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[School to Adulthood: Transition Planning Toolkit for High School, Life, and Work](#)

Looking to the future can feel exciting, hopeful, confusing, overwhelming—or all emotions at once. For families supporting a young person with a disability, it’s never too soon to begin planning to ensure a smooth process from the teen years toward whatever happens next. This toolkit supports families as they organize this multiyear project.

For a visual map of the ages and stages of high school transition process, check out PAVE’s infographic: [What’s Next? High School Transition Planning Timeline](#).

Learn the Words

A good place to begin is a [Glossary of Key Terms for Life After High School Planning](#), which provides vocabulary building and an overview of topics relevant to this important phase of life.

Pandemic Impacts

A student receiving special education services has a right to education through age 21, if needed, to meet requirements and achieve readiness. Some IEP teams may determine that because of COVID-19 a student who has not yet received a diploma needs to stay in school beyond 21 to access [Recovery Services](#), a term developed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to help students recover learning losses related to the pandemic. Decisions about Recovery Services are made by IEP teams, which include parents and students.

OSPI provides a [Family Information Session on Transition Recovery](#), available on YouTube from June 2, 2021. The [presentation slides](#) are also available online, and families may call OSPI at 360-725-6075 with questions about Transition Recovery Services.



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Earning a Diploma

To earn a high-school diploma in Washington State, students must:

[Complete a High School and Beyond Plan \(HSBP\)](#)

[Earn 24 high school credits](#)

[Complete a Graduation Pathway](#)

OSPI provides a [two-page summary of graduation requirements](#) to support families and students. Included is this statement: “Students who receive special education services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP), also have an IEP Transition Plan, which begins by the school year when a student turns 16 or sooner. The HSBP is required to align with their IEP Transition Plan to ensure a robust planning process toward post-high school goals.”

Various state agencies collaborated to provide a guidebook: [Guidelines for Aligning High School & Beyond Plans \(HSBP\) and IEP Transition Plans](#).

The state’s 2019 legislature changed graduation requirements ([HB 1599](#)). Students may earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) to graduate. How a student earns a CIA is determined by their IEP team.

Students with disabilities seeking a diploma through General Educational Development (GED) testing may be eligible for testing accommodations. A website called [passged.com](#) lists a variety of disability conditions that might make a person eligible for testing supports.

Commencement Access

Regardless of when a diploma is earned, a student can participate in Commencement at the end of a traditional senior year, with peers, under a Washington provision called [Kevin’s Law](#). Families may want to plan well in advance with school staff to consider how senior year events are accessible to youth with disabilities.

The Big Picture

The right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) includes the right to school-based services that prepare a young person with a disability for adult life. PAVE provides an overview of transition planning in a two-part video series. Part 1 includes foundational information about the rights of students with disabilities, with some content related to COVID-19. Part 2 provides key information about tools for students moving toward graduation and beyond.



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Here are links to two videos, an infographic, and an article:

Video Part 1 – [Life After High School: Student and Disability Rights](#)

Video Part 2 – [Life After High School: Tools for Transition](#)

Infographic – [Transition Triangle](#)

Article: [Tips to Make a Well-Informed Transition into Life After High School](#)

Various state agencies collaborated to provide a downloadable guidebook: [Guidelines for Aligning High School & Beyond Plans \(HSBP\) and IEP Transition Plans](#). Included are career-planning tools and linkages to current information about [Graduation Pathways](#), which changed in 2019 when the Washington State Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 1599](#).

Student Self-Advocacy

As they move toward adulthood, many students benefit from opportunities to practice skills of self-advocacy and self-determination. One way to foster those skills is to encourage youth to get more involved in their own Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). To support that, PAVE provides this article: [Attention Students: Lead your own IEP meetings and take charge of your future](#). Included is a handout that students might use to contribute to meeting agendas.

The RAISE Center (National Resources for Advocacy, Independence, Self-determination and Employment) provides a [blog](#) with transition related news, information, ideas and opinions. Topics in 2020-21 include how to “Be the Best You,” how issues of race and disability intersect with equity, and how “The Disability Agenda Could Bring Unity to A Fragmented Society,” by RAISE Center co-director Josie Badger, who is a person living with disability.

Student Rights after High School

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) ends when a student leaves secondary education. The protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are ongoing throughout the lifespan.

These laws provide for appropriate accommodations in public programs and facilities. To support these disability protections, The IEP accommodations page or a Section 504 Plan can travel with a student into higher education, a vocational program, or work. Often a special services office at an institution for higher learning includes a staff member responsible for ensuring that disability rights are upheld. PAVE provides an article with general information about Section 504 rights that apply to all ages: [Section 504: A Plan for Equity, Access and Accommodations](#).

Universal Design supports everyone

Asking for rights to be upheld is not asking for special favors. A person living with disability, Kyann Flint, wrote an article for PAVE to describe how Universal Design supports inclusion. Her article can provide

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inspiration for young people looking for examples of what is possible, now as ever: [COVID-19 and Disability: Access to Work has Changed](#).

Agencies that can help

Washington State's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides services for high-school students engaged in transition planning as well as adults seeking employment. PAVE provides an article that describes Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and more: [Ready for Work: Vocational Rehabilitation Provides Guidance and Tools](#).

Services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are provided by Washington's [Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth \(CDHY\)](#), which was formerly called the Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (CDHL). This statewide resource supports all deaf and hard of hearing students in Washington, regardless of where they live or attend school.

Services for individuals who are blind or living with low vision are provided by Washington's Department of Services for the Blind ([DSB](#)). Youth services, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Vocational Rehabilitation, Business Enterprise Program, and mobility and other independent-living skills are served by DSB.

The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) also has a variety of school-to-work and waiver programs that support youth. PAVE provides a [video](#) to support families through the DDA eligibility process. An article provides further detail: [How to Prepare for a DDA Assessment](#).

Not all youth with disabilities are able to access employment-related services through DVR, DSB, or DDA. A limited additional option is Goodwill, which provides access to a virtual learning library. Students can take classes at their own pace for skills development. Employment skills, workplace readiness, interviewing skills and more are part of the training materials. A pilot project has made the library available to individuals in select counties, and more widespread access is forthcoming. To request further information, call 253-573-6507, or send an email to: library@goodwillwa.org.

Graduation's over: Why is school calling?

Schools are responsible to track the outcomes of their special education services. Here's an article to help families get ready to talk about how things are going: [The School Might Call to Ask About a Young Adult's Experience After High School: Here's Help to Prepare](#)

Benefits Planning

A consideration for many families of youth with disabilities is whether lifelong benefits are needed. Applying for social security just past the young person's 18th birthday creates a pathway toward a cash benefit and enables the young person to access Medicaid (public health insurance) and various programs that depend on Medicaid eligibility.

The Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (gowise.org) provides benefit planning information and resources through a program called [BenefitU](#).

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When a person 18 or older has a disability, family members may want to stay involved in helping them make decisions. Supported Decision Making (SDM) is the formal name for one legal option. Washington law (Chapter [11.130](#) in the Revised Code of Washington) includes Supported Decision Making as an option under the Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Other Protective Arrangements Act. The law changed in 2020 when the state passed Senate Bill 6287. The changes took effect Jan. 1, 2022. PAVE's article about [Supported Decision Making](#) has more information about this and other options for families to support an adult with a disability.