

*Monthly tips and resources for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.*

# Essential Planning and Tools for the Move from School to Employment

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Planning the next chapter of your life involves some awareness about the transition process and a few key steps that you need to understand and actively engage in for a successful transition. Moving from school to community-based employment requires ongoing planning with a team of family, friends, agency staff, and other trustworthy supporters. When meeting with them, talk about what you expect for employment. Knowing what you want and need will help your team connect you to appropriate work experiences in community-based employment settings.

Here are some suggestions and planning tools to ensure you are getting what you need.

## 1. Set high expectations.

Start with that end in mind and think about what you really want. Keep the conversations going about your future. Use person-centered planning tools to identify your strengths, interests, preferences, needs, goals, and dreams. Be sure your team members are also aware of your knowledge, skills, learning preferences, values, personality traits, life experiences, and support systems. Keep an ongoing record of this information.

- [Getting Started with LifeCourse Tools](#)
- [LifeCourse Tools: Exploring Life Domains](#)

## 2. Focus on info, connections, and access to peers.

Envisioning the future may be difficult at first. Your school years are the perfect time to prepare for adult life. Give yourself ample time to gather information on employment opportunities, ask questions, and discuss your concerns. Find others who have effectively navigated the transition process and learn from their experiences. Surround yourself with positive mentors such as family and friends. Connect with professionals in your field of interest. Be sure to meet at least annually with your team to review progress toward your goals and plan next steps.

- [Life Course Tools: Mapping Relationships](#)

### 3. Build work skills through real-world work experience.

The school years should help you work toward competitive integrated employment by shaping ideas about various jobs and careers. After leaving school, continue to explore jobs that interest you until you find the right fit. To find a good job match, share information about your likes, dislikes, support needs, and experiences with support staff and prospective employers. Remember: Work experiences should occur in real businesses within your community and pay you at least a minimum wage.

- [Life Course Trajectory Tool](#): (scroll down on page)
- [Finding a Job That Is Right for You: A Practical Approach to Looking for a Job as a Person with a Disability](#), Job Accommodation Network

### 4. Focus on community engagement and connect to ongoing resources and support.

Ask your school or agency to connect you to relevant state and local resources, services, and supports. These are agencies and organizations like:

- Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation (VR),
- local employment service providers,
- community resource providers,
- self-advocacy groups, and
- centers for independent living.

Make sure those supports are in place before you leave school. But if you've already left school, do not fear! There are still opportunities to participate. State agencies, including Indiana VR, can connect you with ongoing support.

Also, learn about "natural supports" (see below) vs. paid support and know how to use both along the way. Identify and work with key contact people who are experts on benefits and employment.

- [Life Course Supports Star Tool](#)
- [Natural Supports](#), Arc of Indiana

### 5. Develop goal-setting and self-advocacy skills.

Start to set goals and advocate for yourself from an early age and throughout the transition process from school to adult life. If you are still in school, lead your IEP team meetings or contribute in other ways to develop your self-advocacy skills. There are many resources online to show you how to begin. Talk with family, friends, teachers, and any service professionals about your goals. They should want what you want and support you in the process.

- [Life Course Goal Attainment Tool](#) (scroll down on page)

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