

# PLANNING MY PATH

Practical tips and tools for  
future planning

**A USER-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

## **Our mission**

PAVE provides support, training, information and resources to empower and give voice to individuals, youth and families impacted by disabilities.

## **Our vision**

We envision an inclusive community that values the unique abilities, cultures, voices, contributions and potential of all individuals.

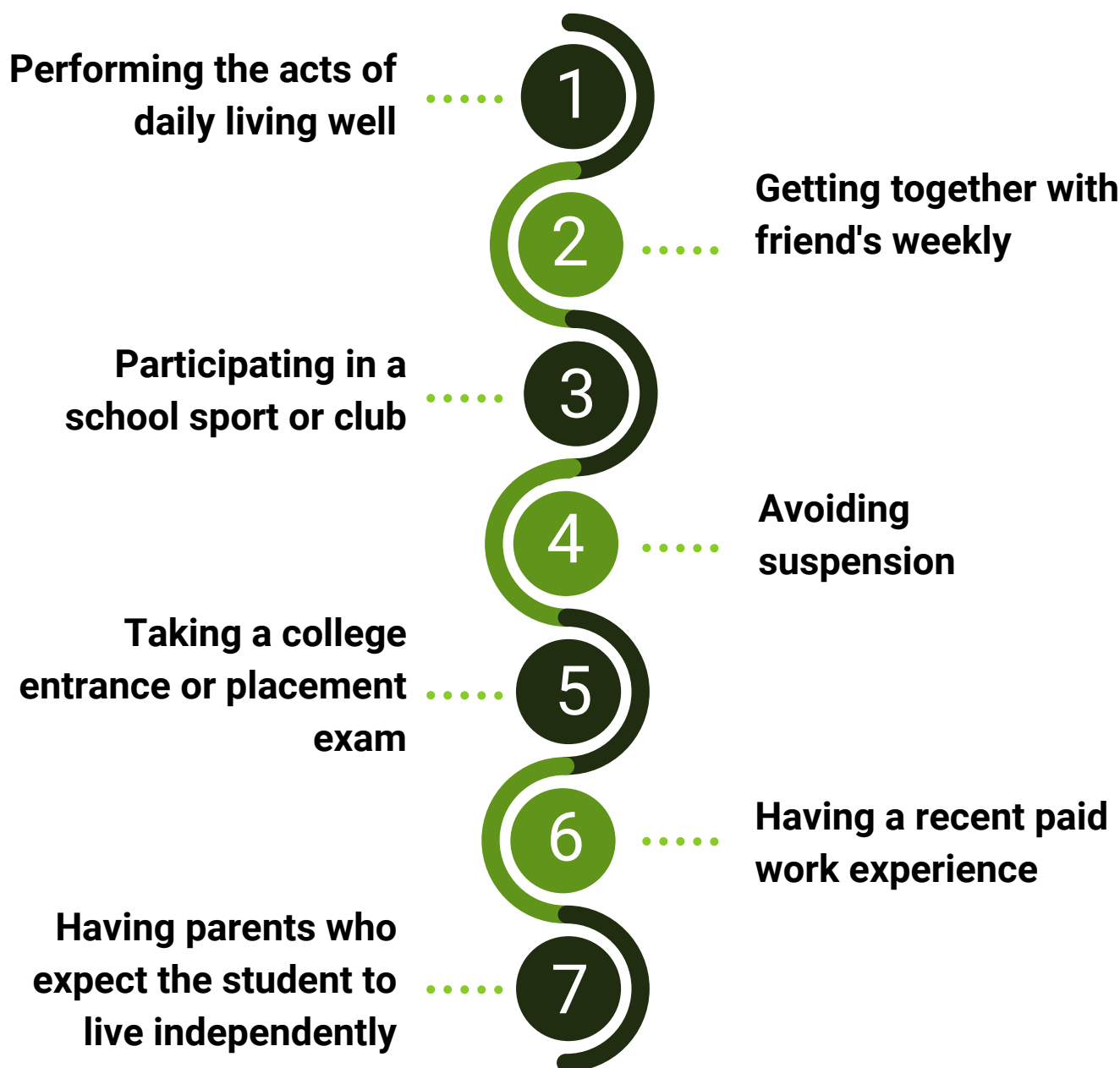


Text highlighted in blue serves as a hyperlink to access supplementary content and/or additional information.

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# 7 FACTORS LINKED TO POST-HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

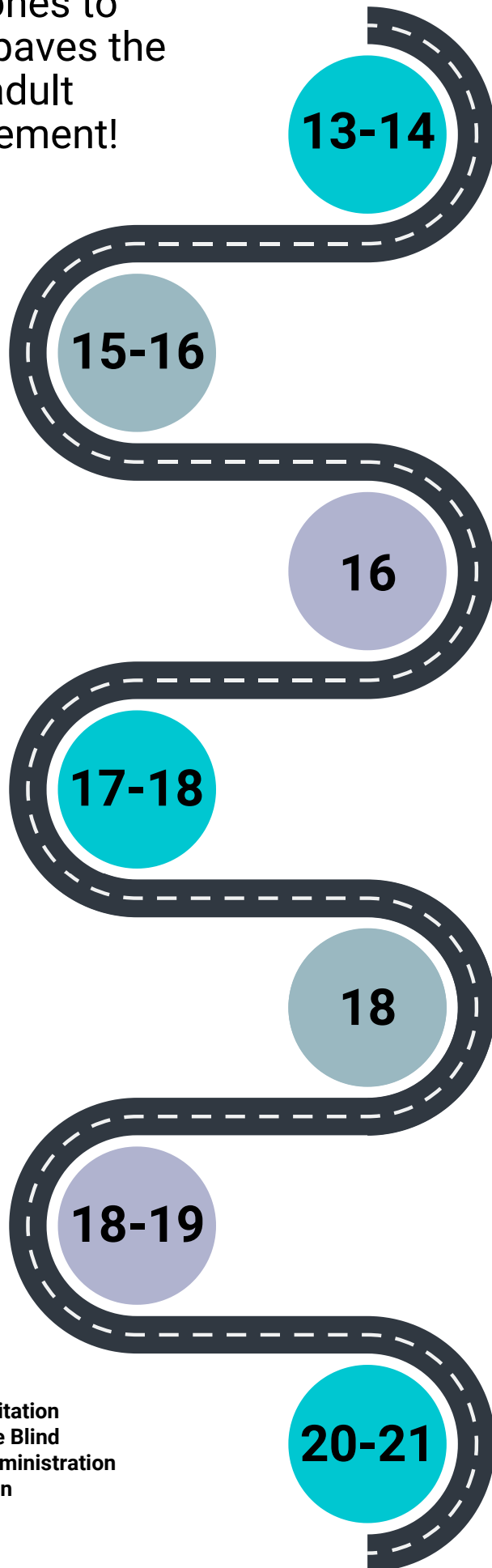
These factors can offer valuable guidance for current high school students with disabilities, their families, and educators. By focusing on these areas, students with disabilities can better prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, whether in further education, training, or the workforce.



Parents can impact each of the factors listed above.  
Parent involvement is crucial to post-high school success!

## MAPPING THE FUTURE

Check these milestones to ensure high school paves the pathway for young adult success and achievement!



### AGES 15-16

The IEP includes a [Transition Plan](#), aligned with the High School and Beyond Plan. The student is a member of the IEP team, which plans a pathway toward a diploma and target graduation date.

### AGES 17-18

Coursework, IEP, High School and Beyond Plan, DVR/DSB, and DDA all support the student's life goals and progress toward a diploma.

### AGES 18-19

The student may continue education in a high school transition program.

DVR: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
DSB: Department of Services for the Blind  
DDA: Developmental Disabilities Administration  
TVR: Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

### AGES 13-14

Student begins [High School and Beyond Plan](#), a Washington State requirement for all students in middle school.

### AGE 16

Get a state identification card. Consider Pre-Employment Transition Services from DVR/DSB or School-to-Work planning with DDA.

### AGE 18

Register to vote! [Participate in Commencement and senior year activities](#), regardless of when the diploma is earned.

### AGES 20-21

The student earns a diploma. They may apply for individualized employment support from DVR/TVR/DSB or DDA.

The planning process to support a student with disabilities toward their adult life plans requires coordination and organization.

## 1. WHO AM I?

Answers include what the student is interested in, what they are good at, what they struggle with, and how they see themselves.

## 2. WHAT'S MY FUTURE?

Students can imagine where they might work, whether higher education will be part of their future, and how they might live.

## 3. HOW DO I REACH MY GOALS?

The answers are a long-term project. A good planning process ensures that work done today moves the student toward their vision for adult life.

[Learn more about the Transition Triangle in this PAVE article.](#)

Person centered planning is like creating a special map for your life, focusing on what makes you happy and what you need. Here's what you should know about it:

### What is Person Centered Planning?

Imagine you're the captain of a ship, and you get to decide where to go. Person centered planning is just like that! It means making plans for your life that are all about you—what you like, what you need, and your dreams for the future.

### What Are the Benefits?

- **You're the Boss:** You get to make the big decisions about your life. It's like having the remote control, choosing what you watch and do.
- **Made Just for You:** This plan isn't one-size-fits-all. It's tailored to fit you perfectly, like a custom-made outfit.
- **Covers Everything:** Instead of just looking at one thing, like school or hobbies, it looks at your whole life to make sure you're supported in every way.
- **Feeling Great:** When you have control and the right support, life feels better. It's like knowing you have everything you need for a big adventure.
- **Team Effort:** You're not alone. Your family, friends, and others join in to help you make your plan work.

### What Are the Benefits?

- **All About You:** This plan puts you in the spotlight. Your thoughts and wishes are the most important.
- **Flexible:** As you grow and things change, your plan can change too. It's always up to date with what you need and want.
- **Looking Ahead:** It's not just about now; it's about your future. This plan helps you set goals for later and figure out how to reach them.
- **Joining In:** It encourages you to be a part of your community and do things you enjoy, like hanging out with friends or following your hobbies.
- **Growing Confidence:** It helps you become more confident and independent. You'll learn how to speak up for what you want and make your own choices.

### Want to Know More?

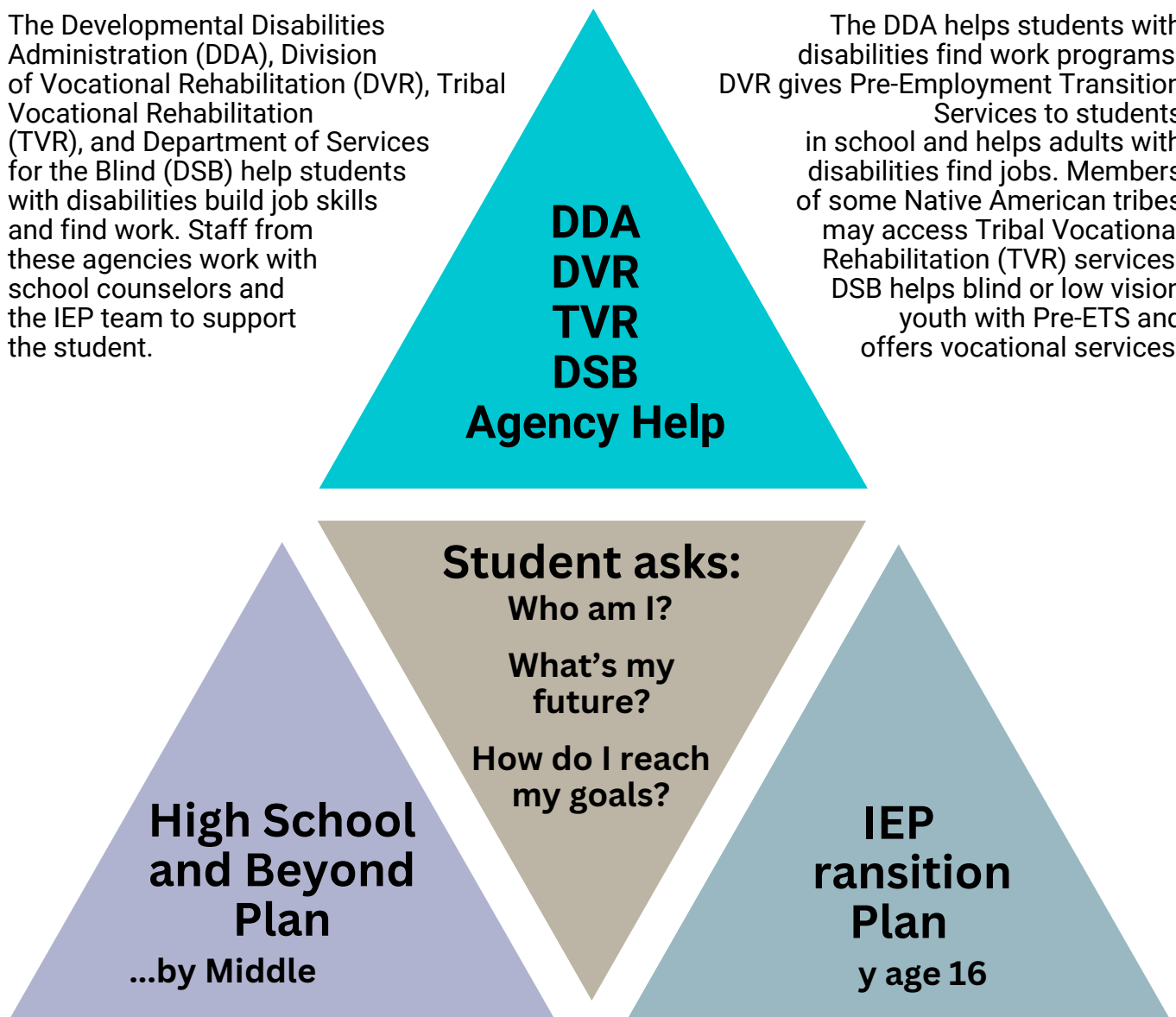
If you think person centered planning sounds great and you want to start making your own plan, teachers can help! They can work with special staff to make a plan that's just right for you.

[Learn more about Person Centered Planning in this PAVE article.](#)

The planning process to support a student with disabilities toward their adult life plans requires coordination and organization. This graphic provides a visual overview of the work and who is responsible to help.

The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR), and Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) help students with disabilities build job skills and find work. Staff from these agencies work with school counselors and the IEP team to support the student.

The DDA helps students with disabilities find work programs. DVR gives Pre-Employment Transition Services to students in school and helps adults with disabilities find jobs. Members of some Native American tribes may access Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) services. DSB helps blind or low vision youth with Pre-ETS and offers vocational services.



Washington State requires schools to begin supporting all students with a [High School and Beyond Plan](#) before they leave middle school. The plan helps students think about future jobs and what education they need. It makes sure school helps them reach their adult goals. School counselors often manage this plan.

The [Transition Plan](#) is required in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) by the school year when they turn 16. It sets goals for education, work, and living alone. Students with disabilities have the right to education until they finish school or turn 21. The plan includes a graduation date decided by the IEP team. It must match the High School and Beyond Plan. School and families work together to support the student.

Ideally a student with disabilities has people supporting all of the features on this transition triangle. Best practice is for all agencies and supporters to collaborate as they help a student move toward a successful adult life.

[Learn more about the Transition Triangle in this PAVE article.](#)

If you're meeting with [vocational rehabilitation services](#) for the first time, you might feel a little nervous or unsure about what to expect. That's totally normal! This tip sheet is here to help you feel more prepared and confident.

## 1. PREPARE DOCUMENTATION

Bring any relevant medical records, educational transcripts, and documentation of disabilities or limitations to your meeting. This will help the vocational rehabilitation counselor understand your situation better and provide appropriate support.

**Have you gathered all relevant medical records, educational transcripts, and documentation of disabilities or limitations?**

Yes

No

**Note:** This helps the counselor understand your situation better and provide appropriate support.

## 2. CLARIFY YOUR GOALS

Think about your career goals and what you hope to achieve through vocational rehabilitation services. Be prepared to discuss your interests, skills, and the type of work you are interested in pursuing.

**What are your career goals?**

**What do you hope to achieve through vocational rehabilitation services?**

**Note:** Be ready to discuss your interests, skills, and the type of work you're interested in.

## 3. ASK QUESTIONS

Don't hesitate to ask questions about the services offered, eligibility criteria, and the process involved. Understanding how vocational rehabilitation works can help you make informed decisions about your future.

**What are your questions about the services?**

**What are your questions about the eligibility criteria?**

**What are your questions about the vocational rehabilitation process?**

**Note:** Understanding vocational rehabilitation helps you make informed decisions.



## 4. DISCUSS ACCOMMODATIONS

If you require accommodations in the workplace due to a disability, discuss these with the counselor. They can help you understand your rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and advocate for reasonable accommodations.

**What accommodations might you need in the workplace due to a disability?**

**Note:** The counselor can help you understand your rights under the ADA and advocate for reasonable accommodations.

## 5. EXPLORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Vocational rehabilitation services often offer training programs to help individuals gain new skills or enhance existing ones. Inquire about available training opportunities that align with your career goals.

**Are you interested in any specific training programs that align with your career goals?**

**Note:** Vocational rehabilitation often offers training to gain new skills or enhance existing ones.

## 6. LEARN ABOUT JOB PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE

Ask about job placement assistance services offered by vocational rehabilitation. These services can help you find suitable employment opportunities and provide support throughout the job search process.

**Are you aware of the job placement assistance services offered?**

**Note:** These services can help find employment opportunities and support you throughout the job search process.

## 7. UNDERSTAND FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS

Inquire about financial aid options available for vocational training or education programs. Vocational rehabilitation services may provide financial assistance or connect you with other funding sources.

**Have you inquired about financial aid options for vocational training or education programs?**

Yes

No

**Note:** Vocational rehabilitation may provide financial assistance or connect you with funding sources.

## 8. STAY ENGAGED

Stay engaged throughout the process by attending meetings, following up on action items, and actively participating in your vocational rehabilitation plan. Your commitment can greatly impact the success of the services provided.

**Are you committed to attending meetings, following up on action items, and actively participating in your plan?**

Yes       No

**Note:** Your engagement can greatly impact the success of the services provided.

## 9. SEEK ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Don't hesitate to seek additional support from family members, friends, or advocates during your interactions with vocational rehabilitation services. Having a support system can help alleviate any concerns or uncertainties you may have.

**Who can you reach out to for additional support?**

FAMILY	FRIENDS	ORGANIZATIONS
		<a href="#">PAVE</a>

**Note:** A support system can help alleviate concerns or uncertainties.

## 10. REVIEW YOUR PLAN REGULARLY

Review your vocational rehabilitation plan regularly with your counselor to track progress, make adjustments as needed, and ensure that you are on the right path towards achieving your career goals.

**Are you reviewing your vocational rehabilitation plan regularly with your counselor?**

Yes       No

**Note:** Regular reviews help track progress, make adjustments as needed, and ensure you're on the right path towards your career goals.

**When is your next appointment with your vocational rehabilitation counselor?**

Date

**Note:** If you haven't already, call your counselor to schedule an appointment to review your plan.

Remember, vocational rehabilitation services are designed to support you in achieving your employment and career objectives despite any challenges you may face. By actively participating in the process and advocating for your needs, you can maximize the benefits of these services and work towards a fulfilling and successful career.

# Transitioning Rights and Accommodations: From IDEA to ADA and 504

The table below outlines the transition from the protections and accommodations provided under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to the rights and accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as students with disabilities move into higher education or the workforce.

ASPECT	IDEA	ADA & Section 504
Purpose	To provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities.	To prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.
Eligibility	Specific categories of disabilities; requires assessment and determination of need for special education and related services.	Broad definition of disability; any individual with a disability who meets general entry or eligibility criteria for education programs or jobs.
Accommodations	Tailored educational services and modifications to curriculum and environment based on individual needs.	Reasonable accommodations in educational settings and workplaces, without significant modification to essential functions or undue burden.
Protections	Ensures FAPE; includes specific procedural safeguards related to educational decisions.	Protects against discrimination; ensures equal opportunity and access but does not guarantee success or outcome.
Transition to Higher Education and/or Work	Transition planning and services must start by age 16, focusing on moving from school to post-school activities.	Individuals must self-disclose their disability and request accommodations; institutions may require documentation to support the need for accommodations.
Accommodations in Education after High School	IEP ends after high school; however, the documentation can be used as part of the evidence to establish disability and need for accommodations under ADA and Section 504.	Students should gather their IEP documents, evaluations, and any other relevant information to present to disability services in higher education or HR/employer to request reasonable accommodations.

Transitioning from high school to higher education or the workforce is a significant step for students with disabilities. Understanding the differences between IEP protections and the rights under ADA and Section 504 can empower individuals to advocate for the accommodations and support they need to succeed in their next phase of life. Remember, self-advocacy and knowledge of your rights are key components of this transition.

Parents, students, and everyone on the IEP team should think about how health and healthcare can affect a student's goals for college, work, and living on their own. Use these questions to identify health-related transition needs.

1. Do you understand the immediate and long-term health ramifications of their medical needs?  Yes  No
2. Can you explain your medical condition in an emergency when medical intervention may be required?  Yes  No
3. Are you able to plan ahead, such as refilling a prescription?  Yes  No
4. Can you complete a multi-step process, like planning and preparing meals or scheduling and calendaring medical appointments?  Yes  No
5. Do you think about and remember questions to ask your medical provider?  Yes  No
6. Do you take medications and/or follow a prescribed treatment plan consistently and independently?  Yes  No
7. Do you know which complications of your disability require immediate medical response?  Yes  No
8. What transportation options are available for you to attend medical appointments?  Yes  No
9. Can you implement and maintain prescribed medical equipment?  Yes  No

**The questions marked “No” are identified needs. Discuss your findings and concerns with the IEP team to address through goals and services in the transition plan.**

[Learn more about Healthcare Transition and Medical Self-Advocacy.](#)

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AT	Assistive Technology
BIE	Bureau of Indian Education
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
CPIR	Center for Parent Information and Resources
CPRC	Community Parent Resource Center
DCYF	Department of Children, Youth and Families
DVR	Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
F2F	Family-to-Family, <i>see also F2FHIC</i>
F2FHIC	Family-to-Family Health Information Center, <i>see also F2F</i>
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FRC	Family Resource Coordinator
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LEA	Local Education Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Mutli-Tiered System of Supports
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
P2P	Parent to Parent
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
PTI	Parent Training and Information (Center)
PWN	Prior Written Notice
RTI	Response to Intervention
SEA	State Education Agency
SDI	Specially Designed Instruction
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TVR	Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation
UPL	Unauthorized Practices of Law

\*Adapted from [OSEP's complete list of acronyms](#)

## WASHINGTON STATE-SPECIFIC TERMS

DDA	Developmental Disabilities Administration
ESIT	Early Support for Infants and Toddlers
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

## MILITARY TERMS

EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
SNP	Special Needs Program

# Glossary of Terms

**Adult Services:** programs available to support individuals after they become legal adults at 18

**Age of Majority:** In Washington, age 18; an adult is responsible for educational, vocational, financial, and other decisions unless other arrangements are made through legal means

**Agging Out:** the process of ending the school year in which a student turns 21 and is no longer eligible for special education (IEP) services

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** the federal law that makes it unlawful to discriminate against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools and transportation

**Appropriate Evaluation:** IDEA requires that a child must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability to determine eligibility for special education and related services

**Assistive Technology (AT):** includes devices that are used by individuals in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible, and services that assist with the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC):** “all of the ways that someone communicates besides talking”

**Bureau of Indian Education (BIE):** offering high-quality educational opportunities spanning early childhood to adulthood and aligned with the cultural and economic requirements of each tribe, recognizing the unique cultural and governmental identity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. The BIE aims to acknowledge the holistic well-being of individuals by considering their spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural dimensions within the context of their family and tribal or village affiliations.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** a working document that the school and family build together and review regularly to make sure the child is supported with positive reinforcement and encouragement for meeting behavioral expectations

**Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR):** the central “Hub” of information and products created for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities

**Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC):** *see also parent training and information (PTI)*; federally-funded programs that provide information, training, and resources to traditionally families of children with disabilities in traditionally underserved communities

**Compensatory Services:** extra educational services provided because an IEP team or another agency with authority determines that a student with a disability did not receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

**Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF):** Washington’s lead agency for providing state-funded services that help kids and families become stronger, healthier, and do better in school

# Glossary of Terms

**Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)**: a state agency that provides a variety of employment, personal care, supportive housing, and other services based on eligibility; transition-age youth may be eligible for a school-to-work program if one is available in their region

**Department of Services for the Blind (DSB)**: state agency that provides vocational services and orientation and mobility training for individuals with visual impairments

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**: state agency that provides employment services to individuals with a wide range of disability circumstances

**Educational evaluation**: a wide variety of assessments, questionnaires, and other tools used to determine eligibility for school-based services

**Equity**: a quality of fairness that is present when someone with a disability has appropriate, individualized help to enable the same access to opportunities that are available to individuals without disabilities

**Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)**: *also see Special Needs Program (SNP)*; Department of Defense (DoD) programs for dependents of active-duty service members (ADSMs) of the U.S. Armed Forces with special medical or educational needs

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**: the federal law that governs Kindergarten through 12th grade public education “to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps”

**Family-to-Family Health Information Center (F2FHIC)**: also known as Family-to-Family (F2F); helps families of children and youth with special health care needs, and the professionals who serve them, to find healthcare funding

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**: students with disabilities who need a special kind of teaching or other help have the right to an education that is not only free but also appropriate, designed just for them, and provided through the local education agency (public school district)

**High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP)**: a future planning tool that is required for all Washington State students, beginning no later than 8th grade

**IEP Transition Plan**: a component of the IEP that is required by age 16 but can be added any time the student and IEP team are ready to discuss future goals and incorporate them into the student’s program, with goals and progress monitoring that consider life plans

**Inclusion**: an environment where individuals with disabilities and without disabilities are learning or working together

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**: the federal law that governs special education and related services for students with disabilities aged 3-21

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)**: a dynamic program written and tailored to the needs of a student with a disability, aged 3-21, in order to help them participate in and make progress in their education

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):** a service plan with support from a vocational rehabilitation agency

**Kevin's Law:** a Washington State law stating that a student receiving special education services has the right to participate in commencement ceremonies with same-age peers, regardless of when a diploma is earned

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** IDEA requires that children who receive special education and related services be with other children who do not have disabilities as much as is appropriate for their unique needs

**Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS):** *see also response to intervention (RTI)*; schools support well-being for all students and offer higher levels of support based on student need by creating a structure for positive behavioral supports and trauma-informed interventions

**Office for Civil Rights (OCR):** an enforcement agency that manages formal complaints and provides information about civil rights that protect individuals from discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and other factors

**Office of the Educational Ombuds (OEO):** a Washington state agency that provides free online resources and 1:1 support for families navigating educational systems

**Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP):** the U.S. Department of Education program dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities aged 3-21

**Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS):** U.S. Department of Education program with a mission "to provide leadership to achieve full integration and participation in society of people with disabilities by ensuring equal opportunity and access to, and excellence in, education, employment and community living"

**Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI):** the federal agency within the US Department of Education that is responsible to administer the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

**Other Health Impairment (OHI):** one of the 14 eligibility categories listed in IDEA "having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that (i) is due to chronic or acute health problems... and; (ii) adversely affects a child's educational performance..."

**Parent and Student Participation:** IDEA and [state regulations about IEP team membership](#) make it clear that parents or legal guardians are [equal partners](#) with school staff in making decisions about their child's education, until the educational decision-making authority transfers to the student on their 18th birthday

**Parent Training and Information (PTI):** a federally-funded program created by IDEA that provides information, training, and support to family caregivers, youth, and professionals with questions about services for and educational rights of children and young people with disabilities; PAVE is the PTI of Washington state



**Person Centered Planning**: A method for helping an individual explore and celebrate life goals while building specific action steps and gathering people to offer support

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)**: services provided for groups of students by a vocational rehabilitation agency, including job exploration, work-based learning experiences, counseling about educational opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy

**Prior written notice (PWN)**: a document that explains school district decisions about a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

**Procedural Safeguards**: IDEA requires schools to provide the parents/guardians of a student who is eligible for or referred for special education with a notice containing a full explanation of the rights available to them

**School-to-Work**: Programs available in many counties for students eligible for support from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

**Secondary Transition**: planning for and progressing through the change from high school to adult life

**Section 504**: Part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; provides anti-discrimination protections for individuals with disabilities throughout the lifespan

**Self-Advocacy**: ability to share thoughts and feelings, understand rights and responsibilities, make independent choices, and ask for help when needed

**SMART Goals**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, and Relevant goals set within a specific span of Time

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**: a monthly financial payment made to persons meeting specific eligibility requirements defined by the Social Security Administration (SSA)

**Transition Services**: programming uniquely designed to support a student in preparing for adult life

## What is person-centered planning?

[Person-centered planning](#) focuses on you! It's about making plans for your future based on what you like, need, and dream about. You get to make big decisions, and the plan adapts as you grow.

## What happens to my accommodations and services when I graduate or leave high school?

In high school, students with disabilities are protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires public schools to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE). After graduation, [your rights and protections change](#). You may still receive accommodations in post-secondary education and employment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

## How can vocational rehabilitation services help me?

[Vocational rehabilitation services](#) can offer job placement help, training programs, and financial aid for education or training. They support you in finding employment that suits your goals and abilities.

## How do I prepare to manage my healthcare needs?

Think about how your health affects your daily life and goals. Can you manage medications, explain your condition in emergencies, or plan for doctor's visits? Identifying gaps helps you figure out what supports you need with the [Including Health Considerations in the Transition Plan](#) worksheet.

## Why is self-advocacy important, and how can I improve at it?

[Self-advocacy](#) means speaking up for yourself and making your own choices. It's crucial for getting the right support and reaching your goals. Learning about your rights, being involved in your plans, and asking for help are great first steps.

## How can I advocate for myself and ensure my needs are met?

Advocating for yourself using [person centered planning](#) is a powerful approach to ensure that your needs, preferences, and goals are at the forefront of any planning and decision-making process regarding your life, particularly for individuals with disabilities.

## How can I request more help and information?

Complete a [Get Help request](#) on the PAVE website to connect with a team member for additional support.

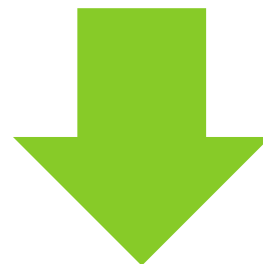
# WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!



## Completing the help request:

All fields marked with an asterisk\* are required.

1. Choose your role
2. Fill out your information
3. Check the box that you are not a robot
4. Click submit and we have received your form!



**[WAPAVE.ORG/GET-HELP/](https://wapave.org/get-help/)**

Essential information is your name, a phone numbers and email address. What if you don't have all of three of those? Please call 1-800-572-7368 and then press 115 to leave a message.



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