

**ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK**  
**A Guide to Employment Programs**  
**For Adults with Disabilities**  
**in Alexandria, Arlington,**  
**Fairfax & Falls Church**



Providing Opportunities, Information, Networking  
and Transition Support

**Produced for the Transition POINTS Program**  
**of The Arc of Northern Virginia**

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This guide is one of six developed for parents of children with intellectual disabilities under the auspices of The Arc of Northern Virginia's Transition POINTS program. Transition POINTS focuses on key life decision points: receiving a diagnosis and having a child with a disability enter an early intervention program; starting school; transitioning out of the school system; securing employment; finding a place to live outside the caregiver's home; and aging with a disability.

The printed version of this guide is prepared periodically. As information changes, updated information may be found in the Employment Guide Toolkit on our website.

This version, as well as, translations of the series of Transition POINTS guides in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, and Korean available to download at <http://www.thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/transition-points>. Translations are made possible by a grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities. Additional support was provided by the Rotary Club of Alexandria.

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## INTRODUCTION

Intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) by definition last a lifetime, so caring for a loved one with DD is a lifelong responsibility. Because of the nature of these disabilities, caregivers must make crucial (and often very difficult) decisions throughout the lifespan of their loved one—where he or she will go to school, what they will do for recreation, where they will live, and how to ensure his or her financial security once the caregiver is no longer there.

While caregivers want to make the best choices for their loved one, research shows that many do not have the resources to do so. A national survey by The Arc found that families face critical challenges to support their loved one:

- 44% reported that support services are decreasing in their communities
- 54% of families do not have a plan for the future
- 75% can't find after school care, community services or summer activities for their loved one
- 71% report that they don't know where their loved one will live in the future
- 91% of families indicated difficulty finding direct support professionals
- Only 36% of individuals with ID/DD are employed, and on average they work only 26 hours per two-week period. There is lack in diversity of the type of work being done; sixty percent (60%) of those employed work in retail, janitorial, landscaping, or food service jobs.<sup>1</sup>

### About Transition POINTS

Families need realistic, actionable information with which they can make a wide range of decisions as their child grows up. Providing this information is the mission of a program of The Arc of Northern Virginia—Transition POINTS (Providing Opportunities, Information, Networking and Transition Support).

Transition POINTS focuses on six key decision points in the lifetime of an individual with an intellectual disability:

1. Receiving a diagnosis and having a child enter an early intervention program

2. Starting school and entering the special education system
3. Transitioning out of the school system and into adult services;
4. Entering the world of work;
5. Finding a place to live outside the caregiver's home; and
6. Aging with a disability.

For each transition point, we provide materials in both print and digital formats, online resources, workshops, and webinars.

The information found in this guide is applicable to all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, although much of the contact information for resources are particular to the Northern Virginia area. To explore resources specific to your local community, contact the Community Services Board (CSB) in your region. You can find your local CSB by visiting DBHDS (Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services) at <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/community-services-boards-csbs>. The CSB is the point of entry into the publically funded system of services for people with mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities. To find your local DARS Office (Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services) visit, <https://vadars.org/offices.aspx>. DARS is a federal-state program offering vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities to prepare for, enter, and maintain employment. Also, visit The Arc of Virginia at [www.thearcova.org](http://www.thearcova.org) to find the local Arc chapter in community.

### Help for You, the Parent

We have written six guides to address important issues that parents should consider at each of these important life stages. The guides are designed to help you recognize opportunities, weigh options, and work through decisions; checklists, timelines, worksheets, and links to other resources are included wherever possible. Each document has also been reviewed by a task force of parents and professionals with relevant experience and expertise. Please visit the Transition POINTS page on our website at [www.thearcnova.org](http://www.thearcnova.org) to explore tool kits

corresponding with each guide that include additional resources.

The Arc of Northern Virginia maintains a library of informative life planning and future planning videos and webinars on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA>

Although each guide addresses issues related to a specific phase of life, you'll note that each also repeats some information parents and caregivers need to know whether their loved one is two, 22 or 62 years old: which steps to take to protect your loved one's financial future, how to apply for benefits, and where to go for more help.

### **Your Rights and Responsibilities**

This is not a legal document and does not spell out your or your child's rights and responsibilities under the law. Every effort has been made to verify the information in the document, but please be aware that items such as program regulations, deadlines, and contact information can change.

Referrals to organizations and individuals are for informational purposes and do not constitute an endorsement of their services.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, L., Hewitt, A., Pettingell, S., Taylor, M., & Reagan, J. (2018) Family and Individual Needs for Disability Supports (v.2) Community Report 2017. Minnesota: Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.

## **ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK: A Guide to Finding & Keeping a Job For Transitioning Youth**

“Work is good,” says Richard Luecking in his book about supporting work experiences for youth with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Work builds self-confidence and self-esteem, teaches valuable skills, grows an individual’s community of support, and sets the stage for the next job! Research supports starting early to get an idea of what a young person may wish to do in terms of a job or career.

Unfortunately, finding appropriate and fulfilling employment for individuals with disabilities can be daunting. U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that less than one-fifth of adults with any disability are employed, and many of those do not have full-time jobs.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, statistics account only for people who are available to work and are actively looking for a job, not those who may have given up, lack training, or are facing major obstacles to looking for work.

The best defense against these obstacles is a good offense: preparation, preparation, preparation. This guide emphasizes preparing the middle and high school student with developmental disabilities for the world of work. See the “Checklist...” on page 5 for a timeline of what to do when.

For the most part, the audience for “Entering the World of Work” is parents who are supporting their young adult with disabilities through the transition from school to work. Some information (particularly in sections about preparing for a particular job) is directed to the young adult him or herself.

**Key issues covered in the guide are:**  
**When to start preparing for entry into the workforce.** Planning for jobs starts early before a student leaves school. Luecking suggests starting as early as middle school with visits to workplaces, volunteer activities, internships, and job shadowing to expose a young adult to the world of work. Eliminating possible jobs is as important as focusing on desired ones.

<sup>1</sup>Richard G. Luecking, *The Way to Work: How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2009) pg 1

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic New Release, “Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics, 2012.” June 12, 2013.

**Who offers short term and long term employment support services in your area.** If your student with ID/DD is found eligible for adult services, localities may offer vocational testing, as well as help in finding, training for, and getting support on the job. A first meeting with DARS (Department of Aging & Rehabilitative Services) should occur three years before graduation. This guide provides resources for employment services in this area and reviews funding options for the various services.

**What you need to know to prepare for and stay on the job.** This guide offers tips for filling out job applications, interviewing and appropriate worksite behavior, sample resumes, and some ideas for self-advocacy on the job. You may also get help from your DARS counselor or employment service organization.

**How he or she will get around.** Transporting to and from work continues to pose barriers for people with disabilities. However, travel training for persons with disabilities is available in all three localities. In addition, local transportation companies (including bus, subway, and taxis) in Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax offer programs to increase convenience and reduce the cost of transportation.

**Whether working will affect your child’s benefits.** If your child is receiving SSI and Medicaid, earning income from a job may affect his or her benefits. Be sure to check the section “Keeping Your Benefits While Working” to protect those benefits.

**What steps to take now to protect your loved one’s financial future.** If you haven’t already done so, now is a good time to make or review your will, create a Special Needs Trust, and set up a filing system to keep records that could affect employment, benefits, and any inheritance you wish your child to receive.

### **Your Rights in the Workplace**

Title I of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), originally passed by Congress in 1990, prohibits discrimination in recruiting, hiring, setting salaries, promoting, or training of individuals with disabilities. It restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability before a job offer is made, and it requires that employers make reasonable accommodations for the known limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities (unless

it results in undue hardship).

To be protected by the ADA, you must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or have a history or record of such an impairment, or be a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

The ADA only protects you if you are **qualified** for the job you want. You must meet job-related requirements (for example, education, training, or skills requirements). You must be able to perform the job's essential functions (i.e., its fundamental duties) with or without a reasonable accommodation.

Your employer<sup>1</sup> must make sure that you:

- have an equal opportunity to apply for jobs and to work in jobs for which you are qualified;
- have an equal opportunity to be promoted once you are working;
- have equal access to benefits and privileges of employment that are offered to other employees, such as employer-provided health insurance or training; and
- are not harassed because of your disability.

For more information on disclosing your disability during the job interview and on "reasonable accommodations," see section on "Interviewing for a Job."

### **Rehabilitation Act**

The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors. The standards for determining employment discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act are the same as those used in Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Filing a Complaint**

Charges of employment discrimination on the basis of disability may be filed at any U.S. Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC) field office. Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the date of discrimination, or 300 days if the charge is filed with a designated state or local fair employment practice agency. Contact:

EEOC  
Washington DC Field Office  
131 M Street, NE  
Fourth Floor, Suite 4NWO2F  
Washington, DC 20507-0100  
[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

### **Role of Parents & Families in Supporting the Work Experience**

Parents and other family members play a key role in preparing their son or daughter with ID/DD for the workplace and in supporting them once on the job.

First, you know your loved one best, and are therefore an important source of information and long-term support.

Second, the IDEA gives parents certain rights in the special education process, such as the right to approve their student's IEP (which would include transition and employment-related goals); IEP meetings in middle- and high school, for example, are golden opportunities to participate in setting goals and talking about ways for your child to get services such as vocational assessments, life skills training, or even work experiences while still in school.

Third, evidence suggests that high parental expectations and sustained involvement throughout the transition process results in more success in the workplace for youth with disabilities.

The next section discusses basic steps in the process of preparing for, obtaining and keep a job. Parents play a vital role in each step. Look at the box under each step to see ways you could support your child and his/her progress toward workplace success.

**Entering the World of Work:  
A Checklist for Parents & Individuals with Disabilities**

Step to Take by Age	Estate/Legal	Employment/ Community Day Services	Transportation
<b>ASAP</b>			
Create file for key documents	x		
Have a will drawn up for parents	x		
Create a Special Needs Trust	x		
Explore eligibility for Medicaid waivers: Get on wait list(s).	MAY BE	LONG WAIT	LIST
<b>Middle School</b>			
Keep record of child's aptitudes & vocational interests		x	
Find out about high school academic & vocational courses that support career goals		x	
Begin participating in activities that could teach/reinforce work skills & expectations (chores, volunteering, etc.)		x	
Learn Self-Advocacy Skills		x	
<b>9th Grade (14)</b>			
Begin including transition goals in IEP, including vocational ones		x	x
If using public transit, obtain Metro reduced-fare ID or MetroAccess cards			x
Explore eligibility for adult services with local school system and CSB; fill out application & release of information forms		x	
<b>10-11th Grade (15-16)</b>			
Ask high school transition coordinator about employment preparedness programs available after high school		x	
Arrange 1st meeting with DARS (typically 3 years before exiting the school system) and establish eligibility for services			
If eligible for DARS, investigate need for vocational assessments and explore programs like PERT		x	
Explore possible careers by getting a part-time job or getting non-paid work experiences like volunteering or internships; create a resume		x	
Explore community resources for adult services: employment service organizations, transition programs		x	
Explore post-secondary options		x	
<b>12th grade (17-18)</b>			
Add specific vocational-related goals to transition IEP		x	
With your transition coordinator, apply for any post-high school career services		x	
Determine eligibility for funding for <b>adult</b> services including DARS, CSB, Medicaid Waiver		x	
Continue working or doing volunteer work; update resume with each new activity or skill		x	



**Entering the World of Work:  
A Checklist for Parents & Individuals with Disabilities**

12th grade (continued)	Estate/Legal	Employment/ Community Day Services	Transportation
If not yet prepared for employment, explore transition, employment and life skill programs.		x	
<b>No earlier than 17 yrs., 6 months</b>			
Explore legal authority such as power of attorney, guardianship or other options. Contact attorney, if needed.	x		
<b>Month of 18th birthday</b>			
Determine if <b>adult</b> with disability qualifies for SSI	x		
<b>1 month before 18th birthday</b>			
Have attorney prepare final documents for new legal relationship, if required	x		
<b>Age 18</b>			
Update will. Inform family about wills, trusts, guardianship, etc.	x		
Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	x		
Once accepted for SSI, apply for Medicaid.	x		
<b>If graduate and exit school system at 18</b>			
If working with DARS, continue with job development & placement		x	
If have a job, work with a benefits counselor if needed to manage income and benefits		x	
If not already done, determine eligibility for Medicaid waivers	x		
If not yet done, obtain Metro reduced-rate transit farecards/ID card			x
<b>If remain in school system until 22</b>			
Continue to add/modify employment-related goals in IEP			
Participate in school-based career services, including working in community-based settings			
If working with DARS, choose an employment service provider & begin job development		x	
<b>Age 22 (out of school system)</b>			
Continue with job placement activities until job is found; after DARS, job coaching may be funded by local CSB funds, Medicaid Waiver, or privately by family		x	

## TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

Figuring out what to do for a job or career is a challenge for every young adult. You may already know what jobs you'd be good at (or what you really *don't* want to do), but most young adults are not very familiar with what it takes to prepare for and get a job.

It takes time to figure this all out. Parents and students should take these steps and get started in middle and high school thinking about work and work-related skills:

**Get some kind of work-type experience** Be creative in thinking about what you/your child already does and how that might teach job skills or be expanded into a career interest.

Using your own experiences, **start a list of what you have done and what you did or did not like about it.** Use the Positive Personal Profile as a guide to assessing what you can offer an employer and what you may need to be successful. The profile can then guide more formal career/aptitude assessments in school or through DARS.

**Meet with your transition coordinator at your high school** Find out about high school-to-adult services programs in your locality. Begin adding work-related transition goals into your IEP (see suggestions on page 9).

You or your student's transition coordinator should **arrange an initial meeting with a counselor from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and research employment service organizations (ESOs).**

If eligible, **begin working with your DARS counselor** and an employment service organization.

### Step 1. Getting Work Experience

Most people begin learning about the world of work through a variety of non-paid experiences. By participating in a variety of these activities, you and your child will begin to sort out which jobs might be a good fit for his or her skills, as well as which ones definitely would not.

**Chores** Probably the first "job" most children have,

chores teach discipline, teamwork, and (perhaps) conflict resolution. Youngsters may also find they enjoy certain chores--cooking, taking care of a pet, or working in the garden--that may point them in the direction of a career.

**School, camp, summer courses** Taking courses in school or during the summer help young adults to learn skills as varied as computer repair, data entry, animal care, or web graphics.

**Volunteering** From distributing meals to the homebound to cleaning a park or working in an animal shelter, volunteering provides a sense of personal accomplishment while teaching job skills.

**Activities at church or synagogue** Participating in religious education classes, being a greeter for or taking part in religious services, or being part of mission programs all provide opportunities to develop responsibility as well as social and job-related skills.

**Scouting** can provide many of the basic skills needed for workplace success: team-work, goal setting, task management, time management, and leadership.

**Sports** teaches not only the sport itself but self-advocacy, sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline and self-care skills.

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### Advice from a Parent

The transition out of school comes before parents are aware it has happened.

- **Plan in advance** Allow a two-year cushion before transition to research the process itself.
  - **Research employment and service organizations** that may be appropriate for your young adult.
  - **Meet with potential employment providers** This is essential. Discuss their approach to job development and job exploration. Discuss what activities, if any, are available while looking for a job, i.e. classes, volunteer opportunities, etc.
  - **Take nothing for granted** Be diligent. Nothing is guaranteed until the individual is actually employed.
  - **Anticipate problems** They will happen, but anticipating them will reduce your stress and that of your family.
-

For volunteer experiences, explore the following:

### Volunteer Match

[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

### Volunteer Alexandria

Phone: (703) 836-2176

Web: <http://www.volunteeralexandria.org/>

### Volunteer Arlington

Phone: (703) 228-1760

Web: <http://www.arlingtonva.us/volunteer>

### Volunteer Fairfax/Falls Church

Phone: (703) 246-3460

Web: <http://www.volunteerfairfax.org>

#### How Parents May Help

- ✓ Start early to talk about the benefits of working and workplace expectations
- ✓ Bring your child with you to your place of work
- ✓ Give him or her household chores
- ✓ Help find volunteer activities
- ✓ Encourage participation in activities such as Special Olympics or Scouting
- ✓ Talk about dreams and hopes for the future (even if not job related).

## Step 2. Assessing Work Interests, Preferences & Skills

Use the Positive Personal Profile to get an overall picture of what you'd like to do for a job or career and what talents, traits and skills you'd bring to the workplace. This is the place to be honest about likes and dislikes and about any accommodations or support you might need at the worksite.

Consider looking at resources such as *What Color is Your Parachute* for lists of skills needed in particular jobs.

The profile will also help you figure out what things other than skills and talents would make you happy and successful on a job. The profile can help you clarify issues such as:

- the type of job you'd prefer, such as service jobs that entail a lot of customer/client contact vs. production or materials handling jobs that may

involve less contact with the public or co-workers.

- the on-the-job environment, which include physical factors such as the size of the physical space you'd work in (such as a small store or large warehouse), whether it's noisy or quiet, or primarily indoors or outdoors, or whether the job requires a lot of sitting or a lot of moving around.
- your boss and co-workers, including your preferences for working as part of a team vs. more independently.
- your work schedule: full time, part time, weekdays vs. weekends, day vs. night shifts, etc.
- commute. Factoring in how you would get to a job (walk, drive, public transportation, transportation service), how long that commute takes, and how much it costs is important in considering a job's suitability for you.

The profile should be a work-in-progress; consider reviewing it every year as you get more academic, volunteer or paid work experience. Discuss it with your family, transition coordinator, or former supervisor(s); others often see talents, skills, and possibilities that you may not have thought of. Eventually you will share it with your DARS counselor and employment specialist who can use it to find a job or career that's suited to you.

#### How Parents May Help

- ✓ Help your child sort out his or her work preferences, skills and interests
- ✓ Complete the Positive Personal Profile with your child
- ✓ Identify people--relatives, friends, co-workers-- who could help find a work experience related to your child's interests
- ✓ Discuss accommodations and supports that work at home and might be useful in the workplace

### Step 3. Meeting with Your Transition Coordinator/Representative

The transition coordinator at your high school is the best first stop for information on post-secondary options, including employment programs, transition programs, college, DARS, and employment service organizations. Localities vary in the services they offer to transitioning students. Ask if your school system offers any of the following: functional life skills programs, job coaching services, school-based career assessments or even individualized career assessments.

Starting in 9th grade, IEPs should begin to include transition objectives to be achieved while the student is still in school. Objectives can be set to help a student with life skills important to employment (such as time management, using a phone or travel training) with specific job skills (such as keyboarding or food safety rules) or social/advocacy skills (greeting a supervisor, asking for help, or using a communications device.)

In addition, IDEA regulations require IEP teams to develop appropriate measurable postsecondary goals for students of transition age. These goals need to be in the areas of training, education and employment; independent living skills may also be included, if needed.

Goals should be measurable (data could be collected to monitor progress and might include number of prompts needed and number of trials) and include a deadline.

#### How Parents May Help

- ✓ Help your child draft a resume. Share the resume with transition staff at school and DARS counselor and get ideas on how to make the most of your child's work-related experiences.
- ✓ Attend IEP meetings, share the Positive Personal Profile, and contribute your ideas for IEPs and other plans or goals related to your student's employment.
- ✓ Discuss with the transition team any accommodations and supports that you and your student have agreed might be needed.
- ✓ Advocate when needed, but let your child speak for him or herself as much as possible.

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### Examples of Employment/Vocational Objectives

- Work with a school counselor to fill out a career interest inventory by October 31
- Greet supervisor every day using appropriate eye contact, 4/5 trials, by February 15
- Learn to use smartphone, including calling and texting and entering needed phone numbers into contacts with no more than one prompt in 4/5 trials by June 1
- Ask questions of others regarding topics initiated by self or others, to sustain conversations of at least 3 turn takings in length, 4/5 trials, by June 30
- Enroll in one technical education class per semester in chosen field of interest
- Attend two transition or employment fairs by November 30
- Draft a resume using the sample provided by the school counselor by October 15
- Complete a mock job application, with no more than 2 prompts, 3/5 trials by December 10
- Before bedtime, check that work uniform is clean and presentable for the next day with no prompts, 4/5 trials through June 1
- Observe at least 5 jobs in the community and keep a log of jobs observed, stating specific job duties and needed skills by April 1

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### Examples of Post-Secondary Goals

#### Post-Secondary Education/Vocational Ed

- Complete coursework to become a licensed home health care aide/nurse's assistant
- Complete a sign language class, with supports, at a community college
- Complete the requirements for an Associate's Degree in Automotive Technology
- Earn an associate's degree at the community college prior to transferring to a university to

work to earn the bachelor's degree

### **Post-Secondary Training Goals**

- Complete study skills course at the community college following high school graduation
- Participate in checking account management training provided by the bank
- Complete route training to use public transit to/from work independently
- Complete training to use emerging communication technologies that replace those being used in high school

### **Post-Secondary Employment Goals**

- Work part-time as a home health care assistant
- Be employed as a ticket scanner at the local sports arena
- Work part time in a retail store

### **Post-Secondary Independent Living Goals (if needed)**

- Acquire and take medication according to schedule
- Utilize self- determination skills in the community
- Use a digital scheduler to be on time for volunteer work
- Vote in local, state, and national elections

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Examples taken from "Development of Postsecondary Goals," Virginia Dept. of Education Guidance Document, 2011. For more information on what is required by IDEA and how to develop these goals, see [https://townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:%5CTownHall%5Cdocroot%5CGuidanceDocs%5C201%5CGDoc\\_DOE\\_5680\\_v1.pdf](https://townhall.virginia.gov/L/GetFile.cfm?File=C:%5CTownHall%5Cdocroot%5CGuidanceDocs%5C201%5CGDoc_DOE_5680_v1.pdf)

## POSITIVE PERSONAL PROFILE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dreams and Goals	Talents
Skills and Knowledge	Learning Styles
Interests	Positive personality traits
Temperament	Values
Work Experiences	Support System
Specific Challenges	Solutions and Accommodations

**Work Experience ideas and possibilities to explore:**

**Source:** Richard G. Luecking. *The Way to Work: How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. (Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 2009), pg.

## WORKING WITH SCHOOL TRANSITION SERVICES

All three localities offer transition and employment services to students aging out of the school system and into the adult world. Ask the transition coordinator in your student's high school about how the transition process works and for recommendations to both school-based and public vocational programs.

### City of Alexandria

#### Transition Coordinators

Based out of T.C. Williams High School, 3330 King Street, Alexandria

Ameeta Shah, Employment Specialist,  
Project SEARCH (703) 504-3687  
[ameeta.shah@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:ameeta.shah@acps.k12.va.us)

Jim Cooney, Employment Support Specialist  
703-824-6800 ext.6892  
[James.cooney@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:James.cooney@acps.k12.va.us)

Angela Brown, Employment Support Specialist  
(703) 824-6800, ext. 6254  
[angela.brown@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:angela.brown@acps.k12.va.us)

For more information on transition services available in Alexandria City Public Schools, visit <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/407>

### Project Search

<https://www.projectsearch.us/>

Locally, Project SEARCH operates a program at Inova Alexandria Hospital. This high school transition program is a one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates classroom instruction, career exploration, and relevant job skills training.

### Arlington County

#### Transition Coordinators

Karen Sherman, Yorktown H.S. (703) 228-2545  
[karen.sherman@apsva.us](mailto:karen.sherman@apsva.us)

Christina Eagle, Arlington Career Center  
(703)228- 5738 [Christinaeagle@apsva.us](mailto:Christinaeagle@apsva.us)

Thomas Sweet, Washington-Lee  
(703)228-6265 [thomas.sweet@apsva.us](mailto:thomas.sweet@apsva.us)

Jennifer DeCamp, Wakefield HS  
703-228-6728 [Jennifer.decamp@apsva.us](mailto:Jennifer.decamp@apsva.us)

Joyce Kelly, Stratford Program  
703-228-6450 [joyce.kelly@apsva.us](mailto:joyce.kelly@apsva.us)

Brian Stapleton, Contract Services  
703-228-6360 [Brian.stapleton@apsva.us](mailto:Brian.stapleton@apsva.us)

### Program for Employment Preparedness (PEP)

is a transition program, located at the Arlington Career Center. PEP opportunities are based on current business trends and needs so that students may gain relevant skills for obtaining employment in today's market, including the requisite social skills necessary to secure and maintain long-term, meaningful employment. The program is designed for students to receive internship/apprenticeship experiences and may lead to trade certifications, licenses, college credit, networking connections, and/or employment directly upon graduation. PEP aims to increase students' work readiness skills to enhance the possibility of their obtaining and maintaining work as an adult.

Depending on student's needs, job experiences may range from a fully supported on-campus program to a fully independent work experience at a local business. Certain students will participate in Career Technical Education (CTE) courses as an adjunct to their job site experiences. PEP teachers and administrators coordinate with DARS and Arlington County IDDS case managers to support a smooth transition into adulthood.

Arlington students aged 18-21 with IEPs may be eligible for PEP. Contact your high school transition coordinator for more information or email Christina Eagle [christinaeagle@apsva.us](mailto:christinaeagle@apsva.us)

For more information on transition services available in Arlington Public Schools, visit <https://www.apsva.us/special-education/transition-services/>

## **Fairfax County Transition Coordinators**

Career & Transition Services, 571-423-4150  
Ann Long, Coordinator

Fairfax has Employment and Transition Representatives (ETRs) at each of its 29 high schools and centers. For more information on these services, visit <https://www.fcps.edu/academics/academic-overview/special-education-instruction/career-and-transition-services>

For students who have been placed in private schools that contract with FCPS, contact Multi Agency Services <https://www.fcps.edu/node/32709>. Adam Cahuantzi, Program Manager [agcahuantzi@fcps.edu](mailto:agcahuantzi@fcps.edu) 571-423-4030.

ETRs facilitate students' transition to post-secondary life by providing transition and employment services while the student is still in school. Employment services include job-seeking skills, job development and job placement, job maintenance and work-based learning. Transition services include information sharing about postsecondary options and resources, referrals to school-based services, support to students in their final year of school, and referrals to adult service agencies upon graduation.

Career and Transition Services also provides a number of services and instructional programs to enhance career and college readiness. These include Career Assessment, Work Awareness & Transition (WAT) class, Education for Employment (EFE) class, Education for Employment in the Office (EFEO), Job Coaching, and Academy Support.

For students choosing to continue their education until age 22, Career and Transition Services offers a number of programs focused on employability and life skills including the Davis and Pulley Career Centers and the Secondary Transition to Employment Programs (STEP) based at Chantilly, South Lakes, Marshall, and Mount Vernon High Schools.

### **Exploring Resources**

High school transition coordinators can also give you more information on the following adult service events held throughout the year.

**Provider Resource Fairs**—Fairfax County Public Schools and the Arlington PEP Program both hold annual Resource Fairs in the Fall for students seeking adult services resources.

**Flash Forward** – Post-secondary Education & Employment Options. Held annually in the spring and hosted by FCPS. The event includes a vendor fair and workshops.

**Super Transition Saturday** held annually in the winter and hosted by FCPS. This event provides information to elementary and middle school students as they prepare for transition

**Future Quest** (George Mason Univ.) College and career event for middle and high school students held every other year; the next one is November 2019.

### **Parent Resource Centers:**

#### **Alexandria City PRC**

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/397>

Special Education Family Resource Center  
TC Williams HS, 3801 West Braddock Rd, Alexandria, VA (703)824-0129

#### **Arlington Public Schools PRC**

<https://www.apsva.us/special-education/parent-resource-center/>

2110 Washington Boulevard, Suite 158,  
Arlington, VA 22204 (703) 228-7239

#### **Fairfax County Public Schools PRC**

<https://www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center>

Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services  
2334 Gallows Road, Rm 105, Dunn Loring, VA 22027  
(703)204-3941 [prc@fcps.edu](mailto:prc@fcps.edu)

### **Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)**

In addition to the local school systems, The Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services also offers programs through the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) to help transitioning students. WWRC provides vocational evaluation and training, life skills evaluation and training, medical rehabilitation, and other services.



### **Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation and Transition Program (PERT)**

The PERT program provides public high school students with disabilities with a 5-10 day comprehensive assessment of vocational, and independent living, social and recreational skills. Eligible students must be age 16 and older, with a full scale IQ of 60 or evidence of good adaptive skills; the student must be returning to school the fall after the PERT session (in other words, you cannot be in your last year of school).

PERT offers the following:

- Life Skills Evaluation
- Vocational Evaluation
- Therapeutic Evaluation
- Vocational Training Programs

To apply for PERT, contact the transition coordinator in your high school. You would need to have an open case with Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to be considered. For more information about PERT, go to:  
<http://wwrc.virginia.gov/PERT.htm>

### **Additional Career Training & Transition Programs and Services**

#### **Adult and Community Education (ACE)**

ACE is a program of Fairfax County Public Schools for people of all ages with an emphasis on career and work readiness. It offers a wide range of training opportunities in apprenticeship, certificate programs, business, information technology, health and medical, and trade and industrial programs. For more information, visit  
<https://aceclasses.fcps.edu/PolicyDetails.aspx?StaticPage=About%20U>

#### **Internship Programs**

##### **John Hudson Internship Program**

This is a summer internship program in Fairfax County Government for college students and recent graduates with disabilities  
(703) 324-5421 or  
<http://www.vcpea.org/program/64783/john-hudson-internship-program>

#### **Educating Youth through Employment (EYE)**

This is an employer-driven summer employment initiative to help young adults 18-21 gain the experience, confidence, and skills needed to be successful in the workforce.

<http://www.myskillsource.org/page/id/42/eye-program>

#### **STEMSkills**

[www.stemskills.org](http://www.stemskills.org)

Focuses on youth with disabilities that are interested in working in innovative and tech-driven industries. Provides services around job discovery, job exploration, apprenticeships, and customized employment. STEMSkills also offers a community camp for youth with Autism, ADHD, and LD to explore work culture norms and build executive functioning skills. Contact Eric Duer at  
[EDuer@stemskills.org](mailto:EDuer@stemskills.org). (202)744-2452

#### **Social Graces, LLC**

[www.socialgracellc.com](http://www.socialgracellc.com)

Provides support to young adults with disabilities and their families. Services include advocacy, along with individualized support, programs, and plans targeted to improve social skills, executive function, and skills required to succeed in school, jobs, and real life. Contact [info@socialgrace.llc](mailto:info@socialgrace.llc) (703)593-9224

#### **Next Level Transition Consulting**

Provides support for transition services, career exploration, career planning and job coaching, and drop-in independent living support. Accepts private pay and DARS funding.

[www.nextleveltransition.com](http://www.nextleveltransition.com) Contact: Scott Wilbur, Transition Director (571)332-2992  
[scottwilbur@nextleveltransition.com](mailto:scottwilbur@nextleveltransition.com)

#### **Starfish Savers**

Services provided include consultation and advocacy, coaching and life skills, and community based transition coaching. Accepts private pay and DARS funding.

[www.starfishsavers.com](http://www.starfishsavers.com)

Contact: Larrie Ellen Randall (703) 631-9551  
[Larrie.Ellen@starfishsavers.com](mailto:Larrie.Ellen@starfishsavers.com)

### **Inclusion Consultants**

provides individuals with the tools to build and enjoy rewarding and inclusive lives through the following services: counseling, coaching, consulting, and connecting. Their services seek to implement inclusive practices at every stage of life and across communities.

[www.inclusionconsultants.com](http://www.inclusionconsultants.com)

Contact Nancy Mercer (703)304-8537

[nancy@inclusionconsultants.com](mailto:nancy@inclusionconsultants.com)

### **MOST Program**

Meaningful Opportunities for Successful Transitions (MOST), a program of the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes (JFGH) is a one year individualized program of activities and training designed to facilitate successful transition into the adult community. The program focuses on facilitating outcomes for participants in three domains:

- Self-sufficiency — including self-help, independent living and safety skills.
- Community — including social skills, transportation and recreation.
- Vocation — including employment, education, vocational training and day habilitation.

MOST accepts CSB and Waiver funding. For more information, <https://www.jfgh.org/services/services/>  
Contact Marcie Bennett, MOST Program Administrator, 240-283-6031 [MBennett@JFGH.org](mailto:MBennett@JFGH.org)

### **SPARC's Pawsome Learning Labs (PLL)**

PLL is an adapted experiential program with skill building curriculums modified for a variety of learning styles and levels. This program training includes personal support attendants working side by side to develop strong communication and facilitation skills in work settings with their clients. The program provides 2 years of training. The first year focuses on soft skills components and the second year focuses on hard skills. Offered Tues/Wed/Thurs from 10am-1pm. Cost is \$400 per month. For more information, contact Jodie Wyckoff, [Jodie@sparcsolutions.org](mailto:Jodie@sparcsolutions.org) (703)967-5997 [www.sparcsolutions.org](http://www.sparcsolutions.org)

## **Exploring Post-Secondary Resources**

### **Mason LIFE Program**

is a post-secondary program at George Mason

University for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who desire a university experience in a supportive academic environment.

<https://masonlife.gmu.edu/>

Program Director: Heidi J. Graff, Ph.D.

(703)993-3905

### **College Living Experience**

Provides post-secondary supports to young adults with varying disabilities.

[www.experiencecle.com](http://www.experiencecle.com)

Montgomery College, 401 North Washington Street, Suite 420 Rockville, MD 20850

CLE also offers a 3 week summer program for diverse learners entering their senior year or who have recently graduated.

<https://experiencecle.com/summer-exploration/>

### **Strive Program at NVCC Annandale**

The STRIVE Program provides opportunities for young adults with learning disabilities to transition from school to post-secondary training, employment and successful community living

Contact Richard Stone [strive05@icloud.com](mailto:strive05@icloud.com)

571-212-4482

### **College Internship Program (CIP)**

[www.cipworldwide.org](http://www.cipworldwide.org)

A comprehensive post-secondary support program for young adults on the autism spectrum and for those with learning differences.

703-323-3000

### **Bass Educational Services, LLC**

[www.basseducationalservices.com](http://www.basseducationalservices.com)

Provides educational consultation for families and students with learning differences

8304 Old Courthouse Road, Suite B, Vienna, VA

703-462-0654

**Northern Virginia Community College**  
Director of Disability Services  
<https://www.nvcc.edu/disability-services>

## **Supports at Northern Virginia Community College**

NOVA hosts three supplemental, fee for service programs at selected NOVA campuses that provide specialized resources and supports for students with disabilities:

### **College Steps**

[www.collegesteps.org](http://www.collegesteps.org)

Annandale and Loudon NOVA Campuses  
This program partners with NOVA to support students with disabilities, ages 17-26, with their college pursuits through peer coaching and on-campus support services. Hourly fee for service model.

1-888-732-1022 or [contactus@collegesteps.org](mailto:contactus@collegesteps.org)

### **Adaptive College Experience (ACE)**

Loudon Campus.

The ACE program consists of twice monthly group sessions designed to support students with disabilities.

Contact 703-787-9090

### **Social InNOVations for College Students**

Annandale Campus

This club provides monthly social opportunities. It is

## **Post Secondary Online Resources**

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net) an online database to research college programs for students with intellectual disabilities.

[www.bestcolleges.com/resources/disabled-students/](http://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/disabled-students/) provides an overview of college resources for people with disabilities.

[www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu) an online clearinghouse on post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities

**PREPARING FOR A JOB: The Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) is part of the Virginia Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS)**

DARS is a federal-state program that provides short term support services to help individuals with disabilities prepare for the workplace, find a job, and get needed support once on the job. DARS focuses on integrated, community based competitive employment.

DARS recommends that students explore Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services three years before they plan to graduate high school. This early involvement helps students get to know their VR Counselor and helps the counselor work with the student to outline activities that lead to achievement of the employment goal.

DARS Services include: Assistive Technology, Career Exploration, Career Guidance and Counseling, Job Development, Job Placement, Job Shadowing, On-the-Job Training, Postsecondary Training and Education, PERT, Supported Employment, and Vocational Evaluation and Assessment. For more information on DARS services and to download their guide, visit <http://www.vadars.org/transitionservices.htm>

**The Role of Your Counselor**

Your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor is an expert in disability and career counseling. There is a counselor assigned to schools in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church. He or she will determine your eligibility for DARS services, help identify any barriers to competitive employment, and work on your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with you.

You (or your parent) may have to sign a release so that your counselor may speak with, or get documents from, your doctors, therapists, former employers (if any), and school staff.

**Becoming a DARS Client**

To participate, you will go through the following steps: referral, intake, eligibility determination, needs assessment, and plan development and implementation.

**Referral**

Students with disabilities (those who have IEPs or a 504 Plan) are encouraged to apply for DARS vocational services. Ask your transition specialist to refer you or you may call DARS at 800-552-5019.

**Intake**

If you are still in school, your transition coordinator can set up an initial meeting for you with a DARS counselor, or you may call the local office yourself. The purpose of this first meeting is to talk about your job plans, disability, education, and any work history, as well as how DRS may be able to assist you.

At this meeting, your counselor may ask for additional information or testing (at no cost to you), such as a psychological evaluation or a rehabilitation technology assessment. You will be asked to sign a release so DARS can request your records.

**Eligibility**

You may be eligible for DARS if you have a goal of competitive employment in an integrated job setting and meet the criteria for eligibility. Eligible individuals must have a documented physical, mental, emotional, sensory or learning disability that causes a substantial barrier to getting or keeping a job.

Financial eligibility is based on family income. DARS uses a sliding scale which is subject to the number of dependents claimed on the latest income tax return. However, when students receive Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for their disability, they are presumed eligible for DARS services, if they intend to become employed.

Information from you, your records, and any new reports will be used to learn about your disability, how it affects your work capabilities and limits, and whether DARS services can help you become employed. Even if you have a disability, you and your counselor must decide if you meet all the eligibility criteria.

To apply, complete an intake with a DARS Rehabilitation Counselor. You will need a social security card, photo ID, all applicable documentation that includes a diagnosis, health insurance information, and a parent if the student is under 18.

Eligibility review is completed within 60 days of the initial meeting. You can help by getting your records for your counselor or authorizing your counselor to request them and keeping appointments.

### Evaluating Needs

If you meet the eligibility criteria, you and your counselor will discuss your vocational goal and work together to choose **the type of job** that's right for you.

If you need more information, your counselor may suggest a vocational evaluation (at no cost to you). A vocational evaluation can include counseling, testing, work samples, and on-the-job evaluations. The results help you both learn about the types of jobs you can do and are most interested in doing.

Next, you and your counselor will jointly decide **what services** you need to get ready for and find that type of job. Services provided without cost include:

- Career Exploration
- Career Guidance and Counseling
- Disability Awareness Counseling
- Follow-up Services after job placement
- Job seeking and placement (no required job coach)
- Vocational Assessment
- On-the-Job Training program
- Unpaid Work Experiences

Services that may have a cost share include:

- College
- Training programs
- Durable medical equipment or other goods
- Assistive technology
- Therapies or other medical services
- Supported employment (working with a job coach)
  - Job seeking
  - Job placement follow along services

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** After DARS eligibility is established, you and your family work with the VR counselor and/or a potential service provider to write an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE:

- Focuses on the goal of employment
- Outlines steps needed for employment goal

- Plans for necessary services and funding

In thinking about necessary services, you, your parents, and the VR counselor take into consideration anything that may affect your ability to prepare, qualify, or apply for a job or stay on a job. These issues include: mobility, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, communication skills, work skills, organizational skills, self-advocacy skills, stamina, money management, and medication management.

By signing the IPE, you are promising to take the steps in your plan to become employed. You also show that you made the IPE planning decisions jointly with your counselor, parents or guardians. Ask questions to be sure you understand your role, rights, and responsibilities under the IPE. IPEs are reviewed at least once a year.

You must tell your counselor about any changes that affect your vocational rehabilitation (address or telephone number, financial situation or family size, medical insurance, your disability or general health, or government benefits).

### DARS Resources

**Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)** located in Fishersville, WWRC provides people with disabilities comprehensive and individualized services that lead to employment and improved independence. WWRC provides vocational evaluation and training, medical rehabilitation, life skills evaluation and training, assistive technology, and other services. To learn more about WWRC, visit <http://wwrc.virginia.gov>

### Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation and Transition Program (PERT)

The PERT program is a school to work initiative at the WWRC that provides high school students with disabilities with a 5-10 day comprehensive assessment of vocational, and independent living, social and recreational skills. Eligible students must be age 16 and older, with a full scale IQ of 60 or evidence of good adaptive skills; the student must be returning to school the fall after the PERT session (in other words, you cannot be in your last year of school).

PERT offers the following:

- Life Skills Evaluation
- Vocational Evaluations
- Therapeutic Evaluations
- Vocational Training Programs

To apply for PERT, contact the transition coordinator in your high school. You would need to have an open case with DARS to be considered. For more information, go to:

<http://wwrc.virginia.gov/PERT.htm>

### **Pre-Employment and Education Readiness Program (PREP)**

This nine week introductory program is divided into three week modules at the WWRC. Clients participate in classes designed to provide a foundation of soft skills as part of their transition to employment and independence. Goals include an introductory exposure to soft skills that support a student's ability to seek and secure employment, increase awareness of interpersonal interactions and expand and enhance personal management skills. On and off-campus activities provide an introduction to issues ranging from money management, grocery shopping and cooking, to personal health care, disability awareness, self-advocacy, and job-seeking skills. For more information, go to <http://wwrc.net/LSTP.htm>

To apply, contact your DARS counselor. If the team is in agreement, you complete an application with your counselor; the application then goes to the WWRC admissions committee, which makes the final decision.

### **DARS Limitations**

DARS does not guarantee a job at any time. You must continue to conduct your own job search. It also cannot promise to send you to school or other type of training.

If and when DARS funding is limited, the law requires DARS to prioritize its services (called Order of Selection) to those with the most severe disabilities and functional limitations (defined by DARS as a vocational barrier or impediment due to a disability that affects mobility, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work skills, communication or work tolerance).

### **Regional DARS Office Locations**

#### **Alexandria DRS Offices**

Serves Arlington and Alexandria  
5904 Old Richmond Highway Suite 410  
Alexandria, VA 22303  
Karen.Brown@dars.virginia.gov  
(703) 960-3411

#### **Fairfax/Falls Church DRS Office**

11150 Fairfax Blvd. Suite 300  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
Leanne.rerko@dars.virginia.gov  
(703) 359-1124

#### **Manassas DRS Office**

9309 Center Street, Suite 304, Manassas, VA 20110  
Mark.fletcher@dars.virginia.gov (703)335-5550

If outside of the Northern Virginia area, visit <https://vadars.org/offices.aspx> to find your local office.

## **WORKING WITH AN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE ORGANIZATION**

DARS contracts with outside vendors called Employment Service Organizations (ESO) to provide many of the short-term employment services to eligible clients. For example, you may meet with a VR Counselor to determine that you are eligible for situational assessments, but then the VR Counselor from DARS will contract with an employment specialist from an ESO to actually take you to participate in a situational assessment. These vendors may be private nonprofit or for-profit organizations. A list of these providers begins on page 23.

### **The Role of the Employment Specialist**

Once a DARS client, you will work closely with either a vocational counselor from DARS or an employment specialist from the employment service organization that has contracted with DARS. As a prospective employee, the employment specialist helps you:

- prepare for, get and stay on a job
- communicate with your family about your progress
- complete necessary applications & resumes
- assist you with initial training as needed
- identify transportation resources as well as travel training.

Employment specialists also work with individual employers to ensure there's a match between the job requirements and your skills, including:

- work with the employer to find out about available jobs
- work closely with hiring managers to determine the scope of work
- analyze the work environment to identify the essential tasks and cultural aspects of the department
- Assist the human resources department with scheduling and planning the interview.
- Identify accommodations and/or adaptations you may need
- communicate with the employer to evaluate your progress
- provide disability awareness training for co-workers as needed

The specialist also coordinates with your DARS counselor on job strategies, concerns of the employer and co-workers, and development of natural supports in the workplace.

### **Job Development Process**

There are four phases to the job development process:

#### **Situational Assessments**

Situational assessments (going to a job site and "practicing" the tasks) allow the job coach to see how an individual might perform in a particular type of job. Information gathered during the assessment helps determine interest, skill level, preferred environment, and other issues before the job search begins. Not everyone wants or needs a situational assessment.

#### **Job Development (2-6 months)**

This phase comprises the actual job search and preparation for job interviews: networking, looking for job openings, writing or updating the resume, developing a cover letter, practice filling out employment applications and interviewing.

#### **Placement and Training**

When an appropriate job is found, the specialist can go on the interview, and help determine any needed accommodation. Once on the job, your specialist becomes a job coach to help train you for the job and

communicate with you, the employer and your family on how strategies to ensure you are successful.

Job coaching for competitive employment has a limited time frame; you go through an initial phase of working together very closely until you feel comfortable being independent. The amount of intervention on the job depends on the need of the individual. The job coach begins to fade as the individual is able to perform without assistance and things are going well on the job.

Once the individual is stable on the job with less than 20% intervention from the job coach, the team will discuss next steps. Travel training may be part of the contract with the ESO. Coaching may also include referrals to outside community resources needed for success in the placement.

#### **How Parents May Help**

- ✓ Reinforce workplace expectations with your son or daughter, such as grooming, appropriate dress, and punctuality
- ✓ Provide feedback to counselors about the work experience from what you are seeing and hearing at home from your child
- ✓ Ask for feedback about how your child is doing on the job from the employment specialist's and the employer's point of view
- ✓ Offer to help solve challenges on issues such as transportation and special accommodations

**Closing Your Case** In general, after you have been working with DARS at least 90 days, you and your counselor will close your DARS case. Before closing your case, your counselor will stay in touch to make sure the job is right for you and that you and your employer are satisfied.

DARS may also close your case if you are no longer eligible, if services will not result in your employment, or you have not met your responsibilities.

If you think you need additional DARS services after your case is closed, you may ask your counselor to re-open your case. You may also contact the ESO that

worked with DARS to provide your services.

## Choosing an Employment Services Organization (ESO)

Once DARS funding ends, money for continuing, long-term support may be funded by a Medicaid Waiver, the local Community Services Board (CSB), or privately paid by the family. The CSB is the first point of entry into the publicly funded system of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information on how to apply for services from the CSB and the Medicaid Waiver in your locality, see page 45.

You may want to research and meet with a number of providers (list begins on page 23) and then select the one who you think will be most successful for you. Begin by visiting their websites and then schedule a meeting.

### Reminders

- The following questions are a general guideline to assist you as you meet with employment service organizations. As you prepare, you will begin to think of questions that are more specifically related to the particular needs of your son or daughter. Don't hesitate to ask any question!
- Prior to meeting with the ESO, it is suggested that you have a firm understanding of what funding sources you are affiliated with (Community Service Board, including self-directed services if with Fairfax County CSB, Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Medicaid Waiver). Learn about what support options are available to you.
- As you begin to meet with ESOs, the process will raise additional questions that you may have never thought of. This is okay! If you feel the need to have additional meetings to complete a more specific comparison of services, take the extra-time.
- Share your capabilities, skills, needs and goals.
- Consider the following when making your decision: How did the service provider answer your questions? Did they treat you with respect? Do you like the staff members? Did they present themselves in a professional manner?

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### Examples of Questions to Ask Employment Service Organizations (ESOs)

- How does your organization develop job leads for people?
  - What companies have you placed people at and in what types of jobs?
  - What type of feedback on job development and training do you provide for the family?
  - Will the job developer also provide the on the job training or will another individual be hired to do so (i.e. job coach, natural supports set up, co-worker, trainer, etc.)?
  - Describe some of the factors you consider when matching an employment site and the individual.
  - What is your marketing approach with a new, prospective employer?
  - How many people does your organization service in supported employment?
  - What kind of activities will you do with the individual to better acquaint yourself with him/her?
  - Do you provide travel training to and from the job site?
  - What costs are involved and who pays? What sources of funding do you accept?
  - What will our communication look like?
  - What other support services or training does your organization provide? Social skills, independent living skills, communications skills training? Volunteer experiences? Community Integration Services?
  - What do you do if I need additional help after I have found a job?
  - Do you offer any other services while I am looking for a job? For example, soft skills instruction, meaningful community and/or volunteer experiences? If yes, describe them. How often are services provided in the community?
  - Do you develop customized employment?
  - How do assess skills and interests?
-



**Employment First** is a national movement rooted in the premise that all people, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of competitive, community-based employment. Employment First is a framework for systems change efforts. The initiative calls for raising expectations, implementing better practices, and aligning policies and reimbursement structures to promote competitive, integrated employment opportunities for all.

In February 2012, Virginia Senate Joint Resolution No. 127 was passed, establishing a formal Employment First policy in the Commonwealth. Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred option for Virginians with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly financed systems.

## Models of Employment & Funding Sources

At present, employment and day support services for individuals with disabilities fall into the varying models described below. The table on page 23 shows types of service models used and sources of funding for different employment service organizations. However, under the Employment First legislation, the first option should always be placement of individuals with disabilities in community *competitive* employment, making *minimum wage or higher*, in an integrated setting.

DARS is the first payer for short term services needed to place individuals in integrated, individual supported employment. Once an individual is able to obtain and maintain a job for 90 days, DARS funding phases out and if available, Waiver or CSB (Community Services Board) funding phases in. If DARS cannot serve an individual (he/she may not be found eligible by DARS or there is a waiting list, Waiver can provide all the funding from the beginning.

The Community Services Board (CSB) is the initial point of entry for public funding in your locality for support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Services include support coordination, individual and group supported employment, and day support. Services are contingent on funding availability and eligibility criteria.

## Supported employment falls into two models:

**Individual Supported Employment** is defined as intermittent support, usually provided one-on-one by a job coach to an individual in a supported position who, during most of the time on the job site, performs, independently.

**Group Supported Employment** is defined as continuous support provided by staff to eight or fewer individuals with disabilities in a contract position with a local company or for a mobile work crew that does jobs in a variety of places around the community.

\*\* Several employment service organizations in the Northern Virginia area have AbilityOne contracts with the Federal Government. For more information, visit [www.abilityone.gov](http://www.abilityone.gov). The AbilityOne Program creates employment and training opportunities for people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities, empowering them to lead more productive and independent lives. Its primary means of doing so is by requiring government agencies to purchase selected products and services from nonprofit organizations employing such individuals.

## Day Support Services

These services should provide meaningful day activities and do not involve paid employment. Activities are provided in small group or one to one settings. The focus is on supporting people with disabilities to access community activities where most people involved do not have disabilities. Activities include general community integration activities such as recreation and leisure, improving social skills, activities of daily living practiced in the community and volunteer experience. This option typically serves individuals who have a high level of daily living support needs throughout the day and who need more support to develop employment skills.

If the person does not want to work, Day Support Services can be pursued through the waiver or the CSB without needing to go through DARS first. DARS will not fund Day Support because it is not related to employment. See the chart on the following pages for Employment and Day Support Organizations.

**EMPLOYMENT & DAY SUPPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

Vendor	Websites	Services Provided	Funding Sources
The Arc Greater Prince William/INSIGHT 13505 Hillendale Drive Woodbridge, VA 22193 (703) 670-4800	<a href="http://www.arcgpw.org">www.arcgpw.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS
Best Buddies Capital Region 6231 Leesburg Pike, #310 Falls Church, VA 22044 (703)533-9420	<a href="http://www.bestbuddies.org/capitalregion">www.bestbuddies.org/capitalregion</a>	Individual Supported Employment	DARS CSB Private Pay
Career Support Systems 3801 Westerre Parkway, Suite C Richmond, VA 23233 517-354-8458 <i>** Although headquartered in Richmond, employment specialists are located throughout Northern VA</i>	<a href="http://www.careersupport.net">www.careersupport.net</a>	Individual Supported Employment Group Supported Employment Independent Living Skills Training	DARS Waiver
Chimes, Inc. 3951 Pender Drive, #120 Fairfax, VA 22030 (703) 267-6558	<a href="http://www.chimes.org">www.chimes.org</a>	Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS Private Pay
The Choice Group 4807 Radford Ave. #106 Richmond, VA 23230 (804)278-9151 <i>** Although headquartered in Richmond, employment specialists are located throughout Northern VA</i>	<a href="http://www.thechoicegroup.com">www.thechoicegroup.com</a>	Individual Supported Employment	Waiver DARS Private Pay
Community Visions, LLC 3460 Commission Court, Suite 101 Woodbridge, VA 22192  Charming Concepts Workhouse Arts Center 9601 Ox Road Lorton, VA 22079	<a href="http://www.comvllc.net">www.comvllc.net</a>	Pre-Vocational Services Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS Private Pay

**EMPLOYMENT & DAY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Websites</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
Didlake, Inc. 8641 Breeden Ave. Manassas, VA 20110 (703) 361-4195	<a href="http://www.didlake.org">www.didlake.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS Private pay
Every Citizen Has Opportunities (ECHO) 71 Lawson Road, SE Leesburg, VA 20177 (703) 779-2100	<a href="http://www.echoworks.org">www.echoworks.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
Job Discovery, Inc. 10345 Democracy Lane Fairfax, VA 22030 (703) 385-0041	<a href="http://www.jobdiscovery.org">www.jobdiscovery.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
JSSA (Jewish Social Service Agency) 3025 Hamaker Court, Suite 450 Fairfax, VA 22031	<a href="http://www.jssa.org">www.jssa.org</a>	Supported Employment	Private pay
Melwood 750 South 23rd Street Arlington, VA 22202 (703) 521-4441	<a href="http://www.melwood.org">www.melwood.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
MVLE, Inc. 7420 Fullerton Road Ste 110 Springfield, VA 22153 (703) 569-3900	<a href="http://www.mvle.org">www.mvle.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS
Outstanding Possibilities Revealed 3022 Javier Rd, #130 Fairfax, VA 22030 (202)888-6533	<a href="http://www.oprservices.org">www.oprservices.org</a>	Supported Employment	DARS
ServiceSource, Inc. 10467 White Granite Drive Oakton, VA 22124 (703)461-6000	<a href="http://www.servicesource.org">www.servicesource.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services Assistive Technology Screening Career Center	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
Saint Coletta of Greater Washington 207 S. Peyton Street Alexandria, VA 22314 (571)438-6940	<a href="http://www.stcoletta.org">www.stcoletta.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services Life Skills Training	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
St. John's Community Services, Inc. 7611 Little River Turnpike #404, Annandale, VA 22003 (703) 914-2755	<a href="http://www.sjcs.org">www.sjcs.org</a>	Supported Employment Day Support Services	Waiver CSB DARS private pay
Work Opportunities Unlimited 11002 Veirs Mill Rd Wheaton, MD 20892 (202)615-4467 <i>** Although headquartered in MD, employment specialists are located throughout Northern VA</i>	<a href="http://www.workopportunities.net">www.workopportunities.net</a>	Supported Employment	Waiver CSB DARS Private pay

## Alternatives to Traditional Employment & Day Services

### Self Directed Services in Fairfax County

Self-Directed (SD) Services is an alternative to the traditional model of support for people with intellectual disabilities. The individual/family is ultimately responsible to determine service needs (with input from the individual's Community Services Board support coordinator and Interdisciplinary Team), identify a service schedule, and recruit, hire, train, supervise, compensate, and evaluate direct service providers. SD Services:

- Increase and expand individualized service options and plans
- Bring greater control and supervision of services to the individual/family
- Allow greater flexibility in scheduling and receiving services, and
- Can be provided in the community closer to the individual's home

SD Services are available to individuals with intellectual disabilities who meet CSB service eligibility requirements and currently receive or will be authorized to receive day support or employment services funding. For more information, contact Joel Friedman at (703)324-4433 or [joel.friedman@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:joel.friedman@fairfaxcounty.gov).

### SPARC (Specially Adapted Resource Clubs)

Is a clubhouse model day program that supports adults with disabilities over the age of 22 with life skills development, entrepreneurial projects and enrichment activities such as music and art therapies. Clubs are located in Reston, McLean and Fairfax. Fees are \$400 per month for 3+ days a week, \$340 per month for 2 days per week, and \$260 per month for 1 day a week. For more information, visit [www.sparcsolutions.org](http://www.sparcsolutions.org) or call (703)338-6185.

### Adults with Disabilities Day Program (ADDP)

Is facilitated by McLean Bible Church for high school graduates and focuses on spiritual formation, literacy, vocational training, personal care and independence, recreation and leisure, social skills, travel training and community navigation, and self-advocacy. There is a monthly fee based on the number of days enrolled per

week. For more information, <https://www.mcleanbible.org/connect/adults-disabilities-day-program-addp>

## Creative Models of Employment Support

### Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates

Started in 2013, Every1 Can Work is a non-profit organization that employs people with disabilities at their business enterprise, Cameron's Coffee & Chocolates. Employees learn kitchen and life skills working with coaches.

[www.every1canwork.com](http://www.every1canwork.com)

9639 Fairfax Blvd., Fairfax, VA (703)278-2627

### Wildflour Bakery Chef-In-Training Program

Started August 2016, in partnership with the Fairfax-Falls Church CSB Employment and Day Services provides cooking skills and food safety training over a 26 month period. For more information, contact Alberto Sangiorgio at Wilflour Catering (703)263-1951.

### Arlington Weaves

ArlingtonWeaves, Etc. provides support to adults with developmental disabilities by teaching them technical and social skills and by helping to improve their self-sufficiency. The program is operated by ServiceSource, on a contract basis with the Arlington County Department of Human Services. For more information, contact Arlington DD Services at 703-228-1700.

### Interested in Starting Your Own Business?

The website listed offers ideas and additional resources for those who are looking for non-traditional employment

<https://www.commercialcapitaltraining.com/business-resources/business-ideas/business-ideas-people-disabilities/>

The marketplace has really diversified over the past few years. People with disabilities are embracing new technology and launching businesses to help others, make life more convenient, or strike out on a new path to generate substantial income while doing something enriching and satisfying. From franchises to niche start-ups, people with disabilities make up a

good portion of the growing number of entrepreneurs in the United States. Visit the website to see an overview of what is required and for some of the best business opportunities available for people with disabilities.

## GETTING A JOB: Writing a Resume and Searching, Applying and Interviewing for a Job

This section covers what has to be done to find a job and prepare to be hired: resume writing, searching for a job, applying, and interviewing for a position.

### 1. Writing a Good Resume

The resume is a one-page document that summarizes your work experiences. The key to creating a resume is one that is general enough to include all your information and experience but still specific to the company or industry you are interested in. See the next pages for examples of resumes.

In general, your resume should be neatly typewritten in 11 or 12-point type (black ink only), with no typos or misspelled words, on clean white paper. Use a font that is easy to read, like Times Roman or Helvetica: no script, all-capital letter, extra-tall, or cartoonish typefaces that are not professional. Use boldface or italics sparingly, if at all.

#### Select the Best Format

Different resume styles highlight different types of experience. Before you start writing, think about what format might be best suited to highlight your qualifications.

There are two basic resume formats: **chronological** and **functional**. The main difference between them is the amount of emphasis you give your **job history** compared to the amount you give your **skills**.

- A **chronological format** highlights your employment history. This format can work if you have a solid work history in a particular job or field and you're planning on looking for a similar position.
- A **functional format** highlights your [skills](#). Use this

format to show what you're capable of doing, even if it's not directly related to your work history. It's the best choice if you're changing careers.

The best resumes are usually a **combination** of these formats. They communicate your strongest qualifications while providing employers with relevant information on your employment history.

#### Personal Information

The resume should include your full name, your address and the **best** contact information (cell phone or email or home phone); for example, if no one answers the home phone, then list a cellular phone or an email address as the best way to get in touch with you.

#### Job Objective

This is optional.

#### Summation of Skills

This should be a bulleted list of what you are best at (not the jobs you've had) in two areas: hard/technical skills and soft (interpersonal skills). Hard skills could include office skills such as typing or knowledge of computer software like Microsoft Word or Excel, or a technical skill like first aid, carpentry or veterinary care. Examples of soft skills are ability to work as part of a team, time management, and communication skills.

#### Work Experience

List your work experience (which can include volunteer or community service activities as well as jobs for pay) in the order you had them. You may include a brief description of your duties or responsibilities.

#### Accomplishments

Talk to your employment counselor, parents, or even teachers about your work experience to get some ideas of how to show that you made progress on a job. Listing *how* you did, not just *what* you did, also shows other skills such as an ability to learn a task quickly, cooperate with others, meet a timetable, and be flexible.

For example, you might say you "increased rate of collation of packets from 14 per hour to 30 per hour within first 90 days," or "collaborated with the

leadership team to create a new filing system and implement within 6 week internship period.”

## References

References--people who will say good things about you--do not need to be included on the resume, but you need to have them available to give to the interviewer. Be sure you have at least two references, at least one professional (current or former employer) and personal (such as a teacher, faith leader, Scout master, coach, camp counselor, staff at a community group you've worked with).

## 2. Searching for a Job

Most job seekers find their jobs through a personal contact, and this approach works well for youth with disabilities who may benefit from a personal connection or the willingness of a friend or a relative to help with the job search. Asking people to help you with the job search is called “networking.”

### Getting Started with Your Network

Using the information from the Positive Personal Profile and any other assessments you've done, determine the kind of job and type of environment in which you would be most likely to succeed.

Make a list of anyone who might who might be hiring for the type of job you are looking for.

The list could include friends, relatives, neighbors, your parents' work colleagues, coaches and teachers, local store owners with whom you have a connection, members of your house of worship, or members of clubs or associations to which you belong. Ask for an introduction to anyone you don't know well so you can talk to them about any potential jobs.

### Introducing Yourself

Not everyone is good at talking or talking about themselves. One idea would be to develop a short (20- to 30-second) “speech” about yourself with help from your parents, transition coordinator or employment specialist about what you want to do for a job and what qualities you might bring to the workplace.

Be sure to be specific: “I am good at ‘X’ (data entry, packing boxes, filing, scanning documents, etc.)” Give your contacts a quick glimpse of your best work-related self: “I am a hard worker who will follow the

rules,” “I like being on time,” “I like to get a job done,” “I'm known for my positive attitude.” If possible, memorize this and role play with parents or counselor to see how it sounds to others.

## Resources for Networking

In the age of the Internet and social media, you have many ways of learning about jobs and of telling others that you are “in the market” for a job.

For information on networking, see the U.S. Department of Labor's website at

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/Networking.pdf>

Popular sites that can help you with your job search by expanding your social reach include LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter.

However, it is important to remember that social media do have risks, including accidentally sharing personal information (such as medical or disability-related information) that you don't want employers or others to know. In general,

- Be aware that nothing is private if it's on line. And once on line, it's there forever in most cases.
- Check your profile regularly to see what comments have been posted. If you find information you feel could be detrimental to your candidacy or career, see about getting it removed – and in the meantime make sure you have an answer ready to counter or explain “digital dirt.”

See CareerBuilder.com for helpful tips to protect your online image and your job opportunities in their online article, “Warning: Helpful Social Networking Resources: “A Word About Social Networking.”

## SAMPLE RESUME

FIRST NAME, LAST NAME  
123 My Main Address, City, State Zip Code  
P: (703) 555-5555 E: [FirstLastName@gmail.com](mailto:FirstLastName@gmail.com)

### SUMMATION OF SKILLS:

Hard or Technical Skills  
Soft Skill (Interpersonal or relationship skills)  
Soft Skill

### WORK EXPERIENCE: *(In Chronological Order)*

**Job Title / Position** *(Most Recent)* **Month, Year – Current OR Month, Year**  
Company, City, State  
Description of duty  
Accomplishment  
Skill learned

**Job Title / Position** **Month, Year - Month, Year**  
Company, City, State  
Description of duty  
Accomplishment  
Skill learned

**Job Title / Position** **Month, Year –Month, Year**  
Company, City, State  
Description of duty  
Accomplishment  
Skill learned

### INTERESTS & ACTIVITIES:

Athletics, appropriate hobbies, groups  
Teams, leadership associations or organizations

### EDUCATION:

**Name of University / Educational Facility** **Graduated: Year**  
City, State  
Focus if Study, relevant courses (Optional)

## The Basic Elements

A resume consists of several sections, each of which delivers essential information. The table below explains what each section of your resume should tell your reader.

Resume section	What it tells the reader
Top portion of resume (first third to half)	If your resume is worth reading further. This opening "snapshot" should entice readers to read more.
Header (name and contact information)	Your preferred name and how to contact you. The reader shouldn't have to think about this (e.g., wonder what name you go by).
Headline and Summary	What you're looking for and why you're qualified. Announces your job target and quickly sums up why you're a good candidate. Note that experts recommend this approach to replace what used to be called "Objective" on many resumes. Read more in our <a href="#">FAQs</a> .
Skills	Whether you have the required skills. Helps the reader quickly match your skills to the position requirements.
Work Experience or Professional Experience or Employment History	What you've accomplished that's relevant. Explains what you've achieved that could also benefit the reader's company.
Education	Whether you meet the education requirements. Again, helps the reader quickly match you to the position requirements.
Continuing Education or Professional Development or Additional Training	What further training you've pursued. Matches you to job requirements and also illustrates initiative and commitment to learning.
Other Information	<b>What other assets you offer.</b> Provides additional information (professional memberships, awards, etc.) to support your candidacy.

<http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumeGuide/TheBasicElements.aspx>



## REFERENCES

### PROFESSIONAL

Last, First Name (Supervisor / Volunteer Coordinator) Known for X Years  
Position  
Company associated during work experience  
City, State  
Current Phone / Email

Last, First Name (Teacher / Counselor) Known for X Years  
Position  
Company associated during work experience  
City, State  
Current Phone / Email

Last, First Name Known for X Years  
Position  
Company associated during work experience  
City, State  
Current Phone / Email

### PERSONAL

Last, First Name (Non-Family Friend / Counselor) Known for X Years  
Position  
Company associated during work experience  
City, State  
Current Phone / Email

## Job Search & Training Resources

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

A Federal job training program sponsored by the Department of Labor. Through a network of One Stop Centers, WIOA offers employers and job seekers, universal access to free employment and training services. WIOA assists workers with tools to manage their career and helps employers find skilled workers. The primary goal is to increase employment, job retention, earnings, and occupational skills among all employer and job seeker populations including individuals with disabilities. To find a One Stop Center in your local area, visit

<http://www.elevatevirginia.org/career-seekers/one-stop-centers/>

### One Stop Centers

#### Fairfax County Skill Source Centers

Job seekers and employers in Northern Virginia have access to a comprehensive system of employment and training services and resources delivered and coordinated through one-stop employment resource centers, locally known as [SkillSource Centers](#). Services are offered at no cost and include: resume writing and interview preparation workshops, career coaching, basic employment assessments, access to computers, phones, copiers, and the internet for employment search, job lead assistance, and ongoing customer support.

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ss/employtraining.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ss/employtraining.htm)

Fairfax: (703) 324-7280

Annandale: (703) 533-5400

Alexandria: (703) 704-6286

Reston: (703) 787-4974

For more information on any of these, see:

<http://www.myskillsource.org>

SkillSource is also a Ticket to Work Program helping people with disabilities who receive social security benefits find employment. Services may include comprehensive assessments, development of individual employment plans as well as career counseling, career planning, and access to job-related

training opportunities.

(703) 752-1606 or [MyTicket@myskillsource.org](mailto:MyTicket@myskillsource.org)

#### City of Alexandria Workforce Development Center & the Arlington Employment Center

Both centers serves a variety of skill levels from those with advanced degrees and years of experience to those with limited education and experience. They provide services and resources for job seekers including access to a Career Center which includes assistive technology, career readiness workshops, career assessments and customized hiring events.

#### Career Center for Self-Directed Job Search

- Computers, internet (Wi-Fi), printers, fax and copy machines
- Online and on-site access to daily job listings
- Hiring events, including job and career fairs
- Assistive technology such as video relay, Jaws and Zoom Text
- Career Readiness Workshops
- Career Assessment Tools
- Search the Internet for job leads

#### Assisted Job Search

- Meet with an employment specialist who will help you develop an individual employment plan
- Get help with your resume
- Practice interviewing skills
- Take a vocational or career assessment to learn more about your work interests and aptitudes
- Find an occupation to match your skills and abilities
- Get job leads for local employers

#### Alexandria Workforce Development Center

1900 N. Beauregard St., Suite 300

Alexandria, VA 22311 Contact (703)746-5990

[wdc@alexandria.gov](mailto:wdc@alexandria.gov)

[www.alexandriava.gov/WorkforceDevelopment](http://www.alexandriava.gov/WorkforceDevelopment)

#### Arlington Employment Center

2100 Washington Blvd 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Arlington, VA 22204

Contact (703)228-1400 [jobseeker@arlingtonva.us](mailto:jobseeker@arlingtonva.us)

<https://aec.arlingtonva.us/www.aec.arlingtonva.us>

## ServiceSource Career Center

offers a variety of services for job seekers, including:

- Computers for job searches and training, including career exploration skill building
- Postings of current job leads and community resources
- Phones to contact employers
- Printers/copiers to make copies of resumes
- Qualified Employment Development Specialists to answer your questions and provide assistance
- Benefits counseling for SSI and SSDI recipients
- Financial literacy counseling
- Peer Support
- Monthly Workshops

<http://www.servicesource.org/services-by-state/virginia/career-center>

10467 White Granite Drive, Oakton, VA

Contact Lauren Goldschmidt (703) 970-3672

[lgoldschmidt@servicesource.org](mailto:lgoldschmidt@servicesource.org)

## Online Job Seeker Resources

### Hire Autism

[www.hireautism.org](http://www.hireautism.org)

Created by the Organization for Autism Research (OAR). This website is for individuals on the autism spectrum offering a job board, direct access to local employment opportunities, a profile builder, and helpful resources for the workplace

### Diversity Inc.

[https://www.diversityinc.com/st/DI\\_Top\\_50](https://www.diversityinc.com/st/DI_Top_50)

Another helpful way to job search is to look at companies that are already hiring people with disabilities, since they have a current practice that is working.

Diversity Inc publishes a list of the top companies for people with disabilities, including autism. It is not simply about who provides accommodations and flexible work schedules, although those are important. Information collected as part of their diversity survey shows these companies make a concerted effort to recruit, retain and promote people with disabilities and to create an inclusive corporate culture for people with both physical and hidden disabilities like ASD.

## Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<https://askjan.org/>

Provides guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

[www.gettinghired.com](http://www.gettinghired.com)

Posts jobs by companies interested in hiring people with disabilities.

### Online Job Postings

[www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)

[www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

[www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

[www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com)

[www.careers.arlingtonva.us](http://www.careers.arlingtonva.us)

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov)

## 3. Applying for a Job

The job application form is probably the first impression an employer will have of you, so make it a good one! It is important to answer all of the questions carefully and positively.

### Employers will be checking to see:

How neat you are

If the application is complete

How prepared and organized you are

How well you follow directions

### Before you start:

Read the instructions carefully. FOLLOW them!

Use blue or black ink pen

### On your application:

Be honest on your application

Do not exaggerate your education or experience

Check your spelling—get it right

Do not use abbreviations

Use correct English

Leave no blanks! Use n/a (not applicable) if the information requested does not apply to you

Sign and date the application

When the application asks what wage or salary you expect, write "Open"

\* See a Sample Job Application in Resources at the end of the guide

### How Parents May Help

- Help make a list of contacts who could be approached about potential openings
- Help write down a 20 to 30-second “speech” that emphasizes the type of job your young adult is looking for and his or her best qualities. If possible, have him or her memorize this.
- Role play giving the quick introduction
- Remind your son or daughter to update their resume every time they complete a training course, add a volunteer activity, or work at a job
- Remember to consider your transportation options when searching for a job. If you rely on public transportation, you’ll need to ensure you can get to and from any job for which you are applying. We discuss more about transportation options in the following section.

## 4. Interviewing for a Position

The purpose of a job interview is to see if there is a match between the type of work the employer has available and the type of work that you would like and could do. Sometimes there’s a match, and sometimes not. Remember, it’s not just a question of whether you have the skills to do the job; it’s also a question of fit for this particular position, with this particular boss, in this particular culture, and in this particular company.

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### Make It Easy on Yourself

- Take a “help sheet,” your resume, and blue or black ink pen with you
- Use your best printing and be neat
- Be prepared to answer and discuss questions in an interview
- Re-read the application form before you turn it in to make sure it presents you in a positive way
- Use phone numbers that have the capability to have voicemail and the message is appropriate for

employers to listen to

- Follow up with an employer after completing an online application with a phone call to introduce yourself and make them aware that YOU have applied for the opening
- 

Interviewing for a job has rules, like many other aspects of the job search process. You’ll make a better impression by learning and following these rules.

### Rule 1: Be Professional *Before* the Interview

Little things count. Hiring managers are watching everything you do throughout the process of applying and interviewing for a job. These range from:

- whether your resume has typos, or doesn’t provide standard information such as your education or dates of previous employment
- how quickly you respond to requests for writing samples and references
- whether you met the deadline for applying
- how you treat the receptionist.

### Rule 2: Be Professional at the Interview

You are interested in making a good first impression on the interviewer. Here’s how:

- Take care with your appearance. Be sure to take a shower or bath that day and use deodorant. Brush your teeth and your hair. Dress in clean clothes that are not too tight or revealing; a suit and tie or a nice skirt and blouse are always appropriate.
- Be on time (but not too early) for the interview.
- Know your interviewer’s name and be sure to call them by their title and last name (such as Mr. Brown or Ms. Bryant) when speaking to them.
- Look the interviewer in the eye and greet him or her when you are introduced.
- Do not be negative about the people who have employed you in the past, even if you didn’t like that job.

### Rule 3: Be Prepared to Answer Questions about Yourself

Be prepared with answers to questions on:

- What your previous job was
- What you liked and didn't like about your previous job(s)
- Any education, training, and skills that prepare you for the new position
- The reason you left your last job
- How to contact previous employers

If needed, you and your job coach or family member can write out answers to these questions and you can practice the answers.

You cannot be asked questions about any disability or use of medication(s). However, your interviewer may ask whether you need any accommodation to perform the job if you were offered it (this is an exception to the usual rule that questions regarding disability should come after a job offer).

### Rule 4: Be Prepared to Ask Questions about the Job and the Employer

As part of the interview process, you need to find out basic information about the "rules" of your new workplace:

- Job description and tasks
- Hours that you have to be at the job
- Break schedule (when, how often, and where are breaks taken)
- Uniform or dress code
- Pay and rules for overtime
- Allowable cell phone and computer use and whether texting is permissible
- What to do if you are sick or have an appointment that can't be scheduled after work
- Types of training available and whether they are voluntary or required and who pays
- Probation period

### Disclosing a Disability

While there is no easy answer to whether you should disclose your disability, it is important to remember that disclosure is required to secure "reasonable accommodations" in the workplace (see below). In

addition, advantages to disclosure include legal protection against discrimination, reducing stress of "hiding" a disability, and improving self-advocacy and self-confidence.

The National Collaborative on Workforce and disability for Youth has developed a workbook to help youth make informed decisions about disclosure; see "The 411 on Disability Disclosure: a Workbook for Youth with Disabilities" at <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/publications/the-411-on-disability-disclosure-a-workbook-for-youth-with-disabilities/>  
A short version of the workbook, along with links to other online resources, can be found at <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

See also *The Way to Work*, Chapter 4 "Work Experience and Disability Disclosure."

### Reasonable Accommodations and Undue Hardship

Reasonable accommodations are adjustments or modifications provided by an employer to enable people with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Employers do not have to provide any accommodation that would pose an undue hardship on the business (defined as significant difficulty or expense, based on resources and the operation of the business).

Employers must provide a reasonable accommodation if a person with a disability needs one in order to **apply** for a job, **perform** a job, or **enjoy benefits equal to those offered to other employees**. Accommodations vary with the individual; not all people with disabilities (or even all people with the same disability) will require the same accommodation.

It is important to know (or have a good idea) what accommodation you require before talking to any employer about a job. It is also important to know how to ask for an accommodation. Once you request an accommodation, you and your employer should discuss your specific needs and identify appropriate options. Your employer *may* ask for documentation of your disability and why the accommodation is needed, including how the impairment may limit a major life activity (like sitting, standing, or performing manual tasks) and how the accommodation would

help you perform your job.

You may ask for an accommodation or the employer may offer to provide one. Once requested, you and our employer should discuss your needs and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation.

Accommodations usually fall into one of these categories:

- Equipment.
- Accessible materials
- Changes to the workplace
- Job-restructuring.
- Working from home
- Modified work schedule
- Leave
- Policy modifications
- Modifying supervisory methods
- Job coaching

For specific examples of how such accommodations may be made for you, see the Searchable Online Accommodation Resource on the Job Accommodation Network at [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org).

See also the Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center ([www.adainfo.org](http://www.adainfo.org)), 1-800-949-4232 for more information about rights under the law, reasonable accommodation, or disclosure.

**Example of a Job Application**

**Please fill this out and keep it handy because most job applications ask for this information!**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION:**

Name (First, Middle, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: |\_\_|\_\_| Zip Code: |\_\_|\_\_|\_\_|\_\_|\_\_|

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: |X|X|X| - |X|X|X| - |\_\_|\_\_|\_\_|

Have you been convicted of a crime within the last five years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION/AVAILABILITY:**

Position Applied For: \_\_\_\_\_ Full Time \_\_\_\_\_ Part Time \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal \_\_\_\_\_ When can you start: \_\_\_\_\_

Desired Wage: \$ |\_\_|\_\_|. |\_\_|\_\_| / Hour

**Please check below the days and times you can work.**

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

**EDUCATION HISTORY:**

School Name & Type (Vocational, High School, GED or College)	City & State	Years Attended	Completed (Yes or No)

**JOB EXPERIENCE**

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Worked: |\_\_|/|\_\_| to |\_\_-\_\_|/|\_\_|

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: |\_\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Responsibilities:

\_\_\_\_\_

Wage: |\_\_|\_|\_|/hour      Hours Worked Per Week |\_\_|\_|

Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

May We Contact Your Employer? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Worked: |\_\_|/|\_\_| to |\_\_-\_\_|/|\_\_|

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: |\_\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_\_|\_|\_|\_| - |\_\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Responsibilities:

\_\_\_\_\_

Wage: |\_\_|\_|\_|/hour      Hours Worked Per Week |\_\_|\_|

Reason for Leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

May We Contact Your Employer? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL REFERENCES:**

Name	Title/Relationship	Phone Number	Email



## 5. Staying on the Job

Starting and keeping a new job can be stressful for anyone. However, knowing some general rules for workplace behavior will help you succeed. Most companies have a clear policy or handbook that provides this information. Take the time to review it, and sit down with your boss or your job coach to ask questions if any part of it is not clear before you begin working.

### Being a Good Employee

Here are suggestions to help you keep your job and avoid some mistakes people make when they start a new job.

- **Keep track of your schedule.** Make an extra copy to keep in a safe place or use an app on your phone that will remind you of when you need to leave to go to your job or come back from your break.
- **Arrive on time.** Being late frequently will get you fired. If you are late once, explain why. Be sure to plan how you are going to get to and from work and allow extra time for bad weather, rush hour, etc. Have a backup plan for getting to work.
- **Be professional.** It always helps to have good manners. Greet your co-workers and your supervisor every day and be polite to customers or visitors. Wear clean clothes that are appropriate for your workplace. Keep your hair and teeth brushed and be sure to shower or bathe every day.
- **Ask questions.** Your boss does not expect you to know everything; it is ok to ask questions. There are no dumb questions.
- **Strive to get better.** Ask your supervisor to tell you what you are doing well, what they would like to see you change, and make an effort to apply this information to your work. You may have to take the initiative and set up a meeting to get this feedback. If you are a DARS client, you will have regular evaluation meetings.

### What Not to Do

All employers are looking for well-mannered,

professional employees who do their job to the best of their ability. It's ok to make mistakes sometimes or to have to ask questions. However, some things will get you fired, including:

- Being late a lot or not showing up
- Being rude, lying, or breaking the company rules
- Using drugs or alcohol on the job
- Stealing
- Being unprofessional (using bad language, not dressing appropriately or having bad hygiene, or sharing too much)
- Saying bad things about the company or your co-workers (to other coworkers or on Facebook or other social media)

### Leaving a Job on a Good Note

Generally, you want to give your supervisor advanced warning, at least two weeks, if you plan to quit, so you can leave on good terms. Be honest and polite when telling your boss why you're leaving. Be careful about speaking negatively about former employers or coworkers when you leave a job. Ask for a reference before leaving. If you leave on good terms, you will get a good reference for future job.

### Self-Advocacy Skills

Speaking up for yourself and asking for what you need on the job is called "self-advocacy." This may be difficult if you are shy or prefer not to talk to others.

But self-advocacy is a skill that comes in handy throughout life, not just when working. Being a good self-advocate means you:

- are able to identify that there is an obstacle or difficulty on your job, and then seek out assistance to have the issue resolved
- can negotiate for yourself (work with others to reach an agreement that will meet your needs)
- know your rights and responsibilities on the job
- are familiar with the resources that are available to you (such as the written rules in the employee handbook to your job coach and the human

resources department at your company)

- explain your disability either by the use of written words, pictures or gestures

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## Self-Advocacy Resources

### I'm Determined

The I'm Determined project is a state directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with I'm Determined behavior. The I'm Determined website offers valuable tools for youth to learn and for parents to help teach these skills. [www.imdetermined.org](http://www.imdetermined.org)

### It's My Choice

Is a workbook that supports self-advocates to think about and plan for the future. By William T. Allen, PhD from the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities  
<https://mn.gov/mnddc/extra/publications/Its-My-Choice.pdf>

### The Arc of Northern Virginia

Offers two Self-Advocacy Groups that meet monthly. People First for Young Adults focuses on transition age youth, ages 14-26. People First ALLY (A Life Like Yours) Toastmasters is for ages 18 and up. More information can be found at  
<https://thearcofnova.org/advocacy/self-advocacy/>.

## Getting Around: Transportation Options

People with disabilities may benefit from travel training and from reduced fares for Washington-area bus and subway. Taxi companies also provide reduced rates and special services for persons with disabilities.

### Non-Driver Identification Card

Since many reduced fare programs—whether for students, persons with a disability or senior citizens require proof of age and/ or photo identification, a worthwhile first step is to obtain a non-driver identification card from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). (This ID can also be used as photo identification when traveling by air).

You must be a resident of Virginia to obtain an ID card. These cards have no age restriction and are available for an adult or child who does not hold a learner's permit or driver's license.

An adult ID card expires at the end of the month in which you were born when you reach an age divisible by five; e.g. 20, 25, 30, etc. A child ID card expires on the child's 16th birthday.

All of the information a customer needs to prepare for a DMV visit is available on the DMV web site [https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/drivers/#id/get\\_id.asp](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/drivers/#id/get_id.asp) or by calling the agency's toll-free telephone number at 1-866-DMV-LINE

### Travel Training

A key element of independence is being able to get around on public transportation for one's work and social life. The ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia offers **free** travel training on Washington-area bus and subway routes for people with disabilities. [www.ecnv.org](http://www.ecnv.org) 2300 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington, VA. Call (703) 525-3268.

### Metro Disability ID Card

All jurisdictions in the Washington area offer reduced transportation fares, but you will first need to obtain a free Metro Disability ID card. You will need to fill out an application and have a health care professional certify the individual's disability. Call 202-962-2700 or download an application from [http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/doc/Reduced\\_Fare\\_Application.pdf](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/doc/Reduced_Fare_Application.pdf)

The Metro Disability ID card is good on Metro buses in the District as well as ART in Arlington. CUE, Fairfax Connector, RideOn, TheBus, VRE and MARC also accept it.

### Reduced Farecards/Bus Passes and/or SmarTrip Card

One option for reduced fares is a reduced fare bus pass or farecard (metro). These are sold at many area Giant and Safeway stores, Metro sales offices and transit stores. You may have to show your Metro Disability ID and photo identification.

Use your Metro Disability ID to purchase a SmarTrip card that is encoded for discount fares. SmarTrip cards can be purchased online at

[www.MetroOpensDoors.com](http://www.MetroOpensDoors.com) and click under "Fares." (you must be a registered Metro Disability ID cardholder and you'll have to use a major credit card); at Metro sales offices; and transit stores (see list at end of this appendix). Every public transit service in the region is using SmarTrip *except* for The Bus, OmniRide, OmniLink, MARC and VRE.

It is highly recommended that you register your SmarTrip card. If you lose it, you will get a replacement card for \$5 that includes the fare value of the lost card at the time you reported the loss.

Add value to your SmarTrip card in any Metro station at the farecard machines or on Metrobus.

### Using Public Transportation

A good place to start to learn about available routes is [CommuterPage.com](http://CommuterPage.com) with links to Virginia and Maryland bus and rail services. See [www.comuterpage.com](http://www.comuterpage.com)

In Alexandria, see [www.dashbus.com](http://www.dashbus.com)

In Arlington, see [www.arlingtontransit.com](http://www.arlingtontransit.com)

In Fairfax, see [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/)

In Fairfax City, see [www.cuebus.org](http://www.cuebus.org)

### Disabled Placard/Plates

In Virginia you need to get a MED-10 form for a disabled parking placard or license plate. You can pick one up at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), or you can get one from their website at <http://dmv.state.va.us>. A physician must complete the form. Bring the completed form to the DMV.

You can get a placard or a plate, or both. Placards offer flexibility since you can move it into any car in which you are the driver or a passenger. You will need to pay a fee and you will receive your placard or plate on the spot. You can do it by mail, but the process does take longer.

### Paratransit Options

MetroAccess is the regional shared-ride door to door service established by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) under provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. MetroAccess provides transportation services to persons who, under certain circumstances, are unable to travel to or

from a bus stop or rail station.

To be eligible for MetroAccess service, a person must meet one of the following conditions:

(1) Have a disability as defined by the ADA **AND** be unable as a result of disability to utilize fixed-route transportation (Metrobus and Metrorail);

OR (2) Need to use a ramp or wheelchair lift to use a public transit vehicle, but an accessible public transit vehicle is not being used at the time, date, and on the route you would travel. (Please note: All Metrobuses are wheelchair accessible);

OR (3) Be unable to travel to or from a bus stop or rail station due to a disability.

An application must be completed and certified by a health care professional detailing your disability and the need for paratransit services. An in-person interview and functional assessment is also required. This process can take up to three months.

You may register to travel with a personal care assistant at the time of application. The personal care assistant rides free of charge when travelling with you on MetroAccess. (301) 562-5360 (Voice), (301) 588-7535 (TTY) [www.wmata.com/metroaccess](http://www.wmata.com/metroaccess).

### STAR (Arlington County)

STAR is Arlington's prearranged, reserved-trip service for persons with disabilities who are eligible for MetroAccess. STAR fares and ticket books for discounted taxi fares are available through the Commuter Stores and [CommuterDirect.com](http://CommuterDirect.com). Eligible seniors and disabled persons may register to order these products by calling [Commuter Direct.com](http://CommuterDirect.com)® at (703) 228-RIDE (7433), TDD (Virginia Relay Center - hearing impaired only): (800) 828-1120.

Arlington County residents currently certified eligible for MetroAccess are automatically certified for STAR. Rides are provided on a curb-to-curb basis. Drivers park in front of the address and assist riders into and out of the vehicle.

For more information on STAR: Contact (703) 892-8747 [STAR@arlingtontransit.com](mailto:STAR@arlingtontransit.com) <http://www.arlingtontransit.com/pages/star/>

### **TaxiAccess (Fairfax County)**

TaxiAccess is a program that provides subsidized taxicab service to Fairfax County residents who are registered with MetroAccess. Like STAR in Arlington, TaxiAccess users can purchase coupon books good toward taxicab rides at one-third of the face value. See <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/transportation/taxi-voucher-program> for information on how to apply, obtain coupons, and Fairfax-area cab companies that accept the coupons.

### **Fastran (Fairfax)**

Fastran offers specialized transportation services for Fairfax County and the Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church residents who participate in human service agency programs. All Fastran riders must be certified by a participating agency before utilizing the service. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/transportation/fastran>

### **DOT**

DOT is the City of Alexandria's specialized transportation service for residents of Alexandria and visitors who cannot use regular transit buses or rail due to their disability. Trips are provided by taxicabs and wheelchair accessible vans.

The eligibility process is similar to that for Metro Access. For more information or to receive an application, please contact the Paratransit Coordinator at (703) 746-4079. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/tes/info/default.aspx?id=6538>

### **Explore the Potential for Driving**

The Woodrow Wilson Workforce Center (WWRC) offers comprehensive driving services.

Driving services are managed and provided through the Occupational Therapy (OT) Department. This state-certified program is comprised of Certified Driving Instructors (CDI's) and Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (CDRS's).

Occupational Therapists assess vision, perception, cognition and motor skills in order to determine an individual's feasibility for obtaining a driver's license. Having a learner's permit or driver's license is not a

prerequisite for this service. Following the evaluation, a report is generated with detailed, individualized recommendations. For more information, visit <http://www.wwrc.virginia.gov/DrivingServices.htm>

### **Uber and Lyft**

Uber and Lyft are ride hailing companies, utilized through apps. Both offer accessible technology for people with hearing and vision impairments.

## **Technology to Empower Young Adults for Transition in the Workplace**

Empowering Employment, a suite of curriculum apps on the ONEder software platform created by The Arc of Northern Virginia. The TravelMATE and EmployMATE apps support a person with I/DD regarding traveling on public transit, Uber/Lyft, taxis and planes and provide supports for their employment. In 2014 The Arc of Northern Virginia designed and launched the first curriculum, TravelMATE, which provides the user with step by step interactive instruction on how to navigate public transit between home and work. In 2016 EmployMATE was launched, helping individuals navigate their duties and the changing dynamics in the workplace. ONEder's software is unique in its ability to support a spectrum of functional needs. It can easily customize each user's program with visual smart scenes and stories, video modeling, a grid-based sentence builder, GPS technology, training data tracking and lesson sharing including a content library. It can also be used in any language (text and audio) and also uses pictures and videos from the young adult's real-life situation.

Once TravelMate and EmployMate are set up to meet an individual's specific needs, the individual can view the steps repeatedly on their own or with family and friends. Through viewing the scenarios with real-time videos and photos, family members more easily let go of feelings of concern and anxiety about their young person traveling and working as independently as they are able.

At this time TravelMate and EmployMate are only available through community partners. To learn more about our community partners go to our

website [thearcofnova.org/programs-services/independent-living/](http://thearcofnova.org/programs-services/independent-living/)."

Contact Kymberly DeLoatche at [kdeloatche@thearcofnova.org](mailto:kdeloatche@thearcofnova.org) or Camille Franco at [cfranco@thearcofnova.org](mailto:cfranco@thearcofnova.org)

## APPLYING FOR BENEFITS: Social Security Disability Programs

You may begin the application process for Social Security benefits once your child turns 18. The first step is to *determine eligibility* for any benefit program; the Social Security Administration (SSA) will decide which program is appropriate. For video and webinar presentations on SSI/SSDI visit The Arc of Northern Virginia's YouTube channel (Videos at The Arc of NoVA) at <https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA>

### SSI vs. SSDI

For both Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), *a person must meet SSA's definition of disability*. Disability is defined as the inability to engage in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) by reason of any medical (physical and/or mental or blind) impairment. Your disability must have lasted or be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months or result in death. For 2018, the wage limit for the SGA is \$1,180 gross income/month.

**SSI.** SSI is a cash assistance program for those with limited income AND are either 65 years old or older or blind or disabled. Adult SSI beneficiaries must have limited income and resources (\$2,000 in assets); parents' income does not count for adult applicants. You do not have to have any work history. Monthly benefit payments are determined by the current benefit rate (\$750 a month in 2018), minus any "countable income." If eligible for SSI, you will also be eligible for Medicaid.

**SSDI.** While SSI is a needs based program, SSDI is an insurance program with benefits dependent on previous payments into the system. In other words, SSDI beneficiaries must have worked enough (or their parents or spouses must have worked long enough) to have made contributions into FICA. Monthly benefit

payments are based on the worker's lifetime average earnings covered by Social Security.

### Applying for Benefits

The steps for applying are:

**Start with a disability report.** Go to the website at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/ssi.htm> and click on Disability Report for Adults. (You may also call 1-800-772-1213 or go to a Social Security Field Office.) Complete as much information here as you can prior to your appointment at the local office. The application asks for names, addresses and telephone numbers of doctors and therapists who have treated your child and information on any hospitalizations. More descriptive medical records, such as a letter explaining a diagnosis or evaluations by therapists or schools—can be brought to the intake meeting (make copies!).

You may also complete the application at the appointment at the local SSA office, although this means taking all your medical records with you and considerably more time with the interviewer. If you do not have access to a computer, you can request an application be mailed to you when you call the 800 number.

*You cannot complete the application for benefits online; you must call Social Security for an appointment.*

**Call Social Security.** To make an appointment, call **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) Monday through Friday or contact your local Social Security office. It is best to call the 800 number rather than the local office as field offices are under staffed and the hold times can be very long. You will be greeted by an automated answering attendant, who will prompt you to state why you are calling; say "Apply for SSI."

The auto attendant will ask for you to say or key in your child's Social Security number. You will then be directed to a representative. During the phone interview, the representative will take information and enter it into a computer, which will secure the date of the application.

- Paperwork will be mailed to you. Complete and return within the allotted timeline.

- The document generated during the phone interview will also be mailed, to be signed for accuracy.
- Before mailing anything back to the agency, be sure to make copies.

**Set up a screening interview.** During the previous phone interview, the representative will set up a screening, which continues the application process, at your local Social Security of office. If outside of the Northern Virginia area, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/locator> to find your local office.

Contact for all offices: 1-800-772-1213

**Arlington Office**

1404 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22209

**Alexandria Office**

PLAZA 500, Suite 190  
6295 Edsall Road  
Alexandria, VA 22312

**Fairfax Local Office**

11212 Waples Mill Rd  
Fairfax, VA 22030-7401

**Go to the screening interview.** Bring any and all information to prove your child’s age, citizenship, disability, and lack of assets/resources:

- Original birth certificate (or other proof of age and citizenship) and Social Security card
- Documentation to verify your address
- Copy of special needs trust, guardianship or conservator order
- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Income slips if your child has income
- Information on any assets your child owns like a savings account, investments, title to a car or life insurance. *These cannot total more than \$2,000 for SSI benefits* (unless held in a special needs trust or an ABLE Account). Note that for programs with income limits, SSA considers parents’ income and assets up until your child turns 18; **individuals over 18 years of age are considered independent households.**

- If you have *not* completed the application online, bring the required medical records and contact information to the screening.
- Checkbook or other papers that show a bank account number to have benefits deposited directly to a Representative Payee account
- A signed rent agreement between parent and child (to receive the full benefit). See “Housing and SSI Benefits” in this section.

**Wait for eligibility determination.** The agency will send your Disability Report Form and medical history to the Disability Determination Service (DDS). DDS may or may not request more information, such as work history, when the disability began, and what treatment has been given. DDS may also request, on behalf of SSA, a medical or psychological exam (SSA pays for the exam by a physician chosen by SSA).

A decision is made in approximately 60 days about eligibility for benefits. If denied, you have 60 days to appeal.

For help with understanding how Social Security works for people who are working or want to work, contact Marilyn Morrison at Community Work Incentives Coordinator, 571-339-1305 [mmorrison@vaaccses.org](mailto:mmorrison@vaaccses.org)

**Set up a Representative Payee account.** Once your child receives benefits, you will need to set up a Representative Payee account; be sure to title the account correctly (SSA has suggested wording). *Automatic deposit of benefits is required.*

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**The Representative Payee**

A representative payee is appointed by SSA to receive Social Security and/or SSI benefits for someone who requires support managing his or her money. Rep Payees should be comfortable handling financial records and be trusted to keep in mind the best interests of the disabled beneficiary.

A payee must keep records of expenses and be able to account each year for all spending of SSI funds. SSA sends out a "Representative Payee Report" annually; complete the report promptly and mail it back, or you may submit the report online.

To be designated a Rep Payee, contact the local SSA office (see above). You must then submit an application, form SSA-11 and documents to prove your identity. SSA requires you to complete the payee application in a face-to-face interview.

See <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500835300> and <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500835901>

Note that having power of attorney, being an authorized representative or having a joint bank account with the beneficiary *does not* give you the legal authority to negotiate and manage the beneficiary's Social Security and/or SSI payments. See [www.socialsecurity.gov/payee](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/payee)

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## Housing and SSI Benefits

**SSI is intended to cover living expenses such as rent, food, and utilities.** For example, it is recommended that you **charge your adult child rent** if he or she lives in the family home. **Rent charged must be at least 30% of the current federal benefit amount** (\$750 a month for 2018) to get the maximum SSI benefit.

It is recommended that you research comparables for your area of rooms to rent and include that with the rental agreement. Be aware that SSI benefits may be reduced under the following circumstances:

In general, about one-third of your SSI benefit is assumed to be paying for housing expenses (rent or mortgage, utilities, property insurance/renter's insurance, etc.) and the other two-thirds for other eligible expenses like food and clothing. If monies from a special needs trust are used to purchase a home with a mortgage, and the **trust makes monthly mortgage payments**, then the beneficiary's SSI payments will be reduced by about one-third each month (the portion of SSI associated with housing). If you have a trust, you can transfer your rent or mortgage money to an ABLE Account, pay the rent from an ABLE Account and SSI will not be reduced. For more information on utilizing ABLE Accounts, visit our trust website at [www.thearcofnovatrust.org](http://www.thearcofnovatrust.org) and the ABLE National Resource Center at [www.ablenrc.org](http://www.ablenrc.org).

Whether the home is purchased outright or with a mortgage, SSI payments will be reduced by slightly more than one-third if the **trust pays for household expenses** such as taxes, heat, electricity, water, sewer and trash collection.

## APPLYING FOR BENEFITS: Medicaid Waiver Programs

This information is adapted from The Arc of Northern Virginia's website. For more information, [www.thearcofnova.org/programs/waivers](http://www.thearcofnova.org/programs/waivers)

Family income and family assets are not a consideration under the Medicaid Waiver program. If your child's personal income and assets qualify them, they have a disability diagnosis, and they meet functioning eligibility criteria. To watch our recorded webinar that walks you through Waivers from start to finish, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sG85EQjuKE>

You can read the latest information on the new Waivers from the state at <http://www.mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/> or call their hotline at 1-844-603-9248.

### Services Covered Under the Waivers

**The Developmental Disability (DD) Waivers:** There are 3 DD Waivers; they are the (1) Community Living, (2) Family and Individual Supports, and (3) Building Independence Waivers. These waivers cover supports in a variety of residential settings, including hourly staff at the home of a child's family and 24 hour staffed group home settings. These three waivers also cover a variety of employment and meaningful daytime supports for people no longer in school. Some additional services include respite care, in-home supports, companion care, assistive technology, environmental modifications, therapeutic consultation, non-emergency medical transportation, private duty nursing, skilled nursing, and Personal Emergency Response System (PERS).

**The Community Living Waiver** is a comprehensive waiver that includes 24/7 residential services for those who require that level of support. It also includes services and supports for adults and children, including those with intense medical and/or behavioral needs.

**The Family and Individual Supports Waiver** is designed to support individuals living with their families, friends, or in their own homes. It supports

individuals with some medical or behavioral needs and is available to both adults and children.

**The Building Independence Waiver** supports adults 18 and older who are able to live in the community with minimal supports. This waiver does not include 24/7 residential services. Individuals will own, lease, or control their own living arrangements and supports may need to be complemented by non-waiver funded rent subsidies.

Individuals receiving waiver services are assessed every two years (as a child) and every three years (as an adult) with an assessment called the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) to measure the intensity of their support needs. People can move between these three DD Waivers if their needs change over time. Moving to a waiver that serves people with higher needs may sometimes involve a waiting period, as it is a "first come, first serve" system.

### Eligibility Criteria

There are criteria everyone must meet to be eligible for a Medicaid DD Waiver:

- (1) **Functioning ability:** This is determined by the VIDES survey. The VIDES has one test for children aged 0-3, one for children ages 3-18, and one for adults. The surveys assess the person's need for assistance with a variety of daily living and independence skill activities.
- (2) **Diagnosis:** Persons applying for a Waiver must meet the diagnostic eligibility requirements for the DD Waivers. This means that a person must have a developmental disability as defined in 37.2-100 of the Code of Virginia.
  - a. "Developmental disability" means a severe, chronic disability of an individual that (1) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments, other than a sole diagnosis of mental illness; (ii) is manifested before the individual reaches 22 years of age; (iii) is likely



to continue indefinitely; (iv) results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independence living, or economic self-sufficiency; and (v) reflects the individual's needs for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic services, individualized support, or other forms of assistance later are lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated. An individual from birth to age nine, inclusive, who has a substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired condition may be considered to have a developmental disability without meeting three or more of the criteria described in clauses (i) through (v) if the individual without services and supports, has a high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.

- (3) **Financial:** If the functioning and diagnostic criteria are met, then the child's income and assets are considered. Special Needs Trusts and ABLE Accounts are not considered when testing financial eligibility. People over 18 have an asset cap of \$2,000. Everyone receiving a Waiver has a monthly income cap of 300% of the current Social Security Supplemental Security Income amount (SSI is \$750 in 2018, so max monthly income is \$2,250).

**The Commonwealth Coordinated Care (CCC) Plus Waiver** covers personal care, respite care, medication monitoring, private duty nursing, assistive technology, environmental modifications, and the Personal Emergency Response (PERS) system. Personal care support hours may be approved up to a

maximum of 56 hours per week and cannot exceed 480 hours per state fiscal year.

To be eligible for this waiver, the person must have a disability and medical nursing needs, as assessed by the Virginia Uniform Instrument (UAI) [https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/as/as\\_intro\\_page/forms/032-02-0168-01-eng.pdf](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/as/as_intro_page/forms/032-02-0168-01-eng.pdf)

### **Waiting List Eligibility**

You can be on the waiting list for a Developmental Disabilities Waiver and apply for the CCC Plus Waiver, assuming you are eligible for the CCC Plus Waiver as well. Many people do this because the CCC Plus Waiver has no waiting list and can provide some interim supports.

### **How Long is the Wait?**

The Developmental Disability Waivers have a waiting list based upon urgency of need. People in Priority One of urgency need services within the year, people in Priority Two need services in 1-5 years, and people in Priority Three need services several years out. Wait time is unpredictable and many people on the priority one list wait many years for a waiver. As your life circumstances change, for example, you or your spouse become ill, become unemployed, etc., notify your support coordinator, as these situations will increase your urgency of need for support services.

### **To Apply for the Developmental Disabilities Waivers Contact your local Community Services Board.**

Alexandria City CSB: (703) 746-3400  
Arlington DHS/IDD Services: (703) 228-1700  
Fairfax/Falls Church CSB/IDS: (703) 324-4400

If not in Northern Virginia, visit <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/community-services-boards-csbs> to find your local CSB

### **To Apply for the CCC Plus Waiver contact your county's Department of Social Services**

Alexandria City: (703)746-5700  
Arlington: (703)228-1350  
Fairfax/Falls Church: (703)324-7948

If not in Northern Virginia, visit  
<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency/index.cgi>  
to find your local DSS

## **IFSP Funding**

For those on the Waiver Waitlist

If you are on the waiting list for a waiver, you are eligible to apply for The Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP). This program is designed to assist individuals on the waiting list for the Developmental Disability Medicaid Waivers to access short term services that will help maintain them in their own homes in their community. Information, applications, and instructions can be found at

<http://dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/ifsp>

## MANAGING BENEFITS WHILE YOU WORK

If you receive Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and work (earned income), your benefits might be reduced based on the amount you earn. If you receive unearned income (e.g., SSDI, child support, trust income or an insurance settlement), the Social Security Administration (SSA) first applies a \$20 “general income exclusion” against that unearned income. It then applies an “earned income” exclusion amounting to the first \$65 of wages you receive in a month and only takes into account one-half of your remaining wages. This means that less than one-half of your earnings are counted in figuring out your net SSI payment amount.

For examples of how SSA applies the general income exclusion and the earned income exclusions to SSI payments, see:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/eng/ssi-only-employment-supports.htm#8=&a0=1>

However, SSA has several programs that will help you keep benefits while you work. Remember that your income is much higher if you work than if you don't; in other words, don't let fear of loss of benefits drive your decision about employment.

### Student Earned Income Exclusion

This exclusion allows individuals under the age of 22 who regularly attend school to exclude earned income up to a certain amount each month, up to a prescribed amount each year. These limits are adjusted for cost-of-living increases.

Individuals not able to claim the full amount in a month can carry the balance over to the next month.

### Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)

SSA deducts from your gross earnings the cost of certain impairment related items and services that you need to work. Examples of such items are attendant care services, certain transportation costs, medical devices, medications, and residential modifications, among others.

### Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)

PASS allows an individual to set aside unearned or earned income to achieve an occupational objective. This money can be over the \$2,000 resource limit.

SSA excludes any contributions from earned income calculations.

### Virginia's Medicaid Works

This is a Medicaid plan option that enables workers with disabilities to earn higher income and retain more in savings, or resources, while ensuring continued Medicaid coverage.

This voluntary plan option will allow enrollees to have annual earnings up to the federal 1619(b) income threshold. In 2018 that amount is \$36,044.

For more information on SSI, SSDI, and working, see the Social Security Administration's "Red Book" at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook/index.html>

### Ticket to Work Program

If you receive SSI or SSDI benefits but believe you may be able eventually to earn enough money to support yourself and get off the benefit rolls, consider using the Ticket to Work Program. **The Ticket program is free and voluntary.**

With Ticket to Work, you may:

- Gain work experience and receive vocational rehabilitation services without automatically losing disability benefits;
- Return to benefits if you have to stop working;
- Continue to receive healthcare benefits; and
- Be protected from receiving a medical continuing disability review while using the Ticket and if you are making the expected progress with work or educational goals.

For more information, go to [www.choosework.net](http://www.choosework.net) or <http://www.ssa.gov/work/overview.html>.

***When you participate in the Ticket program, you are aiming to reduce or eliminate your dependence on SSDI and/or SSI cash benefits.***

### How It Works

If you decide to participate, you can contact any authorized employment service provider in your area to see if the services they offer are right for you. For a list of authorized employment networks, go to <https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/meet-your-employment-team/index.html>

You may also receive services from the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS), the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency. Such services include training, career counseling, vocational rehabilitation, job placement, and ongoing support services necessary to achieve a work goal.

The Ticket program is a two-way street: you receive free assistance from your employment services provider or DARS in preparing for, finding and keeping a job. In return, you pledge to Social Security that you will take specific steps within a specific timeframe to: (1) Work at a specified earnings level or, (2) Complete certain educational or training requirements.

The steps and timeframe are spelled out in your Individual Work Plan (IWP), which DARS and/or the employment services provider will help you write. Taking the agreed-upon steps toward employment within Social Security's timeframes is called making "timely progress."

Remember that there is a resource limit of \$2000 in order to remain eligible for SSI benefits

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Social Security ordinarily reviews your medical condition from time to time to see whether you are still disabled. Social Security uses a process called the Continuing Disability Review, or CDR. If you assign your Ticket to an approved service provider before you receive a CDR notice and you make "timely progress" following your employment plan, Social Security will not conduct a review of your medical condition. If you assign your Ticket after you receive a CDR notice, Social Security will continue with your scheduled medical review.

For more information regarding the initial application process, working while disabled, and other work incentives you may be eligible for, contact:

Marilyn Morrison, CWIC  
VaACCSES  
(571) 339-1305  
[mmorrison@vaaccses.org](mailto:mmorrison@vaaccses.org)

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### **To Avoid Problems with Your Benefits**

Open immediately all mail you receive from the Social Security Administration (SSA)

Meet all deadlines from the SSA

Set up a filing system and keep copies of everything you send to SSA and everything you receive from the agency

Report employment to Social Security and keep your wage records in your file

Submit pay stubs and IRWE receipts once every month (including months that are not worked). You must keep a record confirming submission, i.e. fax confirmation page, certified mail receipt, etc.

Any major life change (address, marriage, employment, loss of job, divorce, and children) must be reported to SSA immediately, both to 1-800-772-1213 and to local SSA field office

## SECURING A FUTURE: Estate Planning and Special Needs Trusts & ABLE Accounts

All parents should have a will, and those who have children with a disability need to create a Special Needs Trust to protect any public benefits that child may receive.

### Creating a Will

A will is critical to ensuring that your wishes are carried out regarding how and to whom your assets are divided after your death. If you have a child with a disability, this is doubly important. Find an attorney who specializes in special needs planning; he or she will be able to address the unique needs of each of your children and not jeopardize the benefits or services of your child with a disability and /or the relationship between the siblings and family members. \* A list of attorneys can be found in our Provider Directory on our website at <https://thearcofnova.org/directory/>. While many wills create family trusts, to avoid jeopardizing the benefits or services of your child with a disability you need to create a separate *special needs trust* (see below).

### Reviewing Beneficiaries

In addition to naming a special needs trust as the beneficiary for monies inherited through a will, you should also **review the beneficiary designations for resources considered outside your will**, including:

Employer provided life insurance (if both parents work and have insurance through their jobs, be sure to check beneficiaries for both); Private life insurance policies (again, check beneficiaries for all policies) Individual retirement accounts, including Roth IRAs\* 401K and 403(b) accounts\*, SEP Plans\*, Thrift Savings Plans\*; Individual checking and savings accounts; Brokerage accounts; Savings Bonds

Special cautions apply when designating a special needs trust as a beneficiary of one or more of your retirement accounts (those marked with an \*). The document creating the special needs trust (whether it is a will or a stand alone trust) needs to state that the trust is "an accumulation trust" for the purpose of receiving distributions from retirement accounts.

(This comes into play once your child with a disability turns 18 and may be eligible for SSI as an adult. After

age 18, an adult receiving SSI can only have \$2,000 in assets. Typically, when someone inherits a retirement account, they have to start receiving periodic payments from the account which would most likely disqualify them for federal benefits such as SSI and Medicaid).

If siblings, other family members, or friends wish to leave your loved one some money, be sure to inform them that they must designate the special needs trust as the beneficiary. Give them the exact name of the trust and the date it was created.

### Special Needs Trusts (SNT)

Special needs trusts (sometimes called supplemental benefits trusts) allow families to provide for the future financial stability of their loved one with a disability. Since some federal benefits programs impose severe limits on beneficiary's assets and resources, your son or daughter could be disqualified from benefits if he or she received, for example an unexpected inheritance or proceeds from a lawsuit. However, the law allows families to set up a special needs trust (SNT) that can act as a repository for an inheritance, stocks, property, insurance settlements or other assets **without** a loss of public benefits.

If your family member with a disability receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid (or you are contemplating having them apply for these benefits), creating a special needs trust is a necessity; these programs limit your loved one to just \$2,000 in assets to remain eligible.

Although no income or asset limits currently exist for the Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) program, individuals receiving SSDI benefits may also set up a first-party special needs trust (see below) for money management purposes.

### Two Kinds of Trusts

Most special needs trusts are **third-party trusts** (family-funded trusts) established by parents or with an authorized non-profit, such as The Arc of Northern Virginia, for their child with disabilities. The person establishing the trust, usually called the settlor, chooses to make some of his or her own assets available for the benefit of the beneficiary (person with disabilities).

These trusts may be funded during the parents' lifetime. You can contribute to them while you are still alive or you can fund them upon the death of the parent(s), friend, etc. with an inheritance, life insurance policy or transfer from another trust.

**First-party trusts** (self-funded or self-settled) are established by the beneficiary, parent, grandparent, guardian, or court ordered and are funded with resources that belong to the person with disabilities. Common sources of funding for first-party trusts are structured settlements, lump-sum paybacks from Social Security, irrevocably assigned child support for an adult child with disabilities and Survivor Benefits, and inheritances that mistakenly were given directly to the individual with the disability.

While many legal matters can be undertaken with a lawyer with a general background, SNTs are complicated enough to require the services of an elder law or special needs attorney with expertise in disabilities and this particular kind of trust.

### Setting Up a Trust

Special needs trusts can, and should be, set up as early as possible as part of the parents' overall estate planning.

For either option, you will have to pay fees to set up the trust and, possibly, to manage the funds. The Arc of Northern Virginia's Special Needs Trust program does not require a minimum deposit.

### Uses of Trust Funds

Funds from a special needs trust are usually not distributed directly to the beneficiary, as that may jeopardize some government benefits. Instead, they are usually disbursed to third parties who provide goods and services for the use and enjoyment of the beneficiary. Trust funds can be used for a variety of life-enhancing expenditures without compromising your loved one's eligibility for government benefits: Here are some examples:

- Education and tutoring
- Out-of-pocket medical & dental costs
- Transportation (including purchase of a vehicle)
- Maintenance of vehicles, car insurance
- Materials for a hobby or recreational activity
- Trips, vacations, hotels, airline tickets
- Entertainment such as movies or ballgames

- Computers, videos, furniture, or electronics
- Athletic training or competitions
- Special dietary needs
- Clothing
- Housing costs (although this may reduce SSI benefits)
- The list is extensive!

### Acting as Trustee

A trustee is the person who oversees trust assets and administers the trust provisions, including investing, account reporting and tax reporting, check writing, and disbursements. The Arc of Northern Virginia's trustee is Key Private Bank while The Arc manages the trusts and provides day to day client relations. Professional legal and investment advice are crucial for trustees administering a special needs trust themselves.

For trusts set up with The Arc of Northern Virginia, the family and beneficiary do not have this burden of trust administration. Trust staff perform all administrative tasks and client relations and Key Bank handles all fiduciary and investment duties.

For more information about being a trustee, download a free handbook at:

<http://www.specialneedsalliance.org/free-trustee-handbook>

To learn more about The Arc of Northern Virginia's Special Needs Trust visit

<https://thearcofnovatrust.org/> or contact Tia Marsili, Director of Special Needs Trusts for a free consultation at [tmarsili@thearcofnova.org](mailto:tmarsili@thearcofnova.org) or via the website at <http://thearcofnovatrust.org/make-an-appointment/>

## ABLE Accounts

ABLE Accounts are an additional tool that may be used for some people with disabilities and their families to save for the future while protecting eligibility benefits.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act enacted by Congress in late 2014 allows states to establish tax-advantaged savings accounts for certain individuals with disabilities for their disability related expenses. In addition, these funds would generally not be considered for supplemental security income (SSI) program (up to \$100,000), Medicaid, and certain other federal means-tested benefits.

ABLE Accounts do not replace the need for a Family Funded Special Needs Trust, but may be used in conjunction. Funds in an ABLE account may only be used for Qualified Disability Related Expenditures. Key aspects of ABLE Accounts are similar to First Party or Self-Funded Trusts in that they require a Medicaid payback upon the death of the beneficiary.

To learn more about ABLE Accounts, visit [www.ablenlc.org](http://www.ablenlc.org). For a better understanding of the differences between Special Needs Trusts and ABLE Accounts, visit The Arc of Northern Virginia Trusts website at <https://thearcofnovatrust.org/pooled-trusts/able-accounts/>

## Advocate Program

Having problems applying for benefits, developing a budget, finding a social outlet, or figuring out housing options for your loved one with a disability? If you have created a Special Needs Trust with The Arc of Northern Virginia, our Beneficiary Advocate is here to help on these and many other issues. Call 703-208-1119 ext. 120 for more information on resources available through this services. There is an hourly fee, which can be paid through the trust.

## UNDERSTANDING LEGAL AUTHORITY

Families often struggle to determine the need for and value of guardianship and other forms of legal authority, especially as they relate to “protecting the person.” The answer to what is appropriate depends upon the person. *It is critical to remember that guardianship and similar measures are simply legal authority on a piece of paper. They cannot prevent someone from doing something. They may be helpful in “cleaning up” some financial problems.*

The Disability Law Center of Virginia [www.dlcv.org](http://www.dlcv.org) offers information on their website regarding weighing varying legal authority options and also provides templates that can be downloaded to create your own documents for power of attorney and medical directives.

### Dignity of Risk and Supported Decision Making

In recent years, a movement has grown to talk about the “dignity of risk” we all have to make decisions. The concept is simply that all people need help making some decisions and we all learn by making bad decisions. For example, many people without developmental disabilities rely on tax accountants or doctors to explain life decisions in simple terms they can understand. This idea is called “[supported decision making](#)” and there is a growing international movement towards this policy. A team of people who care about the person with a disability form a Circle of Support and are asked by the person to work together to help them understand and make decisions. It does not involve taking away legal rights but does build a support team and a way to grow decision making ability and independence over time. It has no cost and is probably what you are already doing. Supported decision making does not give the team any legal authority to speak on behalf of the individual or to override their decisions. You can learn more about Supported Decision Making and view webinars on the topic at <http://supporteddecisionmaking.org/>

“Dignity of Risk” also means understanding that it is okay to make some bad decisions. We are all allowed and it is often how we learn best. Many people learn from spending too much that it is hard to pay bills and learn from weight gain and health issues that they ate too much. This is a right all people have and exercise every day. People with disabilities should have the

same opportunities to make decisions and learn through natural consequences and a support team about how to proceed the next time.

### Legal Authority Options: Weighing Alternatives

The appointment of a guardian or a conservator should be considered as a last resort. See the chart on page 56 for a list and description of legal authority options. Petitioners for guardianship must provide evidence, and a judge must determine, that an individual is “incapacitated” in terms of making certain decisions.

However, if the person is not considered “incapacitated” but still needs help, the individual and his or her family may choose among several other options. These alternatives range from having a caregiver (who has no legal authority to make decisions) to giving a trusted person a durable power-of-attorney that may make educational, medical, legal and financial decisions. For example, an individual needing some assistance may be able to sign a Power of Attorney or Advance Medical Directive, appointing you or another family member as their agent for decision-making.

### Medical Directive

An Advance Directive helps you and your child prepare for a future time he or she may not be able to make informed decisions or communicate his or her wishes. An Agent (parent, relative, or other trusted adult) can make healthcare decisions when necessary while still allowing the individuals the right to make decisions he or she is able to make. There are several ways to make an Advance Directive: Sample forms can be found at <http://www.virginiaadvancedirectives.org/picking-an-ad-form.html>; You and your child can talk to your doctor about making an Advance Directive; you can hire an attorney to complete an Advance Directive. Once your child’s Advance Directive is written, it needs to be signed in the presences of two witnesses. Virginia does not require it to be notarized, but it is a good idea to do so if possible. Once you have the necessary signatures, you should give copies to the Agent, doctors, and other trusted family members. You can also register the Advance Directive online at [www.virginiaregistry.org](http://www.virginiaregistry.org).



\*This information adapted from [www.dlc.v.org](http://www.dlc.v.org) (The Disability Law Center of Virginia).

## Guardianship and Conservatorship

Guardians and conservators are appointed by a local court to protect an incapacitated person-- that is, someone who cannot receive or evaluate information effectively to meet his or her health, care and safety needs, or to manage property or financial affairs. An individual is not put under guardianship solely because they have bad judgment, but because their ability to understand and make good choices is impaired.

A guardian and/or conservator is often appointed for a person with a disability. However, **only a Circuit Court judge can decide that a person is incapacitated** and appoint a guardian and/or a conservator to act for the person. The appointment of a guardian or conservator is not a routine matter, and it is appropriate to take it very seriously, as the legal system does.

In essence, **guardianship** makes someone (like parents) responsible for *making legal decisions* on behalf of a person who cannot make those decisions completely by themselves. A guardian makes medical, residential and other social decisions. In Virginia, a guardianship can be structured to fit the individual, with some rights taken away and others retained (i.e. the right to vote). An attorney experienced in guardianship law can assist you in crafting a guardianship that fits the individual and allows you to remain as a strong advocate for the individual with a disability.

A **conservator's** decision-making responsibility is focused on managing a person's financial and property affairs. A conservator's authority, like that of a guardian, may also be limited depending on the situation of the incapacitated person.

The court may appoint only a guardian, only a conservator, or both. For most young adults with a disability, only a guardian is necessary. Typically, the young adult has less than \$2,000 in assets; the only income is from SSI or earnings that typically can be managed by a Representative Payee or by the individual with some assistance. The extent of the guardian's or conservator's authority will be set forth in the judge's order and in the Virginia code.

## Considering Guardianship

In a guardianship, the law strikes a balance between preserving the rights and personal autonomy of an adult and the duty of the Commonwealth of Virginia to protect individuals who lack sufficient capacity to make decisions regarding themselves or their property.

Families should consider less restrictive alternatives before petitioning for guardianship if they believe the individual may not fit the criterion of "incapacitated." Parents considering guardianship should keep in mind that:

- Overall, it is important to realize that guardian-ship is a **flexible system in Virginia**.
- Guardianships can be **tailored to the needs of your child**, allowing parents to remain in a strong advocacy position.
- As part of that flexibility, **guardianship need not take away all of the individual's rights**. It is very common, for example, to preserve the right to vote, the right to hold a driver's license, and other rights.
- Even under guardianship, your adult child **can still participate in decision-making** about his or her life to the extent of their capabilities. The guardianship order will typically say that the individual with a disability will be consulted and his/her wishes taken into account.
- **Your child remains eligible for government benefits**. There is no loss of government benefits because someone has a guardian. The guardian's income and assets are not counted when computing benefits for an adult individual with a disability.
- Guardianship **does not make you financially responsible for the person under guardianship**. For example, parents who are guardians do not have to provide food and shelter for their child but would be responsible for making the *decisions* about

where their child would live and the kind of care he or she would receive.

- As a guardian, **you are not responsible for the financial, civil or criminal liabilities of your child.** If an individual under guardianship hurts someone or something, the guardian is not liable. If they were, few people would be willing to serve as a guardian. Guardians do have a duty to try to arrange a safe environment for the individual.

Parents are frequently appointed as guardians, but other family members, an attorney, a friend, or a public guardian may also serve in this capacity.

To help determine if guardianship is the appropriate choice for your young adult, complete the screener at <http://www.thearcofnova.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Thinking-about-Guardianship-checklist-2.pdf>

### Obtaining Guardianship

To obtain guardianship, parents need to file a petition with the Circuit Court of the jurisdiction in which the individual lives. Typically, parents are appointed as co-guardians, which allows either to act independently. You must provide a medical or psychological evaluation of your loved one that supports the need for guardianship. You may ask the court to appoint "standby" guardians who would serve when you no longer can.

When the petition is filed, the court appoints a guardian ad litem (GAL). The GAL is an attorney in private practice appointed from an approved list. The GAL's primary job is to ensure that the rights of the individual with the disability are protected. The GAL will therefore meet the individual, serve him or her with the court paper-work, and explain their rights. The GAL will also make a report to the Court giving an opinion as to whether the appointment of a guardian is necessary and who should be appointed.

After the GAL has filed a report, a hearing is held at the Court. Usually the persons being appointed as guardians must attend the hearing, and after the hearing will go to the Clerk of the Court's office to complete all necessary paper-work. The individual for whom the guardian is being appointed may choose to

attend the hearing or not. The typical time frame for obtaining guardianship is approximately 3 months, but may take up to 6 months. As a guardian, you are required to submit a report every year to the local Department of Social Services; the court will provide a form.

If you are interested in pursuing guardianship or other legal authority options, visit The Arc of Northern Virginia's Provider Directory for a list of elder care attorneys at <https://thearcofnova.org/directory/>

<sup>1</sup>Thank you to Kelly Thompson, Esq., and Loretta Morris Williams, Esq. for work on this section and insights on issues parents face in deciding on guardianship

### Determining a Decision-Making Role

Type	Decision-making Responsibilities	Notes
Supported Decision Making	Individual with disability makes decisions, with support from family or others with relevant expertise	www.supporteddecisionmaking.com
Emergency order for adult protective services	Short-term guardianship (15 days) to handle an emergency or correct conditions causing an emergency	Local Department of Social Services must apply to Circuit Court for temporary guardianship order
Durable power of attorney	Written authority giving a parent or another person (agent) power to make decisions on behalf of the individual with a disability (the principal). Agent may act even if principal becomes incapacitated.	Agent cannot override decisions Power ends if principal revokes it or dies
Advance Directive	Person with disability provides instructions about his or her wishes for health care treatment and designates an agent to make health care decisions when he or she cannot. May be combined with Medical Power of Attorney. Must be witnessed in Virginia.	Agent's powers are defined in the document. Agent cannot override decisions.
Health Care Power of Attorney	Similar to durable general power of attorney, but directed exclusively at healthcare.  Choosing the right agent is very important; make sure he or she knows the individual's wishes, values, and preference and will be a strong advocate	Enables someone to make any or all healthcare decisions if the individual becomes incapacitated. Doctor and family will be able to know and respect the individual's wishes
Representative payee	Receives another person's government benefits on behalf of that person; responsible for using benefit to pay beneficiary's living expenses	Individual must be unable to manage finances. Rep Payee must report annually to the Social Security Administration
Limited conservatorship	Decisions on specific financial matters, such as paying bills or filling out tax returns, as specified by the judge. Conservator must post surety bond.	Individual must be incapacitated. Conservator must file report on income and expenses
Full conservatorship	All financial decisions, including paying bills, investing money, and selling property. Conservator must post a surety bond.	Conservator must file annual report on all financial transactions
Standby guardian	Person designated in guardianship order to become guardian when current guardian dies	Does not assume any duties until death of primary guardian
Limited guardianship	Decisions on specific issues (e.g., only health care), as determined by a judge. This leaves the person free to make all other decisions.	Individual must be incapacitated. Guardian must file an annual report with Dept of Social Services
Full guardianship	Guardian makes all financial, legal, personal care, and social decisions	Individual must be incapacitated. Guardian must file an annual report with Dept of Social Services

## Additional Resources

### Career Interest & Occupational Information

<https://www.vawizard.org/vccs/Career.action>

Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/k12/>

BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm>

<http://www.onetonline.org/>

<http://www.acinet.org/>

Autism Speaks Employment Tool Kit

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/employment>

<http://www.naviance.com/students/>

“How to Get a Job” tip sheet:

<http://labs.umassmed.edu/transitionsRTC/Resources/publications/Employment.pdf>

Grandin, Temple. “Choosing the Right Job” on Autism Research Institute website

[http://www.autism.com/index.php/advocacy\\_grandin\\_job](http://www.autism.com/index.php/advocacy_grandin_job)

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

The Spectrum Careers: Jobs Portal for Individuals with Autism, Employers, and Service Providers

[www.thespectrumcareers.com](http://www.thespectrumcareers.com)

Think Beyond the Label Jobs Portal

[www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com)

### Cover Letters & Resumes

<http://susanireland.com/resume/examples/>

<http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/ResumesInterviews.aspx>

<http://how-to-write-a-resume.org/>

### Books

Bolles, R. N. *What color is your parachute?: A practical manual for job-hunters and career-changers*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed. 2018

Griffin, Cary, and David Hammis, et al. *Making Self Employment Work for People with Disabilities*.

Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing. 2003.

Luecking, Richard. *The Way to Work: How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in Transition*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing. 2009

A Parent’s Guide to Employment for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

[www.Autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/employment\\_tool\\_kit\\_parent\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.Autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/docs/employment_tool_kit_parent_booklet.pdf)

**Visit our Transition POINTS Employment Tool Kit on our website for additional documents and updated information at:**

[www.thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/entering-world-work/employment-toolbox/](http://www.thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/entering-world-work/employment-toolbox/)

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