



# Creating a Path to Employment

## Tips for Parents with Children with Disabilities

### *Start by exploring the work world together*

#### Start Early

Starting early is a key component to your child's future success. Start by exploring the work world together and conveying your expectations that he/she can and will work when he/she grows up. Provide opportunities for your child to gain early work experience through volunteer work in your community. Web sites such as Career Voyages ([www.careervoyages.gov](http://www.careervoyages.gov)) and The Office of Disability Employment Policy's Youth Page ([www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/career.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/career.htm)) are useful when exploring career options.

#### Promote Education

Keep your child engaged in classroom activities. When parents expect their children with disabilities to continue their education beyond high school, the children tend to receive better grades than their

peers whose parents do not have these expectations. In addition to the basic skills your child learns in the classroom, it is important that the child also learns how and when to tell others about any accommodations he or she may need.

#### Encourage Work-Based Learning Experiences

Schools and community-based organizations may offer internships, job-shadowing, and mentoring opportunities that focus on employment. While postsecondary education is important, it is also important to remember that it is not the only gateway to well-paying jobs. Vocational education classes can provide an alternate route for exposing young people with disabilities to careers and preparing them for work.



## Create Leadership Opportunities

Encourage your child to connect with mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with other adults and peers. Encourage your child to become a mentor to younger youth. Participating in sports, student government, chorus, or volunteer groups can also build leadership skills. There are also a few leadership organizations specifically focused on youth with disabilities:

- Kids as Self-Advocates (<http://www.fvkasa.org/>)
- The National Youth Leadership Network ([www.nyln.org](http://www.nyln.org))
- The National Consortium on Leadership & Disability for Youth

## Set Goals

Teach your child how to set goals and work towards achieving them. Start small and work toward larger goals. With an older child, goal setting might relate to entering a chosen field.

## Develop Social Skills

Friendships play a key part in youth development. Through the day-to-day activities that accompany making and maintaining friendships, you will be assisting your child in developing the ability to interact and get along with others, another essential skill employers look for and value in an employee.

Listen to the ideas of experts--teachers, medical staff or community providers. Know in the end, however, that you are the one who knows your child best. Share experts' input with your child, and, particularly as your child gets older, involve your child in any decision-making that affects him or her.

### Additional resources for parents of children with disabilities:

- Office of Disability Employment Policy (<http://www.dol.gov/odep>)
- Office of Disability Employment Policy Guideposts to Success: ([www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth](http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth))
- DisabilityInfo.gov (<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>)
- The Job Accommodations Network (JAN)(<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>)
- PACER Center: ([www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org))



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