT) that provides information, training, and education related to transition planning.
- SSA**.....**Social Security Administration** – the federally funded program that administers SSI and SSDI
- SSDI**.....**Social Security Disability Insurance:** A program administered by Social Security that pays a money payment to qualified recipients. One is eligible if one meets the disability definition and has sufficient work history (earned credits). One can also be eligible without the work credits, if as a child one of your parents is also disabled and eligible for SSDI.
- SSI**.....**Supplemental Security Income:** Another program administered by Social Security that pays a money payment to qualified recipients. One is eligible if one meets the disability definition and is either under 18 and the family meets the income requirements; or is over 18 and individually meets the income requirements.

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